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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS.

February, 1948.

FRUIT.

Dessert Apples Cheaper.

Increased supplies of new season's dessert apples came to hand during February. In addition, receipts of Williams pears were much larger and this caused a further weakening in values for apples. Early in the period, best Jonathan and McIntosh Red brought 26s. per bushel case, and occasionally higher, and, at closing, realisations did not exceed 20s. except for a few brands of outstanding colour. Prices for Granny Smiths also were slightly easier. Receipts from interstate sources comprised approximately 11,500 cases from the Stanthorpe district of Queensland, and small quantities from Victoria. Closing quotations were as follow:—*New South Wales* (New Season): Cooking—Granny Smith 6s. to 14s., special 15s., few 16s.; Dessert—Delicious (large) 20s. to 25s.; Jonathan 12s. to 20s., few higher; Gravenstein 6s. to 16s., special coloured to 18s.; McIntosh Red 7s. to 16s., special coloured to 18s., few higher; very small sizes, all varieties, lower. *Queensland*: Delicious 18s. to 22s., few 24s.; Jonathan 12s. to 18s., special 20s., few higher; McIntosh Red 12s. to 15s., few to 18s.; Granny Smith 12s. to 16s. *Victorian*: Gravenstein 8s. to 12s. per bushel case.

Supplies of Pears Exceed Requirements.

Early in the month offerings of Williams pears from New South Wales growing areas and from Victoria were only moderate, and rates were well maintained, best wrapped fruit bringing as much as 16s. per bushel case. By the third week, however, a considerable carry-over had accumulated on selling floors and agents were obliged to reduce prices in an endeavour to maintain clearances. The market was further adversely affected by the fact that many consignments came to hand in a ripe condition. Although in the last two weeks of the period sound fruit brought principally from 6s. to 10s., with special to 12s., many forward ripe packs were disposed of at prices varying from 2s. 6d. to 5s. Towards closing a slight improvement was apparent and rates had a firmer tendency, New South Wales Williams bringing from 6s. to 12s., with a few choice green to 14s., and Victorian Williams 6s. to 12s. per bushel case. Most of the 1,700 cases received from Queensland opened up in a forward ripe condition and were disposed of at from 4s. to 8s., although as much as 12s. had been obtained early in the month.

Inland Peaches Replace Coastal.

Supplies of coastal peaches ceased early in the month, final quotations for best fruit being as high as 16s. per half case. Increased consignments, however, came to hand from the Central Tableland growing areas and from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and Victoria and, in general, supplies continued to be ample for requirements. Throughout the greater part of the month,

Central Tableland peaches were quoted at from 8s. to 14s. per half case with a few special to 16s. In the final week, however, greatly increased stocks were forward and most realisations varied from 6s. to 10s., although odd special packs brought 12s. to 13s. Many lines were affected by fungus and were neglected by buyers even at very low prices. Fruit from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area showed a high percentage of breakdown on arrival due to fungus and most sales ranged from 4s. to 8s., with extra choice to 10s. White flesh varieties from Victoria also were lacking in keeping qualities and brought principally from 6s. to 16s. per bushel case, although a few special brands realised to 24s. Elbertas sold steadily at 10s. to 18s., but Yellow Clingstone varieties were difficult to dispose of mainly at 8s. to 14s. A consignment of 200 cases from Queensland was of medium quality only and brought from 4s. to 7s. per half case.

Restricted Inquiry for Plums.

Although only moderate supplies of plums were received, inquiry was restricted and sellers experienced difficulty in maintaining disposals. Best Angelinas brought as much as 20s. per half case during the first week, but subsequently this variety was lacking in size and few realisations exceeded 14s. Other varieties on offer were "President" and "Grand Duke" but these met a quiet demand mainly at 5s. to 10s. A few Narrabeens from inland growing areas were received, but generally were lacking in keeping quality and were not popular. Moderate quantities of Pond's Seedling were forward but this variety showed a considerable amount of breakdown and sales were difficult to effect. Only small quantities came to hand from Victoria.

Heavy Wastage in Nectarines.

Supplies of locally grown nectarines ceased early in the period, as much as 20s. per half case being obtained for the last few lines available. During the remainder of the month regular consignments arrived from inland growing areas, but heavy wastage due to fungus was apparent. Inquiry from the retail trade was limited and agents experienced considerable difficulty in maintaining clearances. A large percentage of sales took place at from 4s. to 8s. per half case, but packs in sound condition on arrival brought principally from 10s. to 14s. according to colour, quality and count.

