

CROP-ROTATION AND CULTIVATION.

On the small truck farms which grow the earliest potatoes the land is usually kept under cultivation for three or four years, and then sown in pasture for a year or two before being again broken up for another course of cropping. Potatoes are usually the first crop taken after grass, and the land is skim ploughed in the autumn, disked, and then deep ploughed and worked up to a fine tilth with disks and harrows ready for planting in May or June. The early-potato crop is dug in September–October, and is followed by a second crop which is planted in November–December and dug in March–April. Two crops a year may be thus grown for three or more years in succession. The rotation, however, is frequently varied by growing onions, carrots, or cabbages in place of potatoes. Catch-crops of barley, lupins, or white mustard for green-manuring are often grown after the second crop.



FIG. 1. MAP OF CENTRAL AUCKLAND DISTRICT, SHOWING EARLY-POTATO-GROWING AREA IN FRANKLIN COUNTY (SHADED).

On the dairy-farms potatoes are grown in rotation with grass supplementary annual crops, such as mangels and soft turnips. The potatoes are planted in July–August and dug in November–December. Mangels and soft turnips usually follow the potatoes, the mangels being sown early in specially prepared beds and transplanted after the potatoes are dug. The inclusion of potatoes in the cropping rotation on dairy-farms provides a valuable cash crop, which helps materially to reduce the cost of production of roots and green crops grown for the supplementary feeding of dairy cows.

For early crops, with which the haulms do not grow to a normal size, the potato sets are planted 9 in. to 12 in. apart in 27-in. rows. For the later-sown crops the sets are planted 12 in. to 15 in. apart in 33-in. rows. On truck farms the sets are usually hand-planted in furrows after the single-furrow plough, but the ridge plough is also used to some extent for planting. The fertilizer mixture is broadcast by