

# Adams Fruit Growers hear talks on exports, disease, management

BY M.H. GITT  
Staff Correspondent

**GARDNERS**— People outside of United States describe an American apple as a "big red apple," according to John Rice, sales manager of Rice Fruit Company.

Speaking at the Adams County Fruit Growers Association meeting Wednesday evening, Rice said overseas buyers are looking for premium products, "the fancy and extra fancy grades are what they want, with everything being shipped over in bushel tray packs."

The world's current description of the American apple has evolved because other countries, such as France, are producing good non-red apples such as Golden Delicious. But the soil in those countries can not produce the same high quality red apples as grown in the states, noted Rice.

He went on to explain that a box of apples may sell for \$10 in Washington, but the same box would sell for \$36 in Taiwan. Since there's no difference in freight costs between shipping small or large apples, the overseas buyers are willing to pay the extra amount for the larger size.

"But don't expect the overseas market to support American apple growers," warned Rice, "because a country could pass a law preventing the importing of apples. This law could be done for

economic reasons such as an unfavorable trade balance or to help that country's own apple industry."

On the domestic side, he noted the price of apples have not kept up with the cost of producing the apples. "The fresh market is the only area where prices are going up," said Rice. "The top grades, such as fancy and extra fancy, have been moving the best."

These observations about the domestic front were backed up by Larry Yager, marketing agent from the Penn State Extension Service for south-central Pennsylvania.

"We've had high yields the past years and with that increase in supply, people are looking for the larger sizes and fancy grades. Also consumers have become more discriminating than in the past," explained Yager, "But there is never any trouble in marketing good quality fruit."

In other business, George Hekman, chairman of the Research Committee of the State Horticultural Association of Pennsylvania, told the growers about grants for research approved by the association and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

The Association had \$12,000 budgeted for research projects and, after reviewing the suggestions from growers on what

areas needed study, approved the following proposals;

—Research on the association of dandelion and other orchard weeds with tomato ringspot virus-induced diseases in fruit crops; submitted by Richard Stouffer at an estimated cost of \$2,000;

—Research on control tactics for the tufted apple budmoth, the most damaging insect pest to Pennsylvania apples, submitted by Larry Hull at an estimated cost of \$4,000;

—Research on the influence of temperature, stage of development and chemical concentration on peach thinning by the use of chemicals; submitted by George Green at an estimated cost of \$4,000;

—Research on the evaluation of certain prebloom sprays on bee foraging populations in apple orchards; submitted by Clarence Collison, Extension entomologist at an estimated cost of \$2,000.

The Department of Agriculture granted \$22,755 to Stouffer for a research project entitled "An Integrated Management System for the Control of Nematode Transmitted Virus Disease in Pennsylvania." The grant is for the first year of the three year project which will study how nematodes transmit soil born viruses.

Another research project underway was reported by fruit disease expert James Travis. He is

currently experimenting to see if cytospora canker can be affected through the use of differing strengths of fungicides without resorting to surgery as is the normal procedure. In his report on conditions in the county, he observed there is a fair amount of apple scab due to the warm wet weather, but the infestations from last year are almost over. The latter will need pruning to stop it from spreading, according to Travis.

In other reports, nutrition expert George Green warned the growers of using too much nitrogen fertilizers on their trees. He pointed out that mature trees don't need as much nitrogen as immature trees. And, by cutting back on the amount used, growers may be able to cut back on the amount of winter pruning. He said the leaf test on peach and nectarine trees have shown excessive amounts of nitrogen and he urged them to run leaf and soil tests in order to help determine the fertility needs for next spring.

Reporting on pests, William Bode, assistant professor of entomology at Penn State, noted the tufted apple budmoth is halfway through its first flight cycle. In past last week, they have had the highest count of budmoths so far this season. Other active insects, Bode noted, were the mites, oriental fruit moths and the lesser peach tree borer.

Before the meeting, members took a walking tour of the Rice & Rice Orchards which has 70 acres of apples, some being grown by the trellis system, and seven acres of pears.

Mark Rice, who conducted the


tour, said the problem he has with the trellis, where dwarf and root stocks are planted close together and supported by three wires running the length of the rows, is the lack of vigor he's noted in some trees and over vigor in other trees.

"I'd like my trees tall enough that they can be picked from the ground," noted Mark, adding he uses a training aid to make the tree limbs grow horizontally to bear more fruit.

Mark, a 1978 graduate of Cornell University where he majored in pomology, informed the group that last year, when the trees suffered hail damage as well as rabbit and deer damage, over 70 percent of the apples were graded extra fancy for tray packs. He candidly told the group he hoped they would learn from his successes as well as from his mistakes.

In other business, County Extension Agent Thomas Piper told the group of the state horticultural tour schedule for June 24 and 25 which includes tours of orchards in Maryland and New Jersey. He informed them there would be a vegetable tour July 5, 6, & 7 in York County and announced next month's meeting would be held July 29 — sprayer calibration will be one of the main topics.

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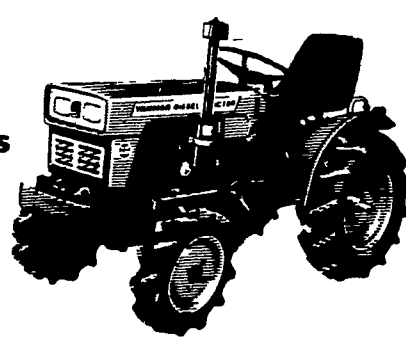
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