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# OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARKETING FRESH PRODUCE IN THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

by

Robert C. McHugh and James E. Epperson  
Agricultural Economics Department  
University of Georgia  
Experiment, Georgia

## PROBLEM

The most limiting factor hindering producer access to the fresh produce industry is often a lack of available market outlets. Specialization and concentration of production in geographical areas have magnified this problem. Such limitations are pertinent to Georgia growers. Thus, a study was undertaken to discover possible market opportunities for Georgia producers. This paper examines potential opportunities for marketing fresh produce to the food service industry in Georgia.

## METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was developed and administered in 1981 to buying agents representing county correctional institutions, state correctional institutions, schools, and military installations to determine the origin of fresh produce for the food service market in Georgia. Reasons were ascertained why present sources of supplies are utilized and why other potential sources are not. Requirements for market entry by producers who wish to supply fresh produce for the food service industry were also discovered.

## SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Major findings of this research indicate tremendous opportunities for producers with the ability to initiate

and develop sales to the food service industry. The study revealed that less than five percent of the fruits and vegetables utilized by food service entities studied in Georgia were grown in Georgia. Moreover, most of the produce items reported as utilized could have been obtained in Georgia. Results indicate that the major suppliers to the institutional market sector are independent wholesalers. If local producers satisfy the requirements of the market channel for quality and quantity at a competitive price, then market access via independent wholesalers to institutional firms could be realized. Further opportunities for increased sales of Georgia produce to military installations could be anticipated if buying agents adhere to standard operating procedures encouraging purchases of locally grown produce.

Results imply that a major obstacle to servicing institutional firms is the ability to provide consistent quality at competitive prices. Good service, dependable supply, adequate volume, and the ability to provide a prepackaged produce are also recognized as important.