

Spring Bedding Market Surges At Produce Auctions

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began in 1984 at Good's Vegetable and Fruit Auction, and incorporated shortly afterward. In 1986, the auction moved to its present location on Brethren Church Road. Leola charges 8 percent commission on produce sold. Horst noted the amount of spring bedding and nursery items have increased at the auction tremendously over the years.

Gebely, of Kutztown, said the auction has 600 consignors and 500 sellers. They pay on a weekly basis, with a minimum lot charge of 75 cents with a commission of 8½ percent on items sold.

Courtney, of Buffalo Valley, said the auction began in 1987 with 35 farmers who purchased shares of stock. Buffalo Valley posted sales last year of \$1.3 million, with 700 buyers and 600 consignors. They handle nursery stock and hold a Christmas tree auction each year (last year, they sold an excess of 5,000 trees). In 1991, they built a large complex and added on to it in 1992. They charge 10 percent commission with no box charge.

Leinbach, of Leinbach's Produce, said the auction began in 1985 on a weekly basis, but expanded rapidly the following year. Their location is ideal, according to the manager, because they are located 30-40 minutes from the fruit belt of Virginia and are near Adams County, a huge apple producing area in Pennsylvania. They offer 28 varieties of peaches, 56 varieties of produce, and hold items for sale from 600 growers and 1,000 buyers. Combined sales in 1992 were about \$2 million. They charge 8 percent commission and a service charge.

Establish rapport

Robinson asked the panel members a series of questions about the

market and about the auction's response to various grower inquiries.

During the height of the growing season, many auctions experience a glut in material and the prices begin to tumble. According to Leinbach, vegetable growers should grade much harder during those times. "The key is to establish your reputation," he said. "Establish that long before the glut."

All the auction managers agreed about the importance of establishing good rapport with buyer clientele during the season. Also important to growers:

- Make sure the lots are arranged to they draw the attention of each buyer, according to Leinbach. Keep the lots together — that's where the buyer's attention is.

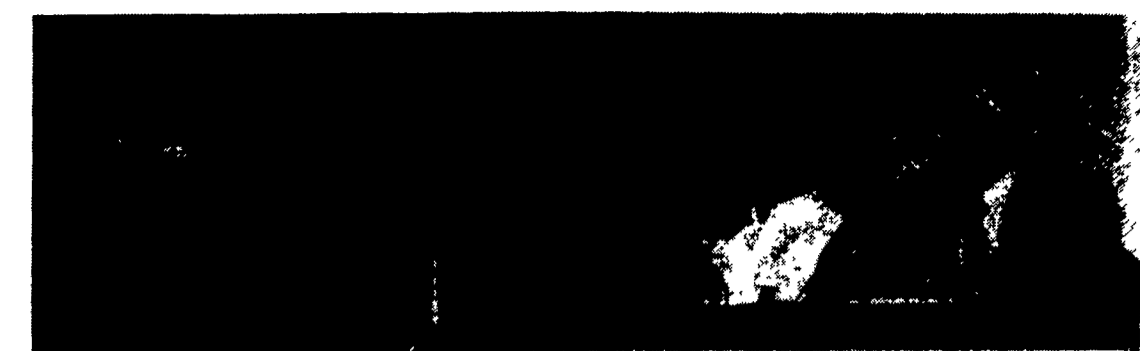
- Know buyers and buyer habits, according to Stoltzfus. Spend time at the auction and work at getting the buyers' attention. Also, speak up and be heard at the auction, and recommend ways the auction can improve service and marketability of your items.

- Present your product in the way you would if you were a buyer making a sale, according to Gebely. Make sure the buyer and auctioneer can see the product.

- "Copy the guys that have the success," said Leinbach. Keep the top of the box open and make sure the items are sitting nice, square, and neat. Make sure the produce is easy to see, and at chest level.

- Avoid topdressing, or making the produce look better than it really is, according to Courtney. The buyer will determine that grower has a reputation and "will make an adjustment," he said.

- Some auctions, to spur sales and establish pricing quickly, will start the season with produce shipped in from other areas. But most markets stick as much as possible to produce grown in the area during the regular season, according to Robinson.



A grower panel featured trickle irrigation for tomato production on Tuesday at the Vegetable Conference in Hershey. At left, Donald Daum, ag and biological engineering department, Penn State, moderator; Will Fairchild, a grower from Berwick; and Earl Stem, a grower from Lock Haven.



