

HOME DEMONSTRATION CLUB MARKET

of

FAIRFIELD COUNTY

WINNSBORO, SOUTH CAROLINA

CONTENT

| | Page |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| HISTORY AND PRESENT STATUS OF MARKET | 2 |
| Time market is open | 3 |
| Troubles of opening the market. | 5 |
| VOLUME OF BUSINESS | 5 |
| FACTS ABOUT THE MARKET | 6 |
| Facilities. | 6 |
| Services and practices. | 7 |
| Duties of the market manager. | 8 |
| Requirements. | 8 |
| Rules and regulations | 9 |
| Products sold | 10 |
| Charges | 10 |
| Space to offer. | 10 |
| Cost and expense. | 11 |
| OPINIONS RESPECTING THE MARKET | 11 |
| Person in charge. | 11 |
| Farmer that sells the produce | 14 |
| Farmer that does not sell on the market | 14 |
| Grocerymen in town. | 14 |
| Consumer. | 14 |
| SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION | 15 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 17 |

INTRODUCTION

Located in the historic town of old Winnsboro, overlooking the beautiful, rolling hills of Fairfield County, South Carolina, stands our county market. The farmers and farm women who gather here to sell their products each week have a spirit of co-operation and fellowship, which is needed in every walk of life if success is to come. Thus, the market is a success! From every section of the county these farmers come with the products they have to offer the townspeople. Every Saturday folks in town are happy to be able to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats raised on the farms of their farmer neighbors. In this way, one can be sure there is no substitute, for only the products grown on Fairfield County soil are sold by this market. Never does one have to worry about the freshness, quality, or prices of these county-raised goods. Therefore, one feels that our town is blessed by having this market--for in this way, food comes straight from the county farm land to us, and the money is kept in the home community. The market offers just as reasonable prices as local grocery stores offer their goods. And, at grocery stores, one cannot be sure of home grown products; but the county markets sell only those foods that have been raised here at home.

The paradox of scarcity in the midst of plenty is familiar, both to those who have and to those who have not. All too frequently are more food products grown by farmers than can be used in their own homes. At the same time, many of these commodities--

II

particularly vegetables--could and would be used if they were made available to consumers.

Faced with meeting requirements, the nation's farmers in Mid-January, 1942, were asked by Sec. Wickard for the largest production program in history. Junking the goals announced before Pearl Harbor, Wickard showed the need for even larger food production. He said the new goals necessitate putting every acre, every hour, and every bit of farm machinery, fertilizer and other supplies to the best use. Practically all other goals were raised upward. Main increases over original goals were for peanuts, soybeans, flaxseed, rosin, turpentine, canning tomatoes, canning peas, dry beans, dry field peas, corn, rice, hogs, and eggs; acreage restrictions were withdrawn for sugarcane and sugarbeets. To encourage production, most of these products will be supported at not less than 85% of parity.¹

HISTORY AND PRESENT STATUS

In an old record dated the 8th day of March, 1775, we find a petition to the "Honorable Senate and House of Representatives" wherein "John Winn, Richard Winn, and John Vanderhorst prayed that a market might be by law established in the said town of Winnsboro, and public fairs kept and held there at least twice in every year for exposing to sale horses, cattle, grain, hemp, flax, tobacco, indigo, and all sorts of produce and merchandise, and that such market and fairs be invested with such liberties

1. Phil Perdue. The Month in Marketing. Agriculture Marketing Service. Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 17 (1942).

III

and privileges as to the same commonly belong.² At this early date was realized the needful co-operation between producers and consumer and the mutual benefits to each from their meeting together.

The first step towards the marketing of rural products under the direction of Cooperative Extension was in April, 1921. Mrs. George Clowney, County Home Demonstration Agent at that time, writes to the "Housekeepers and Farmers of Fairfield County."

"Dear People: After thinking over the hard time situation, I have arrived on a plan which I sincerely hope will prove a way to turn some of your produce into ready cash. This is my plan: The stockholders of the Community House have offered me the rooms of this building in which to carry on a Community Market every Saturday morning from 10:30 until 2:00. All persons who have produce as butter, eggs, chickens, canned good, cured meats, and so forth, which they should like to sell, are invited to bring them to the Community House at 10:30 o'clock.

"I am thoroughly advertising this market among the people of Winnsboro, and the mill town, and I do hope we can make a success of it. Other counties have already started such markets as I have planned, and you would be surprised to know how many dollars worth of produce has been sold in this way. Won't you do your part and help make ours a success?

"Please write me on the enclosed card about what you think you will bring or send to the market on April 23."³

2. Petition to Senate and House of Representatives in The News and Herald (Winnsboro, S. C.), for September 8, 1938. p.2.

