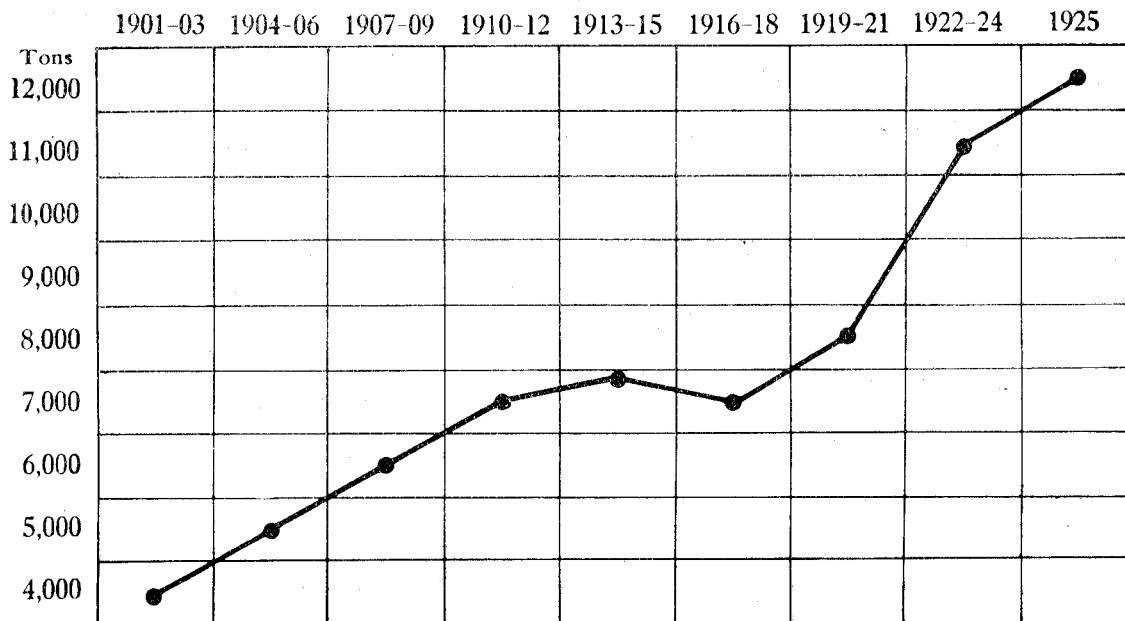


AGRICULTURE.

The extent to which the Natives increase their efforts to utilize their lands for something more than the mere growing of food—namely, to produce copra and other agricultural products for export—is the best indication of their advancement and of the fruits of the money spent on their health and education.

Although copra is their main source of wealth, steps have been taken to interest the Natives in cotton and cacao cultivation, and as soon as suitable shipping facilities are available they will be encouraged to grow fruit for export to New Zealand.

The total amount of copra produced last year was 15,210 tons, of which amount the Natives produced 11,700 tons, or 77 per cent. This constitutes a record.



COPRA PRODUCTION BY NATIVES.

The Natives were induced last year to grow small areas of cotton in various districts, with a view to educating them to the possibility of supplementing what is practically the only source of revenue they now have—viz., copra. The results have shown that cotton can be successfully grown here, and that it is a very suitable “peasant industry” for Native families. While only 2 tons were exported last year, I am hopeful, as steps have been taken by the Natives to plant larger areas with cotton during the ensuing year, that this industry will grow.

To encourage the Natives to improve their plantations and increase production the sum of £214 was distributed last year in prizes, awarded—one to the best district in each island, and two (first and second) to villages in each district. While this scheme has done good, it is only one of many means adopted to promote in the minds of the Natives a livelier interest in agriculture. Their response is slow, and many difficulties have to be overcome, but there has undoubtedly been an all-round improvement as compared with the previous year.

NATIVE LANDS.

The diagrams on page 8 have been corrected to date, and show, by comparison with last year, increased areas of Native coconut plantations, and smaller cultivated areas of food-supplies—bananas and taro. The variations from last year's figures are the result of a recent and more accurate survey of the cultivated lands than that previously made, and upon which last year's report was based.

New areas of land are gradually being planted with coconuts under a system of compulsory planting whereby Natives occupying land are required to plant a given number of nuts every year, the number varying according to local conditions. The object is to plant not more than can be properly cared for during the first four years of growth. While the Natives realize the need for increasing their coconut areas, and comply with the instructions *re* compulsory planting, our Inspectors have great difficulty in getting them to give the young plants that constant care and attention to protect them from the prolific growth of weeds, and damage by pigs and cattle. There are, however, new areas coming into bearing every year with a consequent increasing production of copra, bringing greater prosperity to the Natives themselves and increased trade in which the European community also benefit.

As explained in the annual report for last year, all Native land is held communally under a form of family tenure. The Natives in each village are a separate and self-contained community. They jealously guard against encroachment of the boundaries which divide their lands from those of the adjacent villages, but within their village boundaries very frequently large areas of land are lying