

Peach research and education act to be introduced

MARTINSBURG, W.V. — A Freestone Peach research and education act, slightly modified from the bill which was before Congress in 1976, is expected to be introduced in the House of Representatives early in May.

The bill, which is to allow the peach industry to set up self-help programs, has the

same main provisions as the one which lost on the House floor in 1976. At that time totally unexpected opposition surfaced from a small group of peach producers in one state.

"This is just enabling legislation and will not have any effect until growers approve a plan which will be

presented to them in a national referendum," Allen R. Jones, chairman of the committee which is working on the proposal, points out.

"The peach industry is badly in need of a self-help program," Jones commented, "but it can operate now only on a totally voluntary basis. Such programs

are fine in theory, but do not work well in practice.

"Under provisions of the enabling legislation which we are backing, there would be an involuntary assessment program though growers would be able to request, and obtain, a full refund if they do not wish to participate."

Proponents of the proposal say the peach industry is badly in need of research funds to fill some of the gaps left by losses in state and Federal funding, and program cutbacks caused by inflation.

Under provisions of the proposed act states could get 50 per cent of their contributions back for specific in-state projects, with the remaining funds to be allocated for projects which would be regional or national in nature; and for necessary operating expenses.

"With many of our pesticides either being taken off the market or put on restricted use lists, we must have research which will show how to make better use of available materials," Jones remarked. "We also must have funds to pay for research needed to keep registration under EPA regulations for materials which private industry does not want to reregister because they cannot expect to recoup their costs."

Integrated pest management, which is becoming increasingly important both because of environmental

considerations and the need to reduce use of increasingly costly spray materials, is another area where there can be major returns to growers for relatively small expenditures for research, according to backers of the proposed legislation.

With occasional market gluts causing severe losses to growers, some growers are pointing to a need for checking on export marketing possibilities for fresh market peaches, as well as the need to learn more about how to get peaches into supermarkets in a condition that will cause them to sell quickly, providing faster turnover for the stores, better satisfied customers, and better markets for producers.

"We need to not only have the proper quality of fruit available in the supermarket," Jones continued, "we need to have more materials which will show the customer how to use our delicious fruit. Furthermore, those materials should be available at the same place in the produce section that peaches are displayed.

Many consumers don't know anything more than eating a peach out of hand, or possibly slicing it over cereal."

Speaking of how the programs will be administered, Jones said they will be under the direction of a board controlled by peach producers, and not by government appointees.

Wide Congressional support is being sought for the proposed legislation, with a number of interested persons having already contacted their Congressmen to ask their help in getting this enabling legislation through the House of Representatives.

A hearing on the bill is to be scheduled in the near future before the Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations and Nutrition subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee.

Congressman Frederick Richmond of New York, subcommittee chairman, has said the hearing will be scheduled as soon as possible after the appropriations bill is out of the way.

Grange meets

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Merkel; Ceres, Lillian Milisock; Pomona, Brenda Mengel; Chaplin, Judy Bower, matron Jane Hill; and assistant matron, Annetta Merkel.

Ten dollars was donated to the Heart Fund, \$10 to the Ears to Hear, and \$50 was given to Berks Heim for bingo gifts.

The grange will have a Mother's Day dinner on that day from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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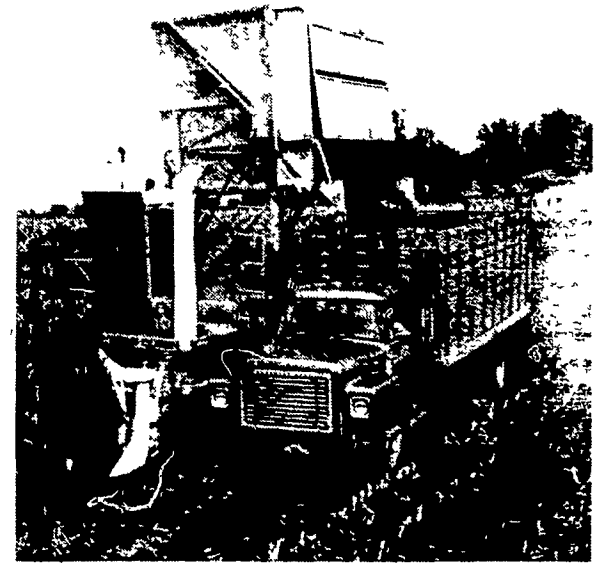
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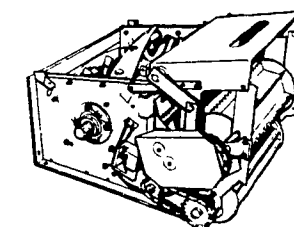
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