

EXPORT OF FRUIT TO ENGLAND.

A COMPREHENSIVE report has been made to the Department by Mr. G. Stratford, Orchard Instructor, on last season's (1921) shipments of fruit (apples and pears) from New Zealand to London, and matters connected with the export fruit-trade generally. Mr. Stratford was in England when the season's shipments arrived and during the marketing of the fruit, and was commissioned to make investigations. He summarizes his main observations and recommendations at the close of the report as follows:—

Varieties.—Some varieties of apples are liked better than others on the London market, and it is advisable, as far as possible, to reduce to a minimum the number of varieties sent, forwarding those that are favoured and likely to be appreciated on the market. Merchants favour big lines of a few good varieties, enabling them to establish a name for such, so that, with the grade and pack of the best, they can sell on the brand. Some of the varieties grown by us are practically unknown to the buyers at the other end, and until a variety is known buyers have to rely on the quality, consequently only the best should be sent. Although Cox Orange Pippin is on the whole a bad carrier, it will always find favour, and the best prices ruling will be given for good stuff. There need be no fear with regard to Jonathan. It is an apple that is in constant demand, and is especially appreciated in the north of England. London Pippin is not very well favoured, being too easily bruised. From the high prices realized for Dunn's Favourite last season this apple must be appreciated, and, providing the standard quality is kept up, should continue to pay well on the London market. Many buyers call for a good yellow apple, according to their class of trade, and in this respect Dunn's Favourite meets the situation. Statesman, though very little known, should find favour on the market. King David is being asked for, providing the colour is not too dark. Although Worcester Pearmain arrived in bad order last season, there is no reason why it should not be shipped successfully and prove profitable. Adams Pearmain is in good demand. Cleopatra and Newton Pippin are two varieties that always command the highest prices, and it is advisable to ship as many as possible. Rome Beauty carried well, and, although somewhat on the green side, was favourably commented on. Delicious, where known, is very highly spoken of, and should equal in price anything sent to the market. Sturmer is eagerly sought for, and should always realize a satisfactory figure.

Bushel Weight.—Cases should contain 40 lb. of fruit. Everything is sold on the 40 lb. basis, and the English buyer strongly objects to 37 lb., which he got in many cases this last season.

Size.—The size of fruit was the subject of much comment from merchants handling our fruit. Large apples are not wanted on the London market. Merchants do not want to handle them, and retailers will not buy them. Undoubtedly the best sizes for the London market are from 2½ in. to 2¼ in., with nothing over 2¾ in., the number of this latter size being reduced to a minimum. Another reason why buyers object to the large apple is that a case very rarely goes 40 lb. Again, the larger apples do not carry well, the waste being much greater than with the smaller sizes.

Packing.—The packing of the fruit should not be so tight as to cause bruising, and it is inadvisable to try and get a bulge on our cases as they are made at present.

Number in Case.—The number of apples in the case must be correct and legible. Complaints were received with regard to this. This matter should be strictly attended to in future.

Marks and Labels.—To facilitate handling it is necessary to reduce the markings on the case to a minimum. Both ends should have the shipping-mark. A label giving full information, including shipping-mark, should be attached to one end, the other being stencilled with the shipping-mark, variety, number of apples, and registered number.

Wiring.—The wiring of the cases is a great improvement, and it is recommended that it be made compulsory with all future shipments. Merchants speak very highly of it.

Packing-material.—The use of corrugated paper in preference to wood-wool is suggested. Consignments coming forward packed with corrugated paper appeared to open up in better condition than where wood-wool was used.

Consignees.—The sending of fruit direct to fruit firms is recommended, but only to those having the full confidence of the trade.