



May 2003

Marketing Fruit

by

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Reprinted from *Jamestown Journal*, November 11, 1913

***Editor's Note:** This article was discovered by Dr. Bruce Anderson, Department of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University. It was originally printed by the Jamestown Journal, now the Jamestown Post-Journal, on November 11, 1913 (permission granted to reprint). It was found when his wife was refurbishing a piece of furniture taken from their Falconer, NY, homestead, sold in 2000.*

The Cornell Agribusiness Management and Marketing faculty feel that many of the points are as applicable today as in 1913. In 2001, apple growers established Premier Cooperative, a "growers' association", to improve marketing and enhance grower returns. The cooperative represents a significant portion of all fresh apples sold on the east coast and includes members from New York, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. During the same year, 14 onion growers in Oswego County, New York formed a corporation and branded their product "New York Bold" to ensure quality and enhance their collaborative marketing power. We also see a fast growth in direct marketing activities among fruit and vegetable growers.

The market will continue to change, and marketing will continue to challenge the fruit and vegetable industries today and in the future much as it did 90 years ago. Success in the future will require the industry and individual businesses to do something different from the past, be innovative, take control, and develop appropriate strategies to maintain and improve competitiveness.

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There are four ways of disposing of orchard products --selling the fruit on the trees to a buyer, who comes to the orchard and makes a lump sum offer; selling through a commission merchant; selling through a fruit growers' association; or selling to the consumer direct.

The first method involves the least trouble, but the seller receives the lowest price, as the buyer has not only the work of picking, etc., but must sell the fruit to a middleman. Moreover, buyers will not, as a rule, contract for small orchards, the expense of bringing men, etc., being too great. However, if the owner has an orchard of several acres and is unable to superintend the work himself, selling in this way is both practical and profitable.

Selling through a commission merchant is often very satisfactory, particularly if the orchard is not near any market, and if care is taken to look up the merchant's financial standing, for the commission man naturally does his best to sell to advantage. In selling in this way, write or telegraph the merchant before shipping, that he may be prepared to receive and dispose of the fruit at once.

To sell through a fruit growers' association, one must become a member, and this may be done by writing to the state department of agriculture for the names of the associations in the state and their financial standing; also by writing to the secretary and applying for membership. These societies undertake to sell the fruit of their members in the best markets. In fact, it is not unusual for fruit growers' associations to take charge of a crop from the time it becomes ripe, picking, packing and selling the same, the grower simply cashing the check he receives as the result of his year's work.

Selling to the consumer direct is an excellent method of disposing of one's produce in more ways than one if the farm happens to be near a town or city. In the first place, better prices are obtained for the fruit, and not infrequently a market is opened for eggs, poultry, potatoes or anything delectable one may choose to raise. There is also the interest of personal contact and the change of the town sights and sounds, which, to a country dweller who doesn't live among them, is often an agreeable diversion. However, to sell a crop of apples by the bushel or quart, for instance, necessitates a storage building

of sufficient capacity to hold the entire output, so that one may keep a crop for the best prices. Such a building need not be an expensive affair, but it must be frost proof.

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"Smart Marketing" is a monthly marketing newsletter for extension publication in local newsletters and for placement in local media. It reviews the elements critical to successful marketing in the food and agricultural industry. Articles are written by faculty members in the Department of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University.

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