FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS.

December, 1946.

FRUIT.

Coastal Apples on Offer.
The greater percentage of apples forwarded during December consisted of stocks from nearby coastal growing centres. Cooking varieties were the first on offer but towards the close of the month small quantities of dessert varieties were available. Much of this fruit was of medium quality only, and small sizes which predominated, were difficult to dispose of. Prices chiefly ranged from 6s. to 14s., choice to 20s. with an occasional special large pack bringing 25s. and more.

Peaches Well Supplied.
Sufficient peaches to meet all needs were available throughout most of the month. Values showed little variation, being mostly 10s. to 16s. for good packs, up to 20s. for specials, with very small sizes from 6s. per half case.

Steady Demand for Cherries.
Consignments of cherries from the Young and Orange districts aggregated approximately 6,000 ¼ cases per day for the first fortnight of December. Subsequently supplies declined gradually. Demand generally was sufficient to clear stocks. Rates mostly were firm at up to 15s. for best packs of Dark varieties although during Christmas week 18s. and occasionally more was obtained. Light varieties were priced at 6s. to 9s. per ¼ case, with only specials realising higher rates.

Prices for Valencia Oranges Firm.
Rates for coastal valencia oranges showed little variation at 5s. to 20s. per bushel, until the last week of the month. The closing down of packing houses for the holidays resulted in limited quantities being on offer and prices increased to 25s. A large proportion of the offerings was of plain grade, and met a slow sale. Only clean fruit brought top rates.

Maximum Rates for Pineapples and Bananas.
Pineapple consignments increased slightly; nevertheless supplies of this fruit and of bananas were insufficient to satisfy all needs and maximum wholesale rates were maintained for all choice quality fruit.

Mangoes Plentiful.
Large quantities of Queensland mangoes were marketed, more than 9,000 cases being received during each of the second and third weeks of December. Best packs of the apple variety which were selling at up to 15s. on 1st December, declined 8s. per ½ case; medium quality lines were offered at 4s. “Commons” included were very difficult to dispose of even when quoted at 1s. to 3s.; many arrived in a wastey condition.
Additional Supplies of Queensland Rock Melons.
Considerably increased supplies of Queensland rock melons were forward. Most of this fruit arrived in satisfactory order although some waste occurred during the period of heaviest consignments.
The values of 14s. to 22s. per bushel case ruling at the beginning of the month could not be maintained.
Maximum prices were mainly 14s. to 18s. per bushel, though on Friday, 27th December, 10s. was the best price secured.

Strawberries by Air Transport.
Small quantities of Tasmanian strawberries were received by way of air transport. Of the “Royal Sovereign” variety the fruit was of excellent quality and sold readily at the high value of 36s. to 50s. per dozen punnets.

VEGETABLES.
December, particularly the second half of the month, saw very heavy supplies of peas and beans coming forward. Values of these vegetables fell to low levels; prices for other green lines declined also.

Extra Choice Beans at 3s. per Bushel.
Beans were very plentiful throughout the month. Large consignments to agents were supplemented by substantial quantities in the growers' section of the Market. Backyard production was at its peak during the latter half of the month and this resulted in decreased purchases from retail shops. Choice quality beans cleared readily on most occasions though this was only possible in many instances by the fact that values were lowered to 3s. per bushel. Medium and inferior lines which comprised a fair proportion of the total, were slow of sale and, though offered on some days at 6d. to 1s. per bushel, buyers were not interested.

Peas in Heavy Supply.
Daily receivals of peas over the last ten days of December ranged from 3,500 to 6,500 bags. Demand by the normal retail trade was insufficient to clear such large quantities and as canning and processing factories were closed over the Christmas-New Year holiday period, many medium and inferior lines were carried over. Values, which were steady at 5s. to 10s. per bushel for the first week declined 7s. to 8s. being the maximum realised during the next fortnight. Christmas week, extra choice peas brought 12s. per bushel, but medium and inferior lots were practically unsaleable.

Demand for Cabbages Slow.
At the decreased prices of mainly 1s. to 5s. per dozen request for the moderate supplies of cabbages was restricted.

Metropolitan Grown Tomatoes Plentiful.
Consignments of tomatoes from the North Coast of New South Wales showed a marked falling off during the month. On the other hand supplies from Metropolitan areas increased considerably, substantial quantities being marketed by the close of December. Request for choice packs was always good. Medium quality descriptions cleared satisfactorily until the advent of the Christmas-New Year period when the closing of factories resulted in an
accumulation of forward ripe tomatoes. Prices were fairly constant at 12s. to 20s. and 8s. to 16s. per half case for Metropolitan and North Coast stocks, respectively, for the first two weeks. Values were mostly about 4s. lower during the third week but on Christmas Eve up to 30s. and 18s. per half case, respectively, was obtained for best lots.

**Potatoes in Short Supply.**

Stocks of potatoes were limited mainly to local new tubers. Quantities coming forward were light and there was a keen request for supplies which were rationed out in small lots only.

**Cucumbers Well Supplied.**

Large quantities of cucumbers were available most of December. Consignments from Queensland decreased but the decline in stocks from that State was more than offset by supplies from the North Coast of New South Wales and, towards the close of the month, from the Gosford-Tuggerah districts. Values were at low levels for "Greens," choice lots being available at 4s. to 5s. per half case on most days, whilst 3s. was the maximum obtained on many occasions. Extra choice apple cucumbers realised as much as 14s. and occasionally 16s. during the first week of December, but for the remainder of the month values generally ranged from 6s. to 10s. per half case with inferior packs as low as 2s.

H. G. Moon.