

Excellent Results Achieved From First Potato D

An experiment on supplying its regular customers on a year-round basis was tried with success this spring and summer by the Pennsylvania Co-operative Potato Growers Association from its headquarters office in Harrisburg.

Owen L. Barkley, general manager for the co-op, reviewed the changing pattern in the marketing of potatoes as a feature of the first annual "Potato Day at Potato City" for members of the association on August 13.

In other years, Barkley explained, regular Blue Label buyers had to find their own supplies during summer months at added cost and loss of time and effort.

When Pennsylvania potato supplies became exhausted in April, Barkley responded to pleas of several of the co-op's best customers and began locating and arranging for delivery of quality spuds from other areas.

"So far, the experiment has proven beneficial to the trade and to the growers of other areas," Barkley told nearly 200 Pennsylvania potato co-op members at their mid-summer rally in the 34-room modern Potato City Hotel in Potter County.

"We kept supplies going to nearly 100 retail distributors. They were not required to find their own supplies and we had a ready-made market operation.

It was just a matter of delivery and through this added service we were able to render a continuing service to our Blue Label buyers."

In summarizing the grower discussion on current problems of the industry, with emphasis on marketing, Dr. E. L. Nixon, the association's adviser and known for more than a generation as "Mr. Pennsylvania Potato," in support of the small or family size farm operation, declared:

"Small farmers will be squeezed out of the picture unless farmers themselves are able to set their own prices for products before they leave the farmyard gate."

"Doc" Nixon's potato breeding experiments on the Potato City farm attracted much attention. He showed results of many years of cross breeding, the most out-

standing display being an established new variety with especially high chipping qualities.

The association's president, Leland W. Nixon, commented on the fact that, as in other states, Pennsylvania commercial potato growers have been shrinking in numbers, acreage and production fail to show as great a decline and Pennsylvania Co-operative Potato Growers, Inc., "is stronger than ever."

The meeting heard reports on 1959 potato crop condition and outlook for Pennsylvania, Long Island, Upstate New York and Ohio.

A good production year is in prospect in the Keystone State, Barkley reported.

At 46,000, the acreage is down six per cent from last year and the USDA August 11 estimate was for a Fall crop of 7,157,000 hundred-weight compared with the revised total of 7,822,000 cwt in 1958.

Some areas had good rains while others not enough

which made conditions in general rather spotty over the state. Quality is generally very good and harvesting of late summer potatoes started two or three weeks earlier than usual, in line with the earlier planting that was possible in most parts of the state.

Barkley cautioned against the possibilities of depressed markets channeling more potatoes into processing plants at low prices and the effect on the Pennsylvania growers should diversion programs be in operation in the larger producing areas of the United States.

"Generally," he said, "the outlook in Pennsylvania is more favorable than last year. At present there are no indications of a glutted market such as occurred in '58."

On marketing, the co-op manager stressed the need for growers developing an active interest in their product after it leaves the farm.

"We need to create a business concept that will carry clear through to the market place. We cannot cut on costs of production and profits must come from the other end."

Conditions and outlook in the Long Island potato growing area were described by Robert Wheeler, manager,

Suffolk Co-operative G.L.F. Service, Inc., Riverhead.

He said digging started "two weeks too early" and 50% of the Cobblers had moved off the Island. It was probably the wettest season ever experienced with more than 20 inches of rainfall, causing some damage to tubers. Yields will not be up to average or last year.

H. J. "Red" Evans, Georgetown, New York, said the Upstate New York acreage is down, about equal to Pennsylvania's total.

He expects a lighter crop than normal due to very dry conditions in some important areas with spotty rains in other sections. Digging started two to three weeks earlier than usual.

A. J. Troyer, a Smithville, Ohio farm machine manufacturer, who is familiar with conditions there, said the outlook was favorable. Growers had an inch of rain per week for six weeks. The acreage is about the same as last year. Digging is expected to start Sept 10 or 15.

The "Potato Day at Potato City" program was new this year for Pennsylvania growers, replacing the field days of other years. It was a co-op member affair featuring the timely meeting of growers and a number of en-

tertainment featuring a mixer, moving watermelon "cut" before.

The first statewide "Pancake Race" ever in Pennsylvania was an outstanding feature Thursday morning.

Ten housewives at the starting line equipped with a pancake baked over the edge of the Duncan Hines Potato City Hot 10-inch skillet.

Running over the course each woman required to "flip" her on a complete turn starting, twice during race and again at line.

The winner and until next year Miriam Stern, Clinton County, Pa. received the "golden" and 15 silver dollars the co-op.

In potato picking the winner of the division was Arnold Chester County in the men's picking race the was Mrs. Ruth Koenig high County Women's contest was Miriam Stern, Clinton County.

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