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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS.

January, 1947.

FRUIT.

Increased Supplies of Coastal Apples.

A gradual increase in consignments of new season's apples from coastal districts was evident during January. Both cooking and dessert varieties were available and the quality of offerings showed some improvement. Demand for large sizes was fairly satisfactory, but small fruit, which comprised the bulk of available supplies, was difficult to clear. Granny Smith cooking apples brought as much as 25s. per bushel case early in the month, but, at closing, best sizes were selling at 22s. Other cooking varieties seldom realised more than 14s. Large coloured dessert apples were quoted at 24s. to 30s. and occasionally higher. Over 2,500 cases from Queensland, representing several varieties, were forward and sold satisfactorily at rates approximately equal to those ruling for local packs.

Coastal Peach Season Closing.

Peaches from coastal and inland districts were well supplied during the greater part of the month and values declined sharply. Very few lines realised more than 14s. per half case until the last week, when receipts from coastal sources showed an appreciable falling off and as high as 22s. was obtained. The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and other inland centres of New South Wales continued to forward moderate quantities. Early consignments from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area arrived in poor to medium condition, but some improvement was noticed later, when up to 15s. per half case was quoted for choice white flesh varieties. Peaches from other inland districts sold at approximately the same rates as coastal offerings. Victorian fruit was also available in limited quantities. Quality showed a wide variation, and prices ranged accordingly from 14s. per bushel case for yellow clingstones in sound carrying condition to 35s. and occasionally higher for best white flesh varieties.

Pears More Plentiful.

Williams pears from Victorian and New South Wales growing areas commenced to arrive early in January, and first transactions took place at as high as 24s. per bushel case. By the middle of the month, however, stocks were more plentiful, and pears became one of the least expensive fruits in the market, selling at 12s. to 16s. A fairly good inquiry ruled at all times, mainly for choice, large, wrapped packs in coloured condition. Rates were easier at the close of the month.

Valencia Oranges Dearer.

Values for Valencia oranges generally were higher than the December rates. During the first half of January the price for best selected counts was firm at 22s., but for the balance of the month choice oranges were scarce, and prices varied between 24s. and 28s. per bushel case. With the main-crop Valencia orange season drawing to a close, the percentage of "break-down" in consignments, particularly from coastal districts, increased progressively. Oranges of popular sizes showing signs of deterioration were sold by agents at prices well below top market rates. Quotations for most oranges other than choice fruit of selected counts ranged from 10s. to 18s. with some plain grades lower.

Large Plums and Nectarines Scarce.

Throughout the greater part of the month choice large plums and nectarines were scarce and realised high prices, plums bringing as much as 20s. and nectarines to 24s. and occasionally higher per half bushel case. Medium sized lines met a fair inquiry, but agents found small and inferior descriptions extremely difficult to dispose of.

New Season's Grapes Available.

First consignments of grapes from local sources reached the market about mid-January. Prices early were as high as 45s. and 50s. per half case for Black Muscatels, but by the end of the month choice lines were available at 20s. to 30s. Other Black varieties were also on offer at, generally, a few shillings per half case less. Limited quantities of Queensland grapes, mainly Black Muscatels, were received.

Bananas and Pineapples Still in Short Supply.

Supplies of bananas and pineapples were insufficient to meet demands of the retail trade and the maximum wholesale rates of 6¼d. per lb. for bananas and 26s. 3d. per tropical case for pineapples were maintained throughout almost the entire month. At closing, however, the consignments of pineapples from Queensland increased suddenly and rates on the last selling day of the month weakened considerably, many lines selling below the maximum price.

Lemon Prices Fairly Firm.

Choice coloured lemons were scarce early in the month and as much as 35s. and occasionally 40s. per bushel case was paid for selected counts. During the middle weeks of the month values declined to a maximum of 25s., but at closing increased to 30s.

Tasmanian Berry Fruits by Air Transport.

The experimental air consignment of Tasmanian Berry Fruits continued during January. Most lines arrived in good condition, though Raspberries did not appear to carry as well as the other fruits, which included Strawberries, Black Currants, Red Currants, Gooseberries and Youngberries.

Stocks of Mangoes and Papaws Light.

