

EDITORIAL.

FERTILISERS

The outbreak of war has necessarily resulted in a dislocation of fertiliser supplies, particularly in regard to inorganic nitrogenous ingredients such as ammonium sulphate. In this issue will be found a report of a lecture given by Dr. Eden before the Dimbula Planters' Association reviewing the general position.

The Institute has been in close touch with the firms supplying fertilisers and now receives frequent reports from these firms and from the Customs authorities in regard to the supplies of fertilisers arriving in Ceylon. A meeting was also held in Colombo when the various interests concerned were all represented and it was possible to reach agreement as to the general principles which should govern the utilisation of existing and forthcoming stocks in order to obtain, so far as possible, some stability in regard to costs.

Owing to unfavourable weather conditions the consumption of fertilisers was somewhat below normal in the earlier part of the year and in consequence the stock position at the outbreak of war was rather better than the import figures suggested. The embargo on the export of nitrogen from the United Kingdom which was imposed at the beginning of the war made it obvious however that some degree of substitution by organic nitrogen would be necessary, and one of the most important points discussed was the degree to which this ought to be carried out. Initially it was considered advisable to reduce the proportion of ammonium sulphate in mixtures by some 50 per cent. This proportion will necessarily fluctuate to some extent, depending on what supplies are received. Actually the position in regard to the release of ammonium sulphate from the United Kingdom remains obscure though it is satisfactory to note that 1,000 tons of this material were received from Belgium in the month of November.

The balance of nitrogen will have to consist to a considerable extent of organic manures such as groundnut cake, fish and similar materials. These are however more expensive both in regard to the cost per unit of nitrogen and also in transport, since a larger bulk has to be used to supply the same amount of plant food. Fortunately a certain amount of nitrate of soda has recently been received and there is no reason why a reasonable quantity of this material should not be used in tea mixtures in order to reduce costs.

The Institute is, as already mentioned, maintaining close touch with the fertiliser firms on the whole question and will be glad to assist tea estates by commenting on alternative mixtures to replace pre-war manurial programmes.

FOOD PRODUCTION

Nursery trials with Maize, Kurakkan, Adlay, Bulrush Millet, Hill Paddy (seven varieties), Soya Bean (two varieties) and Cow-pea are in progress at St. Coombs so that information may be gathered in regard to seed rates, productivity, time of maturation, etc. Two acres of patna land will shortly be opened up in sweet potatoes and, probably, soya bean. These crops will in due course be followed by a suitable rotation. Later when further information is available, the question of opening a larger area will come up for renewed consideration. Much uncertainty unfortunately still remains as to the feasibility of economic food production on up-country tea estates, not only in regard to what can be grown at higher elevations, but also as to the disposal of any crops produced. It is felt, therefore, that it would be premature for the Institute to embark immediately on any large scale scheme and that its most useful function will be to obtain information on different crops for the guidance of estates.

FIRING OF TEA

The first of a new series of papers dealing with the firing of tea is given in the present number. In this connection, it may be of interest, considering conditions imposed by the war, to refer readers to previous articles on Fuels for Tea Dryers which have appeared in *The Tea Quarterly* and to which references are given in Mr. Lamb's paper, and in particular to the "Ready Reckoner" given in the fourth of the previous papers.

PHLOEM NECROSIS RESEARCH

After some delay due to war conditions, it is hoped that an additional senior staff research officer for work on *Phloem necrosis* will be available early in the new year. The appointment has been offered to Dr. T. E. T. Bond, M.Sc. (Reading), Ph.D. (Cantab.), at present Lecturer in Botany in the University of Aberdeen.

TEA RESEARCH INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

A general index to the publications of the Institute to the end of 1938 has been prepared and will shortly be issued to all those registered to receive this publication.

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