

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Division of Fruits and Vegetables

WESTERN NEW YORK ONION DEAL.

SEASON 1922-23.

SUMMARY BY C. L. BROWN.

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Washington, D. C.,
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Varieties.

The Yellow Globe is the principal variety of onion grown throughout western New York, with red onions next in importance. Very few white onions are grown. Not less than 90% of the New York onions are yellows. All of the varieties and types grown are globes and all are for late markets, not early or midseason.

Onion Sections.

The most important onion sections are in Wayne and Genesee counties, the important shipping stations in Wayne County being Ontario, Williamson, East Williamson and Sodus, North Rose, Wolcott and Red Creek in the northern part of the county and Savannah, Clyde, Lyons, Newark, Macedon, Palmyra and Marion in the southern part. In Genesee County the industry centers around Elba. There are scattered onion sections in practically all of the counties in western New York, between Syracuse and Buffalo.

Cultural Methods.

Most of the crop is grown on muck land; so the area devoted to onion culture is confined mainly to those places where there are muck lands, many of which are near the Ridge Road, marking the shore line of the old Ontario Lake bed. Small plots are grown on upland occasionally, but the easier culture and better yields on the muck land confine the commercial culture to this type of soil. The crop is planted as early as possible in spring and the first onions are ready to harvest in late August, but it is the usual practice to do most of the harvesting in September and the crop is then stored for shipment during the winter.

Quality.

Rains during the 1922 growing season were a bad setback to onions and reduced both size and yield in western New York. The crop in Wayne County suffered worst and the stock ran small to medium in size. The best stock was from around Elba, a number of cars of fairly large onions coming from this section.

Middlewest onions, particularly in Indiana and Michigan were a heavy crop and of fine quality. The tonnage from Indiana, Ohio and Michigan showed a large increase over the 1921-22 season and accounted for the heavier onion production for the country. It was an off year for the Connecticut Valley section in Massachusetts, where both yield and quality were poor. Other sections, more particularly the far western States, had a somewhat lighter yield than the year before.

Shipping-Point Market Trends.

Heavy shipments from other sections kept the terminal markets well supplied and, as the stock from some of the States was very good this season and New York stock was only fair in comparison, the shipping-point market was very dull at the start. There was an absence of speculative buying on the part of outside buyers, and resident shippers were not inclined to purchase heavily on weak markets. Consequently, the f.o.b. market was dull and inactive during the fall months. Very few sales were made early in the season and prices for yellows in 100-lb sacks ranged from \$1.00 up. After the first of November, the market was \$1.35-1.50, and then began a more active period. Prices advanced gradually until a peak of \$2.75 per cwt. was reached about the middle of January. This was followed by a period of severe dullness and some decline, as orders stopped coming in. Shippers found that they had somewhat underestimated stocks and during midwinter there was loss of confidence in the market. By the end of the first week of February prices had slumped 50¢. Along in March the market again became active and prices jumped to the highest levels of the season, stock selling at \$3.00-3.50 per cwt.

Receiving Markets

A study of the unload figures in the table at the end of this summary shows that New York City and Philadelphia are the most important markets for western New York onions. These two cities take almost as many as all the other markets combined.

In general, the trend of these two important markets was as follows on yellow varieties; About the middle of August price levels were \$2.25-2.75 per cwt. As receipts increased prices declined somewhat, and ranged about \$1.00 lower the third week in September. Then there were several minor fluctuations but the general tendency was upward, and by the end of the first week in December the range was \$2.60-3.10. The markets then held fairly steady until early February, when there was a break of about 25-40¢ per cwt. This was followed by a rather sharp advance which brought prices to the high point of the season. Arrivals on these two markets were heavier throughout than they were a year ago.

A comparison of the behavior of these two markets the preceding season is interesting in that price levels were practically the same both years about the middle of August. Although there were minor setbacks during the 1921-22 season, it was a generally upward climb to high levels, so that by early April yellows were selling at \$11.00-12.50 per cwt.

Then the sharp advances of late March and early April were halted by the large imports and unusually heavy shipments of Texas Bermudas.

