

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OFFICE OF THE

DAIRY AND COLD STORAGE COMMISSIONER

OTTAWA, December 15, 1910.

THE OUTLOOK FOR CANADIAN TOMATOES IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Recent inquiries received at this office would indicate a revival of interest in the question of the possibility of a profitable trade being done in supplying Canadian tomatoes to the markets of Great Britain. There are two points on which prospective shippers or growers have asked for information, viz.:—

- (a) Is it possible to land Canadian tomatoes in Great Britain in good condition, and
- (b) If so, are the prices high enough at the season of the year when the Canadian supply is available to make shipments profitable?

It will be remembered that in 1897\* a considerable quantity of tender fruits, including tomatoes, was shipped by this Branch of the Department of Agriculture to London, Liverpool and Glasgow, with a view of testing the markets and determining the possibilities of the trade. The conclusions of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying, under whose direction the shipments were made, were to the effect that tomatoes could be landed, even with the facilities then available, in fairly good condition. Since that time considerable progress has been made in the knowledge pertaining to the refrigeration, handling and shipment of all kinds of tender fruit and there would seem to be no difficulty at present in placing Canadian tomatoes of the right variety on the English market in good, sound, marketable condition.

The second question cannot be so satisfactorily answered, as, at the present time, there does not appear to be a very promising opening for Canadian tomatoes in Great Britain.

However, in order to meet the demand for information on the subject, this circular has been prepared, under my direction, by the Chief of the Extension of Markets Division.

CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM SHIPMENTS, 1907.

*(Condensed from the Experimental Farm Report for 1908.)*

In January, 1907, Mr. W. T. Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist, Experimental Farm, Ottawa, wrote Mr. Findlay, the cargo inspector for this Branch at Glasgow,

\*See report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying for 1897, Part VII, Page 11.  
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Scotland, regarding the prospects of sending tomatoes to Glasgow profitably. On February 20, Mr. Findlay replied as follows:—

'I am in receipt of yours of the 21st ultimo regarding trying experimental shipments of tomatoes during the approaching summer season, to arrive from the middle to the end of August. I feel little or no profit would be gained on shipments reaching the Glasgow market at that period, as it is then the very height of the Scotch season, while the market is likewise handling heavy consignments from English, Guernsey (Channel Islands) and French growers. I have inquired the opinion of the leading fruit brokers and also of various large retail fruiterers in Glasgow, and all are unanimous in expressing their opinion against the venture being a profitable one, unless you can manage to get them forward to arrive about the middle of July or thereabout (or in the event of a partial failure in some of the producing centres).

'Regarding the size of the tomatoes, just now tomatoes of about five and a half to six and a half inches in circumference, and averaging about eight or nine to the pound are the ruling size, and I doubt if a smaller species would find a ready market in August, as then the Scotch are plentiful and quite half as large again, and smooth-skinned varieties.

'The popular colour on the Glasgow market is a deep red. Tomatoes which are more or less wrinkled do not sell freely here especially at that season. The packages most in vogue are square boxes containing about 12 to 15 pounds; one broker suggests 12 to 18 pounds, and in the event of the latter being adopted to have a division in the centre. The Canary Island shippers forward theirs in 12 pound boxes, four rows deep per box, and four boxes being strapped together down the ends, and as a box is required the connecting straps are sawn asunder, thus leaving the remainder still intact.

'The market here is supplied from May to October with Scotch, English, Channel Islands and French, and from November to April by Canary Island tomatoes.

'For your guidance I give you the wholesale prices generally ruling in August for the various countries' produce:—

'Scottish, 4d. to 5d.; English, 3d. to 4d.; Guernsey (Channel Islands), 2d. to 3d.; French, 1½d. to 2d. per lb. I also obtained the following average retail prices from the largest firm of retail fruiterers (Messrs. Malcolm Campbell & Co.), who are also importers:—May, 8d. per lb.; June, 6d. per lb.; July, 5d. per lb., and August, 3½d. per lb., for Scotch tomatoes. Perhaps these prices may be of service to you as to the possibility of profit at the lowest returns of, say, French produce.'

