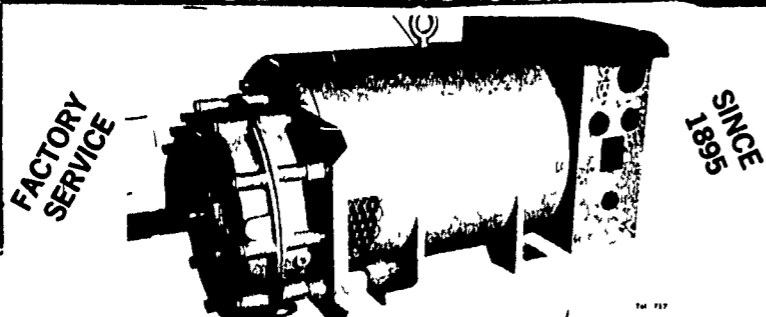


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USDA

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development of a uniform system of describing hogs that can be easily understood by all buyers and sellers.

Under such a system, hogs would remain on farms or in local markets. Buyers would bid for them in national or regional auctions via telephone or teletype facilities.

The prk team found a need for increased use of grading at all stages of marketing, but at the retail level in particular. Federal grades should be established for all major retail pork cuts to help consumers select products of an assured quality. In the past, retail grading has been minimal, varying from day-to-day and from store-to-store, resulting in a loss of consumer confidence.

APPLES

One of the apple industry's biggest concerns has been the large volume of poor quality apples that are offered to consumers, particularly in the fresh market. In turn, consumers question the quality of both fresh apples and processed apple products.

To prevent inferior apples from entering the retail market, the team advised that condition be made a part of the grade system (apples are now graded mainly by color). Decay, breakdown,

and other deterioration developing during storage or transit would be scored against the grade—as is now done for most other fresh produce.

In addition, the team recommended that U.S. No. 1 and other seldom-used lower grades be abolished. It also urged the establishment of national controlled atmosphere standards for condition.

The team found that rough handling during harvesting, packing, transportation, and retailing caused substantial losses in apple quality. It recommended that the industry develop and test more durable polyethylene bags, as well as rigid or semi-rigid consumer packages, and suitable shipping containers.

As another way to keep low quality apples off the market, the team urged that the industry consider a tree removal program. The program would encourage removal of outdated apple varieties, as well as old trees that produce poor quality fruit, and trees serving as havens for disease and insects.

The apple marketing team advised the industry to prevent surpluses by expanding exports. For instance, the industry might launch a fact-finding team to explore potential markets in Latin America and the Far East.

The team also recommended more effective action to deal with competition from imports. Under most existing Federal Statutes industries must first demonstrate proof of injury before qualifying for import relief. The marketing team urged members of the apple industry to plan a program that is more responsive to a threat from foreign imports.

The apple marketing team suggested that all producing areas be eligible for marketing orders for fresh apples and apples for processing. The industry should consider the usefulness of marketing orders in:

- establishing grade, size, and quality regulations
- developing nationwide and regional promotion programs;
- overseeing mandatory apple inspection;
- developing uniform regulations for containers; and
- funding research programs

POTATOES

The potato industry's dilemma of overproduction and low prices has resulted mainly from increased yields in recent years, and the reclamation of new land in several Western States. A 1970 report revealed that more than 300,000 acres had been planted to potatoes in reclamation projects over the past 10 years.

The potato marketing team found there was substantial support among growers for some form of supply management. The team recommended that the Secretary of Agriculture confer with industry leaders to determine if any particular type of supply management program would be feasible.

Meantime, the team urged that restrictions be placed on developing new land for production of potatoes, or any other crop that's in surplus supply.

The potato marketing team encountered a deep industry concern for developing and maintaining high product quality, particularly during transit.

Some of the difficulties:

- Periodic railcar shortages impede movement of fresh potatoes;
- Unsatisfactory rail equipment and shipping practices result in potato damages;
- Coast-to-Coast transit time has lengthened to 10 days or more, upping the risk of quality deterioration;
- Successive freight rate increases are driving up transportation costs.

The potato team prescribed a joint industry-government study to determine the industry's transportation requirements. Specific equipment needs should be identified, and special emphasis given to the impact of new, larger rail cars on potato condition and the storage facilities of shippers and receivers.

In all regions visited, the team received complaints that potato purchasers were frequently delaying payment by as much as 60-180 days.

The delays create credit problems for producers and shippers, as well as violate the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA), which calls for payments within 10 days of delivery. Growers and shippers were reluctant to report these violations for fear of reprisals.

Among the team's recommendations was that the industry consider a national credit card system to be used for all potato purchases from grower to retailer. The credit cards would be issued only to those with good credit ratings and a PACA license. Sellers would receive payment within a specified billing period, and current banking regulations would eliminate the problem of late payments.

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