

Report on Kapok from Ceylon.

By the Imperial Institute, London.

THE sample of kapok which is the subject of this report was received for examination at the Imperial Institute on the 4th April, 1927, from the Director of Agriculture and is referred to in his letter No. 571 dated 23rd February, 1927.

It was stated that the kapok represented the first crop from trees raised from seed introduced from the Japora district in Java.

Description.

The sample weighed 6 lb. and consisted of soft, lustrous floss, of dark cream colour and of rather lumpy and knotty appearance. The fibre was somewhat stained in places, and a few seeds and broken pieces of pod were present.

Results of Examination.

On examination the fibres were found to have the following dimensions, which are shown in comparison with those obtained from a commercial sample of "Prime" Java kapok.

	Length		Diameter	
	Present sample	Java Kapok.	Present sample	Java Kapok.
	ins.	ins.	ins.	ins.
Maximum	1·0	1·1	0·0010	0·0010
Minimum	0·3	0·5	0·0004	0·0006
Mostly	0·6 to 0·8	0·7 to 0·9	0·0007 to 0·0008	0·0008 to 0·0009
Average	0·7	0·8	0·00072	0·0008

These results show that the present sample of kapok was somewhat shorter and finer than the Java kapok.

Buoyance Trials.—With a view to ascertaining the buoyancy of the Ceylon kapok compared with that of Java kapok, small scale, experiments were carried out under conditions similar to those specified in the Board of Trade regulations concerning life jackets (*Instructions as to the Survey*

"It appears more than probable to us that the kapok has possibly been gathered from trees under maturity, and we think that this may account for the shortish staple; we think you should establish from Ceylon as to the age of the trees from which the kapok has been collected—in fact, we should feel indebted to you, on your receiving a reply, if you would kindly let us know as to whether our conjecture is a correct one.

"Furthermore, you might ask as to the manner in which the kapok has been cleaned and treated, as possibly on having a reply, we may be able to advise a cleaning process that should be preferably employed to the manner in which the kapok is at present being cleaned."

They classified the sample as "Usual Ceylon type of knobby kapok and piecy, practically free from seeds and other impurities. Usual orangey tinged Ceylon colour, of short staple and consequently only fair resiliency." They valued it at $10\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb. c.i.f. London when "prime" Java was quoted at 1s. per lb.

The second firm reported as follows:—

"We have taken notice of this new product with much interest and would say that it comes in quality very near the ordinary hand cleaned Ceylon. It does not stand out very much from the hand cleaned and in value would be about equal the same. The "Bulbs" make this quality very attractive for many of our manufactures. In our opinion—and this is founded on repeated personal visits to producing area in Ceylon,—we think that the difference in quality between the Ceylon and Java kapok is not so much in the tree, but mainly due to the preparation of the kapok. It generally is not collected in Ceylon when ripe and the collected pods are allowed to lie about and become damp before they are taken to the factory (that is cleaned more or less). Also, as the time of collection and cleaning coincides with the dampest season in Ceylon, this naturally influences the preservation of the kapok and very often affects the quality. We have given ourselves much trouble to better these conditions and may state that we have had good results in this connection. It is our opinion that with care and perseverance there is good business in Ceylon kapok. The actual crop which we estimate at about 300 tons yearly, may become ten times as large without any real inconvenience to the consuming markets and if produced in perfect quality it will not be far below the prices of Java kapok. Resuming, we would say that if you advise your friends in Ceylon to try to give extension to the output in Ceylon and see to it that the preparation is done with great care, this will mean a great asset for the selling of their kapok. The question from which seeds the kapok is grown is, as far as we can judge from the sample, of secondary importance."

They valued the sample at about $10\frac{1}{4}d.$ to $10\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb. ex warehouse.

Remarks.

This sample of kapok is of good quality but is of darker colour and slightly shorter and finer than "prime" Java kapok. It also differs from Java kapok in being more lumpy and knotty.

Experiments carried out at the Imperial Institute indicated that the buoyancy and resiliency of the material are practically identical with those of the Java fibre although one of the trade experts regarded the resiliency as inferior to that of Java kapok.

23 June, 1927.