

PACA marks 50 years of helping farmers get paid

NEW YORK, N.Y. — When produce marketing went the way of this country's technological and transportation revolution more than a half-century ago, farmers encountered new risks.

One was getting paid for the fruits of their labors.

Dealing directly with local buyers and consumers became a thing of the past. Long-distance, commercial trading became the new thing, and farmers found they had little recourse when buyers didn't pay them or rejected their produce without good cause.

In 1930 — fifty years ago this year — Congress responded to the need of growers and other traders for a code of fair play by passing the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act.

Congress asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to administer the law, and today that task is carried out by the Fruit and Vegetable Division of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

"The law has been a good one, and in fact has gotten better as time goes on," said P.R. Smith, assistant secretary of agriculture for marketing and transportation services. "Legislative amendments have kept it up to date with current marketing practices in the produce industry."

"Our PACA represen-

tatives today service 173,000 farmers and 85,000 others who deal in produce, including retailers."

PACA provides the mechanism, through a system of counseling and enforcement of contracts, to settle trade disputes promptly and recover payments owed so that each load of produce can move through marketing channels and on to consumers quickly.

"Anyone seeking advice on how to avoid specific contract problems with fruit and vegetable purchases or sales can call a regional hotline," Smith explained. "Our PACA representatives answer about 25,000 calls a year from people in the produce industry and counsel them on how to steer clear of business problems."

"When problems occur, PACA representatives on request will go to work on a complaint and help all parties to a contract recover what is rightly theirs."

The assistant secretary said about 75 percent of the 3000 specific complaints that the PACA representatives handle each year are settled informally, recovering about \$8 million for those in the produce industry. A formal complaint procedure is used for more serious cases, with all parties to the complaint submitting evidence.

Smith said a licensing system, now being automated for more ef-

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Dairy Princess

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Her milk is good for people of all ages,

And affordable to those who earn high or low wages,

It's a delicious drink and nutritious too,

That's why milk's the best for me and you.

It builds strong white teeth and a nice physique,

It surely helps you feel unique.

So drink milk today from Bessy the cow,

It will help you feel hap-

pier and healthier, right now.

Connie is especially looking forward to choosing her first-place wardrobe gift and to attending the fair parades and handing out ribbons at the shows.

If anything worries her about the coming year, she said writing all those speeches was a little unsettling. But it's obvious to the visitor that she has nothing to fear. All she has to do is smile.



Marketing of produce, while risky today, was extremely hazardous business before enactment of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act in 1930. Farmers like these North Carolina strawberry growers had little recourse when they

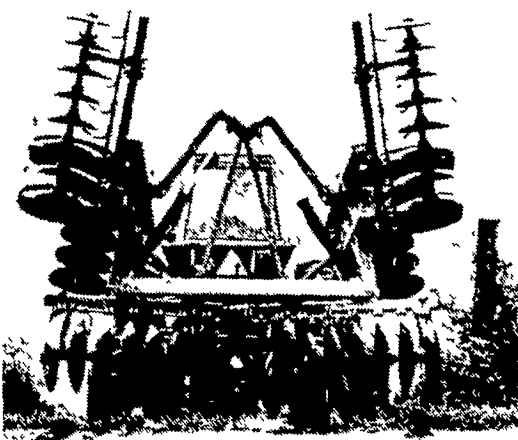
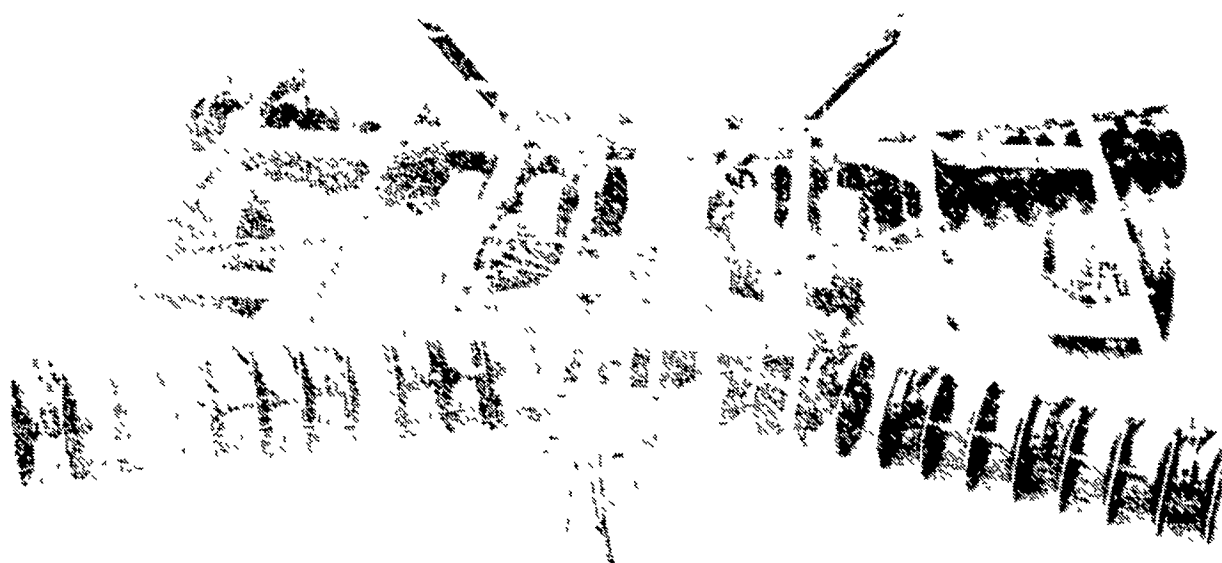
didn't get paid or when their produce was rejected without good cause. Reputable dealers and growers supported idea of fair trading rules that would apply to everyone.

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KOOM ON UP THIS WEEK