

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL.

THE HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

Wellington, 30th June, 1924.

I beg to submit the following report upon the operations of the past year:—

A general survey of the work done indicates that the Department has made distinct progress, and this has been brought about without additional expenditure having been incurred, the gross expenditure having been, in fact, only very little more than in the preceding year, while the net expenditure was slightly less. In recording this I desire to specially bring to your notice the sound assistance which has been rendered by Directors of Divisions and their staffs in maintaining the efficiency of the work done, while at the same time closely watching their expenditure and observing economy wherever possible to do so without impairing efficiency. The Live-stock, Dairy, and Horticulture Divisions, and the Chemistry Section have all given excellent service, while the newly organized Fields Division, established as a separate unit in May, 1923, quickly settled down to good work, the Director and his staff exhibiting both energy and thoroughness in carrying out their duties.

A marked feature of the year's work lay in the expansion of instructional services in various directions, and it is satisfactory to note that farmers generally have appreciated what has been done in this respect, it having evidently been realized that the facilities made available for obtaining knowledge based upon scientific facts, and made applicable to everyday farming operations, are of material assistance in bringing about an increased output of produce. In this instructional work all Divisions and Sections have participated in varying degrees, according to the particular responsibilities entrusted to them. The provision of special courses, each of a week's duration, for farmers themselves, initiated in 1921–22, developed considerably, six such courses being held during the year at different centres in both Islands, while in the present winter this number will be considerably increased. These courses have proved successful in every way, and have been well attended and well appreciated. They are organized by the Fields Division, specialist officers of other Divisions and Sections co-operating in the instruction given.

The permanent farm-school established at Ruakura was opened in August, 1923, with twenty pupils, an additional twenty going in February, 1924. A two-years course is provided, the students spending approximately half their time in receiving instruction by means of lectures and demonstrations, and half in practical work under instruction. The syllabus is sufficiently comprehensive to enable a good knowledge of the application of scientific principles to practical farming to be obtained, as well as practical knowledge of general farming practice.

In other branches of primary production the requests for assistance have markedly increased, the specialist officers of the Live-stock, Dairy, Horticulture, and Fields Divisions having been fully occupied in meeting the calls made upon their services. This is satisfactory in more senses than one, and it can reasonably be assumed that as instructional work increases, and greater knowledge in matters necessary for safeguarding their stock, crops, pastures, &c., from disease or deterioration, and for controlling pests and weeds, is acquired by farmers, the necessity for inspection work will gradually lessen.

THE STATE FARMS.

The large State farms at Ruakura, Weraroa, and Moumahaki have had a good year from a farming point of view, and as the result of efficient work on the part of the management, combined with the good prices which have ruled for the main products, the financial returns may be looked upon as showing marked improvement. These may be summarized as follows, but it must be noted that the expenditure shown is the expenditure from the farm votes on the estimates, which do not include the salaries of the permanent officers employed on the farms. On this basis the expenditure at Ruakura was £10,282 and the receipts £8,718; at Weraroa the expenditure was £5,754 and the receipts £7,980; at Moumahaki the expenditure was £2,520 and the receipts £4,225. So far as the Ruakura figures are concerned it must be borne in mind that a considerable volume of educational work is carried on there, and, in addition, the permanent farm-school was in operation for some seven months of the financial year. Apart from the fees paid by the students at this school, which do not cover more than about half the cost of their maintenance, this educational work naturally does not give a direct monetary return.

In addition to the above-mentioned establishments the Te Kauwhata Farm, devoted chiefly to vine-culture and wine-making, showed an expenditure from the vote of £3,973, with receipts amounting to £5,729. Apart from the educational work at Ruakura, and some instructional work carried out at Weraroa, these places, together with Moumahaki, have continued to be