

*Provides Cash, High Return Per Acre, But Takes Big Labor Input*

# Mid-Season Cucumber Crop Report

The Lancaster County cucumber crop harvest reached its peak this week with some 33 to 35 tons of cucumbers moving each day to the Harvey Good store in Intercourse.

Some 70 growers are producing about 83 acres of cucumbers this year, the second year for the cash crop in Lancaster County.

The size of the individual farmer's cucumber crop varies from about one-quarter acre to five acres.

Domer Fisher of Ronks RD1, who lives about a mile from the Good store on Route 340, has one-quarter acre, he said.

Ivar Oberholtzer, Leola RD1, has about one-half acre, reported Ivan Wenger, Leola RD1, who hauls for Oberholtzer.

Glenn Snyder of Mount Joy RD2 has one acre. "I couldn't handle more than an acre without hiring help and I don't want to do that," Snyder said.

Snyder also noted the cucumber crop fits in well with his corn, beef, barley, tobacco and hog operation.

### The Oxford Attitude

The type of attitude toward cucumbers indicated by Snyder is encouraged by David Orloff, plant manager of the Oxford Pickle Co., South Deerfield, Mass. Orloff was in Lancaster County Monday to review the cucumber crop situation with Good and to visit some of the growers, particularly some just starting cucumbers this year.

Reviewing his records, Orloff said, "We have two five acre growers. It goes on down to about one-quarter acre."

"The key is not how many total acres, but what is the yield per acre."

"A man with one acre can do better with a yield of 700 to 900 bushels than on 10 to 15 acres with 300 bushels per acre. Low yields cause loss of interest."

And because Orloff doesn't want growers to get poor results and lose interest, he urges them to plant only as big a crop as can be easily fit into the existing farm operation and be readily harvested.



Raymond Good is seen unloading a tractor-trailer load of 1,200 pound size shipping crates and storing them outside the store for use in handling the next day's

cucumber crop. It takes more than 50 of these large crates each day to handle the Lancaster County cuke crop, which is in the peak of production this week.

The cucumber crop, Orloff said, "fits in well with the farmer's whole crop program. We have never pushed the farmer to chuck other farm crops. Cucumbers come in after the early crops and before the late crops."

### Chew the Bite

He repeatedly said that farmers shouldn't bite off more than they can chew.

As a guide, he said, it takes 15 to 20 manhours to pick one acre completely once. Since the crop should generally be picked every other day, every third day at the most, this means it takes one man or the equivalent full-time to pick one acre. By the time he finishes at one end of the field, it's time to start again at the other end.

The picking started this year around July 8 and will continue "well into the first frost," Labor Day and beyond.

### How to Pick

This regular picking is very important, Orloff emphasized,

because the grower shouldn't let the cucumbers get too big. If they get too big, the productive energy of the plant goes into

making seed in the big cucumbers rather than in making new cucumbers.

Tests have actually shown that during the course of a growing season, the farmer will get more production per acre by picking the crop under the two-inch diameter size than by allowing the crop to get larger, he said.

Oxford Pickle doesn't have any size requirements, so long as the vegetable remains green. But yellow cucumbers are rejected as they are unloaded at the Good store. The cuke begins to turn yellow when it reaches maximum growth, it's at this point that the plant energy goes into seed production and the over-ripe cuke is not satisfactory for use by Oxford Pickle.

Only a very small per cent of the crop is rejected for being over-ripe, however.

Following his tour of some of the local fields, Orloff said, "From what we've seen, these boys are doing a very excellent job—most of them."

### Production Goals

"Some are going to get a very exceptional year. Yield per acre will be very good."

Last year, 39 growers produced more than 30,000 bushels of cucumbers on 48 acres, an average of 622 bushels per acre. A bushel is 50 pounds. Growers this year are getting paid \$1.26 a bushel.

The top grower last year, according to Orloff's records had 1,224 bushels per acre and the top 10 growers had 1,020 bushels per acre. But Orloff noted these figures are estimates, rather than actual measured acres. He figures, however, that while some may be overstated, others are understated.

Several growers, according to these figures, grossed well over \$1,000 per acre on the cucumbers. One reported \$1,700 per acre.

Orloff thinks \$1,000 per acre gross is a good figure for the grower to shoot for. If the average producer can grow 622 bushels per acre in the first year, Orloff said, a reasonable goal would be 800 bushels or about \$1,000 at the present rate.