With staple crops like onions, cabbage and potatoes it often happens that a few arrivals of new stock have little effect on the market but, once new stock of good quality begins to arrive heavily, there is not much interest in old stock, however good, and the market rapidly becomes dull and weak. In seasons when the old crop is light, prices advance sharply in the spring until increasing receipts of new stock cause a decline; in seasons of a heavy late crop the market usually slumps badly in the spring.

On account of their fine quality, the midwestern onions commanded a premium over the New York and Massachusetts stock throughout the season. New York onions averaged a trifle higher, perhaps, than Massachusetts stock. Usually New York and Massachusetts onions sell as high as or higher than the midwestern stock. Indianas, especially in Chicago, are at a discount, compared to other varieties. Best Michigan onions often command a premium in the Middle West, however.

Onion Imports and Exports.

In recent years onion imports usually have exceeded the exports, but in some cases the exports were heavier. It varies with the size of the crop and prices in this country, and with crops and conditions abroad.

Imports are generally heaviest in the fall months when the Spanish onion movement is at its height. A heavy crop of domestic late onions has a tendency to limit imports in the fall but not to the extent that it does in the spring. When the old crop is short and prices high, onions pour into the United States from the four corners of the earth during the spring months. If the old crop is heavy and there is a surplus in the spring, then practically nothing is imported in the spring except possibly a few Spanish onions or new Bermuda onions from the Bermuda Islands. An examination of the table below of imports and exports by months for 1921 and 1922 will bring out the relationship of imports and exports to crops and conditions here and abroad.

More onions are imported from Spain than from any other country. Next most important sources are England, the Bermuda islands, Australia and Egypt. Imports from all these countries vary widely, the volume depending on conditions in the United States. As a rule Spanish and the Bermuda Island imports fluctuate least, partly because those countries do not ship the same type of onions as are grown in the northern States. Egyptian and Australian imports generally run heavy in a season of high prices in the United States, as for instance the spring of 1922, while in a season like 1921, with an oversupply of domestic old onions, they shipped practically nothing in the spring.

Cuba is our biggest export customer and Canada is next in importance. Taking one year with another, these two countries get more than half of the exports.

To February 1, 1923 almost 997,000 packages of onions had been received from Spain compared with 1,435,000 packages to the same date the previous season and about 508,000 the corresponding season of 1921. The heavy crop at home has held out the Spanish crop, partially at least.

The Tariff

The 1922 tariff act raised the rate to nearly 60¢ per bushel compared with the 1921 emergency rate of 40¢ and the 1913 rate of 20¢. The tariff has been most effective in holding out imports during seasons of low prices at home. When prices reach high levels, as in the spring of 1922 even the present tariff probably would have little effect on importations.

Exports and Imports of Onions.

Country.	1913	<u>Onion Exports. In Bushels</u>				
		1918	1919	1920	1921	1922
Canada	297,881	190,216	218,129	264,262	171,273	204,952
Panama	58,300	43,999	31,643	41,003	57,248	41,408
Mexico	42,886	54,206	46,207	52,133	59,599	36,913
Cuba	37,624	299,300	400,560	485,266	473,203	402,879
Australia	30,838	632	6,242	10,589	none	16,963
New Zealand	54,662	6,628	10,919	17,841	5,270	41,828
Others	51,883	97,374	103,253	74,684	100,749	67,935
TOTAL BUS.	574,074	692,855	816,959	945,778	867,342	812,878

TOTAL VALUE \$397,516 \$1,112,074 \$2095,142 \$2,075,862 \$1,279,029 \$1,439,116

Onion Imports. In Bushels.

