

Apple industry adjusts

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apple grower's fruit has changed considerably over the last 15 years. A continuation of the trends in domestic consumption and international trade would have varying effects on U.S. growers.

Growers of fresh-market varieties would be producing for an expanding, higher priced market and therefore would tend to produce more apples. They would then have a larger volume of cull apples which they could divert to the growing canned-juice market. In contrast, growers producing primarily for the canning market would be facing a shrinking market and lower prices due to unprofitable alternative outlets. These growers could be forced to change production practices or varieties to meet the requirements of the more profitable markets.

Growers sometimes recognize opportunities long before they appear as a trend in statistical data. A few years of lower prices or restricted deliveries of processing apples, accompanied by lower gross returns per unit, can encourage changes. Growers commonly make these changes by planting different varieties when they expand orchard acreage or replace old orchards.

Trends in

Apple Production

Apples comprised nearly 16 percent of the tonnage of all fruit grown in this country during the early 1980s (Table 2). While some commercial production is reported in the majority of states, most is concentrated in nine states (Table 3). Michigan, New York, Washington, and the six states of the Appalachian Region produced about three-fourths of all U.S.-grown apples in 1980-84.

These states are collectively increasing their share of national production. They accounted for 72 percent in 1970-74, 74 percent in 1975-79, and 76 percent during the last five years.

From the early 1970s through the early 1980s, total U.S. apple production increased about 30 percent. A 10 percent growth in population during that period, coupled with an 18 percent increase in per-capita consumption, accounted for use of nearly all the increased supply. In Washington, where production is fresh-market oriented, apple production increased 87 percent during the period, while the remaining states averaged only a 13.6 percent increase. Of the major apple-producing states, New York, Michigan, and Washington enjoyed the highest rates of growth.

Apple production in the Appalachian Region has not increased as rapidly as it has in the other major producing states. Among the six states in the region, only North Carolina has significantly increased production since the early 1970s. A number of reasons may explain why the region has not kept pace with the rest of the industry. The climate may not be as favorable for the production of fresh-market apples as it is in other regions. Or perhaps the region's resources can be used more profitably in other kinds of businesses. A more probable explanation, though, is that the Appalachian Region simply has not had enough time to adjust to recent market changes because it is an old production area. Adjustment is much faster and easier when production is in an expansion phase. Washington, for example, has increased output by expanding acreage and incorporating new production techniques.

Evidence of change in response to market forces is slowly beginning to appear in the Appalachian Region. The 1972 and 1982 surveys of Pennsylvania orchards and vineyards reveal some changes in the apple industry during that decade (Table 4). Growers have been expanding their potential for fresh-market production by planting more fresh-

market varieties like Delicious. In addition, the number of growers and acreages of apples continue to decline, and the average number of trees per acre continues to increase. Because these higher-density plantings require smaller trees, 43 percent of all commercial apple trees today are dwarf, semidwarf, or trellised, compared with only 25 percent in 1972.

Larger growers are still increasing their share of total output. About 175 large orchardists are responsible for the bulk of apple production in Pennsylvania. The remaining group, more than 500 growers, accounts for only 15 percent of Pennsylvania's annual production. Many of these small growers and some of the large ones, too, produce for direct-marketing outlets such as roadside stands and farmers markets where apples are sold fresh and as cider. Pennsylvania apple growers appear to be making market-directed adjustments in production

by shifting emphasis slightly from processing varieties to fresh-market varieties. However, judging from the quantity of recent plantings of York (primarily a processing variety), there is still a fair degree of grower optimism about the peeler market.

Growers are getting larger and adopting new planting systems in the hope of increasing efficiency and enhancing the quality of apples grown. As more and more of the adjustment process is completed, the Appalachian Region may find it is able to hold and even increase its portion of the market.

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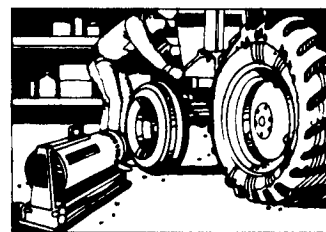
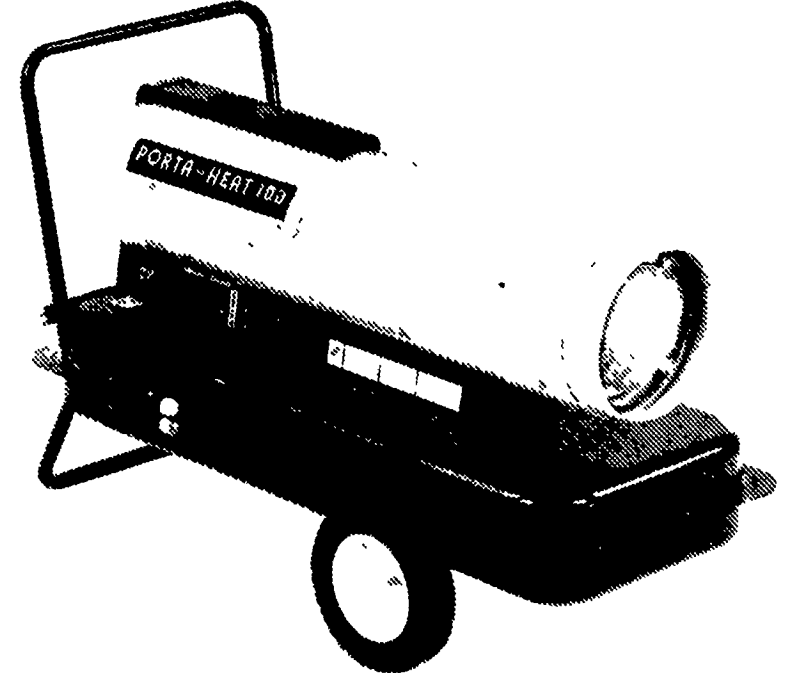
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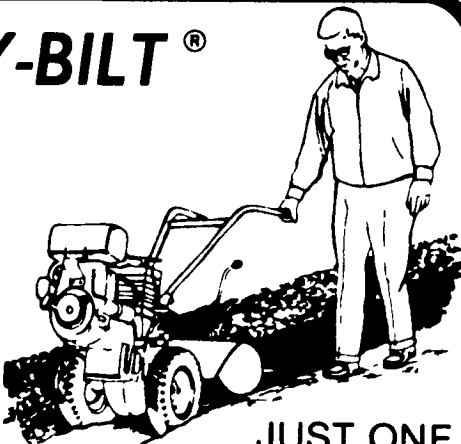
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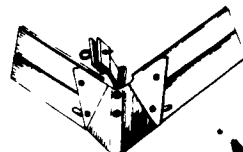
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