Notwithstanding the unfavourable prospect two special varieties of tomatoes were planted at the Experimental Farm and forwarded to Glasgow in four shipments which left Ottawa on September 3, 9, 16 and 23. The tomatoes were wrapped in tissue paper and packed in two tiers in boxes 5 x 11 x 20 inches, holding about 21 pounds net. The results were as follows:—

	Cases.	Amount Sold for.		Shipping and Selling Expenses.	
		\$	cts.	\$	cts.
Shipment No. 1.....	12	13	12	4	02
" " 2.....	14	8	50	4	20
" " 3.....	17	9	47	8	33
" " 4.....	11	4	00	3	19
Total .....	54	35	09	19	74

Average price sold for, 64 cents per case.

*Expenses.*

	Cts. per case.
Transportation and selling charges. . . . .	36½
Picking, packing and sorting. . . . .	8
Cost of packages. . . . .	14
<b>Total. . . . .</b>	<b>58½</b>

Net proceeds for 21 lbs. tomatoes, 5½ cents.

In his report on these shipments Mr. Macoun summed up as follows:—

'From the above letters it will be readily seen that even if the tomatoes had presented a more even appearance on arrival, there would have been little chance of their bringing remunerative returns.'

#### TOMATOES SOLD IN ENGLISH MARKETS, 1910.

The present sources of supply for the old country markets are as follows:—

*Home Grown.*—Five varieties or grades are usually quoted on the London market, viz.:—'Pinks,' 'Pink and White,' 'Pink and Blue,' 'Blues' and 'Whites.' Packed in round wicker baskets or 'strikes' holding twelve pounds net. Grown under glass. Season from July to October, though some are on the market the year round.

*Channel Islands (Guernsey and Jersey).*—Packed in wicker baskets (which are returned and refilled), holding twelve pounds net. Grown under glass from November to June and outside from July to October, latter period being principal shipping season.

*Lisbon.*—Packed in sawdust in boxes holding fifty pounds net. Season, September.

*Belgian.*—Packed in 'seives' and 'half seives' holding forty-eight and twenty-four pounds respectively. Season, September and October.

*French.*—Packed in layers in crates or boxes holding twenty pounds net. Season, August to October.

*Dutch and Danish.*—Packed in chip baskets holding twelve pounds and fifteen pounds net (former size preferred). Season, September with a few in August.

*Valencia.*—Packed in boxes holding eight to ten pounds each. For shipment sixteen boxes are crated together. Season, June 1 to August 31.

*Canary Islands.*—Packed in boxes holding eight to fourteen pounds net, four boxes being battened together to form one 'bundle.' Season, November to May.

## PRICES.

During the period September 21 to October 22, 1910, the wholesale price per pound for tomatoes in London was as follows:—

## HOME GROWN.

(Under Glass.)

Date.	Pink and White.	Pinks.	Pink and Blue.	Blues.	Whites.
	Per lb.	Per lb.	Per lb.	Per lb.	Per lb.
	Cents.	Cents.	Cents.	Cents.	Cents.
1910.					
September 21.....	8 to 9	7½ to 8	7 to 7½	6½ to 7	5½ to 6
" 26.....	6½ " 7	6 " 7	5½ " 6	5 " 5½	4 " 5
" 30.....	6 " 7	5½ " 6	5 " 5½	4½ " 5	4 " 4½
October 4.....	6 " 7	5½ " 6	5 " 5½	4½ " 5	5 " 5½
" 8.....	5½ " 6½	5 " 5½	4½ " 5	4½ " 5	4 " 4½
" 12.....	5½ " 6½	5 " 5½	4½ " 5	4½ " 5	4 " 4½
" 15.....	4½ " 5½	4 " 4½	3½ " 4	3½ " 4	3 " 4
" 22.....	5 " 6	5 " 5½	4 " 4½	4 " 4½	3½ " 4½