Country	1913	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922
Spain	428,955	153,558	568,540	1,414,910	1,596,190	752,635
England	149,232	none	13,264	54,749	174,019	108,973
Bermuda	38,409	83,121	94,796	74,345	19,849	33,593
Australia	13,388	5,280	4,431	24,414	1,656	119,389
Others	159,474	19,070	59,655	250,740	184,378	435,708
TOTAL BUS.	789,458	261,029	740,686	1,819,158	1,976,083	1,450,298

TOTAL VALUE \$481,756 \$212,344 \$1,017,577 \$2,363,797 \$2,248,049 \$2,059,798

Onion Imports and Exports by Months for 1921 and 1922

Month	Imports		Exports	
	1921	1922	1921	1922
January	20,733	38,978	93,389	45,151
February	63,732	20,307	117,032	32,064
March	41,405	181,520	56,416	28,193
April	7,243	241,505	72,352	100,649
May	13,016	155,497	99,585	84,158
June	9,036	28,840	107,593	46,315
July	32,181	213,254	71,868	55,857
August	125,029	58,147	57,520	124,052
September	261,965	56,171	57,214	104,090
October	306,447	237,484	50,379	72,825
November	652,883	79,373	48,283	71,043
December	442,413	139,222	35,711	48,481
TOTALS	1,976,083	1,450,298	867,342	812,878

Carlot Shipments of Onions Seasons 1917-1922

STATE	1917-18	1918-19	1919-20	1920-21	1921-22	1922-23
California	3,498	4,027	5,409	4,402	3,590	3,641
Colorado	239	230	207	134	443	652
Indiana	1,204	1,317	1,005	3,448	1,839	4,676
Iowa	708	968	488	870	412	918
Massachusetts	2,766	2,883	2,835	3,834	2,224	1,912
Michigan	253	590	224	795	418	1,885
Minnesota	626	822	439	276	173	500
New Jersey	567	597	634	635	427	479
New York	2,104	2,784	2,702	3,089	2,946	2,813
Ohio	1,475	2,008	1,913	3,212	1,736	4,492
Oregon	196	238	292	19	343	265
Washington	315	477	596	790	650	765
Wisconsin	240	309	95	406	90	337
Other States	6,850	4,799	3,800	6,313	5,476	6,448
TOTAL	21,041	22,549	20,549	28,223	20,767	29,783

Trend of Eastern Jobbing Markets on Yellow Onions in Recent Seasons

1917-18: The market opened early in September at \$2.50-3.00 per cwt. and advanced to a range of \$2.50-3.25 toward the close of the month, which was the high point of the season. It was a season of low prices, and a gradual decline set in with the usual short flurries and breaks, but with the trend generally downward. By the first week in December the market had weakened to a range of \$2.00-2.75 per cwt. and it closed the first of April at the low level of \$.75-1.00 in spite of the short late crop. Importations were heavy and there was a heavy crop of Texas Bermudas, coupled with early shipments.

1918-19: Prices opened lower than the season before, jobbing markets ranging from \$1.50-2.50 in early September. The market weakened 25-75¢ and by the middle of October ranged \$1.25-1.75. After this, there was a gradual reaction and prices advanced to a range of \$4.50-7.50 on the 12th of May, in spite of a fair-sized crop. War conditions, lighter imports, and a lighter Texas crop were the deciding factors.

1919-20: The market ranged \$3.00-4.25 during September, but declined during October to a range of \$2.75-4.10. Prices advanced consistently during November, reaching about a \$5.00 level. There was some fluctuation during the winter months, but the market had a strong tendency and closed at a range of mostly \$6.00-7.00 in the spring. Shipments this season were below average.

1920-21: September prices ranged \$1.50-3.00, with most sales around \$2.00-2.75, but weakened almost from the start, and the market was dull and draggy throughout the year, with very few rallies. During the winter months prices ranged \$1.00-1.75 in eastern markets and, when spring approached, the large surplus on hand brought prices down to a range of \$.40-1.50, with most sales under the dollar mark. Shipments were very heavy this season and the crop in general was big.

1921-22: This season was almost the exact opposite of the previous one. The crop was light, as often happens after a disastrous year. The market opened at \$2.25-3.50 as the extreme August range (this was an early season), and continued a rapid and consistent advance, crossing the five dollar mark in late October, and progressing until a \$9.50-12.50 range was reached in April.

1922-23: High prices the previous season were an encouragement to growers and there was another large crop this season. Prices opened very low, New York and Philadelphia ranging \$1.50-2.00 the first of September. There were only minor changes the next two months and no definite trend in either direction. Late in November the situation changed and, during a short period of good demand, prices advanced to a \$3.00 market. After this were spells of dullness, but no sharp breaks, and the price advanced about \$1.00 per cwt. and closed around \$4.00, in spite of a heavy crop.

