

It is a little further round the corners of a square deal, but the road is better.

The Florida Citrus Exchange to Establish Packing Houses on East Coast

The Stroller, in referring to the Indian River orange, said:

"To own an Indian River orchard is to have title in the orange nobility. Smooth of skin, which is thin as a lady's glove, full of sweet juice to the bursting point, they are ne plus ultra, the last word in oranges."

Since the first year of its existence the Florida Citrus Exchange has handled very little Indian River fruit, and has thus been handicapped in the markets. To be frank, that first year in the Exchange fold was not a satisfactory one to the growers, and there were reasons, among them being the fact that the associations over there were largely composed of men who, while they knew orange growing, knew little about packing or handling fruit for market, and (shades of Caesar) they located their sub-exchange headquarters at a point where there was no telegraphic communication. That was truly a hard year for the co-operation. The association furnished the fruit put up the only way they knew how to put it up and the Tampa office must do the rest. The result in many sections was failure.

The Exchange does things differently now. The success of the Exchange plan is assured, and it has enough fruit to carry on the institution without the addition of another box, but the more fruit handled the less per box it can be handled for. No association will be taken in unless it can deliver fruit to the selling department that the sales-manager is proud to sell, and hereafter when any association is formed, the Exchange officials will insist that it have proper facilities and is under competent management.

The exchange officials would indeed be proud to handle the splendid fruit from along the shores of the Indian River, and it now looks as though they would have an opportunity this coming season, and an opportunity is all they ask. They are so sure that they can make a better showing than any other operator ever has succeeded in doing that they are not even considering any other possibility.

The Exchange is now ready to publish the glad news that there is every prospect there will be four associations operating along the Indian River this year, one of them already having been organized, and with money at hand to build a house that can handle 100,000 boxes of fruit, while among the other three, as yet embryonic associations, there will be possibly 200,000 boxes of fruit pledged the Exchange. The time is very short and some sharp work must be done to get into shape, but Manager Jones is optimistic, and forces are at work rounding up the situation to the end that everybody will be in readiness by the middle of September.

There are many outside operators in these East Coast sections that believe the Exchange is poaching; that it is coming into territory that is exclusively theirs and needless to say they are worried and are doing all in their power to discredit co-operation and the Florida Citrus Exchange.

Said one of these men to a grower on Sunday last: "Way, you will be the biggest kind of a chump to let the Exchange handle your fruit after the prices we got for you last season. Don't you know that the Exchange won't let you ship your fruit in September, even if it is ripe, and don't you know that it takes them three to six months to settle for fruit after they have sold it?" No, the man didn't know this, but he was game and stuck

to his determination to try the Exchange, saying to himself that he would take up these points with the Exchange officials, which he did. I believe the average time for returns for fruit is 17 days from the day it is sold, of course varying somewhat with distance of market, and no grower's money is ever allowed to stay in Tampa over night of the date it is received, it being immediately sent to the sub-exchange manager for proper distribution. As for shipping early fruit, it may be shipped at any time it will pass the inspector, and thus comply with the law, and not before.

I know that a great deal of misapprehension exists not only among East Coast growers, but among growers in general regarding the working of the Exchange. Let's have a little confidential chat about the A B C's of the institution. What is it you want to know?

Can you pick your fruit when you want to? So far as the Tampa office is concerned, you can pick and deliver it at any time that it is ripe. We can conceive of certain local conditions when it might be inexpedient for your local manager to handle the fruit, but you are in close touch with him and could readily learn if these conditions were of prime importance. There are times when the head office ADVISES you not to pick fruit and if you are wise you will harken unto this advice, for you are paying a man to keep in touch with the markets and if he is worth anything to you at all it is on such occasion as this. He tells you this because market conditions are bad, and he does not want to see your fruit slaughtered.

Your manager, with your consent and advice, may send any car of fruit to any market in the country you choose. Orders are sent to your manager for fruit at a certain price; you can fill that order or refuse to fill, just as you choose. You can set a price on your fruit and refuse to accept anything less; that is up to you and your manager, though it is only fair to say that you may not get that price, as all will depend upon market conditions at the time, and of course dealers will not pay more than they consider fruit to be worth, but it rests with your manager to make your fruit worth as much or just a little more than any other fruit offered. Brands that have made a reputation will always command a great deal more than other fruit which may be equally as good, but which does not have that reputation or is not packed quite so well. Your fruit may be sold by the packed box at the packinghouse to speculators, however, provided the sale is approved by the Tampa office, with the regular selling charges to be deducted.

I have a letter on my desk from a man who complains that the Exchange charge for packing is too high. The Exchange does not pack fruit and has nothing to do with the cost. The Exchange is a selling agency only. The cost of packing, the way the fruit is packed, and the condition of fruit on arrival at the markets is wholly up to the local association, of which each individual is a member, and as such responsible in part for any defect in the working machinery. The power to right wrongs within the associations lies wholly within the power of the Tampa office, though the Tampa office is beginning to broaden its scope to the extent of demanding that efficient men be employed who can put fruit up the "Exchange Way." The co-operative weak spot, when there was one,

has always been the weak association. Our correspondent should make his complaint at the proper place.