Grapes Fairly Plentiful.

Daily receipts of grapes increased as the month advanced and values showed a corresponding decline. Early in the period, rates were only slightly lower than those recorded in last report, best black Muscat bringing up to 30s. with occasional special to 35s. per half case, but prices receded gradually as the month progressed. Closing quotations were as follow:—*New South Wales*: Black Muscat 8s. to 16s., special 18s. to 22s.; White Muscat 16s. to 22s., few to 25s.; Hamburg 8s. to 12s., few 14s.; Waltham Cross (M.I.A.) 8s. to 14s., few 16s. *Queensland*: Black Muscat 6s. to 12s., few 14s.; Gros Coleman 10s. to 14s.; Waltham Cross 4s. to 8s., few 10s. per half case. A large

percentage of the stocks from Queensland showed a dry stalk condition on arrival and, in addition, many lines of the Waltham Cross variety were lacking in sugar content and could not be sold to the retail trade.

Considerable Fluctuation in Prices for Bananas.

During the first week of the month under review, quotations for bananas showed little alteration from those recorded in last issue, and ranged principally from 10s. to 20s. per banana case, with occasional sales to 24s. In the second week, however, a temporary shortage of supplies caused a sharp advance in prices and choice large fruit brought 22s. to 25s., with a few extra choice to 28s. per banana case. These prices were not maintained, however, during the latter half of the month when heavy consignments came to hand. During the final week in particular values were adversely affected by large quantities of fruit which arrived in a ripe and "boiled" condition as a result of the hot weather. Closing realisations were as follow:—*New South Wales* and *Queensland*: Cavendish 8-inch to 9-inch 12s. to 16s., few higher; sevens 10s. to 14s.; sixes 8s. to 12s.; ripe, inferior and small, lower, per banana case.

Quality of Coastal and Near-Metropolitan Valencias Declines.

Realisations for Valencia oranges showed little fluctuation during the period. Early in the month best packs from coastal and near-metropolitan growers brought 18s., and occasionally 20s., per bushel case. A decline in quality was apparent subsequently, however, and the bulk of transactions in main crop fruit took place within the range of 8s. to 16s. Second crop were slow of sale early in the month at 5s. to 9s., but rates later advanced to range from 6s. to 12s., with occasional choice higher. Fruit from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, however, was in good condition and met a keen demand. Prices advanced to range from 14s. to 24s. per bushel case according to count.

Realisations for Lemons Generally Higher.

The improved prices ruling for lemons at the close of the previous month were fairly well maintained throughout the period under review. During the third week a slight recession occurred and values seldom exceeded 12s. per bushel case for best counts, but, in general, realisations varied from 6s. to 14s., with late sales to 16s. Large fruit of good quality met a satisfactory inquiry whilst medium sizes moved out well. Lines showing breakdown, however, were slow to clear.

Choice Passionfruit Comparatively Scarce.

Passionfruit were well supplied early and prices did not exceed 14s. per half case. Subsequently, however, daily offerings included only a small percentage of choice packs and these cleared rapidly at 16s. to 20s., and occasionally to 22s. Medium to good grade packs were ample for requirements, however, at prices varying from 6s. to 14s.

Papaws Scarce and Dear.

Receipts of papaws dropped sharply, only 2,014 tropical cases being received from Queensland during February. Prices advanced after the first week, best packs bringing from 28s. to 35s., with medium quality lines from 20s. Some over-ripe and inferior fruit was cheaper.

Pineapples More Plentiful.

Greatly increased supplies of pineapples arrived from Queensland, a total of 43,200 tropical cases being offered. Early in the period, choicest lines brought 20s. to 24s., with occasional sales higher, but subsequently a decline in values was apparent. At closing most realisations varied from 10s. to 18s. according to quality and count.

Cantaloupes Sell Well.

Fairly large consignments of cantaloupes came to hand from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area throughout the month. Demand from the retail trade was satisfactory and clearances were well maintained. Quotations ranged from 14s. to 22s. per crate during the middle weeks of the month, but early and late realisations were as high as 26s.

Demand for Water Melons Limited.

Offerings of water melons on most selling days were only moderate, but inquiry from the retail trade was limited. Quotations varied principally from 6s. to 24s. per dozen according to size, with specially selected large melons to 36s. Occasional sales, however, were made at 40s. to 50s.

Other Fruit.

