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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES AT CITY MUNICIPAL MARKETS.

January, 1948.

FRUIT.

Quiet Demand for Apples.

Supplies of new season apples were only moderate but were ample for the limited requirements of the retail trade. Inquiry was principally for medium and large sizes and small fruit was difficult to dispose of. In the dessert varieties also, only lines showing good colour were keenly sought after. A considerably weaker tendency in prices for cooking apples was apparent towards the end of the month when increasing supplies of the Granny Smith variety were coming forward. Quotations for Gravenstein and Macintosh Red ranged principally from 12s. to 26s., with early sales as high as 30s. per bushel case. Very small and inferior packs were cheaper. Granny Smiths brought as much as 24s. early but, at closing, sales ranged from 8s. to 16s., with special 18s. Other cooking varieties, including Willie Sharp and Twenty Ounce, realised up to 18s. in the first half of the period but towards closing only small quantities were forward and rates had dropped to range from 6s. to 14s. Receipts from Queensland and Victoria were fairly light.

New Season Pears Meet Restricted Inquiry.

Offerings of new season pears from Victorian and New South Wales growers were fairly small. However, the retail demand was particularly dull and sellers experienced difficulty in maintaining clearances. Prices declined gradually throughout the period. Best wrapped Williams brought as much as 22s. early but at closing values ranged from 8s. to 15s. per bushel case. Clapp's Favourites were not popular; although up to 20s. was obtained early, at closing realisations varied from 6s. to 12s.

Peaches Over-Supplied and Values Low.

Supplies of peaches, both in the agents' and producers' markets, were at all times heavy during the month. In the growers' market, prices in the main varied from 3s. to 8s. per half case, with a few special brands to 10s. and occasionally higher. Agents, however, experienced considerable difficulty in maintaining clearances and realisations for stocks received on consignment generally were lower, ranging from 2s. to 6s., with extra choice to 8s. Only a few special brands from inland districts realised more. Towards closing, however, an improvement in disposals was apparent and prices rose on the last two trading days of the month. Small quantities of Victorian peaches were available but were of medium quality only.

Supplies of Apricots Decline.

A gradual decline in daily receipts of apricots was apparent. Realisations covered the wide range of 6s. to 20s. per half case because of considerable variation in the size and quality. Late quotations for best packs were as high as 24s. Small quantities

arrived from Victoria. Early in the month the quality was good and as much as 30s. per bushel case was obtained but later quotations ranged principally from 8s. to 18s.

Plums Scarce at End of Month.

During the third week of the month supplies of plums were far in excess of requirements and a large carry-over of ripe fruit had a depressing effect on market values, few realisations exceeding 10s. per half case. However, towards closing, stocks dwindled and rates had an upward trend. Angelinas brought from 6s. to 16s. per half case and other varieties from 6s. to 14s., with choice large fruit to 18s. A few special brands were dearer. Moderate quantities of Victorian Angelinas came to hand. A high percentage was of small size and brought only 8s. to 10s. per bushel case. However, some choice large fruit realised as much as 30s. in the second week of the period.

Dull Demand for Nectarines.

Inquiry from the retail trade for nectarines was particularly dull in the last half of the month, mainly as a result of the fact that a very high percentage of supplies was lacking in keeping qualities and showed signs of break-down on arrival or whilst on selling floors. Most rates varied from 4s. to 12s. per half case according to size and condition but special packs, which were comparatively scarce, met a strong demand at all times, bringing to 16s. and occasionally to 22s.

Consignments of Cherries Terminate.

Only small consignments of cherries came to hand in the first half of January and inquiry was restricted. Most sales ranged from 6s. to 16s. but final quotations for choice packs were as high as 20s. per quarter case.

Few New Season Grapes Available.

First consignments of Queensland grapes commenced to arrive early in the period. These were of the Hamburg variety and brought from 14s. to 24s. and occasionally higher per half case. Towards closing small quantities were coming forward from New South Wales growers, Black Muscat being quoted at 20s. to 36s. with isolated sales to 40s., Hamburg (black) at 20s. to 30s., with a few special higher and common white varieties at 10s. to 18s. per half case.

Prices for Bananas Show a Gradual Decline.

