

Fruits and Vegetables

state in top rank because of advances in farm methods, technology, marketing, merchandising, and food science

Sidney Hoos

California is first among the states as a producer and marketer of fresh fruits and vegetables.

About 12% of California crop acreage grows these crops. About 20% of the state's irrigated land is devoted to their production.

California's top rank has developed along with improved farming methods. Knowledge of nutrition has increased demand also.

Major markets include the eastern seaboard and even foreign countries. Foreign trade influences, other producing states, methods of use, and price changes affect the total production.

In 1948, over 1,136,000 tons of fruits and nuts were marketed in fresh form in the state. Close to 2,300,000 tons of vegetables for fresh use were grown. The grand total was a little under 3,500,000 tons for all fresh fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Cash receipts of California farmers for these crops are nearly one third of the national total.

In 1945, there were 63,731 California farms selling fruits and nuts. Vegetables were sold on 12,816 farms.

About 190,000,000 man-hours are employed each year producing fresh fruits and vegetables. The total labor payroll for 1948 for these crops was about \$157,000,000.

Total acreage in California devoted to tree fruits, nuts, and truck crops, excluding potatoes, is about 2,000,000 acres a year. Tree fruits and nuts account for about 75% of this total. Truck crops comprise the other 25%.

Tree fruits going into fresh consumption occupy about 15% of the irrigated land. Truck crops for fresh use occupy about 5% of the irrigated land.

In terms of production for fresh use, the main fruits are citrus, pears, peaches, grapes, and apples. Bearing acreage for fresh use in apples, pears, and walnuts has fallen during the last 10 years. Acreage in oranges, lemons, figs, and almonds has shown the greatest recent gains.

For vegetables, the chief items for fresh use are lettuce, melons, tomatoes, carrots, and celery. All fresh vegetables have increased in acreage during the last 10 years except asparagus, peas, and snap beans. Strawberries have also declined somewhat.

In crops like almonds, lemons, and

olives, California is the only significant producing state.

In 1947, California fresh fruits and vegetables had a total farm value of more than \$462,000,000. Fresh fruits accounted for \$236,000,000. Fresh vegetables brought \$226,000,000.

Produce Examples

Oranges are an example of the prestige of citrus fruit in the state. California has 42% of the national acreage and 40% of the yield. Its on-tree farm value of oranges is 54% of the national figure.

California shipments of oranges in 1948 amounted to 36,200,000 boxes. They were shipped to all parts of the country and Canada. In producing these oranges, 36,000,000 man-hours of labor were employed. Over \$31,000,000 was paid in wages.

Shipments of California fresh pears average about 115,000 tons a year. This crop is important to Mendocino and Lake counties.

California is first in the production and shipment of lettuce. In 1948, about 128,000 acres in the state were growing this crop. Production was 770,000 tons. Almost 600,000 tons were shipped out of the state. Gross returns to farmers for this crop were near \$70,000,000.

Lettuce, oranges, carrots, grapes, walnuts, tomatoes, lemons, and melons led in that order in farm value of fresh production in 1948.

Specialty crops are also important in the state. Each is vital to the prosperity of the area in which it is grown.

Associated Businesses

The California fresh fruit and vegetable industries have significant economic effects upon the position and welfare of other industries.

Many business firms depend upon the production and merchandising of fresh fruits and vegetables. When these are considered, the full impact of these crops is seen more clearly.

A major associated business is packing and shipping. In 1949, about 1,950 fresh fruit and vegetable packers and shippers operated in the state.

At least 168 packing houses in the state pack and ship fresh peaches, Bartlett

pears, or plums. Eleven major apple packers are located in the important apple-producing area of Sebastopol. Twenty apply packers are operating in the Watsonville area. About 17 houses pack fresh apricots. For citrus, there are 270 packing houses and 18 processing plants.

Distribution firms are important. Icing companies, transportation firms, terminal markets, local truckers, and advertising agencies are a few of these.

At least \$160,000,000 is paid each year by growers for transportation. Rail, truck, and water means are used.

Equipment firms serving growers and packers are also numerous. Some of these are lumber mills, box factories, farm equipment firms, irrigation districts, insecticide firms, and machinery makers.

Seed companies are another associated business. Fertilizer and nursery firms are others. Some whole towns in California depend substantially upon one agricultural industry.

Oil and gas sold to producers for farm machines and orchard heating comprises a large part of the sales of oil companies in fruit and vegetable growing areas.

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