

# Peach marketing

(Continued from Page A1)

Hoover, who noted that as long as growers pay more attention to production than to marketing, overproduction will plague the industry.

The first panelist to take the floor was Charles Walker, executive marketing director for the South Carolina Peach Board, who noted that with an estimated 86 percent of the population using peaches, "we've either got to get them to use more or take out some of our trees."

Though Walker saw merit in drafting an Eastern U.S. peach marketing order, he pointed out that such proposals take years to develop.

"Based on my experience, you end up talking about marketing orders for 10 to 20 years before you have one," he said. "And then it takes another 10 years before it has any teeth in it."

Walker called for stepped up promotion activities, citing California's aggressive television, radio and food service ad campaign as a successful marketing tool. "They're the only group of growers putting their money where their mouth is," he said.

New Jersey peach grower Robert Best was the next speaker, pointing out a number of areas where the industry needs improvement. Best noted that peaches are being picked too green and immature, and that packers often fail to fill containers with

fruit of uniform size.

He said that many boxes currently in use are not designed for palletizing, resulting in bruised fruit when the containers are stacked. He encouraged packers to use the new shallower and wider boxes currently available.

Such quality-related problems fall in the lap of the grower and his staff, Best emphasized. Peach growers should not expect results from increased promotional efforts if their product fails to appeal to the consumer, he said.

York County Extension home economist Joan Lamberson presented information on current produce buying trends at the consumer level. She noted that in the Northeast a larger percentage of consumers shop the produce specialty stores than in other parts of the country.

In her own survey involving 100 York Countians, Lamberson found that 46 percent bought produce in the smaller, roadside markets.

Participants were asked to rate a number of criteria involved in produce selection. Heading the list was freshness, with 99 percent of those surveyed indicating a desire to purchase the freshest possible fruit. Other factors, in decreasing order of importance, were cleanliness, price, appearance, nutritional value, growing region and brand name.

Lamberson speculated that an increase in generic advertising may prove profitable, since only one-third of those surveyed indicated a concern for brand names and the region where the fruit was grown.

Nearly 50 percent of the consumers said they bought on impulse, so advertisements and eye-catching displays at the point of purchase should also boost sales, said the economist.

Ninety percent of the survey participants said that they prefer to buy their fruit in bulk, rather than prepackaged.

"We should emphasize the nutritional value of our products, since there is a trend toward a healthful lifestyle," Lamberson said.



Serving on the peach marketing panel at this year's Pa. Horticultural Association conference were (left) Charles Walker, executive marketing director of the South Carolina Peach Board; New Jersey peach grower Robert Best; and York County Ext. home economist Joan Lamberson.

# Vegetable Conference

(Continued from Page A1)

may sell truckloads of produce at the wholesale level, retailing means dealing with a broad cross-section of individual personalities. "You've got to like people to be in this business," stated Blakeley.

•A diversity of products. Consumers are attracted to a wide selection, as well as freshness and good flavor.

•Timing. Retail customers want small amounts of produce available everyday, whereas wholesalers are looking for large amounts at more or less predictable intervals.

•Tight scheduling. Plenty of planning must go into the use of such things as irrigation, pesticides and herbicides, so as not to inconvenience or endanger the customer.

Other requirements include specialized (and usually expensive) facilities and equipment, a specialized labor force, advertising and promotional skills, and competent employees for times when the owner is absent.

Blakeley then examined the specific types of direct marketing, pointing out their merits and drawbacks. The breakdown included roadside markets, pick-your-own facilities, farmers markets and delivery routes.

Though roadside markets have

high income potential, they also require large investments, whereas a pick-your-own operation can be implemented fairly inexpensively. The pick-your-own marketer, however, should not try to cut corners on liability insurance, Blakeley emphasized.

One way to increase sales volume, said the consultant, is to have shopping carts available, making it convenient for consumers to handle more groceries.

Market owners will also find that ice displays increase the sale of leafy vegetables two to three times, and juice sales six to eight times over refrigerated displays.

Attention to small details such as these is what makes a market successful, says Blakeley.

Speaking on the subject of row tunnels for early vegetable production was Dr. Joy S. Bloom, a Dupont chemist from Wilmington, Delaware. Dr. Bloom divided row tunnels into two categories: supported covers and floating covers.

Floating covers were first employed on tobacco seedbeds, according to the speaker, with cheese cloth being the popular material. The newer spun polyester covers offer distinct advantages over both cheese cloth and the supported covers. Being

very lightweight, the new materials are easily adapted to mechanical placement, with only one man-hour of application time required per acre.

Being porous, the polyester will admit a fungicide spray, as well as 75 to 80 percent of the light striking them. The covers offer about two to five degrees of frost protection, and also minimize insect damage, according to Dr. Bloom.

Though the polyester material does block some rainfall, there is no apparent loss in soil moisture, probably due to the lower evaporation rate, says Dr. Bloom.

A highlight for vegetable growers attending Tuesday's sessions was the tomato awards luncheon. This year's awards were presented in four machine-harvest and two hand-harvest classes.

•Class 1, Machine Harvest (100 acres and up): This class was won by Mark and Earl Stern of Lock Haven, Clinton County. They harvested 4,570 tons of useable fruit from 180 acres, for a yield of 25.4 tons per acre.

•Class 2, Machine Harvest (75 to 99 acres): Winner was Robert W. Schwartz of Lykens, Dauphin County, for harvesting 2,216 tons from 98 acres for a 22.6 tons-per-acre average.

•Class 3, Machine Harvest (50 to 74 acres): Won by Dwight and John Hess of Hess Farms, Marietta, Lancaster County. The brothers harvested 1,515 tons from 48 acres, for an average of 31.6 tons per acre.

•Class 4, Machine Harvest (20 to 49 acres): Carl M. Schmidt of Watsonstown, Northumberland County took this class, harvesting 535 tons from 22 acres for a per-acre average of 24.3 tons.

•Class 2, Hand Harvest (25 to 49 acres): Won by Dio Shetler of Turbotville, Montour County for his harvest of 891 tons on 31 acres for an average of 28.8 tons per acre.

•Class 4, Hand Harvest (5 to 14 acres): Donald E. Mowrer of Marietta, Lancaster County was the winner, harvesting 335 tons from eight acres for an average of 41.9 tons per acre.

The annual recognition of outstanding tomato growers is sponsored by the Penn State Extension Service and the Tomato Processors of Pa.



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