FARM AND RANCH BULLETIN

Vol. 22, No. 9 September 1967

KNOW YOUR GRADES

S. R. Smith, Administrator with the Consumer and Marketing Service, says that U.S. Department of Agriculture grades for food help protect four basic consumer rights: (1) the right to be safe, (2) the right to be informed, (3) the right to choose, and (4) the right to be heard.

To be safe. The official USDA grade shield may be used only on foods that are clean and wholesome. In the case of meat and poultry, the product must first pass a rigid Government inspection for wholesomeness before it is eligible for grading. In order for other food products to carry the grade shield, strict requirements for sanitation must be met in the plant, equipment, and operating procedures.

To be informed. The U.S. grades are plainly marked on the package or on the product, thereby providing the food shopper with reliable, impartial information on quality. Food is the only consumer product for which such service is provided by Federal and state governments. The USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service, in cooperation with state departments of agriculture, offers grading services to processors and packers on a voluntary basis. A fee is charged for these services; processors and packers paid nearly $29 million for grading services during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1967.

To choose. The consumer must be well informed in order to choose wisely. Thus, the right to be informed and the right to choose must go hand in hand. The consumer who is informed on food quality by USDA grades will have the information he needs to choose intelligently. Since the USDA grade means the same thing in any store, in any part of the country, and at any time of the year, it makes choice between products and between prices a meaningful process.

To be heard. The consumer who buys by USDA grade makes his voice heard in the marketplace and all the way back to the producer. Buying by grade does not mean buying only the best — it means a choice of qualities. Sometimes a lower grade is very satisfactory for a particular purpose and can mean a saving in money.

The "economic votes" cast by consumers through their purchases of USDA Choice grade beef have resulted in a large increase in the production of this quality of beef, says Mr. Smith. About three-fourths of the beef grades are now rated as Choice quality. Foods most commonly carrying the USDA grade mark include beef, lamb, chicken, turkey, butter, and eggs. Grades are also available for many other products, but they are not as widely used.

The kinds of meat which are graded are beef, veal, calf, lamb, yearling mutton, and mutton. The grade names are U.S. Prime, U.S. Choice, and U.S. Good; however, mutton is not eligible for the Prime grade. The next three lower grades of beef — U.S. Standard, U.S. Commercial, and U.S. Utility — are sometimes found on retail counters. There are

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF DALLAS
DALLAS, TEXAS

also lower grades for each of these meats, but they are not likely to be seen in retail stores.

The kinds of poultry graded are turkey, chicken, duck, goose, guinea, and squab. The grade names are U.S. grade A, U.S. grade B, and U.S. grade C. Poultry grades are based on the conformation of the bird (the proportion of meat to bone); the amount of fat in and under the skin; and the absence of or degree of defects, such as cuts, tears, and bruises. The "class" of the bird (which appears on the label) is a guide to tenderness and to the appropriate cooking method.

Eggs are graded for both quality and size, but there is no relation between the two characteristics. Grade names for quality include Fresh Fancy Quality or U.S. grade AA, U.S. grade A, and U.S. grade B. For size, the names are U.S. Jumbo, Extra Large, Large, Medium, Small, and Peewee. Official egg sizes are based on weight-per-dozen, and the variation of sizes of individual eggs within a dozen is limited by the standards.

Dairy products which are graded are butter, cheese, Swiss cheese, and nonfat dry milk. A quality control program and "Quality Approved" rating are available for the following products: process cheese, cottage cheese, sour cream, and buttermilk.

Most fresh fruits and vegetables are packed and sold on the wholesale market on the basis of U.S. grades. There are standards for 72 different kinds of commodities. In addition, there are 13 "consumer standards" developed for use at the retail level. The typical range of grades used for fresh fruits and vegetables at the wholesale level includes U.S. Fancy, U.S. No. 1, and U.S. No. 2. Grades for fresh fruits and vegetables are determined on the basis of the product's color, size, shape, degree of maturity, and freedom from defects. Grades have also been developed for a large variety of processed fruits and vegetables, as well as for a number of related products, such as peanut butter, jams, jellies, pickles, olives, honey, and orange juice crystals.

