

USDA Marketing Teams Report Findings

Capping months of intensive research, five marketing teams have presented their findings to Agriculture Secretary Butz.

The Secretary named the teams last February as part of a new effort to life farm income. Their assignment: recommend solutions for the problems confronting five major commodities—apples, eggs, pork, canning peaches, and potatoes.

The study groups were headed by USDA people and included State, university, extension, farm, and industry representatives.

The teams based their reports on interviews, conferences, and consultation with growers, processors, agri-businessmen, trade experts, State and Federal personnel, and other interested members of the commodity industries.

Some of the major problems uncovered by the teams were common to all the commodities. Oversupply and unstable volumes and prices loomed largest.

Surpluses have resulted mainly from failure of the commodity industries to find markets for increased production, caused in part by the continued entry of new producers. For some of the commodities, the surplus dilemma has deepened with recent losses of export markets.

Similarly, lack of stability in some commodities has stemmed from entry of new producers and accelerated output when prices are favorable, and a pulling out when prices drop.

The marketing teams recognized that boosting per capita consumption poses one of the biggest challenges to each industry. All teams saw the need for better organization and coordinated commodity promotion programs.

Team members found that past promotional efforts were often fragmented and missed their mark. One report noted that

promotional materials in some cases seemed to be designed to "impress industry colleagues" rather than influence consumers.

The teams further recommended that promotional efforts place special emphasis on reaching the youth market. Several of the study groups added that promotion programs should focus on the expanding market for food eaten away from home.

Each team stressed the importance of continued research for new products that are tastier, have longer shelf lives, are less susceptible to damage and disease, have more appealing textures, etc.

New product research should also focus on innovative packaging techniques, and new styles and sizes of servings with built-in consumer appeal.

Examining commodity grading practices, the marketing teams advised that grading systems be improved to adequately reflect product quality. Some teams recommended a complete overhauling of current grading practices. Other prescribed the

elimination of grades that are seldom used.

Many industry spokesmen said they favored stricter grading systems that would keep inferior goods from entering the market. Improved grading standards might bolster consumer confidence in the commodities, simplify purchase decisions, and result in bigger sales.

The marketing teams also investigated growers' charges that:

- marketing margins are excessive;
- processors are not giving them a fair deal;
- USDA statistics and market reports are incomplete and lack

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State Potato Production Down 29 pct. from '71

The Pennsylvania potato harvest was about 95 percent complete on November 1 and the estimate for the year is now 5,550,000 hundredweight (cwt.), according to the Crop Reporting Service, a joint service of the Pennsylvania and U.S. Departments of Agriculture.

Acreage, yield and total production are all down sharply from a year earlier with this year's results reflecting heavily the ravages of tropical storm Agnes.

The total production was off 29 percent from last year and 33 percent from 1970. Total acres planted dropped 5,500 to 30,000 and the yield (per acre) at 185 cwt. was reduced by 35 cwt. from 1971.

Production of fall potatoes was off throughout the United States with the November 1 estimate now placed at 234,571,000 a

decline of eight percent from 1971.

Pennsylvania is ranked 12th in the U.S. in potato production with the value of last year's harvest placed at \$322,046,000. Lehigh, Erie and Cambria County account for 30 percent of the total.

Book Elected By Interstate

Roy H. Book, Ronks R1, was elected a director of the Interstate Milk Producers Cooperative at a recent meeting in Philadelphia. He is one of 24 directors from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland representing some 3000 dairy farmers.

Book will represent the cooperative's sixth district at all board meetings.

Unpublicized American James Bridger was an American who had an intimate knowledge of the mountains and the Indians, from New Mexico to Idaho. He did much to publicize the Yellowstone Park region, and is credited with being the first white man to see the Great Salt Lake.

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