

assists sales. Some customers each day want fruit for immediate consumption.

SUMMARY

The Marketing Agreement Program for Florida avocados, initiated at the beginning of the 1954-55 season, focused considerable attention on the problem of grade standards for the product. While a set of standards has been adopted by the industry, they are subject to change if such changes are necessary to market the product more efficiently and satisfy consumer preferences. Thus, the determination of consumer recognition of external quality factors in avocados, to develop a set of standards reflecting the maximum desires of consumers, is of paramount importance. The objective of this study, therefore, was to determine the extent to which consumers regarded variations in the external characteristics of size, shape and appearance of avocados as differences in quality.

To test consumer quality preferences, 3 tests, each of 1 week's duration, were conducted in 6 retail supermarkets in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from November 3 to 22, 1958. Tests the first week were of normally shaped, U. S. No. 1 grade avocados of the Lula variety of varying sizes: small (size 20, average weight 11 ounces), medium (size 16, average weight 14 ounces) and large (size 12, average weight 18½ ounces). Tests the second week included normally shaped avocados of the Lula variety, size 12, with 3 degrees of skin blemishes, principally scab and scar. Tests the third week were of size 14 avocados, U. S. No. 1 grade, of the Lula variety (pear-shaped) and Booth 7 variety (round-shaped). Results of the tests were:

1. Small-sized avocados were purchased in larger number than large-sized ones but, on a weight basis, about the same quantity of avocados was purchased by consumers, regardless of size.

2. Customers expressed a very decided preference for the better grades of fruit and chose among these grades for softer fruit. However, one-fifth of the sales were badly blemished fruit.

3. Consumers did not exhibit a significant preference for shape of fruit. Sales by shape appeared to vary with relative softness of the fruit on display.