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“HOW TO FEED 10 MILLION MOUTHS” . . .

From the commencement of settlement in this State, markets have been a problem. In recent years, transport bottlenecks, lack of space and increasing population, all the results of over-centralisation, have caused a simmering of discontent. Here as elsewhere there seems to be a common agreement that *“there comes a time in the development of every metropolis when it is necessary to face boldly up to the fact that existing institutions which hitherto have essayed to cater for the city's needs are no longer adequate themselves to fulfil their original purpose.”* Such a stage, it is claimed, has been reached with regard to the City Municipal Fruit and Vegetable Markets. A whole host of schemes and solutions have been put forward by those seeking improvement involving either a reorganisation or renovation of the existing markets, or else a complete shift to a new site. Expenditure in either direction is likely to reach considerable proportions, and such a project in any case lies many years in the future. It is thus of particular interest to find that the situation in Sydney is little if any worse than it is in New York. The following article from the Consumer's Guide (U.S. Department of Agriculture), May 1947 issue, is here reprinted to show the essential similarity of the marketing problem in Sydney and New York. This extract is of additional interest in the reference made to the advisory service set up by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in relation to marketing problems, but, apparently, even in the great city of New York, present facilities are no better than as they have haphazardly developed over the last one hundred years.

“How to feed 10 million mouths is the daily task of New York City's crowded wholesale markets. Other towns and cities have their market facility problems too.

New York's most exciting, late night life isn't found under the glitter of Times Square. In fact, about the time the signs of Broadway are being dimmed, this other night life really gets under way in a little area at the silent tip of lower Manhattan Island. It is only two blocks wide. Its one-half mile in length is bordered on the west by piers that jut out into the Hudson River. On the east are the dark towers of New York's skyscrapers.

Into its cramped streets lined by squatty, ramshackle, brick buildings the greater part of the perishable foods that will feed the New York area's 10,000,000 people, when day breaks, is brought in and distributed. It is the Washington-street Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market.

Here every night, by truck, by boat, and by train food pours in. Horse-drawn drays, and push carts jockey their way through the trucks. Trans-continental trucks and the small ones of nearby farmers jostle the trucks of local jobbers and merchants and retailers that come to carry away the incoming loads to the retail stores.

To add to the excitement of the scene 50 per cent. of the produce is brought in by train and this must be ferried across the Hudson on car floats from the New Jersey side, unloaded at the piers, trucked across the cobbled highway and laid down at the market.

There's no planned reason for the use of this expensive land, and for these frantic packed-jammed little streets being the greatest focal point of intake of fruits and vegetables for New York and the surrounding areas. None of the buildings was designed for marketing. No streets were laid out to handle traffic. The market just started there and grew. Dealers took over buildings, warehouses, tenements and the like that had been erected a century ago and the institution carried on.



Market facilities range all the way from great terminal markets to push carts. Push cart markets in New York are now off the street and have their own improved facilities.

Yet into this ancient area nightly comes fruit and lettuce from the West Coast, citrus from Florida, early cucumbers from Louisiana, apples from up-State New York, eggs and produce from the farms of the Midwest, melons from the South, potatoes from Maine and Idaho. In fact, there are truly truck crops of all sorts from most all the States of the Union.

The State of New York ranks first amongst the States in which this produce originates, California comes next, and Florida third.

These tens of thousands of carloads of fresh produce that arrive in New York City constitute nearly 12 per cent. of the total commercial production of fresh fruits and vegetables in the United States.

Among the commodities accounted for in these huge shipments of food, potatoes rank first with the largest number of freight carloads. Oranges were a close second, with apples, lettuce, and tomatoes following. With these leaders came 44 varieties of fresh fruits and 73 varieties of fresh vegetables.

Although there are 12 other New York City markets as well as different railroad, steamship terminals, and chain-store warehouses, more than two-thirds of the produce is handled at the old Washington-street stand.

Inefficient marketing conditions of this sort are of vital importance to the consumer, the farmer, the wholesaler, and the retailer. Old-fashioned or inadequate facilities add extra labour costs and other charges to the movement of the goods. Every one loses. The consumer pays more or does not buy; the farmer sells less than he would if the extra costs were not tacked on to the selling price.

When it is considered that the total cost of distributing the fruits and vegetables after they reach New York City are almost as much as the cost of producing and transporting them to the city the importance of savings at this point is evident.

New York is not alone when it comes to having a market facility problem to solve. Marketing facilities are links in a moving chain that conveys food from the farm to the kitchen. These facilities are represented by the clapboard shelters along country railway sidings where farmers bring in their crops for sorting into loads sized right for shipment. The warehouses of canneries and processing plants in producing areas handling the fresh crops are links as well as big terminal markets. In strength these facilities range all the way from weak to inadequate.

