NOTICES OF SHIPMENT

The enforcement of the Florida Seed Act would be made tremendously more effective if the law contained a requirement that Notices of Shipment of wholesale lots should be required to be given to the Commissioner of Agriculture at the time of the shipment. This requirement has been effective for years in the Florida Fertilizer Law and has enabled our field men to locate, inspect, and sample fertilizer before it has been put into the ground. If the same rule were made to apply to wholesale deliveries of seed within the State of Florida, it would expedite proper enforcement of our State Seed Law.

BLENDING

We come now to a statement as to a practice commonly referred to as blending. Under this practice seed falling far below the standards fixed may have been mixed with seed of the same variety which are not high in germination or other factors and the blended lot may thus be brought above the standard and sold. This system beyond a doubt permits many lots of seed which may fall as low as 25 percent in germination to be skillfully commingled with a lot of high germinating percentage and sold at the price which the better seed alone would have commanded. One of the deplorable possibilities in such a situation lies in the fact, little known or discussed, that in a given lot of seed which may test only 25 percent germination you not only have three-quarters of the seed which will not sprout at all but you also have a great proportion of the 25 percent which will sprout to be so low in vitality that they cannot be expected to grow into normal healthy and productive plants.

Furthermore, it is well to remember that blending of seed increases the danger of spreading seed-borne diseases. The mixing of a lot of diseased seed with seed free from disease will certainly result in infecting the entire lot.

The practice of blending has been discouraged for years by many law enforcement agents. A great many ethical seedsmen have already discontinued blending entirely or have greatly restricted it. We believe that such action should be taken in Florida through appropriate amendment of our Florida Seed Law, under which blending may not be done with impunity.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

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We, in the business of converting the sweat of the brow into the coin of the realm, must keep constantly on the alert to anticipate trends of demand, and see that our offerings conform as near as possible to those demands. When I say demand, I mean the consumer’s demand, for he is the only person who puts real money into the transaction. The grower intends at least to invest for a profit, the buyer intends to invest for a profit, so does each handler, then it follows that we must meet the requirements of the
consumer, and in so doing, each step back to and including the grower, will have performed a satisfactory business transaction.

The buyer resistance to on-the-farm grade and pack is becoming very strong, due to a wide variation in the quality offered by individual growers. It appears some centralized grading and packing plants should be utilized. The fact that this is being done in some areas rather extensively, and as demand can be met with proper grade and pack, those farmers not availing themselves of these facilities, will surely sell their produce at a very low comparative figure.

Few individual growers have volume enough to justify the investment required for modern grading and packing, and without substantial volume, labor would be difficult to employ. Farmers cooperatives seem to be the best answer to this problem, where grading, packing, and selling can be done cooperatively in large volume.

Grading and packing should be done for the grower who retains ownership after packing, thereby benefiting from a proper grade and pack.

The grower and country shipper must be concerned with the performance of his commodity in competition with other food items. Recently, the National League of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Distributors launched a Nation-wide publicity campaign, using newspapers, magazines, and radio, in connection with distribution education classes in handling fresh fruits and vegetables.

The League's Washington office, prepared special releases for each medium—dailies, weeklies, magazines, and radio, covering every trading area in the United States.

The radio script and "fact sheet," setting forth all phases of this educational program, was placed with 525 radio food editors throughout the country. A story stressing the consumer benefit to be derived from the program and designed to improve retailer consumer relations was beamed to 388 metropolitan daily food editors. The response was such that the country was virtually blanketed by this release. A story emphasizing the grower and shipper "stake" in streamlining and modernizing of retailing perishables was placed with 388 smaller newspapers in all producing sections of the United States. A magazine story was directly beamed at United States retailers through the medium of 67 especially screened retail food store trade publications. Another release was prepared for a large group of radio farm editors, explaining the distributive education program; how it works and how it will benefit the farmer.

Baltimore recently launched its distribution education course in handling and merchandising fresh fruits and vegetables, with 29 registrants making up a combination retailer-wholesaler class. The program has not only the enthusiastic support of the enrollees themselves, but the endorsement of the Independent Retail Grocers and Meat Dealers Association, the Baltimore Department of Education, and the University of Maryland Extension Service.

As in the case in every city where classes are being conducted, the course is based on the "instructor's manual," a guide to better handling and more efficient merchandising of fresh fruits and vegetables, prepared by the National League.

From the foregoing, we can see the trend is toward orderly and better distribution. We, at the grower level, will
need to grade and pack in a more efficient manner to tie into this Nationwide program.

The extension service of the University of Florida might be able to watch the trend and supply material for adult education in fitting the country shipper into the wholesale-retail program.

Farmers as a group, may expect somewhat lower income in the next few years, because costs will be higher in relation to prices received. If a sharp recession occurs, the drop in net farm incomes will be severe. Prices of farm products are not likely to decline appreciably during this year, but present high levels are not likely to continue indefinitely. While the general price level and business activity may maintain their present altitude for some months; a readjustment is probable within the next year or two.

Efficiency in farm production is up to the farmer, whereas efficiency in marketing of farm products and purchasing of farm requisites is up to farm cooperatives and other corporations engaged in these activities. When prices decline, marketing costs will be more important, because marketing margins will lag and remain relatively high. Hence, criticism of marketing agencies and pressure for economy in marketing will increase. While marketing is always important, now is a good time to emphasize studies of marketing methods to find ways of doing a better job at a lower cost.

The days when inefficient organizations could get by are coming to a close, and keen competition is sure to follow. It is important to emphasize quality, as well as efficiency, for premiums for better products will justify the higher cost that may be involved.

The most important economic problem of agriculture of the United States is the reduction of the violence of economic fluctuation, the reasonable stabilization of favorable levels of prices, production, and employment.

Some fluctuation is probably inevitable as long as human beings become alternately over optimistic, and over pessimistic. These minor movements, or business cycles, are like the waves of the ocean and are not a cause of major difficulties. It is the great depressions, the tidal waves, which raise havoc with modern economic society.

In order to reduce the violence of depressions, it will be necessary to discourage over optimism during booms. The importance of this problem justifies the use of the best brains and ingenuity, and the support of agriculture and business.

Reducing the violence of economic fluctuations is not a panacea for all economic ills. It would not solve all economic problems of the Nation but it would reduce them to manageable proportions.

The Nation has learned that it cannot have a really prosperous agriculture, unless the rest of the economy is prosperous. It has learned that agricultural income, and national income, rise and fall together, and that each affects the other. It should be learned also, that we cannot stabilize our economy piecemeal, one crop, or one industry at a time.

Remember our customer, the consumer, is tied into all of these problems. Give him good food value, with a maximum of nourishment and a minimum of waste.