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 1/ 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.

1/ Excluding production for seed purposes.

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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

to 90 percent of parity range permitted by law. The farmers of this country have repeatedly demonstrated their ability and willingness to produce more potatoes than we need at the high levels of prices supported in recent years.

Demand for sweetpotatoes in 1949 is expected to be no stronger than in 1948, in spite of continued high income. Experience with the below-average crops of 1947 and 1948 seems to indicate that with many people feeling the pinch of the rapidly rising cost of living, we have about reached a ceiling price for sweetpotatoes, which are considered somewhat of a luxury by many consumers in northern markets. As long as employment and income are maintained on levels as high as are currently foreseen for most of 1948, farmers probably will be able to sell sweetpotatoes at prices about as high as those received in 1947 and 1948, for equal quantities. Price support purchases may again be necessary on the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Maryland and in North Carolina, if farmers in these areas again produce the same varieties and attempt to sell at digging time a quantity as large as in 1947 or 1948. Price support on the 1949 crop through December 31, 1949 will be within the range of 60 to 90 percent of parity specified by law.

Domestic demand for dry edible beans in 1949 is expected to continue about as strong as in 1948, but foreign demand probably will be weaker. Unless the 1949 crop is substantially smaller than the 1948 crop, prices received by farmers will again rest heavily upon the support level. Under the Agricultural Act of 1948, support for dry beans in 1949 must be within the range of 60 to 90 percent of parity. With parity at the September 15, 1948 level, 60 percent of parity is $5.05 or $2.53 per 100 pounds less than 90 percent of parity.

Domestic demand for dry field peas is expected to be no stronger in 1949 than in 1948, and foreign demand may be even weaker. Even if the 1949 crop is no larger than the 1948 crop, which is considerably smaller than the recent 10-year average, prices to farmers probably will rest heavily upon the support levels. Support in 1949 will fall within the range of 60 to 90 percent of parity. At the September 15, 1948 level of parity, this range of 60 to 90 makes a difference of $1.57 per 100 pounds.

Demand for fresh and processed vegetables is expected to continue strong throughout most of 1949. The uncertainty with respect to the second half of the year arises out of the unpredictable international situation and from the cumulative effects of one more boom year in this country. Aside from this uncertainty, however, no marked reduction in consumer incomes and domestic demand for farm products generally is foreseen at this time. Acreage and production probably will be sustained on a generally high level. Prices which growers will receive for individual truck crops, of course, will reflect inversely any substantial increase or decrease in production or supplies. Prices received in the first quarter of 1949 for cabbage, carrots and onions are expected to be lower than in the first quarter of this year, because of the larger storage stocks expected this winter. For those who grow truck crops for commercial canning and freezing, 1949 probably will be another year of production and prices, not greatly different than in 1948. No more than normal working stocks of canned and frozen vegetables are expected to remain in the hands of packers and wholesale distributors at the beginning of the 1949 pack season.