3. Published in The News and Herald. September 8 1938

IV

In January of 1922 this market was discontinued, as no money was appropriated that year for a Home Demonstration Agent. Fairfield was without an agent until 1929. This year Miss Lucille Clark came to the county and in November, 1929, at a director's meeting of the Farm Woman's Council, plans were adopted for opening a market at an early date. Through the diligence of Miss Clark, who had enlisted some of the leading rural women of the county, in February, 1930 the first organized Home Demonstration Club Market was begun in Winnsboro.

Their first home was the Community House. They came on Saturday of each week for a few hours in the morning. As pioneers, they met with many discouragements and yet "carried on." The commission from sales was not enough to pay \$1 rent for the Community House each week, and the market shifted about to unrented store rooms. After a year of such wanderings, the Town Council offered the old market site under the town clock. For three years it enjoyed the permanency of this home. Because of winter discomfort in this location, the market moved to the Community House in the fall of 1934, grateful that the sympathetic Woman's Club offered the room for the modest rental of one dollar per month. This building was roomy and comfortable and remained the home of the market until June, 1938. With the tearing away of the Community House, the market was homeless again. Once more the town offered an abiding place, and the market returned to the original marketing building guarded by the town clock, where decades ago countrymen with all sorts of cattle, grain, victuals, and provisions were wont to meet with

townspeople and sell or barter between sunrise and sunsetting. In 1940, the market was compelled to move again because the town clock was to be remodeled. Since that time it has been located in a room in the rear of our county library building.

There are no debts on the market. All bills are paid at the end of every month. Each month a financial statement showing financial conditions of the market is posted on the bulletin board.

The marketing association holds three business meetings during the year; however, other meetings may be called at any time.⁴

Each Saturday at 9 o'clock in the market building you will find, as of yore, exposed for sale all sorts of provisions and victuals from county gardens, yard smokehouses, and pantries.

There is very little trouble in opening the market; since it is open one day a week--Saturday--there is nothing that must be done except to have the building cleaned, and during the winters to have a fire built. A janitor is hired for this work.

VOLUME OF BUSINESS

From December 1, 1940, to November 30, 1941, the total volume of sales at the market was \$2174.78. Over half of this was sold by one enthusiastic person who showed a great interest in the market.

The produce of the members of the market is brought in from the farms early every Saturday morning and is then placed in the

4. Annual Report for Fairfield Club Market, from December 1, 1940 to November 30, 1941. (Lent to me by club president, Mrs. R. B. McDonald.)

VI

show case and on the counters in the room in the rear of the library building. Insurance is carried on the building by the Fairfield County Library Commission.

At present, only fourteen farm women are selling through the market, and only five or six are present each Saturday. About 35 or 40 regular customers buy from the market every market-day.

The products sold mostly are seasonal crops. A few products such as pork, chickens, eggs, butter, and cream are sold during the summer and fall months and consist of beans, beets, cabbage, carrots, sweet corn, okra, onions, English peas, field peas, peppers, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, spinach, squash, collards, turnips, and tomatoes. Cucumbers, cantaloupes, muskmelons, watermelons, apples, pears, peaches, and berries are the fruits sold at the market. Baked products, such as cakes and cookies are sold whenever orders are placed in advance for them.

FACTS ABOUT THE MARKET

Facilities

The room in which the market is located has a cement floor, and the walls are white-washed. Furniture consists of a desk, four pairs of scales, one small show case, three counters, and four poultry coops. The market is well ventilated with three large windows and a double door. The market has no means of refrigeration--but has a stove to heat the building during the long winter months.

VII

Services and Practices

One of the most satisfactory methods of conducting sales in the market is the use of the duplicate sales system. The customers make their purchases from the producers, getting a charge slip which carries the producer's name, the customer's name, and the article and price; they in turn pay the secretary for their purchases in the market before leaving. The secretary, at the close of the market, checks her slips with the producer's duplicate slip and pays her according to her slips, less five per cent. This eliminates the confusion caused in making change and things in general run better. They find that the customers like this system and producers in markets where the system is in operation like it. It is impossible for producers to have sufficient change to meet the needs of customers when ten or fifteen cents worth is bought. There is no danger in losing any products, for the producer has a duplicate slip with the customer's name and products purchased. This method is employed in our market.

An old method of selling which proves satisfactory, but makes it more difficult to secure accurate information on volume of sales is the stall fee method. A member of the association pays a daily fee of 25¢ or more, depending upon the size and location of counter space, which the producer needs for displaying produce. At the close of each market day, each producer is asked to make out a sales slip showing the name of products and amount sold for the day.⁵

5. Constitution and By-Laws for Organizing and Establishing a Club Market Association, Prepared by Jane Ketchen, Extension Marketing Specialist, 1938, pp. 1,2.