Carlot Shipments of Onions - New York and United States.

Week	New York		United States	
	1922-23	1921-22	1922-23	1921-22
Aug. 20-26	70	112	671	368
Aug. 27-Sept. 2	92	102	874	501
Sept. 3-9	54	90	776	681
Sept. 10-16	47	163	976	900
Sept. 17-23	57	131	1093	790
Sept. 24-30	105	154	1408	826
Oct. 1-7	88	97	1345	659
Oct. 8-14	99	96	965	605
Oct. 15-21	158	172	1308	697
Oct. 22-28	160	160	1175	513
Oct. 29-Nov. 4	76	73	925	337
Nov. 5-11	48	68	551	347
Nov. 12-18	68	61	425	329
Nov. 19-25	74	34	432	186
Nov. 26-Dec. 2	61	50	343	285
Dec. 3-9	65	60	443	293
Dec. 10-16	81	58	453	282
Dec. 17-23	58	38	341	180
Dec. 24-30	48	39	296	219
Dec. 31-Jan. 6	75	78	464	398
Jan. 7-13	90	106	506	494
Jan. 14-20	57	107	425	425
Jan. 21-27	111	52	487	333
Jan. 28-Feb. 3	82	90	436	366
Feb. 4-10	72	48	362	293
Feb. 11-17	43	37	274	219
Feb. 18-24	70	46	386	231
Feb. 25-Mar. 3	76	42	508	196
Mar. 4-10	82	60	429	219
Mar. 11-17	81	35	322	137
Mar. 18-24	95	28	354	89
Mar. 25-31	47	17	215	78

Carlot Shipments of Onions - Massachusetts, Ohio and Indiana.

WEEK	MASSACHUSETTS		OHIO		INDIANA	
	1922-23	1921-22	1922-23	1921-22	1922-23	1921-22
Aug. 20-26	37	19	99	20	261	96
Aug. 27- Sept. 2	26	53	170	35	357	97
Sept. 3-9	17	125	188	33	312	133
Sept. 10-16	41	190	266	70	285	158
Sept. 17-23	63	137	331	79	276	128
Sept. 24-30	118	121	367	77	365	106
Oct. 1-7	125	67	310	66	302	57
Oct. 8-14	27	76	165	66	241	49
Oct. 15-21	107	75	185	77	334	45
Oct. 22-28	93	90	196	65	270	34
Oct. 29-Nov. 4	52	49	240	32	187	21
Nov. 5-11	22	60	146	19	75	36
Nov. 12-18	31	46	107	35	35	35
Nov. 19-25	32	30	92	16	53	37
Nov. 26-Dec. 2	33	48	76	56	47	57
Dec. 3-9	34	56	131	65	67	49
Dec. 10-16	33	65	133	49	68	41
Dec. 17-23	25	34	64	36	53	25
Dec. 24-30	9	27	77	54	56	44
Dec. 31-Jan. 6	22	66	140	61	82	55
Jan. 7-13	24	79	108	104	85	75
Jan. 14-20	36	56	59	110	71	70
Jan. 21-27	50	38	96	118	103	49
Jan. 28-Feb. 3	59	58	115	87	75	49
Feb. 4-10	37	53	90	64	82	40
Feb. 11-17	28	40	84	54	63	34
Feb. 18-24	43	33	82	58	80	45
Feb. 25-Mar. 3	69	33	128	34	67	19
Mar. 4-10	42	42	103	35	60	26
Mar. 11-17	59	32	56	12	23	16
Mar. 18-24	78	27	32	2	18	3
Mar. 25-31	44	13	15	2	10	1

