

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT SHOWING THE OUTPUT, EXPORT, AND QUANTITY PLACED ON NEW ZEALAND MARKET OF RIMU, KAURI, MATAI, AND TOTARA FOR THE YEARS 1917-18, 1919-20, AND 1920-21.

Timber.	Year ended 31st March.	Output.	Export.	Placed on New Zealand Market.	Percentage of Output exported.
		Feet.	Feet.	Feet.	
Rimu	1918	111,318,579	27,583,235	88,875,298	23·7
	1920	145,584,203	10,101,000	135,483,203	7·0
	1921	150,708,970	12,997,588	137,556,856	8·6
Kauri	1918	21,835,023	10,454,494	19,552,692	34·8
	1920	22,598,391	362,000	22,236,391	1·6
	1921	19,663,955	1,218,298	17,698,613	6·2
Matai	1918	11,930,040	493,964	12,374,501	3·8
	1920	17,820,597	Nil	17,820,597	Nil.
	1921	22,776,424	Nil	22,180,475	Nil.
Totara	1918	13,387,038	57,337	13,518,126	0·4
	1920	14,414,298	Nil	14,414,298	Nil.
	1921	17,901,178	Nil	17,691,470	Nil.

NOTE.—Any discrepancy between the total output and the total of the quantities exported and placed on the New Zealand market is accounted for by stocks held at the beginning of the period.

In connection with the foregoing figures the principal features to note are that there has been a considerable increase in the output of most classes of timber, and that the Board's measures of control have obviously assisted in meeting the heavy demands for timber in New Zealand. During the period under review the demand for timber at the reasonable prices fixed by the Board has been well-nigh insatiable. In connection with rimu it is particularly noteworthy that while the increase in production between 1918 and 1920 amounted to 34,265,625 sup. ft., the official restrictions on export enabled an increase of 46,607,905 sup. ft. to be placed on the New Zealand market.

While the general production of New Zealand timber has increased appreciably by comparison with the figures of 1917-18 (which exceeded those of 1918-19, the last year of the war's call on man-power), the output of building-material—rimu, kauri, matai, and totara—for the year ended 31st March, 1920, was 200,417,489 sup. ft., as against 158,470,680 ft. for 1917-18. A satisfactory feature was that the proportion of building-material exported for 1919-20 was only 5½ per cent., compared with 23 per cent. in 1917-18. During these two years the proportion placed on the local market rose from 77 per cent. to 94½ per cent. The increased rate of production, with the low proportion of export, was maintained during the year 1920-21.

The reduction in exports of building-timber has been effected in accordance with the regulations which came into force in August, 1918, but the figures show that the reduction has been greater than that which the regulations rendered obligatory. If export had gone to the permissible limit the figures for 1921 would have been 27,000,000 ft. of rimu and 8,500,000 ft. of kauri. Thus it appears that the policy inaugurated by the Government in relation to New Zealand building-timber for use in the Dominion has been entirely successful.

While there has been a slight increase in the actual amount of timber exported in 1921 as compared with 1920, the exports in neither year have approached the limits fixed by regulations. Attention has been concentrated on the requirements of the local market—the Department requiring that export permits might be exercised only for timber for which transport facilities to the New Zealand market were not available, or for timber exceeding the Dominion's requirements.

One of the first administrative precautions was to issue permits only to those mills which were in the export trade prior to 1918. All new mills commenced operations with the knowledge of the restrictions on export, and with the assurance that these restrictions would become year by year more severe. It would have been obviously unfair to allow the new mills to take a share of the export trade, in which the operations of the older mills were being gradually curtailed.

Another administrative precaution was that during the shortage, export permits for rimu and kauri were granted only to the west coast (South Island) and the north of Auckland mills, and then only for quantities for which shipping from coastal port to port was not available. The idea of this arrangement was that those mills so situated geographically as to be unable to place the whole of their timber on the New Zealand market were granted the privilege of export within the limits already specified. Thus the New Zealand market received the whole of the output of the Southland and Main Trunk (North Island) mills, supplemented by that portion of the output of west coast (South Island) and north Auckland for which coastal shipping was available. This arrangement has proved to be economically sound, and has worked well. The following published statement made by the Board's Chairman is of special interest:—

“Even if the very limited export of building-timber were stopped the quantity available for use in New Zealand would not be increased. Not sufficient coasting shipping would be available to lift all the timber at some mills for use in the Dominion. If a certain measure of export to Australia did not help to clear the skids they would become congested, and milling operations would be checked, with the result that a number of men would be thrown out of employment. While they lost their wages, New Zealand would not have any additional supplies of building-timber for use here.”

Like most other branches of trade, the timber business is now very unsettled. The Australian market—which is our principal market for export—is failing, while at the same time, owing to