The market for bananas was adversely affected early in the month by a heavy carry-over of ripe fruit from the holiday period. This had a depressing effect on values and sellers were obliged to offer stocks in a forward condition at from 1s. to 6s. per banana case. In the latter half of the month, this surplus had been cleared but receipts continued to be heavy and prices were reduced gradually, being lowest at closing, as follows:—Cavendish 9-inch and 8-inch 13s. to 16s., few to 20s., sevens 10s. to 14s., sixes 7s. to 13s., ripe and small lower per banana case. Queensland growers forwarded 11,270 cases.

Rates for Oranges Maintained at Moderate Levels.

Realisations for main crop Valencia oranges were fairly regular throughout the month. Special quality packs were comparatively scarce and brought from 14s. to 18s. per bushel case. A large percentage of main crop quotations, however, ranged from 8s. to 12s. Second crop generally were not in demand at 4s. to 8s., although a few choice packs brought as much as 12s. Plains were practically unsaleable at 4s. to 6s. Fruit from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area came to hand in moderate quantities and met a good demand at 14s. to 18s. and occasionally to 20s.

Demand for Lemons Improves Towards Closing.

Early in the month, medium sized lemons sold satisfactorily at 8s. to 12s. per bushel case, but large sized fruit was practically unsaleable even at as low as 4s. Towards closing, however, an improved demand operated and realisations ranged principally from 8s. to 16s., with medium sizes selling well and large meeting a moderate demand.

Passionfruit Plentiful and Values Decline.

Offerings of passionfruit were more than sufficient for requirements and, despite fairly large purchases by factory buyers, sellers were obliged to reduce rates gradually throughout the period. Early realisations were as high as 20s. per half case of best lines but at closing most sales ranged from 4s. to 10s., with a few special 12s. A small quantity of Queensland passionfruit of medium quality was available.

Restricted Inquiry for Tasmanian Berry Fruits.

Small quantities of berry fruits were received by air from Tasmania. Inquiry was restricted, particularly for black currants which were difficult to clear. Representative quotations were:— Strawberries, 18s. to 36s., few higher; Black Currants, 12s. to 24s.; Red Currants, 18s. to 30s., few to 36s. per dozen packets. However, some wastage occurred in lines carried over and these were sold at lower prices.

Higher Realisations for Papaws at Closing.

During the first half of January prices for Queensland papaws were fairly low, ranging according to quality from 8s. to 14s. per tropical case with blemished and inferior fruit cheaper. Later, however, smaller consignments and an improved demand resulting from belated advent of summer weather caused prices to rise, and closing quotations ranged principally from 16s. to 25s. Consignments totalled 7,990 tropical cases.

Rates for Pineapples Fairly Stable.

Values for Queensland pineapples showed little fluctuation throughout the month and on most selling days ranged from 12s. to 20s., with special 22s. per tropical case. However, occasional lines of outstanding quality were quoted at as much as 26s. Some very small fruit was cheaper. Receipts totalled 29,735 tropical cases.

Rock Melons Sell Satisfactorily.

Moderate supplies of local rock melons came to hand and met a fairly satisfactory demand at prices ranging principally from 8s. to 16s. per tropical case, with extra choice packs to 22s. A few special brands, however, brought as much as 30s. early in the period. Toward closing, first deliveries of new season cantaloupes were received from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. Opening quotations ranged from 15s. to 25s., with special to 30s. per crate.

Light Supplies of Water Melons Meet Quiet Request.

Receivals of water melons during the period were fairly light as heavy early summer rains adversely affected crops. Early in the period, continued wet weather retarded the retail demand but some improvement was noticeable towards closing. Most sales took place within the range of 6s. to 24s. per dozen according to size and quality but a few specially selected large melons brought 36s., and occasionally as much as 45s. and 50s. per dozen.

Other Fruit.

Representative quotations for other main lines were as follow:—Grapefruit (M.I.A.) 14s. to 18s., few to 22s., (Vic.) 10s. to 20s., special to 24s.; Mangoes (Q'ld), dessert 24s. to 36s., few to 40s., common 2s. to 12s. per bushel case. Figs 3s. to 8s., few 10s., per quarter case.