VIII

DUTIES OF THE MARKET MANAGER

The manager is responsible for securing local market prices and with the assistance of a committee on prices and standards puts prices on the bulletin board for all produce sold in the market. The manager is responsible for seeing that the market building is kept in a sanitary condition; collects the commissions and makes such disbursements as are necessary, depending upon system of operation; keeps the books of the association in such a manner that the Board of Directors or members of the association are able to see financial condition of the association at all times; makes wholesale purchases of supplies necessary for operation of the market. All receipts for purchases are market paid and filed with financial reports submitted to the Board of Directors. Funds not necessary for daily operation are deposited in a bank. The manager is responsible for securing the signed membership agreements and assigned locations or counter space to members. All membership agreements are filed in a reliable place and at the disposal of the Board of Directors. The manager posts monthly financial statements on the bulletin board in the market.⁶

REQUIREMENTS

There are little or no requirements at this kind of market because the better looking the produce is the better it will sell. Therefore, the producers sell only the best products raised.

6. Op. Cit., Page 2.

IX

The quantities that are not marketed--and which consumers need sorely--cost the farmer as much per unit to produce as the commodities he sells. In other words, quantities unsold do not add to the income of the farmer, but they cost him as much per pound or per bushel to raise as the products that are sold. Consequently, products that are sold must return to the farmer the full cost of production and distribution if he is to stay on the black side of the ledger.

RULES AND REGULATIONS⁷

1. City health officers discuss city ordinances affecting the handling of various farm products with members. Rules to meet the requirements of city ordinance are drawn up by the Board of Directors.
2. All members selling cakes or other cooked foods on local market must attend the demonstration given by the extension nutrition specialist and carry out practices in making and packing cakes and other cooked foods for market.
3. All eggs must be fresh, clean, and uniform in size. Eggs weighing 24 ounces and over per dozen sell for market prices, eggs weighing twenty to twenty-three ounces per dozen sell for three cents less than market price; and eggs weighing sixteen to nineteen ounces per dozen five cents less than market price.
4. Each member selling butter has it graded at stated intervals during the year (at least three times), and adopts recommended practices for improving the quality of the products offered on the market.

5. Standard quart berry boxes are used by members for marketing berries, grapes, figs, and plums.
6. Members sell produce by prices on bulletin board.
7. An opening and closing hour is determined upon and due consideration given as to the hours best suited for the consumer.⁷

KIND OF PRODUCTS SOLD

The kind of products sold are mostly pork, chickens, eggs, butter, cream, lamb, and fresh vegetables. Flowers and wreathes are also sold for special occasions and special orders.

CHARGES

This organization is devoted to the improvements of agricultural and rural life, and did much to direct attention of farmers to the needs and possibilities of selling their produce.

Through this market the farmers can obtain retail rather than wholesale prices for their produce. Were these products to be sold to local grocermen they would only receive wholesale prices. Thus, the markets enable the farmers to receive prices which compare with the grocer's prices. The local market prices are based upon the quality of the product--the prices are decided upon by averaging the rates of two local grocer's prices and one chain store's prices. In this way, there is no conflict between the county market and local stores.

There is no definite amount of space to offer each producer. Each producer is given as much space as his products require. At times the building is very crowded--but the members make the best of the small building in which they are situated.

⁷. Gr. Cit.. pp. 3.4.

XI

The market does not have many expenses. The total amount of expenses for one year was only \$74.35. This included \$24.25 for secretary's salary, \$12.10 for the janitor, \$15, for gifts, \$10.25 for the building, \$2.00 for advertising, \$3.90 for flowers for funerals, \$5.04 for glass jars, \$1.35 for the assistant secretary's salary and 27¢ for little odds and ends. For the whole year only 19¢ was lost on account of lost bills.⁸

OPINIONS RESPECTING THE MARKET

The State Home Demonstration Service has promoted and been responsible for the organization of Club Market Associations in South Carolina since 1920.⁹ The Home Demonstration Service renders assistance in setting up and developing the market associations. Club market work is a regular Home Demonstration project and the Home Demonstration Agent devotes time to the development of this line of work.

The Home Demonstration Agent works directly with the officers--consisting of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and four directors--and the members of the association in an advisory capacity and in promoting production and standardization programs to meet the local demand. She also renders assistance in bringing to the attention of the business men and housewives or consumers of our town the value of a club market to both business men and consumers.

8. Annual Report for Fairfield Club Market, from December 1, 1940 November 30, 1941.

9. Op. Cit., p. 2.

XII

Practically all club market associations are carrying a yearly program of work. The Home Agent works out the program with the Board of Directors, and it is then presented to the members of the association for their approval.

