

Notes on Storms, 1937-38.

April, 1937.—Strong winds at Niue Island on the 9th were associated with a depression which passed in a southerly and then easterly direction from between Fiji and the New Hebrides.

August, 1937.—On the 11th a depression was situated south of Tonga and later moved east and affected the Cook Islands.

December, 1937.—Winds of gale force were experienced at Norfolk Island on the 28th, when a depression moved south from the New Hebrides.

February, 1938.—On the 24th a centre of depression moved towards the Fiji Islands, where squally conditions prevailed.

XX.—LAND TENURE.

Under the Samoa Act, 1921, all land is legally—

- (a) Crown land, vested in the Crown free from Native title or any estate in fee-simple, of which there are (including New Zealand Reparation Estates) 103,630 acres ; or
- (b) European land, being land held from the Crown for an estate in fee-simple, of which there are 40,000 acres ; or
- (c) Native land, being land vested in the Crown but held by Samoans by Native title, and not by grant from the Crown, of which there are 581,370 acres.

“ Native title ” means title to land in accordance with the customs and usages of the Samoan race.

Titles to Crown land, European land, and European interests in Native land (leases) are registered by the Administration. Titles to Native land, when in dispute, are adjudicated upon by the Native Land and Titles Court referred to in Chapter X of this report, and determined in accordance with the customs and usages of the Samoan race.

Usurious contracts with Natives are unenforceable at law, and Native land is incapable of being taken in execution for the payments of the debts of a Samoan on his decease or insolvency.

Generally, alienation of Native land is prohibited, save an alienation or disposition in favour of the Government. Provision has been made for sale of Native land in the Apia town area, and the Administrator may approve of a lease of Native land for a period not exceeding forty years, but in each instance the grant is made only if the Administrator is satisfied that the transaction is in accordance with the desires and in the interests of the Native owners and in conformity with the public interests.

Although large areas in the interior of each of the two main islands are incapable of cultivation, there is more than ample Native land available for all the requirements of the present indigenous population.

XXI.—FORESTS AND AGRICULTURE.

FORESTS.

The mountainous interior, comprising by far the greater portion of the area of both principal islands, is completely covered with virgin Native forest. The Territory has been visited on occasion by representatives of milling interests, who have formed the opinion that the indigenous forest has insufficient millable trees to the acre to be profitable, whilst afforestation with exotic species is rather discouraged by the precipitous nature of the country.

On European plantations teak is planted in a small way, but quite successfully, for general utility.

AGRICULTURE.

The circumstances of the Territory do not warrant the maintenance of a separate Department of Agriculture but all produce exported is subject to close and careful inspection before shipment.

Copra is the staple product of the Territory : it is produced approximately 77 per cent. by Natives, and the output of the New Zealand Reparation Estates accounts for roughly two-thirds of the balance. Exports for the four years 1934-37 averaged 11,951 tons. There is considerable fluctuation in local stocks held between shipments, and for this reason records are kept of Native production as distinct from export, as indicated in the following :—

Year.						Exported. Tons.	Native Production. Tons.
1934	..	..	..	..	..	8,948	7,907
1935	..	..	..	..	..	12,501	10,500
1936	..	..	..	..	..	13,014	9,230
1937	..	..	..	..	..	13,340	10,273

Cocoa is produced in Western Samoa principally by Europeans (although Native production is increasing), and is of very high quality, being a standardized hybrid of Criollo and Forastero, but with the Criollo predominating. Samoan cocoa has been classified by the Imperial Economic Conference on cocoa as being amongst the world's finest in point of quality, and it is used mainly for blending. Export during the four years 1934-37 averaged 980 tons per annum.

Bananas continue to be of considerable assistance to the Territory, and a record number of 187,755 cases was shipped during the calendar year 1937. Further information relating to this product will be found in the report on trade, Chapter IX.