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# COMPUTERIZED MARKETING OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

by

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Computerized marketing of agricultural commodities is an innovative marketing concept that has gained considerable attention. Computerized marketing involves a host computer with remote-access information storage, retrieval, and processing capabilities that facilitate trading. The processes involved in computerized marketing include: 1) describing the produce using standardized terminology known to buyers and sellers, 2) transmitting the product description to buyers, and 3) consummating the sale with buyers making acceptable bids to product sellers.

The need and call for more efficient marketing methods and the continuing decline in the price of technological advances require a complete evaluation of the potential for computerized marketing of fresh fruits and vegetables to determine feasibility. Such a study is currently being conducted by the University of Florida in cooperation with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. The study will identify potential users of such a system and determine characteristics essential for successful implementation and use of the system.

Separate, but similar, survey instruments were developed for growers and

buyers using the "mirror image" approach. That is, comparable questions were asked so as to facilitate comparisons of characteristics and attitudes of the respective parties. Data have been collected in selected areas of the U.S. Preliminary results, primarily from Florida, for selected items were gleaned for presentation.

Respondents noted familiarity with computers in that about 3/5 of the buyers and 1/2 of the growers either leased or owned a computer. Another 10% of each grouping indicated they had at least used a computer. Also, 11% of the buyers and 14% of the growers indicated probable or definite purchase of a computer during the next year. About 1/4 of the buyers and slightly more than 1/3 of the growers indicated receptiveness to a computerized system of exchange for fresh fruits and vegetables. Another 1/3 of each grouping was undecided relative to receptiveness to the system.

Given that the computerized system could provide more and better information, increased competition for produce and reduced fluctuations in daily prices, about 3/5 of the buyers and 2/3 of the growers indicated they would use the system if it cost the same or more than the current system. A third of the buyers and 2/5 of the growers noted use if the cost was more.