## FOREIGN GROWN.

Date.	Channel Islands. (Guernsey).	Lisbon.	Belgian.	French.
	Per lb.	Per lb.	Per lb.	Per lb.
	Cents.	Cents.	Cents.	Cents.
1910.				
September 21.....	6 to 8	3 to 3½	3 to 3½	.....
" 26.....	5 " 6	3 " 3½	2 " 2½	3 to 4½
" 30.....	4 " 5	3 " 3½	2½ " 3	.....
October 4.....	5 " 6½	3 " 3½	.....	.....
" 8.....	4 " 6	3 " 3½	2½ to 3	2½ to 3½
" 12.....	4 " 6	3 " 3½	2½ " 3	2½ " 3½
" 15.....	3 " 5	.....	1½ " 2	2 " 2½
" 22.....	4 " 5½	.....	.....	.....

## TRANSPORTATION AND SELLING CHARGES.

To ship tomatoes from Ontario to England and have them land in good condition it would be necessary to pack them in single layer cases such as were used for export peaches this year. These cases measured inside 18 x 11 x 3½ inches and would hold from six to eight pounds of tomatoes. The freight rate, say, from St. Catherines to Montreal would average 4 cents a case; the ocean freight in cold storage 10 cents, or in cooled air 9 cents a case, and the broker's charges for landing, delivering, &c., would amount to about 5 cents a case, making a total of 18 cents a case. In addition there would be the broker's commission of 5 per cent. Ontario tomatoes would compete with those from Lisbon, Belgium and France selling at from 2 cents to 3½ cents a pound. At the higher figure a seven pound case of Ontario tomatoes would make

25 cents. Adding a commission of 1 cent would make the total charges 19 cents a case, leaving proceeds of 6 cents f.o.b. packing house, a sum insufficient to meet the cost of the package and packing.

SOME OPINIONS FROM ENGLAND.

Writing on the subject of Canadian tomatoes for the English market, Mr. A. W. Grindley, Chief Cargo Inspector for this Department at Liverpool, says:—

‘Canadian tomatoes, as supplied to canning factories, are not wanted here at any price. The tomato for this market must be of medium size, smooth and of cherry red colour.’

Messrs. George Monro, Limited, Covent Garden Market, London, the well known fruit and vegetable brokers, wrote on November 7 last as follows:—

‘We are aware that the question of sending tomatoes here from Canada has been considered by a good many people, and we have had several callers who have been interested, but in every case we have assured them that we could not encourage tomatoes to be sent here, especially at that time of year.

‘For one thing, the varieties grown in Canada are too large to make anything like the best prices.

‘Another reason is the journey is too long, as they never turn out well from cold storage.

‘Our experience is that fruit can be kept well in cold storage, but not vegetables. The autumn months are always the cheapest time for tomatoes here, as there are large quantities grown out of doors and under glass, when the season admits.

‘In addition to these, there are large arrivals from Holland, grown under glass, and the south of France, grown out of doors. Through the winter months we get abundant supplies from the Canary Islands, which come in in five days without the necessity of cool chambers, and they are sold throughout the winter at an average of 2d. or 2½d. per pound, being perfect in colour, size and shape, and weighing on the average about four to the pound.

‘You will, therefore, see that there is very little chance of a trade being made in them here, unless your people grow an entirely different class of tomato to any that we have seen. Our customers will not look at the larger sizes at all, trade having got well on to medium sized, smooth, firm fruit, and even if they did grow the right varieties it is a question whether they could possibly get them here in good enough colour and condition to compete with the others coming in such large quantities.’

Much more might be quoted to the same effect, and it would seem that under present conditions the export of tomatoes to Great Britain would yield no profit to the shipper.

J. A. RUDDICK,

*Dairy and Cold Storage Commissioner.*