The Market for
Willamette Valley Bartlett Pears

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MARKET OUTLETS

There are two types of market outlets for Willamette Valley Bartlett pears—fresh market and processing. At the present time processing offers the greatest potential.

Marketing Bartlett pears, either fresh or canned, like marketing so many other agricultural products, is highly competitive. Fresh and canned pears compete not only with numerous other food products but also with each other.

Fresh market

Fresh market outlets are worldwide. To serve them packing and storage facilities must be available. If a good market for Willamette Valley pears is to be developed, fruit must be carefully graded, sized, and properly packed. It must carry a high finish and quality to compete with pears produced in other areas.

The most common container for Bartlett pears is the wooden box with a slatted veneer lid. Inside dimensions of the standard northwestern pear box are 18 x 11 ½ x 18 inches. Net weight will vary from 42 to 48 pounds. All fruit should be packed according to size. Small and large size fruit usually bring less money than the middle range.

Newer developments in Bartlett pear packing include use of fiberboard, telesopic type boxes, tray pack in fiberboard; and consumer-size packages packed in master containers.

It is highly important that pears be picked at the proper time. This is necessary for good storage and shelf life and high dessert qualities. Other important considerations for fresh market pears in the Willamette Valley include: (1) obtaining a high degree of finish and quality on Bartletts to compete with well-established producing areas; (2) obtaining the know-how and experience of growing and packing Bartletts for fresh market outlets; and (3) obtaining the costly, but necessary, storage, conditioning, and packing facilities now lacking.

Fresh market outlets include U-pick, roadside stands, sales to wholesalers, sales through brokers, direct sales to retail buyers, and pear auctions. Pears can be sold fresh or on consignment; the latter is probably more risky from a price standpoint.

Processing outlets

Processing outlets are fewer in number, but probably offer a better market outlet at this time. Nearness of production to processing facilities is a major economic consideration. With today's methods of handling and transportation, however, moving fruit for several hundred miles is feasible.

Most sales to processors are made on contract, and usually the contract is made well in advance of the harvesting season. The common contract is the "open end" type, with price to be determined during the harvest season.

A grower planning to sell to the processing industry should secure his contract well in advance of harvest time, and should be well acquainted with its specifications and terms. Knowledge of raw product requirements also is important if marketing through a processing cooperative.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

In the foreseeable future, it is likely that growth in population, consumer incomes, and export markets can be best satisfied by gradual expansion in pear production. Production in the Willamette Valley could easily expand faster than market development would increase demand—even if there were some shifting of demand.
from other food products to pears or shifting of demand for pears from other pear producing areas to the Willamette Valley.

Some shifting of demand might be accomplished through product differentiation, advertising and promotion, from economic advantages, and through educational programs.

Product differentiation could be accomplished through new strains of Bartletts, improved quality, and selling under name brands to gain consumer acceptance and shelf space in stores.

Advertising and promotion are expensive and can be copied by competitors. This can become a race among competing areas and result in less money to producers.

Packing and selling under a name brand offers a good potential, but most packers of name brands already have adequate raw product supplies. If additional supplies were needed, they probably could be procured from present production areas.

Reliable industry personnel have reported that Willamette Valley pears do not have the high finish required for fresh market sales and do not have the white appearing flesh of pears produced in other areas. These are primary quality factors as expressed by the trade.

The following methods can be used in market development:

1. Have sufficient volume of uniform product to attract and hold top buyers.
2. Have an effective sales force to do a good job of selling.
3. Maintain adequate and widespread contacts in all major markets and with retail buyers.
4. Make use of efficient selling agencies, such as brokers, wholesalers, and commission men.
5. Maintain quality control of product.
   - Use central packing, grading, and selling of fresh product.
   - Establish at least two name brands—one for premium quality and one or more for other qualities of fruit.
   - Make use of cull fruit in by-products and new products.
6. Plan to carry out an educational program, developing recognition of unique characteristics of your product, through advertising and promotion.
7. Shoot for the sky—and prepare to be satisfied with a little less.