### Tobacco Comparison

He estimates an average pre-harvest cost of around \$113 to \$115 per acre, including fertilizer, lime, seed, weed control, insecticide and cultivation.

Although he had no figures on tobacco readily available, he said the pre-harvest cost of tobacco and cucumbers should be comparable.

He made several comparisons of cucumbers with tobacco. They require about "the same inputs," they require hand picking or "stoop labor," both are cash crops.

He thinks cucumbers compare favorably with tobacco as a cash crop.

"Our records show that in net profit per acre cucumbers are far and away the best net return."

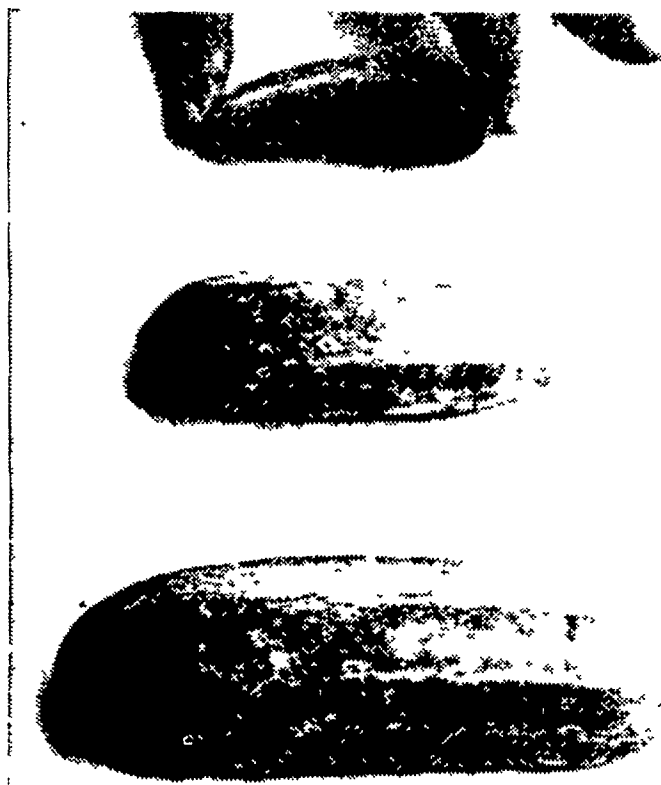
The farmer gets his money every week out of the cucumbers, while he has to wait till the end of the season for his tobacco money. "Growers get paid every week, which they love," Orloff said. He thinks this gives cucumbers an advantage for farmers who need the operating capital.

Except for the yellow cucumbers, Oxford buys "on a field run basis." This means basically they take everything that's on the field.

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Glenn Snyder unloading Cucumbers



Photograph illustrates the best pickle production size. The top two pickles, the one to one and one-half inch diameter size, are about the correct range for picking; the bottom one is about two and one-half inches in diameter. While the larger cuke is acceptable if it retains its coloring, this particular one had turned partially yellow and was a reject. The smaller cucumbers will result in larger production per acre because they exert less strain on the vine according to David Orloff of Oxford Pickle.

## Guernsey Field Day Thursday Will Feature Calf Drawing

The annual Lancaster County Guernsey Field Day will feature a drawing for a six month old Guernsey calf next week.

Lancaster County 4-H and FFA members from the ages of 9 to 18 will be eligible to get the calf, which is reported to be a very good quality animal.

Other attractions include a music program provided by the Guernsey 4-H Club, the Lancaster County Dairy Princess, Marilyn Kiantz, will be present, a judging contest will be held, a speaker will be present, and judging prizes will be given, reports Kenneth Garber, Willow Street RD2, Field Day chairman.

The Field Day will be held from 10 a.m. till about 3 p.m. Thursday, August 6, at the Elam Mull farm near Mechanics Grove which is south of Quarryville on Route 222. For those going south on 222, turn right at Mechanics Grove and the farm

will be designated on this road about a mile and a half from Mechanics Grove.

Oscar Weaver of Goshen, Ind., will be the speaker during the afternoon program. He will also be official judge for the judging contest which begins at 10 a.m.

Weaver is a nationally known Guernsey breeder who has sold more proven sires to A.I. firms

than any other breeder, Garber said.

Lunch will be provided for \$1.50 per person.

There will be three judging classes: one for men, one for women and a third for children 16 and under.

Besides Garber, the program committee members are Fred Cuder, Quarryville, and Larry Bieneman, Hessdale.



Lancaster Farming

SECOND SECTION