Consumers will not find all of these foods identified by grade in the grocery store, although most of the trading in food below the retail level is done on the basis of USDA grades. In general, processors and packers will carry the USDA grade shield on their products only when they feel it will give them a merchandising advantage or when consumers or retailers demand it. Nevertheless, many foods do carry the USDA grade mark. Mr. Smith says that it pays to learn to recognize the grade mark and to know what it means. It can help the purchaser to know more about what he is buying, to compare prices of foods in different stores, and to get the most for his money.

Spanish-American Youths In Texas Favor Nonfarm Jobs

With the wholehearted approval of their families, many young Spanish Americans in Texas are *not* following in the footsteps of their parents, reports the Economic Research Service. Farm work has traditionally been one of the major occupations of Spanish Americans living in Texas; however, in recent years, many of these persons — especially the younger ones —have abandoned farm work in favor of nonfarm employment.

The Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, in cooperation with ERS economists, conducted a survey of 544 Spanish-American household heads in two areas of Texas — rural Atascosa County and urban San Antonio. The survey illustrates both the role of education and the extent of occupational shifts occurring between younger-generation Spanish Americans and their parents.

In the city, the principal occupational differences between the generations occurred in the smaller proportion of unskilled laborers and the larger proportion of white-collar workers among the young Spanish Americans as compared with their parents. White-collar workers comprised about 30 percent of the younger-generation work force, while laborers accounted for less than 20 percent. Among the household heads, these proportions were reversed.

In large part, the occupational changes by the younger generation were made possible by significant gains in educational attainment.

The younger generation achieved an educational level which was double that of their parents and almost on a par with the educational level of the non-Spanish population around them. Average years of schooling completed by younger rural and urban Spanish Americans were 8 and 12 years, respectively. The report shows that most of the household heads had high aspirations for their young children. This fact was true particularly in San Antonio, where family heads hoped that their sons and daughters would seek careers in professional fields.

Bossy Helps Abroad

A record 23,500 U.S. dairy breeder cattle joined the technical experts going abroad last year to upgrade foreign agriculture, points out the Statistical Reporting Service. The purpose of the mission was to inaugurate high-output herds and to breed up the existing dairy strains. Many foreign herds have been based on dairy strains developed in Europe; however, European cattle often do not equal the milk output of U.S. cattle. In a recent test, for example, registered German and Dutch Holsteins, placed alongside American Holsteins and under the same conditions, fell short by as much as a third of the 15,000-pound production level of U.S. animals.

Moreover, U.S. dairy cattle have proved to be adaptable to foreign regions. Although some of the cattle are shipped to vacation areas such as Bermuda, most of the animals go where livestock conditions are poor by modern standards. Even so, they are expected to thrive and to benefit native herds.

Based on a trade-estimate price of $500 per animal, the sale of U.S. dairy breeder cattle for export in 1966 was valued at $11.7 million, or an all-time high. Most of the animals were paid for by private stockbreeders, although foreign governments made some of the initial purchases. The majority of last year's exports went to other countries in North and South America. The largest number, 12,000, was shipped to Mexico; and the second highest, 3,500 head, went to Italy.

Sturdy Wheat

Sturdy is a new variety of hard red winter wheat that is adapted to irrigated regions and other high-production areas of Texas. It is the first short-statured commercial variety of hard red winter wheat available to growers, according to the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. Sturdy wheat is usually from 6 to 10 inches shorter than most commercial varieties; moreover, it has strong straw and is resistant to shattering.

Sturdy wheat plants have rather broad leaves. Seedling growth is moderately erect; consequently, the variety is well suited for winter forage uses. The new wheat is highly resistant to the races of leaf rust present in Texas during the period of its development but may not be resistant under all conditions. It is susceptible to prevalent stem rust races and to powdery mildew.