Onion Arrivals and Jobbing Range, 1922-1923

Week	New York		Philadelphia	
	Arrivals (cars)	Prices - Yellows	Arrivals (cars)	Prices-Yellows
Aug. 15-21	64	\$2.25-2.50	30	\$2.60-2.75
Aug. 22-28	102	1.75-2.00	56	2.10-2.25
Aug. 29-Sept. 4	96	1.50-1.65	27	2.00
Sept. 5-11	109	2.00-2.15	68	1.40-1.50
Sept. 12-18	102	1.50-1.75	23	1.75-1.85
Sept. 19-25	142	1.25-1.50	44	1.55-1.65
Sept. 26-Oct. 2	138	1.40-1.50	101	1.50-1.65
Oct. 3-9	66	1.75-1.80	73	1.65-1.75
Oct. 10-16	67	1.75-1.90	40	1.40-1.65
Oct. 17-23	103	1.75-2.00	42	1.50-1.75
Oct. 24-30	216	1.75-2.00	48	1.75-2.00
Oct. 31-Nov. 6	183	1.40-1.75	40	1.75-2.00
Nov. 7-13	114	1.75-1.85	62	1.40-1.75
Nov. 14-20	65	1.50-1.90	44	1.65-1.90
Nov. 21-27	95	2.00-2.50	31	2.15
Nov. 28-Dec. 4	85	2.00-2.75	27	2.50-2.90
Dec. 5-11	100	2.75-3.10	36	2.60-3.00
Dec. 12-18	106	2.50-2.90	62	2.65-2.90
Dec. 19-23	63	2.65-3.05	33	2.65-2.90
Dec. 24-30	90	3.00-3.15	34	2.65-3.00
Dec. 31-Jan. 8	170	2.50-3.00	31	2.90-3.25
Jan. 9-15	101	2.50-3.00	38	2.90-3.10
Jan. 16-22	77	2.90-3.00	51	2.85-3.10
Jan. 23-29	124	3.00-3.15	41	2.65-2.95
Jan. 30-Feb. 5	110	2.65-2.75	34	2.90
Feb. 6-12	225	2.50-2.65	34	2.65-2.85
Feb. 13-19	167	3.00-3.15	30	2.75
Feb. 20-26	108	2.90-3.00	22	3.00
Feb. 27-Mar. 5	110	3.10-3.25	31	3.15
Mar. 6-12	121	3.25-3.40	50	3.00-3.25
Mar. 13-19	126	4.25-4.50	33	3.00-4.00
Mar. 20-26	151	3.50-3.75	39	4.40
Mar. 27-Apr. 2	39	3.75-4.00	27	4.00

Onion Arrivals and Jobbing Range, 1921-1922

Week	New York		Philadelphia	
	Arrivals (cars)	Prices-Yellows	Arrivals (cars)	Prices-Yellows
Aug. 15-21		\$2.25-2.50		\$3.15
Aug. 22-28		2.50-3.00		\$3.00- 3.15
Aug. 29-Sept. 4		3.00-3.25		3.50
Sept. 5-11	88	3.50-4.00	22	4.50- 4.75
Sept. 12-18	125	3.00-3.25	92	3.00- 4.00
Sept. 19-25	128	3.50-3.75	56	3.25- 3.75
Sept. 26-Oct. 2		4.00-4.25		3.90- 4.00
Oct. 3-9	58	4.25-4.50	13	4.50- 4.75
Oct. 10-16	65	5.00-5.25	27	5.00- 5.50
Oct. 17-23	73	5.50-5.75	47	5.00- 5.65
Oct. 24-30	93	5.50-5.75	31	5.00- 5.50
Oct. 31-Nov. 6	68	5.50-5.75	29	5.40- 5.75
Nov. 7-13	58	5.25-5.50	24	5.00- 5.60
Nov. 14-20	89	5.25-5.50	21	4.75- 5.00
Nov. 21-27	102	5.25-5.50	12	5.00- 5.50
Nov. 28-Dec. 4		5.25-5.50		6.00- 6.25
Dec. 5-11		5.00-5.50		5.00- 5.75
Dec. 12-18		5.00-5.25		5.00- 5.25
Dec. 19-25	32	5.00-5.25	6	5.25
Dec. 26-31	22	6.00	10	5.25
Jan. 1-8	109	6.25-6.50	33	6.15- 6.25
Jan. 9-15	68	6.75-7.00	27	6.50- 7.00
Jan. 16-22	91	6.75-7.00	45	7.40- 7.50
Jan. 23-29	63	7.50-8.25	43	7.65- 7.75
Jan. 30-Feb. 5	75	8.00-8.25	33	8.00
Feb. 6-12	53	8.00-8.25	17	7.75- 8.00
Feb. 13-19	80	8.00-8.40	12	7.90- 8.00
Feb. 20-26	101	7.25-7.50	18	8.15- 8.25
Feb. 27-Mar. 5	20	8.25-8.50	27	8.25
Mar. 6-12	62	8.25-8.50	17	8.00- 8.50
Mar. 13-19	41	8.25-8.50	6	8.75
Mar. 20-26	79	11.50-12.00	9	11.50
Mar. 27-Apr. 2	107	11.00-12.50	24	11.50

