

California Vegetable Industry

vegetable acreage accounts for one twelfth of state's total crop acreage and one fourth of farm income from all crops

Ralph I. Crane

California farmers take home 34% of the nation's vegetable dollar but farm only 16% of the total vegetable land.

California produces 30% of the nation's commercial vegetables for fresh market and 36% of the nation's processed vegetables. About 63% of the nation's lettuce, 42% of the cantaloupes, 41% of the carrots, 55% of the celery, 25% of the fresh market tomatoes, and virtually all of the nation's garlic, artichokes, and Brussels sprouts are grown in California. No other state raises so many different kinds of vegetables.

Lettuce, tomatoes—fresh market and processed—and potatoes are California's three most important vegetable crops. Between 110,000 and 130,000 acres of each of these vegetables are harvested every year. The total annual value—5-year averages, 1951-55—packed and loaded f.o.b., of lettuce and tomatoes is each over \$70 million.

Lettuce is harvested during every month of the year in California, and production has more than doubled in the period 1953-1955 as compared with 1927-1929. Most of the increase was due to larger acreages and greater yields of the summer and early fall crops. Acreage and yield per acre for summer lettuce are more than double what they were 25 years ago.

Since 1945, production of cannery tomatoes has doubled, due—almost entirely—to larger yields per acre, because total acreage has actually decreased. California's per acre yield of canning tomatoes is now nearly three times the yield per acre for the rest of the country. Production of fresh market tomatoes also has increased since 1945, and most of the increase can be attributed to higher yields per acre.

Only Maine and Idaho grow more po-

tatoes than California where production—of early potatoes especially—has risen rapidly since 1940. In 1955, three fifths of California's potatoes were harvested in late spring.

United States per capita consumption of commercially produced fresh and processed vegetables—fresh weight equivalent not including potatoes and sweet potatoes—increased 18% during the period 1937-39 to 1952-54, with about four fifths of the rise due to increased use of processed vegetables. Per capita consumption of fresh vegetables increased only about 3%, while the per capita consumption of processed vegetables rose more than 50% with about one third of the increase due to the rapid growth in use of frozen vegetables. In 1955, an estimated 57% of the commercially produced vegetables were eaten fresh, 37% were canned, and 6% were frozen.

In contrast with most other vegetables, per capita consumption of potatoes has dropped about 18% in the last 15 years. Per capita consumption of sweet potatoes is 64% lower than 15 years ago. Most of these declines have resulted from changes in consumer preferences. However, per capita consumption of potatoes is still over one hundred pounds per year—almost as much as all other fresh vegetables combined. With United States population increasing by about 3½ million persons each year, there is a large demand for the 13% of the nation's potatoes grown in California.

In 1955, California ranked first in production of vegetables for commercial processing and second behind Wisconsin in total harvested acreage. In terms of both total dollar value and tonnage, tomatoes are by far California's leading

processed crop. Next in order are asparagus, green lima beans, and snap beans. California raises about 62% of the nation's tomatoes for processing. California grows 58% of the nation's processed asparagus, 53% of the spinach, and 40% of the green lima beans. Production of green lima beans and snap beans in California has increased at a rapid rate since 1945, because of consumer acceptance of the frozen product.

It is estimated that one third of the total fresh vegetables produced in California is consumed within the state, with New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia the three major terminal markets for California interstate vegetable shipments. In 1954, California originated over 35% of the total United States rail shipments of fresh vegetables. California's carlot rail shipments of fresh vegetables are almost twice the combined carlot rail shipments of deciduous fruits, grapes, berries, and citrus fruit.

The trend in the California vegetable industry is toward expanded production. In the period 1937-39 to 1952-54, total production—tons—increased 48%. Larger yields per acre of most vegetables were the major cause of this expansion. During this period, total acreage increased only about 12% to approximately 734,000 acres.

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Per Cent of U. S. Production (tons) Grown in California—1955

Fresh market	%	Processed	%
Artichokes	100	Asparagus	58
Asparagus	43	Beans, green lima	40
Broccoli	62	Spinach	53
Brussels sprouts	88	Tomatoes	62
Cantaloupes	42	Total fresh market	30
Carrots	41	Total processed	36
Cauliflower	45	Total vegetables	32
Celery	55	(fresh market and processed)	
Garlic	100		
Lettuce	63		
Potatoes	13		
Tomatoes	25		

Per Cent of U. S. Production Grown in California for Each Year 1942-1955

Year	Fresh market		Processed		Total
	%	%	%	%	
1942	23.5	15.9	20.1	20.1	
1943	28.4	17.9	23.9	23.9	
1944	27.5	19.8	24.3	24.3	
1945	28.2	19.4	24.8	24.8	
1946	27.2	23.8	25.8	25.8	
1947	29.4	27.9	28.8	28.8	
1948	28.9	19.8	25.3	25.3	
1949	29.5	21.5	26.3	26.3	
1950	29.5	21.3	26.4	26.4	
1951	28.8	33.6	30.9	30.9	
1952	30.2	30.2	30.2	30.2	
1953	29.7	24.7	27.7	27.7	
1954	29.9	26.2	28.6	28.6	
1955	29.6	36.4	32.1	32.1	

CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE

Progress Reports of Agricultural Research, published monthly by the University of California Division of Agricultural Sciences.

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California Agriculture

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