Mrs. R. B. McDonald, a member of the County Market since 1931, has missed only one Saturday in all those years. At present, her sales are first of all the farm women. She says that by marketing hogs, lambs, and chickens at this market, she gets retail prices instead of wholesale prices, which increases their value about one-fourth. In the fall butter is profitable. This is after the calves that stay with their mothers on pasture during the summer have been sold. Among the vegetables--spinach, lettuce, and tomatoes are satisfactory, salable, and profitable.

This market represents much work, time, and thought. Vegetables do not become full grown overnight; no fairy wands are waved about to change pigs into hogs; and no buttons can be pressed to make butter come in molded. Most of these farmers manage to get along with little hired help.

Preparation for the market begins on Thursday with the killing of the hogs. Friday the sausage is ground, liver pudding made, butter molded, and the vegetables gathered. All the hog sells--even the cracklins. On Saturdays the farmers get up by five o'clock, gather up their produce, and start on their way to Winnsboro.

But Saturday is a very pleasant day for the farm women--its success is full compensation for the effort of the week.

XIII

The ladies enjoy the contact and co-operation with each other at the market. Yes, it's a lot of fun.

Would that all farm women might take advantage of this opportunity and add joy, interest, objective, and accomplishment to their farm life!

Mrs. R. B. McDonald has written for me a letter in which she shows her appreciation toward this club market:

"For a period of seven years I have been a regular Home Demonstration market attendant. During this time I have been absent only one Saturday and that was due to illness in the family. This has enabled me to have regular engagements and to build up a permanent trade. I select my produce very carefully and try to have it of the best quality. In that way, I have won the confidence of my customers. I deem it a privilege to be able to sell at market price in this ordered way. It is as though each producer were his own merchant. I have handled almost \$5,000 and succeeded in "making the grade" on an encumbered farm.

The weekly preparation relieves the monotony of farm life and Saturday is a day of profitable pleasure. I have enjoyed the contact with customers and producers and have had the opportunity to know our home agents better. For the past two years Miss Ellen Atkinson has gladdened the market with her sweet presence. Always alert to our interests she has added comforts and conveniences for our building, now the support of the townspeople, and engendered a lovely spirit of co-operation among all. Even to the extent of serving as secretary, she has freely given her time. Altogether, I feel that I have been very fortunate."

XIV

In an interview with a country farmer who does not take part in selling his farm products at the market, I was astounded to learn how little he knew of the market and how little interest he took in it. He said that he didn't raise enough food to sell to others and that if he did, he couldn't find time to gather up the produce and get it ready for market. He felt that if he raised enough food to sell, he would have to hire extra labor; and in that way, it would not pay.

Upon talking with several grocers in Winnsboro, they stated that they would gladly buy the vegetables and meats sold at the market at regular market prices provided they came up to specification in grading. There is no hard feeling between the grocers and the producers who sell at the market for there is plenty of business for all. In the end, the farmers spend their earnings with the local stores for products they themselves cannot grow.

A one hundred percent preference is found among the housekeepers for homegrown vegetables. They attribute their preference chiefly to reasons of quality, although some purchased home grown products because of economy. The chief quality factor is that the native produce is fresh. There is a prevailing custom on the part of the housekeepers to inspect personally or look over the produce before it is purchased. This indicates that it is worth the farmer's time to keep his goods in attractive condition and to offer for sale only produce of the best quality.

There is preference for fresh country eggs rather than those shipped in, and a great many families have standing orders with the markets to supply them.

Price of native fruits is somewhat lower than that of fruits shipped in.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The market has proven an orderly, organized means of disposing of farm produce and the ready cash which farm women receive in this way has been most helpful. A commission of five percent takes care of incidentals and the secretary's salary. The Home Agent has general supervision and sends records to Winthrop College each month. A local department store has provided the market with sales books. The cash taken in is immediately expended with the merchants of the town. A better understanding between the farm people and townspeople has been fostered by the market and many pleasant contacts made.

Experience has shown conclusively that if direct marketing is to prove satisfactory both producer and consumer must gain something from the transaction. Some inducement in the way of extra value or higher quality must be offered to consumers to compensate the latter for their extra trouble. Because of the large price spread between farmer and consumer on perishable farm products this inducement is not hard to offer and still leave an extra amount for the producer. Non-uniform and poor quality products have sometimes proved to be a stumbling block. Products should be graded whenever possible, and success should not cause the farmers to become careless and lower the standards of his produce. Consumers buying at these club markets will usually overlook small imperfections in order to obtain freshness.

XVI

If club markets are to be successful, customers must have definite information in advance concerning the three W's--where to go for the things they want, what products are available at what price, and when they can get them. Want-ads inserted in the local paper a few days in advance constitute an easy, satisfactory, and inexpensive means of informing consumers of these facts.

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