

The Committee has held frequent meetings since it was appointed, (a) to consider ways and means of extending the use of New Zealand timbers, and (b) to advise as to the best practical means of attaining this object.

A considerable amount of work has been performed, and much detailed information and data have been collected for the purpose of drawing up more scientific and uniform grading and classification rules for New Zealand timbers. A number of practical grading tests have been carried out at several representative mills in all districts in New Zealand. As a result of the Committee's deliberations and the tests referred to above, a new set of grading and classification rules, as well as definitions of minimum and maximum defects in timbers have been prepared. The executive of the Dominion Federated Sawmillers' Association has carefully considered the proposals made by the Committee and is agreeable to their adoption.

It is the intention of the Timber Committee to recommend to Government that the grading and classification rules, when finally approved, be adopted by all Government Departments as a basis for the purchase of the timber requirements of the State, and as a basis for uniformity in timber specifications for all buildings constructed out of loan-money advanced by Government Departments. This course is calculated to bring about more quickly the complete adoption of the new system, and is expected to be a big factor in giving rise to a wider use of New Zealand timbers in preference to imported timbers.

Sawmillers have expressed the opinion that the inauguration of uniform and definite grading and classification rules is probably the biggest step that has yet been undertaken to place the industry on a permanently improved footing.

The Committee is sure that timber-users will in future obtain greater satisfaction generally, and that the real merits and undeniable quality of various New Zealand timbers will be more readily understood. It is considered that the local product will be found suitable for practically all purposes for which wood is required. It will, of course, be some time before the new system will be in universal use, but the Committee anticipates that, as the advantages will be so apparent, the period of change-over from the old to the new methods of grading and classification will be of reasonably short duration.

The scheme is now being explained in detail to all individual sawmillers. Immediately this has been done meetings are to be arranged for the purpose of demonstrating to distributors and users the practicability and advantages of the new system.

At a later date the Committee intends to go into the question of a uniform system of grading and classification for the export timber trade of the Dominion. This, it is felt, will materially help towards a better understanding and a more complete knowledge of the true values of New Zealand timbers compared with those received from other countries in New Zealand's main export market, Australia.

The production of timber within the Dominion during the past year or two has been curtailed considerably. The following table shows for the past seven years (ended 31st March) the total output and the quantities of the several main varieties produced in each period. The substantial decline in the national output in the year 1926-27 as compared with the previous year will be readily noted. The figures for the year ended March, 1928, are not yet available, but are expected to show a further decrease.

Year ended 31st March,	Total.	Kauri.	Rimu.	White-pine.	Matai.	Totara.	Others.
	Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.
1921 ..	307,667,834	20,393,788	153,529,022	73,168,750	21,329,043	17,984,189	21,263,042
1922 ..	314,972,310	21,435,728	157,345,928	68,486,633	24,830,368	19,570,561	23,303,092
1923 ..	304,351,877	22,460,759	155,627,936	66,088,219	23,747,049	20,843,718	15,584,196
1924 ..	317,069,216	19,743,196	181,093,581	56,699,443	24,326,148	18,904,361	16,302,487
1925 ..	344,094,874	22,891,535	195,572,705	65,572,439	23,947,707	18,509,551	17,600,937
1926 ..	353,224,196	22,765,877	195,451,758	75,634,869	26,141,027	14,109,576	19,121,089
1927 ..	306,665,513	18,474,981	171,488,537	65,490,059	19,380,469	14,179,462	17,652,005

The competition arising from importations is recorded in the following table, which shows in thousands of superficial feet the quantities of timber (other than Australian hardwoods) which have come into the Dominion in recent periods:—

—	1923-24.	1924-25.	1925-26.	1926-27.	1927-28.
Ash, hickory, lancewood, lignum-vitæ, beech, mahogany, walnut	Included under "Cedar" below		127	219	145
Cedar	342	2,314	7,571	8,202	1,910
Oregon	11,373	13,653	16,206	18,622	16,298
Hemlock	545	1,747	4,258	3,744*	2,053*
Spruce	3	899	1,463	239*	144*
Oak	1,867	2,136	2,586	2,343	1,656
Other kinds, including redwood ..	1,394	2,812	8,716	9,628†	10,845†
Totals	15,514	23,561	40,927	42,997	33,051

* Does not include timber for butter-boxes or cheese-crates (if any) of hemlock or spruce. Previous years' figures for hemlock and spruce include any butter-boxes or cheese-crates of these species.

† Includes all butter-boxes and cheese-crates of any species of timber. Redwood in 1927-28 was 7,202,000 super. ft.