

SUMMARY

Celery is one of Florida's important vegetable crops. More than 8.5 million man-hours were used in producing, harvesting and packaging the 1945 Florida celery crop. More than half of this labor was used in harvesting and packaging alone. In the process of harvesting and packaging, as many as 10 to 15 individuals may handle each stalk from the time it is cut until it is packed.

Production of celery in Florida is concentrated in three major producing areas centered around Sanford, Belle Glade and Sarasota. During 1946 the acreages amounted to 6,780 in the Sanford area, 5,175 in the Belle Glade area and 1,460 in the Sarasota area. The production and harvesting practices differed in all three areas.

I — HARVESTING METHODS

Daily output records were obtained from three firms in each of the three areas. Among these nine firms there was a range in field work from 31 to 65 hours per unit of 10,000 stalks. Washhouse labor varied from 21 to 47 hours per 10,000 stalks. One firm harvested and packed 10,000 stalks in 69 hours while another required 102 hours. Studied by operations in the entire process of harvesting and packaging, no one firm was either the most or least efficient in every operation.

The hand-knife method of harvesting, as used in the Belle Glade area, was the fastest method of cutting, trimming roots and stripping. It seemed best adapted to small crews because very close supervision must be maintained to avoid materially damaging the celery. The push-knife method of harvesting, with strippers working across the rows, was apparently the best method for large crews. The practice of working across the rows was superior in most cases to working down the rows, because there was less confusion and moving on the part of the workers. Broken roots and shattered stalks were much more common in the celery cut by the hand-knife method than in that cut by the push-knife method.

Judging from the average prices received and from a detailed inspection of the contents of 511 crates, there was not a great deal of difference in the quality of celery resulting from various methods of work among the firms within any area. In all three areas the firm using the most hours of labor per 10,000 stalks