



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

*No endorsement of AgEcon Search or its fundraising activities by the author(s) of the following work or their employer(s) is intended or implied.*

## VEGETABLES, 1950-54

By H. W. Mumford, Jr.

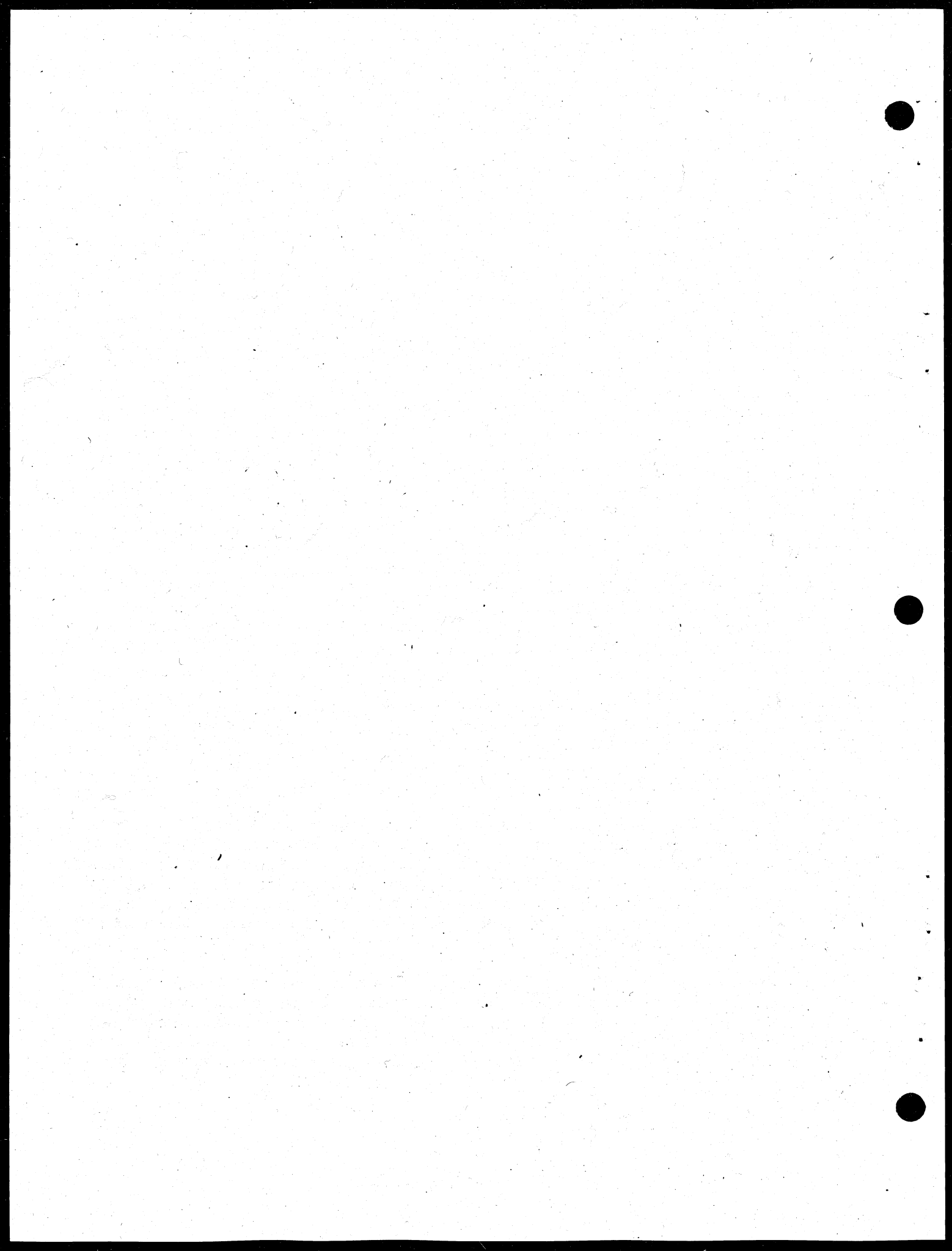
Probably the most important factors which will influence demand for vegetables in 1950-54 are the general level of employment and consumers' disposable income in that period, the rate of growth in the total population of the United States; and the long-time trends in per capita consumption of vegetables. Demand in 1950-54 for vegetables as a whole is expected to be about as strong as in the years 1947 and 1948. Relative to demand for vegetables as a group, demand for potatoes and sweetpotatoes probably will be somewhat weaker, for dry field peas about the same, for dry edible beans slightly stronger, and for commercial truck crops moderately stronger.

Prices in the intermediate period will depend primarily upon the size of the crops produced and the general level of income. Prices for vegetables in 1950-54 will be substantially above their 1935-39 levels in any event, and probably about as high as at present if the more optimistic business trend prevails. If production is in line with consumption trends, prices received for truck crops under the highest income assumption would compare favorably in general with prices received for the 1948 crops, but prices for potatoes, sweetpotatoes and dry beans and peas probably would be somewhat lower. Under the less-high-income assumption, prices for vegetables in general would be considerably lower than in 1947 and 1948 but moderately above pre-World War II levels.