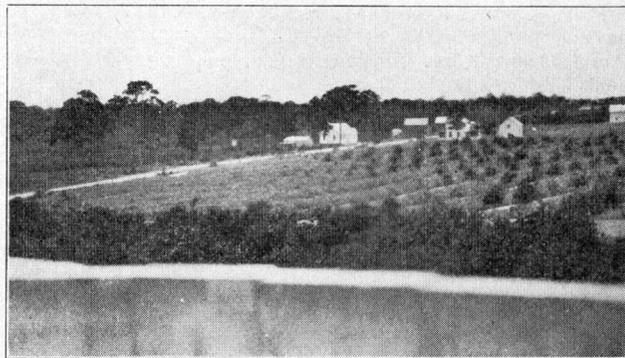
Each grower joining becomes a full member of the association with power to vote, just as much voting power as the larger grower

within the fold. Not less than three associations may form a sub-exchange, and each association may send a director to sit on the sub-exchange board. This sub-exchange has a manager, and it is to this manager that all orders and inquiries for fruit are sent by the Tampa office when there are such. It is his business to know just what each association is doing so that he can quickly and intelligently fill or reject such orders and to be able to do this he must be in constant touch with each of his associations. This sub-exchange elects, through its directors, a representative to sit on the Tampa board and he looks after the interests of his locality when the board of directors of the Florida Citrus Exchange meet, and these directors constitute the Florida Citrus Exchange.

The Exchange charge for handling fruit in the seasons of 1912-13 was 15 cents a box and at the end of the season the Exchange paid back to its members 5 cents a box on all fruit each had shipped. This past season the selling charge was 12½ cents per box, and there will be about \$25,000.00 excess over expenses at the end of this season. Please understand that the Exchange is not in the business for profit. It is purely a co-operative body of growers who are doing business at cost; in short, you and your neighbor are handling your own business of packing and selling the fruit you grow and if the estimated cost of selling is more than the actual cost this excess is returned to you. In addition to this selling charge there was 1½ cents a box charge for advertising. The cost of handling fruit in the house varies in each case, as does the cost of maintaining the sub-exchange office, the expense of the latter being comparatively small, but the total cost of picking, packing and selling should not be much over 70 cents a box. The California Exchange does all this for about 50 cents a box, and when the Florida Exchange handles as much fruit as does its California mother we can also come to some such price, for the more fruit the less per box it can be done for.

These are some of the kindergarten fundamentals of the co-operative principles of the Florida Citrus Exchange and if any reader wishes to know more he should send to the Tampa office for the book which is now known as the "Temple Bible," which explains all the workings of the Exchange in detail, shows the type of contract to be signed, and in short everything that the seeker for knowledge wishes to know. This will be sent freely and gladly.

I feel sure that old-time Exchange men and old-time readers of the Grower will pardon our dwelling to such a length on a subject that they are so familiar with. I started to write about the Indian River orange, the growers there, their needs of co-operation, and I have been writing with their needs solely in mind. I per-



sonally feel great interest in this matter, for it was largely through the Grower that the awakening interest for co-operation on the East Coast was brought to the attention of the Exchange officials, and I will feel that if the Exchange succeeds in lining up enough fruit over there with which to make a demonstration this next season that the Grower's work for Florida has not been in vain.

Will all growers from New Smyrna south to Ft. Pierce who wish to affiliate with the Exchange write to the Tampa office, stating what fruit they have. There will probably be no Exchange house built this season south of Cocoa, but no doubt arrangements may be made for shipping fruit in field boxes at such a rate that there will be but little, if any, excess in freight charges over what they would be had the fruit been packed at point of origin. It seems probable also that either a house will be built on Merritt's Island, or else arrangements will be made so that fruit can be boated from the island to either Cocoa or to Wiley Avenue (just north of Titusville), where an exchange house will be erected on the railroad and close to the water front.

Most of the Indian River fruit has in the past been sent to New York or Philadelphia and sold at auction. No particular salesmanship was required to sell such fruit, its bright, smooth appearance and general excellence, coupled with the fact that there was no excessive quantity of it offered, tending to make buyers seek the seller rather than the contrary, as is commonly the case. I can imagine the eagerness with which Holland, the New York representative of the Exchange, will await the arrival of his first consignment of these superior goods, and I have faith to believe that the man who packs the fruit will not disappoint him, and that the car will be class A in every respect. I can also imagine the dealers gathering around to note the results, and if these Indian River growers only knew the regard these same buyers have for Exchange goods, they also would have the same confidence I have that results will be fine. However, New York will not have it all her own way with these Indian Rivers hereafter; there are other markets and the one that will pay the top price will get the goods.

Buyers along the Indian River usually begin to make offers in September. Because of Exchange activity over there they are now buying crops, offering as high as \$1.50 a box on the tree when they cannot buy for less. It was only two months ago when the representative of a big selling concern made the remark that it would be lucky for the growers over there if they got 50 cents a box next season, but that remark was made before the Florida Citrus Exchange hit the East Coast. Get on the cushions.—Florida Grower.

The Farmer will introduce you to a lot of new customers.