Representative quotations for other main lines were as follow:—
Mangoes 5s. to 12s., early sales to 18s.; Apricots 4s. to 12s., early sales to 20s. per half bushel case.

VEGETABLES.**Peas Again Plentiful.**

Supplies of peas totalled more than 56,000 bags. Receipts were fairly regular and values showed little fluctuation, ranging on most days from 6s. to 12s. per bushel, with special to 14s. On occasions of temporary scarcity, however, rates advanced to 18s., with occasional sales to 22s. Considerable quantities were purchased by "quick-freeze" processors early in the period and this averted a decline in values on some selling days when stocks were in excess of retail requirements.

Beans Over-supplied Towards Closing.

Offerings of beans again approximated 15,000 bags from New South Wales growers in addition to 1,000 from Victoria and 550 from Queensland. Stocks in the growers' market were only moderate. Early in the month, supplies were insufficient for requirements and prices advanced to range from 12s. to 24s., with occasional special to 26s. per bushel on most selling days. Towards the end of the third week, however, daily supplies were

heavier and sellers were obliged to reduce prices. The lowest quotations were on Tuesday, 24th February, when realisations varied from 1s. to 6s. per bushel, with early sales of special quality to 8s. During the last week, agents experienced considerable difficulty in disposing of medium and inferior quality beans which were not wanted by the retail trade. A slight recovery was apparent on the last two days of the month.

Cabbages Generally Cheaper.

The market for cabbages showed a gradual decline towards the end of the period. Receipts were not heavy but the plentiful supplies of beans towards closing had an adverse effect on demand for cabbages. Early quotations for choice large heads ranged from 18s. to 20s., with occasional sales to 24s. per dozen, but final realisations varied principally from 5s. to 14s.

Quiet Demand for Cauliflowers.

The moderate consignments of new season's cauliflowers received were principally of medium and inferior grade and met a dull retail demand at low prices. A few specially selected heads brought as much as 16s. per dozen, but considerable quantities were cleared at prices ranging from 1s. 6d. to 6s.

Lettuce Generally Over-supplied.

On most trading days offerings of lettuce were in excess of the needs of the retail trade. Choice packs cleared satisfactorily, mainly at 7s. to 10s. per case, although, throughout the third week of the month, as much as 14s. was obtained. Considerable difficulty was experienced, however, in maintaining disposals of medium to good grade packs even at low prices, which ranged principally from 3s. to 6s. A large carry-over remained on many trading days when the Producers' Market closed at 10 a.m.

Tomatoes in Light Supply.

Locally grown tomatoes, in general, were lightly supplied during the month. Realisations for choice packs showed slight fluctuations mainly within the range of 16s. to 20s. per half case, although on occasions of scarcity as much as 24s. was obtained. Small size fruit was offered from 6s., whilst very small and inferior were cheaper. Hot and humid weather during two weekends, however, resulted in increased stocks being on offer on the Monday mornings, and on these occasions sellers found it difficult to realise more than 10s. for well coloured packs as the morning advanced. Consignments from Queensland totalled approximately 12,500 half cases. These were principally in green condition and brought from 5s. to 12s. per half case according to quality, with occasional sales to 14s.

Cucumbers Scarce and Dear.

Offerings of cucumbers were much lighter during the month and prices showed a considerable advance. The green variety brought mainly from 10s. to 16s. per half case, although on occasions as much as 20s. was obtained. Many inferior packs were cheaper. Apple cucumbers were quoted principally at 8s. to 16s., although as much as 18s. was realised on occasions. Some stocks from Queensland and Victoria were available. Larger supplies from all districts later in the month resulted in a gradual decline in values, which seldom exceeded 14s. at closing.

Other Main Vegetable Lines.

Representative ranges of prices for other main lines of vegetables available were as follow:—Potatoes, No. 1 Grade, 10s. (fixed maximum price); Carrots 10s. to 24s., early and late sales to 36s., few higher; Parsnips (old season) 8s. to 22s., few higher; Onions, N.S.W. Brown and White, 12s. to 18s., few special to 23s. 6d.; Victorian Brown 22s. to 23s. 6d.; South Australian White 23s. 6d. (23s. 6d. is the fixed maximum price); Pumpkins 7s. to 10s., special to 12s., few special local to 18s.; Swedes 12s. to 24s., few higher; Sweet Potatoes 12s. to 20s., special to 24s., isolated sales to 32s. per cwt.; Celery (local) 8s. to 15s., special to 18s., late sales to 24s. per dozen bunches.

T. M. McKEON.