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HARVEST LABOR EFFICIENCY ON SOUR CHERRIES IN OREGON*

Sour cherries in Oregon require a considerable amount of seasonal labor for harvest during June and July. The shortage of men owing to the war has required the assistance of older people and more women and youth for harvesting many crops in Oregon, including such crops as fruits and vegetables, particularly. The recruitment and placement of thousands of such workers has presented a major problem, involving estimates of the number needed for which information on relative efficiency has been inadequate. The data that follow should assist materially in meeting harvest labor problems on sour cherries in 1944.

Practically all of the commercial acreage of sour cherries in Oregon is in the Willamette Valley. During the summer of 1943, records were obtained from 96 persons harvesting sour cherries on three farms. These records provided data on quantities picked per day by people of different ages and sex. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2 and in Figure 1.

Table 1 presents the average amount picked by each age group included in the study. Table 2 gives the relative efficiency for each of 4 major age groups in percentage of the pickers aged 18 to 55 years. The average amount of work done per day (225 pounds) by workers between the ages of 18 and 55 has been taken as 100 per cent since these ages are normally considered as adult labor. The relative efficiency of each group is, therefore, shown as a percentage of the work done by adults. For example, the data indicate that boys under 14 on the average picked 50 per cent as much as was picked by adults. The figures show that men and boys picked more per day than women and girls, but there were more women and girls picking.

The data indicated that pickers with one or more years of experience will generally harvest 10 per cent more sour cherries per day than pickers without experience.

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Table 1. Average Number of Pounds of Sour Cherries
Picked per Picker per Day According to Age of Picker
 Willamette Valley, Oregon, 1943

Age group	Sour cherries (96 pickers) Average amount picked per day	
	Actual (pounds)	Adjusted ^{1/} (pounds)
Under 13 years	96	96
13 years	107	102
14 years	118	117
15 years	149	138
16 years	159	160
17 years	172	181
18-20 years	192	203
21-30 years	202	224
31-40 years	252	240
41-50 years	224	239
51-60 years	253	224
Over 60 years	158	158
All ages	173	173

^{1/} The actual figures were adjusted to fit a smoothed curve. These are the figures that are charted in Figure 1.

Table 2. Distribution by Age and Sex and
Relative Efficiency of Sour Cherry Pickers per Day
 Willamette Valley, Oregon, 1943 (96 pickers)

	Sex	Distribution (per cent)	Index of picking efficiency per day (225 lbs. = 100)
			(per cent)
Under 14 years . .	Boys	8	50
	Girls	11	41
14-17 years . . .	Boys	11	67
	Girls	14	62
18-55 years . . .	Men	18	121
	Women	35	92
56 years and over.	Men	3	70
	Women	-	^{1/}

^{1/} No data available

Figure 1. Estimated average number of pounds of sour cherries picked per day according to age of picker.
(96 pickers, Willamette Valley, Oregon, 1943)

