

# Machine Eyed to Revive Eastern Shore Tomato Industry

A new harvester looks like it is the answer to pulling the eastern shore tomato farming industry out of a long decline and into a stiff competitive position with other tomato growing areas of the country.

After two years of research, General Kinetics, Inc., through

The following report by Food Technology Corporation of Reston, Va., explains how and why eastern shore farmers are switching to mechanical tomato harvesting.

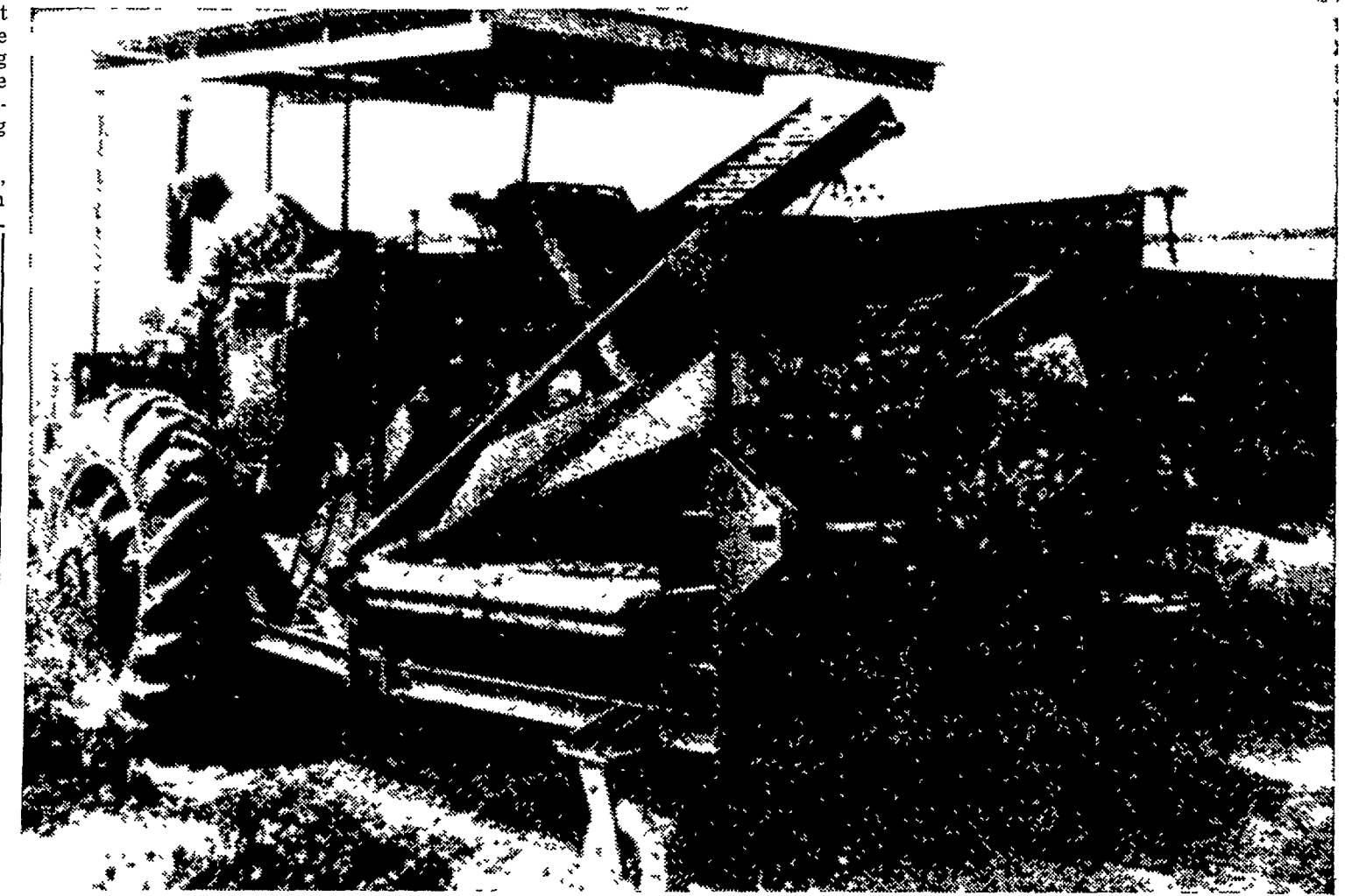
While vegetable production is not among the leading farm enterprises in Pennsylvania, the tomato crop is among the most important of the vegetable crops grown. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture reported 3,000 acres of tomatoes grown statewide for the fresh market and 9,300 acres for processing in 1969.

its subsidiary Food Technology Corporation of Reston, Virginia, built and tested a tractor-carried tomato harvester designed for the moderate sized operations which characterize the Delaware, Maryland and Virginia (DelMarVa) eastern shore area.

The area's typical tomato farmer plants up to 100 acres of tomatoes and relies largely on migratory labor to hand-pick his crop.

Using the FTC harvester the farmer can pick four acres of tomatoes a day. To hand-pick the same acreage of tomatoes in one day requires 30 to 40 field hands who can harvest about 12 tons of tomatoes from each acre. Using the new FTC machine, the same acreage has yielded twice the harvest of 25 tons per acre.

This past season during August and September, a FTC unit was operated on the George A. Horsey & Sons Farm, near Laurel, Delaware. According to Robert Horsey, one of the two



The Food Technology Corporation's new tomato harvester moves through the field, snips off the entire plant under the soil, carries the vine up and back onto a rubber coated mechanism which shakes the fruit loose.

The tomatoes are then carried by conveyor to the truck which moves alongside the tractor-carried harvester. The fruit-free vines are discarded over the back end of the unit.

brothers who operates the farm, the harvester supplies the solution to two critical problems, labor and production. It allows the smaller operator to increase production without compounding the shortage of field labor.

The FTC unit is considered economical — costing half the price of other harvesters. Two or three people are required to operate the unit: the tractor driver and one or two monitors who discard under-ripe tomatoes or an occasional weed from the harvested fruit.

Presently, there are about 11,000 acres of tomatoes har-

vested in the DelMarVa area. The drop in tomato production about 20 years ago, when field labor was more plentiful and in the same three-state area. (Continued on Page 19)

## There is NO shortage of Seed Corn here!

This is to notify all interested Pennsylvania Farmers that DOEBLERS have completed their 1970 Seed Corn Harvest and the crop is the biggest ever!! Estimates are for 40% more seed for sale this coming season than last!! It's great to raise seed corn in Pennsylvania in the year of the "Big Blight"!!

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