

# Cocksfoot Seed Production

NEW Zealand cocksfoot is well known and liked in Britain, where land intensively cropped for wartime production must be regularly reseeded to pasture if crop yields are to be maintained. There is also a tendency there to establish a longer-lived pasture, which strengthens the claim of New Zealand cocksfoot for inclusion in the mixture. The writer of this article, a New Zealand agriculturist seconded to the British Ministry of Agriculture during the war, discusses factors, particularly of price and purity, which will influence the market prospects of New Zealand cocksfoot seed in Britain, and cites British methods of seed production in urging higher yields and more extensive growing to procure greater purity and cheaper production.

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THAT the New Zealand Certified strain of cocksfoot was unsurpassed in quality by any other known strain, but that the purity of New Zealand lines left much to be desired, was pointed out in the January, 1942, issue of the "Journal of Agriculture." The effect of the lower purity is not very apparent to the growers of the seed or to those who use it in mixtures in New Zealand, because there is very little available of much higher purity than the 70 per cent. minimum allowed for Certified seed. But when our cocksfoot seed is exported to Great Britain the strain suffers disadvantageously, despite its high quality,



Cutting a heavy crop of cocksfoot which yielded 600lb. of machine-dressed seed per acre.

in comparison with English-grown seed and other imported seed, which often have purities of over 90 per cent.

## *British Requirements*

Since 1939 millions of acres of pastures in Great Britain have been ploughed and cropped in order to provide as much as possible of the nation's food supply from home-grown sources. Food shortages in Europe are not at an end yet, and in order to maintain her present rations Britain must also maintain her agriculture at the same high standard. Besides maintaining the acreage under the plough, the yield per acre must also not be allowed to slip. This certainly would occur if the same land were cropped continuously, even if ample fertilisers were available. The policy recommended by the Ministry of Agriculture and followed by good farmers is that land which has carried three, four, or five crops and has reached the stage where further cropping would result in reduced yields should be seeded down to pasture and an equivalent acreage of old pasture ploughed in its place. In many parts of Britain, especially in the good arable areas, it has been the custom to sow a temporary pasture of one year's duration every four or five years, and although this is still done over a big area, the general tendency now is to extend the life of the pasture to perhaps three



Cocksfoot grown for seed production in Southland.