In the event of weather-induced surpluses, the minimum level of prices which farmers will receive may be moderated by whatever price-support legislation is in effect at that time. Present legislation provides for continuing support for potatoes on a mandatory basis and for other vegetables on a permissive and discretionary basis.

A factor in the outlook for vegetable production and prices is the rate of growth in our national population. After giving signs of slowing up over a period of years, the annual increase in our population has risen significantly in recent years. More mouths to feed obviously mean an expanding market for vegetables as well as for other farm products. For a time, at least, the increase in our population may offset the effect of the downward trend in per capita consumption of potatoes.

There has been a definite and strong downward trend in the per capita consumption of potatoes over more than 3 decades. On the other hand, there has been an upward trend, about equally strong, in the per capita consumption of fresh and processed truck crop vegetables. Average per capita consumption of sweetpotatoes, dry edible beans and dry field peas has not changed very much.



The anticipated growth in population probably will provide a market for a correspondingly increased quantity of dry edible beans and dry field peas, but only about the same quantity of potatoes and sweetpotatoes. Moderate to considerable increases in total production of truck crops will be required to meet the increased demand for most fresh and processed vegetables. Consumption of frozen vegetables is expected to gain relative to that of fresh and canned vegetables.

If per capita consumption of potatoes continue to decline, it will be offset in considerable part by the anticipated growth in total United States population. The total quantity of potatoes that will be needed for food in 1950-54 probably will be about as large as at present. Domestic demand under the assumptions given is expected to be such as to justify the annual production of some 355 to 375 million bushels of potatoes. This quantity can be produced on less acreage than is used at present and probably at lower average unit costs of production. Under the highest income assumption, prices are likely to be roughly double 1935-39, and also would stay well above pre-war prices under the less-high assumption. There will be occasional years of unusually high production when substantial purchases of surplus potatoes will be required to support prices if price-support programs are in effect for that period.

Domestic demand for sweetpotatoes in the intermediate period is expected to continue strong under the highest level assumption, requiring total production at about the 1947-48 two-year average level, with the probability of about the same level of prices as in those years. Under the less-high-income assumption, production would need to be slightly lower and prices also would average slightly to moderately lower than current levels, though considerably above pre-World War II levels.

Demand for dry edible beans and dry field peas in the intermediate period probably will resemble that during 1935-39, with a slight expansion to allow for the 4 percent increase expected in total population. Both production and prices will be considerably lower than during World War II, and slightly to moderately lower than the 1948 levels.

The outlook for commercial truck crops in the intermediate period is for a slight expansion in acreage and production. With the highest level income assumed, prices received by growers for fresh market crops would closely approximate those received in 1947 and 1948. Those received for crops grown for commercial processing probably will average slightly lower than prices received in 1947 and 1948. Assuming the less-high-income level in 1950-54, prices received by growers for commercial truck crops both for fresh market sales and for commercial processing probably will average moderately lower than the average of prices received during 1947 and 1948.

Long-time trends indicate that total acreage of potatoes and sweetpotatoes has been shrinking, that of dry edible beans is holding reasonably constant, that of dry field peas is slowly increasing though currently far below the wartime peak, and that of truck crops as a whole is rising.



Average yield per acre of potatoes has been rising rapidly since 1940. Substantial but much less dramatic increases in average yield per acre of commercial truck crops have occurred in recent years, due partly to use of more fertilizer in response to rising prices. Yields per acre of sweet-potatoes, dry edible beans and dry field peas however, have shown little consistent trend.

Nearly all vegetable crops are grown as annuals <sup>1/</sup> and a considerable number have growing seasons short enough to permit more than one crop to be grown in some areas of the United States. Consequently, farmers can and do adjust their vegetable acreages at least annually. In the past, farmers generally have increased or decreased acreage of vegetables promptly and emphatically in response to the relative level of prices received in past seasons or anticipated for current seasons. Therefore, the acreage of any one vegetable is quickly altered to meet any changes in effective demand. In fact, the adjustment is frequently overdone, as evidenced by the frequent, alternate surplus and shortage of onions and cabbage.

Whether or not adequate adjustments in the production of vegetables are made as needed depends among other things upon what alternatives the growers have. If satisfactory alternatives are available, the needed adjustments will be made. However, if the general price level falls, no alternatives are apt to be very satisfactory, and needed adjustments might not be made.

Weather will continue to produce sizeable variations in yield and total production. These variations will be reflected inversely in the prices received by farmers. The general level of prices received by farmers for all vegetables, however, will be determined primarily by the national level of employment and disposable personal income.

<sup>1/</sup> Excluding production for seed purposes.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### VEGETABLES, 1949

By H. W. Mumford, Jr.

Domestic demand for vegetables through at least the first half of 1949 is expected to continue about as strong as in 1948. Export demand may be somewhat weaker.

Potatoes share in this general prospect for vegetables. This does not imply, however, that prices received by farmers for potatoes in 1949 will be as high as in 1948. What farmers get for potatoes next year will depend upon how many potatoes are grown and the level of support selected within the 60