Furman Farms won, for the first time in its history, first place for 60+ acres machine harvest. From left, James F. Kohl, vice president, Furman Foods; Sam Ravenolt, Leroy Erb, Bob Schrauder, Mike Stroup, and George Conrad.

sible to produce grown in the area during the regular season, according to Robinson.

- Honesty is the best policy. The buyers are intelligent, according to Courtney.

- Don't make contact with buyers off-site. For one thing, in the long term, it won't pay for the grower. A buyer who goes to the farm is looking for a bargain, and may not provide the best price, according to Stoltzfus.

Overall, according to the managers, quality produce will set the stage for better pricing and will ensure profitability for growers.

Tomato awards

On Tuesday at the conference, a tomato awards luncheon sponsored by Furman Foods and other companies honored growers with the highest tomato yields in the

state. The following were honored:

- Class 1 machine harvest (60 or more acres): Furman Farms, Inc., Sam Rovenolt, manager. Located in Northumberland, Furman Farms won the award by harvesting 3,748 tons of usable fruit on 106.9 acres for a 35.1 tons per acre average yield.

- Class 2 machine harvest (40 to 59 acres): Joe and Robert Hess. Located in Mount Joy, the Hess brothers won the award by harvesting 1,541.8 tons of usable fruit on 42 acres for a 36.7 tons per acre average yield.

- Class 3 machine harvest (25-39 acres): Donald Mowrer. Mowrer, located in Marietta, harvested 1,359.5 tons of usable fruit on 36 acres for a 37.7 tons per acre average yield.

- Class 4 machine harvest (10-24 acres): Dale Frank and R.

Roher. Frank and Roher, Elizabethtown, harvested 698 tons of usable fruit on 20 acres for a 34.9 tons per acre average yield.

- Class 1 hand harvest (15 or more acres): Robert MacBeth. Macbeth, Biglerville, harvested 433.4 tons of usable fruit on 16 acres for a 27 tons per acre average yield.

- Class 2 hand harvest (6-14 acres): Dio Shetler. Shetler, Turbotville, harvested 289 tons of usable fruit on 9.9 acres for a 29.2 tons per acre average yield.

- Class 3 hand harvest (2-5 acres): Reuben K. Esh. Esh, Loganton, harvested 86.7 tons of usable fruit on 2.3 acres for a 37.6 tons per acre average yield.

Editor's note: More coverage of the Vegetable Conference next issue.



Don Mowrer, Marietta, right, was honored for class 3 machine harvest (25-39 acres) at the tomato awards luncheon. At left is James F. Kohl, vice president, Furman Foods.



The Hess brothers were honored with the top production in class 2 machine harvest. From left, James Kohl, vice president, Furman Foods and Joe and Bob Hess.

FFA Ertl Tractors For Sale

HATFIELD (Montgomery Co.) — The Pennsylvania FFA Foundation is announcing the arrival shipment of the second in a limited edition series of Ertl Tractors.

The profits from the sale of the tractors will go into the General Endowment Fund of the Pennsylvania FFA Foundation, which helps support statewide FFA Foundation activities.

The second tractor in a series of five Keystone Ertl Collector's tractors is a Super H Model. The tractor has the FFA emblem on the side of the hood and also the number 2 is imprinted on the Keystone emblem.

According to Dwight Woelkers, Foundation trustee and Pennsylvania FFA Foundation chairman of this project, the Super H has been a popular model, and if sales of the tractor at the Farm Show are any indicator, the second year model should be sold out within a few months. "We have reserved a limited amount of the first edition in this series, a Farmall 350, for those customers interested in purchasing the entire series," he said.

The total number of tractors ordered is the same as the year of the tractor, for instance, 1993 for this year. "We have had inquiries from all over the United States

wishing to buy this Pennsylvania FFA Keystone series," he said.

Cost of the tractors, including shipping, is \$35. Orders may be placed by calling (800) 523-5291, Ext. 397 for VISA or MasterCard. Checks may be made out to the

Pennsylvania FFA Foundation and sent to Dwight Woelkers, Marketing Director, Hatfield Quality Meats, 2700 Funk Road, P.O. Box 902, Hatfield, PA. 19440-0902.



Ertl tractors to benefit the FFA Foundation are now on sale. Dwight Woelkers, marketing director, Hatfield, right, holds the second in a series. Paula Godshall, marketing receptionist, holds the first in the tractor series.