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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS.

May, 1947.

FRUIT.

Apples mainly from Interstate Sources.

Consignments of apples from New South Wales districts declined gradually in quantity throughout the period and trading was confined mainly to supplies from interstate sources. Values for local packs firmed, Delicious bringing 38s. per bushel case and occasionally 40s. Jonathans also were dearer, from 30s. to 32s. being paid for best lots during the greater part of the month. Granny Smiths brought mainly from 14s. to 26s. according to size and quality and in some instances 28s. was realised. Other varieties represented from New South Wales centres were: Rome Beauty, Stayman's Winesap, London Pippin, Northern Spy, King David and Democrat. Moderate quantities were forwarded from Victoria and Western Australia, whilst fairly large shipments were received from Tasmania. Stocks from the latter source comprised most of the available offerings and prices were reduced progressively, Delicious opening at 26s. per bushel case and closing at 23s. Some packs from Western Australia and Tasmania opened in faulty condition and were sold slightly below the rates fixed by the Apple and Pear Board. Total supplies were insufficient to meet retail requirements.

Pears More Plentiful and Prices Decline.

The varieties of pears most popular during the month were Packham's Triumph, Winter Cole and Beurre Bosc in approximately that order. Receivals, mainly from Victoria, were fairly heavy but the comparative shortage of apples resulted in high rates ruling. A gradual decline throughout the month was evident, however, and best lines of Packham's Triumph, which brought as high as 22s. per bushel case at opening, seldom realised more than 18s. at the end of the period. Winter Coles showed a wide variation in size and prices ranged accordingly from 6s. to 16s., although, early, up to 20s. per bushel case had been obtained. Other varieties on offer were Jonathan, Winter Nelis, Glou Morceau and small quantities of Keiffers and Doyenne du Comice. Large sizes in these varieties at all times sold well but smaller grades were difficult to clear.

Receivals of Grapes Decline.

Consignments of grapes were mainly from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area although a few lines from other inland districts were available early in the month. A gradual decline in quantities coming forward was apparent. At opening, varieties available included Cornichon, Waltham Cross and Doradillo but,

after the first week of May, stocks were limited mainly to Cornichon, with the exception of a few packs of Ribier and Ohanez varieties. Realisations for Cornichons advanced gradually from 12s. early to 18s. per half case at closing. Rates for the others were comparable.

Supplies of Bananas Remain Light.

Bananas were lightly supplied at all times and all good quality fruit of popular sizes brought the fixed maximum price of 6¼d. per lb. Some very small and inferior packs, however, were lower. Receipts were mainly from North Coast districts, supplemented by small quantities from Queensland.

Navel Oranges Replace Valencias.

Navel oranges from coastal areas came to hand in increasing quantities during the month and by the end of the first week had replaced Valencias as the variety most represented. Prices eased as receipts improved and although 18s. and occasionally 20s. per bushel case was obtained at opening, closing quotations seldom exceeded 14s. The few second crop Valencias were slow to clear, mainly at 4s. to 10s. Moderate consignments from Queensland included Navels, which realised from 15s. to 20s., with a few early sales to 25s. per bushel case, and Joppas at 12s. to 18s., few 20s. A few local Silettas on offer were not in demand at 6s. to 10s.

Lemons Plentiful and Fairly Cheap.

Large supplies of lemons were available on most selling days. Values early in the period were much lower and rarely exceeded 8s. per bushel case. A slight recovery was apparent towards closing, however, when quotations ranged from 5s. to 12s. according to size, colour and condition. Receipts from Queensland were only moderate and a higher percentage of break-down than previously was noticed. Realisations early were as high as 25s. per bushel case for choice lines but a decline in quality resulted in prices being reduced, to range from 12s. to 18s. at the end of the month.

New Season's Mandarins Available.

Mandarins of the Imperial variety commenced to arrive on the market in appreciable quantities early in the month and values, which opened at 14s. per half case for best packs, were fairly well maintained throughout, ranging from 6s. to 12s. at closing. Emperors from coastal districts were available after the second week of the month. Early prices ranged to 26s. per bushel case but declined gradually as supplies increased, final quotations being 10s. to 16s. Very green packs were neglected by buyers. Moderate consignments of Glen Retreats from Queensland opened up in very good condition and cleared well mainly at 25s. to 32s. per bushel case, although as high as 35s. was obtained early.

Dull Demand for Grapefruit.

Inquiry for grapefruit from New South Wales districts was at all times dull during the period and most rates were within the range of 4s. to 8s. per bushel case. A few special coloured packs realised to 12s. In addition, small quantities were received from Queensland. These were generally of better quality than the local packs and brought from 10s. to 20s. per bushel case.

Passionfruit Dearer and Lightly Supplied.

The higher quotations ruling for local passionfruit recorded at the close of the previous month were maintained during May. Towards closing supplies were very light and choice lines brought from 25s. to 32s. per half case.

Papaws Again Cheaper.

Increased supplies of papaws came to hand from Queensland each week and values again declined. Most realisations were within the range of 10s. to 20s. per tropical case according to condition on arrival although towards the end a slight falling off in size of consignments resulted in prices for best packs advancing to 25s. Demand for lines showing good colour was fairly keen but very green lots were slow to move, some being unsaleable.

Pineapples Lower in Price at Closing.

