

direction consequent upon the Government of Argentina—which country during the past few years has absorbed an aggregate of well over one and a half million cases of New Zealand fruit—having announced its intention of placing a duty of 33½ per cent. *ad valorem* on all fresh fruit imported into that country. This impost, when taken in conjunction with the adverse exchange position of Argentina, is likely to render that market of little value in future to the New Zealand fruitgrower. However, it is anticipated that the increasing sales being effected on the Continent of Europe will offset this substantially.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZERS.

It is unfortunate that farm-improvement and farm-maintenance costs leading directly to increased production on a lowering cost basis are the very ones that are first reduced by farmers when the price-level for farm-products drops. This has been most noticeable with regard to the employment of artificial fertilizers.

In the year 1923 less than 100,000 tons of artificial fertilizers was used both for top-dressing and ordinary crops. The tonnage used in the next seven years increased each year by about 50,000 tons, and in 1929 the amount of 450,000 tons was exceeded, of which nearly 350,000 tons was used for top-dressing. In 1930, consequent mainly on the serious decline in wool-values, top-dressing of sheep-country largely ceased, with the result that the tonnage fell by nearly 50,000 tons to 404,000 tons. During the last five months of the year the fall has been intensified, and much dairying country has not been treated. The figures from January to May inclusive for each of the past three years are as follows:—

					Tons.	Decrease.
1929	..	..	..	..	200,000	..
1930	..	..	..	..	184,000	16,000
1931	..	..	..	..	130,000	70,000

Since January of this year to the end of May the New Zealand farmer has cut his fertilizer bill by £350,000, compared with corresponding period of 1929—a reduction in expenditure that is likely to be reflected in a marked decrease in the volume of his production in the coming season.

WOOL-PRODUCTION.

Details regarding wool-production will be found in the appended report of the Live-stock Division. The low values received were disappointing, but there is reason for satisfaction on one point—namely, that the general quality of our crossbred wool is showing a gradual improvement.

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The outstanding feature with regard to noxious weeds has been the unqualified success of sodium chlorate in the destruction of ragwort. Over 400 tons of the material have been imported, and tens of thousands of acres have been sprayed. So far as the small dairy-farmer is concerned, he need no longer fear serious trouble from ragwort. The fact also that spraying can be effectively carried out throughout the growing-season enables the labour necessary to be spread, so that it need not interfere with the normal operations of the farm. The efficiency of sodium chlorate in the destruction of Californian thistle has also been well demonstrated, and considerable quantities have been used for this purpose. More than one application is, however, needed for complete eradication.

The price of the material—namely, 5d. per pound—has been the subject of criticism, but as the business was an entirely new one to New Zealand merchants, costs could not be brought to the point they can be now the trade has been firmly established.

RUAKURA FARM OF INSTRUCTION.

Notwithstanding increased production, the gross income of the Ruakura Farm of Instruction shows a sharp drop as compared with the previous year, due entirely to the heavy decline in values of farm-produce. A very close watch has been kept over expenditure, and it is satisfactory to be able to record that a considerable saving has been effected.

Following a very favourable autumn the winter of 1930 was commenced with pastures well covered and stock in good condition. For the fourth year in succession the winter stocking was increased, and it is now approximately 70 per cent. higher than it was five years ago. All classes of stock wintered well, and, after making reasonable allowances for lambing deaths