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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, November 16, 1937

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Subject: "NOTES FOR FOOD SHOPPERS." Information from the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Once again the news for the listener who does the marketing -- fortnightly notes on supply and price trends of seasonal foods.

First, a little timely news about -- turkeys. Turkey supplies during the coming holidays will probably be a tenth smaller than last year's record turkey crop, and prices most likely will be higher. But we'll have as many turkeys as we had in 1932 and '33, the economists think. Just to show you how turkey prices have been going, the economists report that during late October wholesale prices of dressed turkeys in New York were from 3 to 4 cents a pound higher than a year ago. The usual trend of turkey prices is downward from September through December and then up in January, but some years turkey prices are higher in December than November.

Now if you are considering some other bird than turkey for the coming holidays, you may be interested in some general poultry news. The predictions are that poultry prices will continue to go up during the rest of the year and will stay above their 1936-level. The reason that supplies of fresh-dressed poultry are small is that the 1936 drought reduced feed supplies, so cut down the number of chickens hatched early this year. Lightweight chickens are the ones whose price has increased most sharply over a year ago. As an example of that, here's the way prices were in New York during late October. Wholesale prices of fresh-dressed chickens there were from 5 to 12 cents a pound higher than a year ago while fresh-dressed fowl prices were only from 4 to 6 cents a pound higher.

Now some news of the fruits and vegetables you may be counting on for your holiday menus. Marketings of cranberries, brussels sprouts, celery, mushrooms and persimmons usually reach their season's peak in November. Sweetpotato and apple shipments are also relatively large this month, though October is the month when they are largest.

Speaking of those bright-red, late-fall berries that always suggest the holidays, cranberry prices are lower this year than last because the crop is a third larger. Just as an indication of how cranberry prices are going this year, the economists report that the wholesale price of cranberries in New York during the last week in October was about a dollar a quarter-barrel below a year ago.



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As you may know, fresh vegetables all during the winter months come from southern and western States. The exceptions are the storage supplies of late-grown potatoes, cabbage and onions which go to market from warehouses in the northern States. Because winter supplies of fresh vegetables are small and must come either from storage or be shipped from distant producing areas, vegetable prices usually go up during the winter. And they often fluctuate sharply because of heavy rains or frost which damage tender winter-grown crops.

During late October the first shipments of snap beans, peppers, cucumber and spinach began to come to market from States in the Southeast. And these supplies will be increasing seasonally during the rest of the year. When the economists make their advance estimate of the supply of any crop they consider the number of acres planted to it. They report that vegetable-growers have planted fewer acres to fall and winter vegetables this year than last. Last year they planted a relatively high acreage. But unless weather conditions prove bad for these crops, the economists expect only slight reductions in production over last year.

Here's a little news about the winter storage vegetables. Potato prices will probably remain fairly stable during the next few months but prices of sweetpotatoes, cabbage and onions probably will advance seasonally until next spring. Sweetpotatoes may not go up so much in price as usual because the crop this year is larger than average and about a sixth larger than a year ago. As for the late cabbage crop, it won't be as large as the economists expected a few months ago. Dry weather has cut down the yield so production will be only slightly larger than a year ago. Practically the entire increase over last year's short crop is in the cabbage used for kraut.

The next news note is about citrus fruits. The first shipments of tangerines will be going to market this month and the peak volume will come in December. As for grapefruit, shipments are expected to be much larger this month since supplies are now coming in from both Texas and Florida. The predictions are that this year's grapefruit crop is going to be second largest on record. Last year's crop had the record, you know.

The last item of news I have here is about beef prices. The prices of better grade beef cattle have gone down slightly since they reached their high point in September. And they may go down slightly more until January. Then during the first half of the new year they will probably drop considerably. Most of the advance in beef prices up to September occurred in the better-grade beef from grain-fed cattle. One way thrifty housewives may get relief from the high price of better-grade beef is to shift to lower-priced grass-fed beef until the larger supplies of grain-fed beef come in with the new year.

That concludes the market news for today.

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