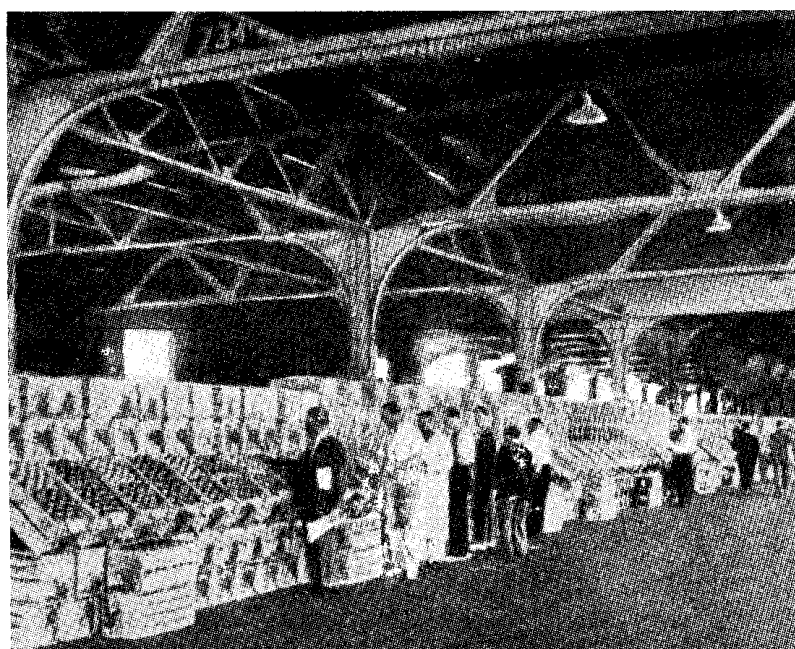


A small fruit and vegetable stand in New York's Essex Street Market takes the place of push cart market facilities.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture made a survey of terminal markets in 20 cities serving metropolitan populations of totalling some 40 million people. These markets handled more than 800,000 carloads of fruits and vegetables annually. The survey showed that extensive improvements were needed in the fruit and vegetable wholesale marketing facilities in 15 of the 20 cities. Thirteen markets lacked direct railway connections. Eight cities had duplicate markets, owned by the railways, 20 cities contained 64 separate markets, 11 cities were found to be handling an excessive amount of produce by hand, 11 were handicapped by excessive hauling. Traffic conditions were too congested in 15 of the cities, and two-thirds of the markets were in old poorly designed store buildings.

The job of getting more up-to-date, efficient, and less costly marketing facilities in large terminals is a big one. An out-grown, out-moded terminal is expensive for everyone from consumer to farmer and puts extra charges on the public as a whole. And, the actual work of reorganizing and re-establishing up-to-date marketing facilities is too big for any single group to undertake. The jobbers, and wholesalers can't do it alone, the railroads can't do it alone nor can the consumers and farmers. It is a public problem and responsibility.

† 51947--B



**Trainloads of fruit are brought to lower Manhattan by car floats.
At Erie Railroad Terminal pier, wholesalers are buying.**

During the war when vast quantities of food had to be moved under heavy pressure of time, and when labour was scarce, the failures of our marketing setup were brought into dramatic focus. Farm trade groups, civic organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and State and city officials recognized more acutely than ever before that something must be done.

In order to meet the marketing facility problems of varied communities the Department of Agriculture, which has for years been studying marketing facilities throughout the country, brought together specialists in all facets of the work. Specialists in handling, storing, transporting, displaying, and distributing various commodities were assembled. So too were experts in designing marketing structures, planning lay-outs, and installing equipment for a truly efficient market. These experts can supply advice on and plans for construction and improvements on all kinds of markets from an adequate shelter shed on the right of way near a village railroad station, to a vast terminal market equipped for receiving trucks, trains, and ships and equipment for the warehousing and distributing of all types of commodities.

Their services are available for solving these problems from the beginning. They investigate the producing areas, the type of transportation, and the best possible site for the market. They advise on construction costs and operating costs. They figure the chances of paying off the investment in a reasonable time as estimated against the sources of income.

This consultation service provided by the Department of Agriculture lasts until the work is completed. Last year this service was requested by State and local marketing people in about 25 cities. Although the difficulty and the cost of still obtaining material for the actual construction of the improvements are holding them up, the time is being used in the refinement of the plans. In some instances it was found that buildings of old fair-grounds were suitable for conversion into marketing facilities. The use of them resulted in a saving of \$300,000. Interest too is State-wide in a number of contemplated projects. Marketing people in one State are working out plans for a State-wide system of concentration—and terminal—marketing facilities.

In still another State, farmers want a survey made of marketing facilities for fruit, vegetables, poultry, and eggs.

When the State marketing authority requested the service and city officials and farm and trade groups agreed, the Department undertook the study that has resulted in the assembly of economic information upon which a working project can be built. The site is already being considered.



A Scene at the Sydney Fruit and Vegetable Markets—Note Traffic Congestion.

[Photo by R. D. MEAKER.]

And the legislature of a Southern State recently worked with the representatives of the Department of Agriculture and State officials to prepare a bill, which was passed, appropriating \$550,000 for a centrally located market, the contract for which has already been let."