Unloads of Onions by Months in Eight Important Markets for 1922

City	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
Boston	89	78	85	227	235	88	111	117	247	275	140	82	1776
New York	346	310	302	755	617	264	139	324	515	505	452	397	4933
Phila.	140	105	77	150	189	72	51	103	205	259	178	169	1698
Pittsburgh	52	59	54	94	136	79	61	95	112	109	60	40	951
Cleveland	35	22	23	50	77	42	57	46	75	67	34	20	548
Cincinnati	31	14	10	50	50	22	19	29	47	56	41	31	400
Detroit	51	23	22	50	71	43	64	55	107	78	63	48	675
Chicago	89	45	73	202	249	184	121	91	132	194	186	102	1673

Unloads of Onions by Months in Eight Important Markets for 1921

City	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
Boston	120	127	137	136	217	119	121	83	153	182	218	184	1797
New York	209	296	328	430	775	227	175	326	411	470	554	228	4429
Phila.	172	106	165	140	163	73	37	76	167	125	106	152	1482
Pittsburgh	41	64	58	111	131	76	62	92	83	96	61	42	922
Cleveland	7	34	23	31	64	35	43	58	49	75	55	24	498
Cincinnati	28	23	24	33	36	26	5	17	22	59	19	22	314
Detroit	13	9	23	36	41	56	55	80	63	80	57	40	558
Chicago	36	79	79	93	182	130	73	209	109	243	214	98	1545

Unloads of Onions in Eight Important Markets, Calendar Years, 1921 & 1922.

States of Origin	Boston		New York		Phila.		Pittsburgh		Cleveland		Cincinnati		Detroit		Chicago	
	1922	1921	1922	1921	1922	1921	1922	1921	1922	1921	1922	1921	1922	1921	1922	1921
Mass.	567	875	166	325	122	330	13	34	11	10				24		
N.Y.	44	26	991	1593	296	424	35	92	23	59	8	11	6	2	6	27
N.J.	17	21	23	28	43	44	22	13	13	6						3
Pa.	2	3	13	22	16	15	33	45	1	9						
Md.		3	21	6	4		1	2	2	5						1
Va.	33	51	96	146	14	26	5	20	8	11		1	10	15		
Ga.													1			1
Fla.			6		2						1					3
Ohio	118	12	806	337	314	78	191	131	149	146	106	93	69	36	10	8
Ind.	104	6	909	421	192	108	165	108	88	37	87	64	135	79	284	164
Ill.	1		6	22	8	3	7	5	7	13		1			35	38
Mich.	178		121	20	121	36	73	91	4	7	13	11	145	76	92	62
Wis.			1	1		1									37	10
Minn.					5					1					6	2
Iowa			22		1		12	12	1	1	1		5	31	22	15
Ky.	8		7	14	2	4	9	19	37	24	16	8	45	11	4	37
La.			5		2	1									10	5
Tex.	299	287	870	875	302	219	220	240	102	102	107	76	120	85	370	284
Colo.							3	3	1						46	54
Wash.	2	4			13	3	21	26	7	7	4	1		6	89	108
Ore.				1						1					5	20
Idaho									1						4	2
Calif.	131	170	266	275	74	45	106	55	69	41	19	17	66	62	462	482
Ariz															1	
Utah															17	
Unknown	11	3	1		1	13	3	2	1				1	3		7
Imports	261	336	623	341	162	144	22	18	22	15	38	31	72	123	169	210

Totals 1776 1797 4933 4429 1698 1482 951 922 548 498 400 314 675 558 1673 1545

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