VEGETABLES.**Peas Generally Plentiful.**

Offerings of peas on most selling days were more than sufficient for the requirements of the retail trade and only fairly heavy purchases by processors enabled values to be maintained at moderately high levels. A period of very heavy rain during the second week caused a temporary shortage and on Thursday, 15th January, values soared, best lines bringing 36s. and occasionally as much as 40s. per bushel. This rise was not maintained, however, on the following day. Generally, during the first half of the month, best lines brought 18s. to 24s., and occasionally higher, but subsequently a gradual decline occurred and during the last week most sales took place within the range of 5s. to 12s., with special 14s., and occasionally 16s. per bushel. Consignments to agents from New South Wales growers totalled more than 54,000 bags.

Medium Quality Beans Difficult to Clear.

The 15,000 bags of beans consigned by New South Wales growers were augmented by 150 bags from Queensland and 1,700 from Victoria, in addition to moderate quantities in the producers' market. Choice lines at all times represented only a small percentage of the total offering and sold well but sellers experienced considerable difficulty in maintaining clearances of medium grade lots. Throughout the greater part of the period choice brought from 16s. to 18s. per bushel but, at times, prices rose to 20s. and occasionally to 24s. However, very heavy supplies in the last week of the month caused the market to collapse and on Wednesday, 28th January, realisations varied from 1s. to 7s.

with a few to 8s. Prices recovered on the last two days of the month and at closing ranged mainly from 6s. to 18s. per bushel according to quality.

Cabbages Generally Dearer.

In general, cabbages were dearer during January. Early quotations ranged from 6s. to 18s. per dozen according to size and quality but the shortage of peas and beans on 15th January caused a sharp rise to 30s. and occasionally higher. The market subsequently was maintained at as high as 24s. for best lines except during the last three days of the month when realisations did not exceed 20s.

Lettuce Cheaper at Closing.

During the first three weeks of the period, lettuce continued to be in short supply and special quality packs on most days brought from 16s. to 20s., with late sales as high as 24s. per case. Medium and inferior packs, however, were difficult to dispose of at prices ranging from 5s. Towards the end of the month an improvement in the weather caused an increase in receipts and sellers were obliged to reduce rates, choice selling at 6s. to 10s. with medium from 3s.

Bagged Carrots Mainly Scarce and Dear.

Supplies of carrots were very light early in the month and realisations for best lines reached 45s. per cwt. However, greatly increased supplies came forward as a result of the high prices ruling and rates subsequently declined to range principally from 8s. to 20s. according to size, grading and quality. An upward trend was again apparent towards closing. Receipts of bunched lines in the producers' market were fairly regular and although as much as 14s. per dozen bunches was obtained on occasions, a considerable percentage of sales ranged from 4s. to 8s.

Tomatoes Generally Insufficient for Requirements.

Offerings of tomatoes from near-metropolitan growing areas were insufficient for the requirements of the retail trade during the first three weeks of the month. Choice packs brought principally from 18s. to 22s. per half case, although as much as 30s. was obtained on a few occasions. On Tuesday, 27th January, however, after the fine holiday week-end, a considerable increase in supplies was apparent and prices commenced to decline, few sales during the week exceeding 14s., whilst many choice packs were sold at approximately 10s. per half case. Large quantities were received from the Shepparton district of Victoria but these were principally of medium quality only and were unsuitable for Sydney retail requirements. Although as much as 30s. per bushel case was obtained for some good coloured and mature-green lines when local stocks were light, most realisations during the last week ranged from 5s. to 10s. Moderate consignments came to hand from the Stanthorpe district in Queensland and brought principally from 4s. to 12s. per half case according to quality; however, a few realisations were as high as 18s. during periods of scarcity.

Many Inferior Onions.

Stocks of onions on offer came from New South Wales, Queensland and Victorian growers. A wide range of quality was apparent, particularly in consignments from New South Wales areas, and although most choice lines brought the fixed maximum price of 23s. 6d. per cwt., a large percentage of sales ranged from 12s. to 18s., whilst some inferior were lower.

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); parsnips 6s. to 16s., few 18s.; swedes 6s. to 14s., early sales to 22s., few to 26s.; pumpkins (N.S.W. and Q'ld.) 10s. to 14s., few early sales to 18s.; sweet potatoes (old season) 5s. to 14s., early sales to 40s. (new season), 20s. per cwt.; celery (local) 6s. to 12s., few special to 18s., per dozen bunches; cucumbers (green) 3s. to 7s., few to 10s., (apple) 4s. to 10s., few 12s. to 14s. per half bushel case.

T. M. McKEON.
