

LEMONS

The packing and marketing of New-Zealand-grown lemons (not including the Meyer variety) and the importing and marketing of overseas lemons were again carried out by the Division. Contrary to the general criticism that the lemon industry is dying out in New Zealand, the crop was the largest yet experienced—probably a record—and during the peak period of production there was difficulty in finding an outlet for the quantities coming forward. Efforts are continually being made to find ways and means of holding lemons produced in the middle of the season for marketing in the off season when this fruit is scarce. If these experiments are successful and production is maintained, this country should soon be self-supporting in lemons throughout the year. Unfortunately, locally grown lemons in general are not good keepers and, consequently, when large quantities are on the market considerable losses occur. This weakness in the fruit may be due to climatic conditions. Nevertheless, the attention of growers is being directed to eliminating weak fruit and making every effort to improve its keeping condition.

As the Australian and Cook Island seasons are practically identical with our own, very few lemons were imported to relieve the shortage during the period of low production in New Zealand. In addition, 50 per cent. of the Australian crop is reserved for Armed Service demands, leaving practically no surplus for other than Australian consumer needs. Normally, Californian lemons are imported to meet our requirements in the local off season, but, as with other fruits, suitable shipping space is not yet obtainable to allow a return to this procedure.

The quantities (based on $\frac{3}{4}$ -bushel cases) handled as fresh fruit from 1939 to the present year were :—

—	Year ended 31st March,							
	1939.		1940.		1941.		1942.	
	Cases.	Per Cent.	Cases.	Per Cent.	Cases.	Per Cent.	Cases.	Per Cent.
New Zealand	..	..	47,521	58.44	69,151	78.7	80,043	91.9
Australia ..	..	..	15,852	19.50	7,342	8.4	6,724	7.7
Cook Islands	..	..	32	0.04	801	0.9	318	0.4
U.S.A. ..	8,998	100.0	17,908	22.02	10,500	12.0	..	..
	8,998	..	81,313	..	87,794	..	87,085	..

—	Year ended 31st March,							
	1943.		1944.		1945.			
	Cases.	Per Cent.	Cases.	Per Cent.	Cases.	Per Cent.		
New Zealand	61,500	79.7	82,949	86.20	99,662	95.29
Australia	14,316	18.5	11,826	12.29	3,936	3.77
Cook Islands	1,370	1.8	1,450	1.51	976	0.94
U.S.A.
			77,186	..	96,225	..	104,574	..

The work of the grading, curing, and packing sheds has to be expressed in terms of the loose-bushel cases in which the fruit is received from the growers. A record total of 139,000 cases was handled, 17,000 cases more than the 122,000 of 1941 and 27,000 over the 112,000 of 1944.