IMPORTATION OF FERTILIZERS.

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THERE are several interesting facts to be learnt from a study of the figures showing the yearly importations of fertilizers.

Looking at the respective quantities imported at the different ports, one is first struck by the enormous quantities of phosphate landed at the Port of Auckland. Thus, in the purely phosphatic manures (amongst which bone is included), Auckland imports as much (36,000 tons) as all the South Island ports, although there are two facts which somewhat discount this statement—viz., (1) that Dunedin possesses a phosphate-field and produces a considerable amount of phosphatic fertilizer, which does not therefore appear in these figures; (2) that the fertilizer imported into Otago (Dunedin) and Southland (Invercargill) is largely guano, which is much richer in phosphoric acid than either basic slag, bonedust, or superphosphate, the kinds of fertilizers mostly imported into the northern ports. But, making due allowance for these two facts, the amount of phosphates imported into Auckland is far greater than anything one can compare it with elsewhere in the Dominion. This great need of Auckland for phosphate, be it observed, is coincident with a paucity of available phosphoric acid in the majority of the soil-samples which have been analysed from that province (see *Journal of the Department of Agriculture*, Vol. iii, No. 4, p. 304, "Some Typical Auckland Soils," by B. C. Aston).

Considering the respective qualities of the different phosphates employed, it is seen that the soluble and quick-acting forms* of phosphate are more in favour in the northern parts, while the insoluble or slower-acting are more in demand in the extreme south. Thus the North Island ports, together with Lyttelton and Timaru, imported 64,700 tons of phosphates, of which only 18,300 tons were bonedust and guano; whereas Dunedin and Invercargill imported 21,000 tons, of which 15,700 tons were bonedust and guano, about 14,000 tons being guano. The reason that guano and ground rock phosphate are so abundantly used in Otago and Southland is well worth investigating.

On the relative merits of slag and superphosphate it is interesting to note that New Plymouth imports more slag than superphosphate,

* Bonedust would be quicker-acting on an Auckland soil than on a Southland soil, and hence might possibly be classified as a slow manure in the south.