



Packing lemons in a packing house at Tauranga.

[Rendell's

of horticulture could be increased with a satisfactory margin of profit to the nurseryman. The production of flower and vegetable seedlings could also be increased to a limited extent, as supplies are often insufficient to fulfil local demands.

Present Land Values

Up to about 1946 horticultural production was mainly centred round Tauranga, but during recent years commercial development has extended over a much wider area. Apart from the fact that Tauranga has attracted many retired people to settle there, the potential industrial development associated with the timber and pulp industries has caused a keen demand for property.

Owing to the rapid expansion of the town the older-established horticultural localities are fast developing into residential areas, and the upsurge in land values and increases in rates are forcing established growers to subdivide their holdings for residential purposes. Current prices paid for small holdings near Tauranga are therefore a matter of what the sellers can get for their properties rather than actual values. It appears in such instances that prices paid in relation to the size of most properties are well beyond an economic level. With the exception of glasshouse units, properties of this kind may meet the requirements of purchasers who do not require a full-time occupation, but they can hardly be considered economic units, as they are established on land that has a residential value.

Any land intended for future horticultural development on an economic scale should be far enough away from the towns to avoid high initial capital outlay and heavy rates. Suitable areas for horticultural production exist near Te Puke and in localities between Tauranga and Waihi, particularly on the many peninsulas extending into the upper reaches of the Tauranga Harbour.

Land available for sale in the areas mentioned is at a premium, but recent sales indicate that present values range from £150 to £300 an acre according to locality. The size of an economic holding depends on what it is intended to produce. For growing fruit and miscellaneous cash crops 8 to 10 acres would be sufficient, but for market gardening a larger area is desirable so that crop rotation may be practised.

New Enterprise

The possibilities of the Bay of Plenty's ability to produce quantities of vegetables and fruits for quick freezing have been recognised recently. Early in 1952 a company was registered with headquarters in Tauranga to develop a local frozen foods industry, which should prove an asset to fruit and vegetable growers and the district generally. The 1952-53 growing season will be more of an experimental period for the organisation. Contracts were arranged for the growing of several acres of peas and beans in 1952, and small quantities of many kinds of fruit and other vegetables will be processed to test consumer reaction. Should the company expand along the lines expected, much greater quantities of certain kinds of fruit and vegetables than are produced at present will need to be grown to meet its requirements.

Possibilities for Expansion

With the rapid subdivision near Tauranga of established horticultural areas for building, the development of new holdings to produce a variety of crops is warranted. The area has proved that it is well suited for the growing of citrus and sub-tropical fruits, and at present a limited scope exists for the planting of new orchards with certain varieties of those fruits. Of the citrus fruits, standard lemons, sweet oranges, and mandarins appear to offer the best prospects. New plantings of New Zealand grapefruit and Meyer lemons cannot be advocated, as for some years production of these two varieties seems ample for New Zealand requirements.

Economic problems are being experienced by standard lemon growers, but are not insurmountable, as they are due more to assembling and marketing difficulties than to fruit production difficulties. Of the sub-tropical fruits, new plantings of tree tomatoes and passion fruit appear to offer reasonable prospects. Production of these fruits has declined during the last 2 years owing mainly to the eradication of orchard blocks on land sold for building. Tree tomatoes probably offer the more attractive proposition, as they are easier to grow and production costs are much lower than for passion fruit. However, they must be restricted to localities well protected from winds and it is important that the site be relatively frost free.

Market gardening in conjunction with other forms of horticultural development also offers limited scope. The taking over of market-gardening land near Auckland for building has sent prospective growers further afield. The Bay of Plenty may provide greatly increased quantities of vegetables for the city markets in future, as it has been shown that the area can produce excellent-quality root crops, onions, and asparagus, and with the present road and rail transport facilities produce can be placed on the auction floors in first-class condition.

The expected development of the port at Mt. Maunganui to provide facilities for coastal and export shipping, combined with the potential development of the timber and allied industries in the Bay of Plenty, must in turn increase the demand for locally grown fruit and vegetables. The development of the quick-freeze enterprise should also add to the demand. With a favourable climate and a soil that is easy to work, the Bay of Plenty seems to offer an assured future to many types of horticultural crops. To the man who is physically fit, has some capital, and is prepared to work the production of such crops offers a healthy outdoor occupation besides providing a fair standard of living.