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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

THE OUTLOOK FOR FRUITS AND TREE NUTS IN 1954

Statement by Ben H. Pubols, Agricultural Economic Statistician
at the 31st Annual Agricultural Outlook Conference, Washington, D. C.

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With little change in demand for fruit in 1954, weather and yields are likely to determine the direction of price changes. Assuming average weather, production of deciduous fruits in 1954 probably will be moderately larger than the relatively small 1952 and 1953 crops and production of citrus fruits probably will increase further. However, the 1954 crop of tree nuts is likely to be smaller.

Prospects for exports of fruit in 1954 are for no marked change in total volume. In Western European countries that for many years have been important outlets for substantial quantities of fresh and dried fruits, dollar exchange for the importation of United States fruit continues limited even though there has been some improvement otherwise in the dollar exchange situation. Even so, exports of winter pears probably will be larger in 1954 because of the larger 1953 crop of winter varieties and the current export-payment program for pears. With increased production of export varieties and sizes of apples, exports of apples also may be a little larger in 1954. Exports of citrus are expected to continue large in 1954, and may increase further to Canada. But exports of raisins are expected to be smaller because of reduced output in 1953. Exports of raisins are again being assisted by a payment program.

Imports of apples, most of which usually come from Canada, may not be greatly different from the relatively large volume in 1953. Imports of bananas, of which consumption per capita ranks second only to that of oranges and apples, probably will be about as large in 1954 as in 1953. Some increase in receipts of canned pineapple and pineapple juice from Hawaii seems probable.

The 1953 deciduous fruit crop is slightly smaller than the 1952 crop and moderately smaller than the 1942-51 average. Most of the reduction is the result of the heavy drop in production of grapes. Total production of the major deciduous fruits, excluding grapes, is slightly larger than in 1952. This means that with average weather, a substantial increase in production of grapes can be expected in 1954. But increases also seem probable for apples, peaches, and pears, while decreases are likely for plums, cherries, and cranberries.

With the 1953 apple crop again considerably smaller than average and demand for processing strong, prices for apples this summer have averaged above the relatively high prices of a year earlier. Prices are expected to continue high this fall. Amount and quality of year-end stocks will largely determine the course of prices in the first half of 1954. Because of larger supplies of late pears and cranberries, prices

for these two fruits are expected to average lower this fall and winter than a year earlier. In contrast, prices for fresh grapes probably will average higher because of smaller quantities going into storage.

Prospective production of citrus fruits in 1953-54 is slightly larger than in 1952-53. Furthermore, production probably will increase further in 1954-55 as trees planted in recent years in Florida and Texas start bearing and as older groves in Texas recover further from the freeze damage of 1949 and 1951. The early and midseason orange crop of 1953-54 is expected to be slightly larger than the 1952-53 crop. But the 1953-54 grapefruit crop is much larger than the crop last season. Production of both oranges and grapefruit is up considerably in Florida, and also larger in Texas and Arizona.

Because movement of canned and frozen citrus into consumption channels has been larger, even at higher prices, in the spring and summer of 1953 than in this period of 1952, stocks of processed citrus, especially in Florida, are much smaller this fall than a year earlier. Partly for this reason, grower prices for oranges this fall and winter probably will average about as high as in this part of the 1952-53 season. However, because of the heavy increase in grapefruit production, prices for this fruit are expected to average lower.

Over the last two decades, utilization of the fruit crops for processing, especially citrus, has increased sharply. Meanwhile fresh use of deciduous fruits has not changed greatly while fresh use of citrus also has increased but less markedly than that of processed. In 1952-53, about 48 percent of the orange and tangerine crop and 45 percent of the grapefruit crop were processed. In Florida the percentage processed of oranges and tangerines was 61 percent and of grapefruit 46 percent. Increased tonnages of both fruits probably will be processed in the 1953-54 season. This is expected to lead to larger packs of both canned and frozen orange juice than in the past season. Moreover, output of frozen concentrate for lemonade, which has become popular, in the last few years, also may increase further.

The 1953-54 pack of canned fruits, consisting mostly of deciduous fruits, is expected to be a little larger than the relatively large 1952-53 output. The new pack of apricots is considerably larger than the 1952-53 pack, the pack of sour cherries is slightly smaller, and that of sweet cherries is considerably smaller. The packs of canned peaches, fruit cocktail, and cranberries are each expected to be larger this season. In the season ahead, supplies of canned fruits and fruit juices probably will be as large as in 1952-53, but supplies of frozen fruits and fruit juices may be larger.

Total production of almonds, filberts, pecans, and walnuts in 1953 is nearly as large as the record tonnage in 1952. However, production of almonds and pecans is larger. The early season outlook for grower prices for the 1953 crops was for higher prices for filberts, lower prices for pecans, and not much change for almonds and walnuts. Total imports of tree nuts in 1953-54 may not differ markedly from 1952-53.