

Gleanings

Better Groundnuts Expected in Australia: It is hoped to develop groundnuts strains with a higher resistance to disease by crossing Australian varieties with vigorous plants obtained by the CSIRO from South America. It is also hoped that the hybrids produced will give a higher yield than the varieties now generally grown. Groundnut industry is well established in Queensland, and some success has also been achieved in northern parts of New South Wales. In the 1947-48 season the acreage in New South Wales increased to 67 compared with a mere 17 acres in the previous year and the yield was nearly 92,000 lb.

There seems, however little chance of establishing the crop in the cooler southern parts of the State. Trial crops have been grown for three years at the Yanco Experiment Farm, on the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, but the climate and heavy soils have proved unsuitable, and further trials in this area are considered useless. Variety trials will be continued at the Grafton Experiment Farm, on the North Coast, and in the Dumaresq River district, where irrigation is available.

Rice Crop should be a good one: Reports from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, in New South Wales, indicate that the rice crop should be good this season, but not equal to the results obtained last year. In the older Griffith area, harvesting conditions have been made difficult by untimely rains. Australian rice industry is highly mechanised, and on the soils used for rice growing, wet weather creates many problems. Some growers found their machines bogged in the mud, and others had to use two tractors to pull the headers through the crop. Rice growing on the new Wakool area has begun fairly well. The crop has averaged about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons to the acre from 6,000 acres, yielding a crop worth about £A 180,000.

Australian rice yield about 50,000 tons this year: The Australian rice crop harvested from the 33,000 acres sown during the 1948-49 season will yield about 50,000 tons. The harvest is pleasing, since up to March, 1949, forecasts were very gloomy and it seemed that the first rice failure recorded in Australia might be imminent.

Cool conditions and weed infestation checked the crops originally but the grain now being harvested is excellent. Heads are somewhat smaller than last year and the average yield will consequently be lower than in 1947-48 but should reach between 32 and 35 cwt. an acre. Several of the best crops already harvested have reached two tons and over to the acre. Except for a small quantity reserved for invalids and for visiting and residential Asians in Australia, the entire crop will be exported to Eastern countries.

Important Agricultural Conference in Australia: Twenty or more scientific specialists from India, the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand, together with several observers from the United States will attend the British Commonwealth Scientific Conference on agriculture to be held in Australia this month. This is the first of a series of specialist conferences recommended by the 1946 Official Scientific Conference held in London. Theme of the conference will be 'Plant and Animal Nutrition in Relation to Soil and Climatic Factors'. Leader of the overseas delegations will be Sir Edward Salisbury, Director of the Royal Botanic Garden (England); Professor E. W. Crampton, Department of Nutrition, McGill University (Canada); Dr. T. G. Mirchandani, Division of Agronomy, Agricultural Research Institute (India); Dr. E. J. Filmer, Animal Research Division, Department of Agriculture (New Zealand); Mr. J. C. Bonsma, Senior Animal Nutrition Research Officer, Department of Agriculture, (South Africa). Dr. I. Chumies Ross, Chairman of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research organisation will head the Australian delegates. Observers will include Professor W. Albrecht of the University of Missouri; Dr. Bonner, of the California Institute of Technology; and Dr. K. Hammer and Professor P. R. Stout, both of the University of California.

Conference will begin with a series of meetings in Adelaide, South Australia from August 22 to 31, followed by a 12-day tour of southern South Australia, Victoria and southern New South Wales to show delegates something of Australian research and agricultural practice. The final sessions will be held in Canberra, Australia's national capital, from September 13 to 15, 1949.

Mowing Checks Orchard Soil Erosion: An interesting experiment in the control of soil erosion in a citrus grove has been in progress for three years at Kurrajong Heights, New South Wales, and the results have been particularly successful. The citrus grove was on steeply sloping land, and there was a continual loss of soil from water erosion. The owner of the property consulted the Department of Agriculture, and was advised to try controlling weed growth by mowing instead of cultivation. A small motor-operated mower was used whenever the weeds grew high enough to cut. Mown weeds were left on the ground. They provided a useful mulch in dry weather and decayed in the wet season to keep the soil in excellent physical condition. This practice preserved the mat of roots in the topsoil. Soil loss by erosion has been completely checked, even during periods of heavy rain. Only cultivation the orchard now receives is superficial treatment with a rotary hoe to a depth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, once a year when the main application of fertilizer is given. Improvement in the grove has been striking, and three other orchardists in the district have adopted the same methods.

Letters to the Editor

Further Experiences of an Educational Officer in Farming: Our Fruit Specialist was pleased to send for publication, extracts from the report I had sent him at his request. This was published under the title "Experiences of an Educational Officer in Fruit Farming" in Vol. No. XXXIV October 1947 of the Madras Agricultural Journal. This report has probably given readers an incorrect impression of this farm. That would not have mattered but for the fact that the article resulted in some letters to me from some farmers. With the repeated Editorial requests for brevity in mind, I shall be as brief as possible even at the risk of obscurity.

I planned a plan which differed from all the innumerable plans which made up the spate of plans for post-war and post-independence reconstruction experienced in recent years. While all the latter were made for the Government or someone else—chiefly Government, to carry out, mine had the unique feature that it was intended for me to work on, and it was not a Five year plan. I do not believe there is any magic in the figure Five. My favourite figure is three. In any case at my age, three years is a period long enough to look forward to. At the completion of my first three-year plan, I sent the above-mentioned report to the Fruit Specialist. Now, I have completed my second 3-year plan and commenced my third.

The two possible misconceptions are:— (1) That this farm is only an orchard. (2) That I am practising some combination of Hydroponics and soil-less culture compounding weird chemical mixtures, and juggling with pHs and other strange combinations of the alphabet.