Increased quantities of pineapples arrived from Queensland during May, particularly in the last two weeks of the month. A wide range in size and quality was apparent and rates varied accordingly. Packs of popular counts brought mainly the fixed maximum price of 26s. 3d. per tropical case except at closing when few realisations exceeded 22s. Quotations for other grades ranged from as low as 10s. for very large and 8s. for very small. A decline in the retail demand was noticeable towards the end of the period.

Other Fruit: Representative prices for other main fruit lines available were as follow: Persimmons 5s. to 9s.; Guavas 6s. to 12s.; Custard Apples (Queensland) 5s. to 8s., few 10s. to 14s.; Avocados (Queensland) 10s. to 20s., few special to 25s. per half bushel case. Quinces 8s. to 14s. per bushel case. Realisations for some inferior lines were lower than these quotations.

VEGETABLES.

Beans Over-supplied and Prices very Low.

Greatly increased quantities of beans arrived on the market from the first week of May onwards as a result of the commencement of the autumn crop in the Gosford and North Coast districts. Supplies on most selling days were in excess of retail requirements and sellers experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining prices sufficiently high to be remunerative to growers. Realisations which were as high as 20s. per bushel on 2nd May depreciated daily and, by 12th May, very few quotations for choicest lines exceeded 4s. This situation continued with only slight fluctuations until the last two days of the month when a falling off in receivals caused rates to advance to 10s. per bushel for best lots. During the period of over-supply, medium and inferior beans were practically unsaleable, even when offered at as low as 6d. per bushel and many lines remained on agents' floors until unsuitable for sale. A large percentage of consignments from Gosford and districts further north was found to be affected by Sclerotinia Rot and Anthracnose and could not be sold. The glut conditions were slightly relieved at times by the purchase of appreciable quantities for the Melbourne market.

Peas Cheaper.

Values for peas were adversely affected by the low rates ruling for beans. Offerings from day to day were fairly regular in size and quotations were mainly within the range of 8s. to 14s. per bushel, although as much as 18s. was obtained both early in the month and at closing. Heavy rain in growing areas resulted in considerable water damage and sellers were obliged to dispose of many lines so damaged at prices well below top market values. Demand was mainly for choice "Gems" which were available in increasing quantities as the month progressed.

Values for Tomatoes Remain Stable.

Stocks of tomatoes were not at any time in excess of retail requirements during the period under review. As a result, values showed little fluctuation and remained at moderately high levels throughout. Choicest local packs brought mainly from 10s. to 14s. per half case, although on occasions 15s. to 16s. was obtained. Consignments from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and the Central Tableland district declined gradually both in size and quality and realisations ranged mainly from 3s. to 8s. per half case, with only specially selected packs higher. In addition, small quantities arrived from Queensland. These opened up in good condition and were quoted at 6s. to 10s., few 12s., per half case.

Cabbages Cheap but Meet a Dull Demand.

Although only moderate supplies of cabbages were forward on most selling days, inquiry from the retail trade was insufficient to enable clearances to be maintained. Early in the month, prices were mainly within the range of 2s. to 6s. per dozen but during the last two weeks of the period sellers experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining 4s. per dozen for choice large heads and most realisations were within the range of 1s. to 3s. Lack of demand was attributed largely to the heavy offerings of beans and cauliflowers.

Cauliflowers Plentiful and Fairly Cheap.

Early in the period stocks of cauliflowers were insufficient for the requirements of retailers and from 16s. to 20s. and occasionally to 24s. per dozen was realised for choice large heads. In the third week of the month, however, greatly increased quantities came forward from near-metropolitan and suburban growing centres to supplement the regular receivals from the Central Tableland region. Values dropped sharply and most sales were within the range of 1s. to 8s. Large purchases were made for services requirements and by factory buyers and it was only this fact which enabled sellers to maintain clearances. At closing, receivals from the Central Tableland showed a decline and an upward trend in rates was apparent.

Slight Improvement in Prices for Lettuce.

Daily receivals of lettuce were more regular and quotations generally were slightly higher than during the previous month, being mainly within the range of 8s. to 12s. per case for good and choice packs. At closing, however, consistently wet weather adversely affected the demand and few sales exceeded 7s.

Market Over-Supplied with Queensland Cucumbers.

Early in the period green cucumbers were lightly supplied and offerings, which were mainly from Queensland, brought from 8s. to 12s. per half case. Consignments from Queensland, however, increased from week to week and resulted in the market being over-supplied. At closing values had declined to range mainly from 1s. to 4s. and many lines in an over-mature and yellow condition were unsaleable.

Other Main Vegetable Lines: Closing quotations for other main vegetables were: Carrots 8s. to 12s., few 14s. to 16s.; Parsnips 10s. to 16s., few 18s. to 20s.; Potatoes 7s. 10½d. (fixed maximum price); Onions: (Vic.) Brown 23s. 6d. (fixed maximum price); Swedes 6s. to 16s.; Pumpkins 6s. to 10s., few higher; Sweet Potatoes 16s. to 24s. per cwt. Celery: (N.S.W.) 4s. to 8s., special 10s. to 13s. per dozen bunches; (South Australian) 12s. to 18s., few higher per crate. Brussels Sprouts: (N.S.W.) 4s. to 8s. per 12 lbs. (Vic.) 4s. to 8s. (early quotations to 16s.) per 12 lb. box.

T. McKEON.