California Food Industries

study of their economic importance shows benefits from the use of chemicals in food production and processing

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Materials which help increase food production without adversely affecting the health of the nation contribute to the well-being of the agricultural economy as well as the national economy.

As the California food industries are a significant part of the general economy of the state, the use of chemicals affects other areas of the economy as well; helps create significant amounts of employment and income; and contributes toward a better diet for the consumer.

A survey of the economic importance of California food industries shows that total cash receipts from farm marketings rose from $651,000,000 in 1940 to $2,321,441,000 in 1950.

During the same 10-year period, field crop production increased almost 40% on an acreage that had expanded only 20%; truck crop production rose about 75% on 24% increased acreage; fruits and nuts production grew 7% on an acreage that decreased 7%.

During the past 10 years, cattle and calves in California increased from about 2¼ million to almost 3 million; chickens on farms from about 15 million to over 23 million; egg production from almost 147 million dozen to 270 million dozen a year; and the number of turkeys about doubled.

This increased agricultural production has resulted from many influences, including better farming practices and management, but recognition must adequately be given to the use of fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, and similar substances necessary in obtaining and sustaining improved yields.

According to the 1950 agricultural census there were in California 137,137 farms. The state also has approximately 2,000 fresh fruit and vegetable packers and shippers, and some 200 canning and freezing plants.

Employment in production and market preparation of California fresh fruits and vegetables averages about 190 million man-hours annually.

Civilian employment for the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries in California in 1950 ranged from 344,000 in March to 516,000 in October.

The annual employment payroll for fruits, vegetables and nuts—fresh shipping and processed—is conservatively estimated at near $200 million.

The California food industries participate directly and indirectly in the creation of significant amounts of employment and income in other industries as well.

Transportation—railroads, trucking, and water transport—serves as an example of how employment, income and service trades are built around and based on agricultural industries.

Fresh deciduous fruit and vegetable shippers pay approximately $100 million annually to railroads. This does not include payments for trucking which transports annually the equivalent of 20,000 carloads of fresh vegetables and melons.

Transportation costs on fresh citrus from the California-Arizona area were $51.2 million in the 1949–50 season.

The California canning and freezing industries are estimated to have paid some $48 million for transportation of raw and finished products in 1950.

Transportation is only one example of how the California food industries are interrelated with other industries generally represented by two groups.

One group comprises those firms whose activity depends, in whole or in part, on the business they receive from the distribution of the products of the California food industry. Examples include—in addition to transportation—icing companies, terminal market facilities, auction and private sale, local truckers, advertising agencies, distributors, wholesalers, jobbers and retailers.

The other group is made up of those firms whose business activity depends, in whole or in part, on purchases of production equipment and services by the California food industries. Examples include lumber mills, tin can manufacturers, wood and paper box factories, farm equipment firms, food processing and machinery companies, glassmakers, printers of labels, seed and nursery suppliers.

Many communities and their surrounding areas depend in large part upon the operations of the various food industries. Examples include the south coast, parts of the Los Angeles area, Bakersfield, Fresno, the Salinas-Watsonville-Hollister area, San Jose and the East Bay, Modesto, Sacramento, and Marysville. Farmers, workers in the fields, packing sheds, canneries, freezing plants, dairies, creameries, and tradesmen participate in an economic network aimed at the well-being of the agricultural and other industries, and of the consumer.

Studies of human nutrition point to the importance of having adequate proportions of dairy products, citrus fruits and tomatoes, and leafy, green and yellow vegetables in the diet of the consumers.

During the past four to five decades, consumers have increased their intake of fruit and vegetables. These are the products in which California food industries are leading producers and distributors.

To produce those foods with increasing efficiency it is necessary to draw upon production and processing techniques which help to maintain and increase yields. It is here that the use of chemicals in the production of food products is pertinent not only to farmers and processors but to consumers. Without necessary weapons to contain the destruction caused by insects, plant diseases, and similar barriers to high production, and without processing techniques to maintain quality, the interests of both producers and consumers are affected.

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