

The Committee on Oils and Oilseeds is considering the possibility of extending the use of Shea butter with a view to the further utilisation of the large supply of Shea nuts available in British West Africa. Owing to the presence of a certain constituent in the fat there is some prejudice against its use for edible purposes, and it is hoped to arrange for an investigation of this question by the appropriate body in order that an authoritative opinion may be obtained.

The Committees on Essential Oils and Resins, and on Tanning Materials are investigating the possibility of increasing the production within the Empire of a number of important products belonging to these groups which are at present principally obtained from foreign sources.

Acknowledgment must also be made of the important services which the Technical Committees render to the Institute by reporting on the commercial possibilities of materials received for examination.

The investigations of plantation rubber carried out at the Institute by a special staff on behalf of the Ceylon Rubber Research Scheme have been continued throughout the year. This work is under the direction of the London Committee of the Scheme, of which Mr. P. J. Burgess, M.A., is the Chairman. The principal problems under investigation are the variations in the plasticity of plantation rubber and in its ageing properties after vulcanisation. The results of the work are published in the annual report of the Scheme and in the periodical Bulletins.

Intelligence.

The Intelligence Section of the Department deals with enquiries for technical and commercial information respecting the production, utilisation and marketing of Empire raw materials of plant and animal origin. The section is also responsible for the collection and indexing of published and other information on plant and animal products which is likely to be of service in connection with the above-mentioned enquiries and the work of the Department as a whole.

The enquiries dealt with are received from Governments, firms and individuals overseas, and from manufacturers, merchants and others in this country; many enquiries are made personally. A considerable proportion of the enquiries from overseas have reference to the marketing of produce, whilst merchants and others in this country desire information as to supplies of raw materials from Empire sources.