

National Potato Letter

National Spud Council Considers Penalties For Non-Compliance

By A. L. FITZSIMMONDS
National Potato council met in Washington Monday and Tuesday of this week, but did not invite press coverage.

Appearing before the Pace Subcommittee this fall, council representatives protested ignorance of marketing quotas because of lack of experience with them, but quotas have been part of the program for basic crops for years. The representatives were told to be ready to propose a program that would adjust production effectively by penalizing non-compliance. Hence this meeting for the purpose of developing a program that the council can recommend and that congress will accept.

Agree?
It is not an easy task as potato growers fall to agree on many points. Some sections have the desire and the means to expand while others are under economic compulsion to contract. Some are new, some old, some early, some late. All want support, but not all are willing to accept the principle that guaranteed benefits are linked with rigid controls and penalties.

To point up the support situation, beginning with 1943, six years of price support for potatoes have involved department of agriculture purchases of 425.6 million bushels at a total net cost of 408.7 million dollars. This quantity of potatoes is larger than one normal crop—about 74 million bushels more than the 1950 allotment. The amount spent would buy every bushel of potatoes from a 250 million bushel crop at \$1.17 per bushel or 67 per cent of November parity.

Parity
It would buy a 325 million bushel crop (the 1950 allotment base) at \$1.22 per bushel or 69.3 per cent of November parity. These crops are figured as 100 per cent saleable. If an allowance were made for culls each of them would be increased seven to 10 per cent.

In six years the aggregate surplus is far in excess of a full normal crop, and the amount spent would pay 60 per cent of parity for every bushel of a potato crop 52 million bushels in excess of requirements. That is the situation facing the industry and congress.

Miscellaneous
Canadian low-duty seed quota was about filled last week-end, and full duty is being charged. Duty adjustments will be made as necessary when all the figures are in. The seed quota was filled about a week earlier than last year, despite a draggy spell early in the month.

Potato growers, especially in Maine, are more bitter than ever about the Canadian imports. They say: we raise a crop but can not sell it all because of imports, have to sell it to the department of agriculture. Then we get the blame for over production, our acreage is cut, Canada's is increased, and we go around again.

No Spurt
The customary pre-Thanksgiving spurt in demand did not develop. The usual inter-holiday bulge should occur but may not if trucks remain as active as they have been. Freezing weather would benefit the long-haul areas.

Bangor-Aroostook railroad freight rate reduction is due soon, but it won't necessarily solve the Canadian competition, however, it will help.

Parity price remained the same in November—\$1.16 per bushel. Price received averaged \$1.34, a

gain of four cents. Amounted to 76 per cent of parity, a two point gain over October.

The 76 per cent of parity figure should dispel the myth that the support level sets the market. Proponents of low-level support for insurance only (and there are many in the commercial areas) point at this as proof of their position, 60 per cent of parity support to prevent losses, and 15 per cent more as result of the supply-demand relationship.

More In 1950
1950 acreage allotments would permit potato consumption next year of 110 lbs. per person. Consumption rate for 1949 is about 108 lbs. 1948 about 107 and 123 in 1947. Department of agriculture and the industry would like to get consumption up to 125 lbs. per capita in prosperous times, goes up in bad times by itself. This level would permit potato crops of 375 million bushels at fair prices.

Afghan Nomads On Move Again

KABUL, Afghanistan, (AP)—One of the world's few remaining nomadic movements is taking place in Afghanistan, where long camel caravans are leaving the cold grasslands of Central Asia for the warm plains of Pakistan. The migrants are the Kuchis, who travel thousands of miles each year accompanied by ill-tempered, hairy camels and patient donkeys.

At the head of each caravan strides the patriarch, with lengthy beard, loose turban, and flowing robes. Only a modern rifle shows the influence of a newer world. At his back follow camels, fastened nose to tail and piled high with goods, chickens, and children. In the rear come the women, tall, hawk-faced, with flashing eyes and ready tongues. Around the caravan, the youngsters play, accompanied by ferocious crop-eared dogs.

At night, the caravans cluster in tiny camps under the peaks of the Hindu Kush. Black felt tents arise. The smoke of camel thorn fires mingles with the smell of roasting mutton. From the nearby highway may come the hum of a passing car, but to the Kuchis life goes on in its placid and ancient way.



A DINNER YOU'LL NEVER FORGET!
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