Very few Mangoes and Papaws were received from Queensland in the latter stages of January and a decline in quality was apparent.

M.I.A. Cantaloupes in Demand.

Cantaloupes from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area commenced to arrive towards the close of the month and consignments increased rapidly. Almost 4,000 crates were received in the last few days. A good demand was in evidence and rates for best lots, which commenced at 24s. per crate, were firm at 16s. at closing. Local Rock Melons were in moderate supply and sold fairly well. Queensland Honey Dews, however, which arrived in very green condition, were almost completely neglected by buyers.

Passionfruit Plentiful.

Supplies of Passionfruit throughout the greater part of January were in excess of the demand by the retail trade and fairly considerable quantities were purchased by factory buyers. Quality showed wide variation and prices, as a result, ranged early in the month from 5s. to 20s. per half case. Later, the maximum realisation for choice fruit dropped to 16s.

Watermelons Available.

Watermelons, mainly from the Hawkesbury River district, became available in increasing quantities during the period. Weather conditions favoured the rapid disposal of this class of fruit and large melons cleared well on most selling days. For the first three weeks of the month, maximum prices ranged from 35s. to 40s. and occasionally as high as 50s. per dozen, but, at closing, supplies were heavier and few sales took place above 25s. Other quotations ranged, according to size, from 6s. with very small lower.

VEGETABLES.**Heat Affects Quality of Peas.**

Exceptionally heavy supplies of peas were forward for the first three weeks of the month, principally from Central Tableland growing areas, although consignments from New England districts were available at times. Realisations during the period of heavy supply fell to low levels especially for weather-damaged or lines affected by heat in transit. The quantities offering exceeded the retail demand on some occasions and fairly large purchases were made by canners while one firm bought good lines for snap freezing. There was an appreciable decline in quality of the bulk of offerings late in the month owing to the extremely hot and dry conditions prevailing. The small percentage of good and choice quality included in consignments found a ready sale at considerably higher prices than those ruling early in January. At closing best lines were realising from 18s. to 24s., whilst heat-affected lines were quoted at 3s. to 8s. per bushel.

Wide Variation in Bean Prices.

The market for beans was governed largely by supplies. On some occasions values were extremely low and disposal of poor quality lines could not be effected. Demand mainly was for choice descriptions and maximum prices showed marked fluctuations. As low as 5s. was accepted at times, but up to 16s. per bushel was paid on a few days. Supplies were drawn, for the most part, from within the county of Cumberland and the Far South Coast.

Ripe Tomatoes Over-supplied at Times.

With the extremely hot and humid weather experienced during the greater part of January, large quantities of tomatoes reached the ripe stage quickly and the market was over-supplied with this class of fruit. The accumulations of ripe stocks adversely affected values, and, for a limited period, rates were at low levels. It was not until factories were in a position to utilise the large quantities available that the position improved. Generally, values were most irregular, up to 24s. per half case for choice local packs being obtained at times, whilst, on the other hand, it was difficult to realise above 6s. during the period when ripe lots were in abundance.

Cabbages Again Slow of Sale.

With plentiful supplies of beans and peas available, demand for cabbages was restricted during the greater part of the month and values were low, top rates rarely exceeding 4s. per dozen. Just prior to the close, however, there was an improvement in the position owing largely to reduced supplies and the higher prices ruling for other greens. Values at closing ranged from 2s. to 7s. per dozen.

Cauliflowers Available.

Marketing of cauliflowers from the Bathurst district commenced late in January. The quality generally was only medium and the size small. It was expected that supplies would increase appreciably from this district during ensuing months.

Choice Large Lettuce in Short Supply.

There was a good demand for lettuce, especially for choice large heads, remunerative prices up to 20s. being obtained. The percentage of this class included in daily offerings was relatively small, the quality of the bulk being only medium to poor, and rates ranged from 4s. per case.

Cucumbers Exceed Requirements.

Large quantities of apple cucumbers were forward, the stocks available being in excess of trade requirements on a number of days. Prices were low during the period of heavy supply and rates of 1s. to 3s. per half case ruled. Green lines were also plentiful and sold cheaply during the greater part of the month.

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