

# Rebirth of vegetables seen in Md.

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Small farmers growing fresh-market produce appear destined to play starring roles in a cautious rebirth of the state's vegetable industry.

That's the view of Bruno Quebedeaux, Jr., horticulture department chairman since September at the University of Maryland in College Park. Quebedeaux was a speaker Tuesday morning during the sixty-fifth annual meeting of the Maryland Vegetable Growers Association at the Maryland Wholesale Produce Market in Jessup.

Quebedeaux pointed out that 75 to 80 million people live within a 350 to 400-mile radius of Baltimore. And U.S. per capita consumption of fresh vegetables has been rising during the past five years in line with increased nutrition awareness.

A vegetable specialist with industry and academic experience, both nationwide and overseas, Quebedeaux noted several factors that favor vegetable production in

Maryland and most of the Mid-Atlantic area.

These include a favorable climate that lends itself to double-cropping — and even triple-cropping — of fresh market vegetables; relatively short transportation hauls to major markets, and a resource pool of technical expertise both in the commercial vegetable industry and at land-grant universities throughout the Mid-Atlantic area.

The technical expertise is partly a carryover from a generation or more ago when commercial vegetable-growing in the Delmarva area was at its peak. Since that time, the industry suffered a steady decline through most of the 1970s as processing plants closed up and moved westward.

But the rebirth which Quebedeaux foresees would depend primarily on small farmers throughout the state growing fresh-market produce — not large acreages of vegetables on the Eastern Shore grown for

processing, as in the past.

In line with this philosophy, he reported plans for horticulture department expansion during the next five years in cooperation with the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station. These plans include upgrading facilities at the university's Eastern Shore vegetable research farm near Salisbury and possible purchase of additional land at that location.

Quebedeaux's philosophy also envisions spreading some of the vegetable research work to existing University of Maryland research farms near Wye Mills (Queen Annes county) and Sharpsburg (Washington county) in order to make it more applicable

to a wider variety of soil conditions than is possible on the sandy soils at Salisbury.

Quebedeaux's hope is that both the research work of the Experiment Station and educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service might be combined on an interstate, multi-discipline basis in the Mid-Atlantic area for greater efficiency.


The research effort, particularly, needs to emphasize increased quality and proper storage of fresh vegetables. This infers a more basic and biochemical approach toward understanding the problems, Quebedeaux said.

He sees development of com-

puter modeling programs by university specialists as a major priority to help both small and large farmers determine the inputs necessary under various cropping systems to maximize incomes.

The Maryland department chairman cautions that growth in the vegetable industry must be compatible both with market demand and with environmental considerations.

On the latter point, both research and Extension specialists need to re-evaluate pesticide recommendations constantly in line with statewide efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay.



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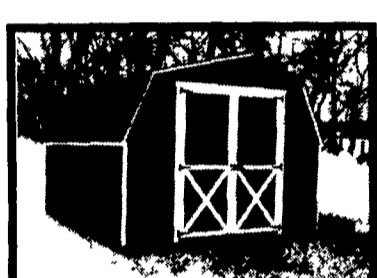
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