The maturity of Sturdy wheat is about midway between that of the Triumph and Caddo varieties. In central Texas, the new wheat type frequently heads 4 days earlier than does Caddo, but there is less difference at higher elevations in northwest Texas.

Yields of Sturdy wheat under irrigation and in the 35- to 40-inch rainfall belt of central Texas have been equal to those of the best commercial varieties. Furthermore, the new wheat has not lodged, even at yield levels of 60 to 70 bushels per acre. Under dryland farming conditions in the 15- to 25-inch rainfall areas, Sturdy wheat has not produced yields equal to those of standard height commercial varieties; consequently, it is not recommended for these areas.

The test weight of Sturdy wheat is equal to that of older varieties, such as Comanche, but is not equal to the test weights of Tascosa, Kaw, or Caddo. Limited tests of winter-hardiness in regional trials indicate that Sturdy

wheat may not be sufficiently winter-hardy for wheat-growing areas north of the Texas High Plains. Growers in adjoining states should contact their nearest agricultural experiment station for information on the new wheat variety.

Grain of Sturdy wheat, from many locations and from both irrigated and dryland production, has been tested extensively for quality. In all instances, it has been equal to the best quality varieties of hard red winter wheat. Flour yields, gluten strength, and bread characteristics of the new wheat variety were outstanding in all tests.

Smaller Calf Crop Expected

The 1967 national calf crop is expected to total 43.1 million head, or 1 percent less than the 1966 figure, according to the Statistical Reporting Service. The number of cows and heifers 2 years old and older on January 1, 1967, was 49.8 million head, also 1 percent below a year earlier. The number of calves expected to be born during 1967, expressed as a percentage of cows and heifers 2 years old and older at the beginning of the year, is placed at 86 percent, the same as in 1966.

Compared with a year ago, the 1967 calf crop in the states of the Eleventh Federal Reserve District is expected to be about unchanged in Oklahoma and Texas but down 4 percent in Arizona, 5 percent in Louisiana, and 2 percent in New Mexico.

Explosion Puffing

Explosion puffing of fruits and vegetables, a process devised by scientists with the Agricultural Research Service, makes possible the dehydration of large pieces of these products so that only 5 to 6 minutes are required for their reconstitution, according to Mrs. Gwen Clyatt, Extension Consumer Marketing Specialist with Texas A&M University. Approximately 20 minutes are required for the cooking of those foods that are dehydrated conventionally. The nutritive value of foods processed by explosion puffing is not affected, and the cost of the process is about the same as that involved in conventional dehydration.

Farm Land Prices

Farm real estate prices in the Nation rose 7 percent during the year ended March 1, 1967, according to a recent report of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The national index of value per acre reached 160 percent of the 1957-59 average. Regional increases ranged from 1 percent in the Pacific States to 9 percent in both the Lake States and Corn Belt regions. Gains of 12 percent were recorded for Iowa and Missouri. The USDA says that sharp reductions in the availability of credit and increases in interest rates held the November 1966-March 1967 advance to 2 percent nationally.

Among the states, only Florida showed a decline in the average value of farm real estate for the year ended March 1. California values were unchanged for the year, despite a 3-percent decline during the November 1966-March 1967 period. In Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, and Arizona, decreases of 1 percent were registered for the 4-month period.

The following table shows the indexes of farm land prices (1957-59 = 100) for the states of the Eleventh Federal Reserve District for March 1, 1967, together with comparisons with a year earlier and November 1, 1966.

State	Mar. 1, 1967	Nov. 1, 1966	Mar. 1, 1966
Arizona	165	167	155
Louisiana	195	187	176
New Mexico	160	161	154
Oklahoma	181	179	169
Texas	172	168	165

Rice is the only cereal which has shown a substantial increase in per capita food use in the United States, according to the Statistical Reporting Service. Per capita consumption of wheat and other grains has been declining, although the use of a few individual items — such as macaroni, wheat breakfast cereals, and some corn products — has risen. The use of rice in cereals increased from about 1.3 million hundredweight in the midfifties to approximately 2.0 million hundredweight in the early sixties.