



Left.—

Good cultivation is necessary—land ploughed while slightly too wet; soil dried out rapidly before cultivation could reduce the size of the clods.



Right.—

Rolling at the time when the clods are friable helps, but it does not break down the large, dried-out clods at the bottom of the photo.

the farmer can "cash in" on stored-up fertility.

Cultivation

Thorough cultivation is essential to ensure a full yield. Good seed, good land, and the liberal use of fertilisers are, to a large extent, wasted if the preparatory cultivation is not thorough. Deep and complete cultivation of the seed-bed is most necessary, and if this is done, unfavourable conditions which may occur later will not affect yields so much. An idea exists among some farmers that a well-prepared seed bed is not so necessary because of the large size of the seed of maize. No greater mistake can be made, for no amount of after-cultivation, important as this is, can make up for insufficient preparation of the soil.

Being comparatively shallow-rooted, especially in the later stages of its growth, maize requires a deep, well-worked seed bed, for it is mainly in this depth of worked soil that the roots are distributed and on which they depend almost wholly for the nourishment of the plant during later growth. The ground should, therefore, be ploughed as deeply as possible without turning over an undue amount of sub-soil. This ploughing should be given in the autumn or early winter, and the ground allowed to lie in the "plough" and mellow down under the action of winter rains and possible frosts.

As soon as the land is dry enough in the spring, a second ploughing should

be given to destroy weeds and make a good, clean seed bed. If this second ploughing immediately precedes sowing, it should not be so deep, as the seed bed requires a certain amount of firmness. Practical farmers on the heavy land of the North Auckland river-flats have found that it pays to delay the spring ploughing if the weather is at all wet.

One farmer who has spent a lifetime on these flats gives the following excellent advice. "Leave the land alone when it is wet, and also when it appears ready for ploughing. Get in and plough when it appears to be becoming too dry to work. Then the soil crumbles up freely and a really good seed bed can be prepared."

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