

loss and damage claims of substantial amounts from the railroad but retained them instead of forwarding them to the consignors.

The department investigators learn of many other subterfuges of unscrupulous dealers, such as substituting frozen or decayed produce for good produce at the car door before calling for an inspection, and rejecting a purchased car of produce on a declining market with a false statement as to its condition, and then either getting an allowance or withholding part of the proceeds in accounting for the consignment.

The shipper suffers from these dishonorable practices and is not in a position to protect himself except as he may call upon the department to investigate the transaction when the produce has been handled as a consignment. He should exercise great care in selecting the person or firm to which he consigns his produce.

### Wrong Practices By Shippers

Fraudulent practices are not confined to dealers in terminal markets. All shippers are not careful to grade the produce strictly; many are inclined to pack as near as possible to the minimum of the specifications. Best packages are placed nearest to the car door or the finest fruit is at the top of the barrel or box.

Reports of inspection of the shipment upon arrival furnish evidence of the condition of the produce. These reports are frequently lacking when they would be helpful in settling disputes.

The produce agency act makes no requirement as to the kind of accounts which dealers must keep. Investigators have been impressed with the variety of systems of records and with the lack of records. Some dealers have scarcely sufficient records to indicate whether they have settled for all consignments. Frequently no lot number is shown on the sales slips to identify the sale with the particular shipment and sales slips are not numbered serially. This constitutes insufficient accounting. The commission merchant is the agent of the shipper and is expected to keep such records as will show all sales from the consignment. The shipper is entitled to these details from his agent, the commission merchant, if he requests them. Sales slips and all correspondence and other papers relating to a shipment should be retained at least six months after remittance is made to the shipper.

A development of more honest practices on the part of both the shipper and the receiving dealer would improve the confidence of one in the other, remove some of the speculation in the produce trade, and give the producer a larger share in the returns from his crops.

W. L. EVANS,

*Associate Marketing Specialist,  
Bureau of Agricultural Economics.*

**P**RUENE Production International trade in dried fruits, in recent  
Falling in Europe; years, has been marked by large and  
Rising in the U. S. increasing production in the United States,  
with Europe as the largest factor in the purchase and consumption of supplies. The average total world production of dried prunes in recent years has been about 470,000,000 pounds. The United States supplied 75 per cent of this production. Of this total, about 50 per cent was exported to Europe. Average total world



FIGURE 145.—The Yugoslavian peasant delivering prunes to the packing plant. Horses are common in Bosnia, but ox teams are used almost exclusively in Serbia. The typical peasant garb is shown in the extreme right

production of raisins, not including currants, in recent years was some 800,000,000 pounds, of which the United States supplied about 600,000,000 pounds, or approximately 75 per cent. The countries of western Europe are the greatest consumers of dried fruits.

Important factors influencing the demand for American dried fruits in principal European consuming districts are: Direct competition



FIGURE 146.—View of one of the more modern type prune-processing plants in Bosnia. These plants are usually owned and operated by corporations, the stock in which is held by large financial institutions

with dried fruits from other exporting countries and indirect competition with fresh fruits, either imported or locally grown.

Countries competing directly with the United States in prunes are France and Yugoslavia. Prune production in France has been steadily declining, with every indication that this will continue. The generally low price of prunes in postwar years has caused peasants to turn to crops that promise quicker financial returns. Yugoslavia has shown a decline since 1927 in both production and number of trees. Low prices have had a tendency to reduce the total quantities of dried prunes for export, and larger quantities are used for brandy and jam. Improved railway transportation has facilitated the shipment of fresh prunes. A heavy toll of bearing prune trees has been taken by the Schildlaus (*Lecanium corni*). Through liberal financial assistance, the Yugoslavian Government is attempting to prevent further spread of this pest. The industry is elastic in that the seedling young tree comes into production quickly and new orchards are planted at little cost.

Consumption of fruits in Europe, especially fresh fruits, has generally been on the increase, partly as a result of extensive advertising campaigns. The United States is not keeping pace in advertising.

In uniform quality and neatness of pack, products from the United States stand far above others; but, in maintenance of personal contact with the trade, this country is behind. Large consumer organizations and the chain-store movement are increasing group buying. Competing dried-fruit exporting nations are centralizing within the industry such activities as improvement of quality, advertising, and marketing. So far, little has been done by dried-fruit growers in the United States to meet this growing tendency in Europe by centralized selling.

M. J. NEWHOUSE,

*Consulting Specialist, Bureau of Agricultural Economics.*

## PUBLICATIONS of the Department Grouped According to Purpose

mines how they are named.

Those receiving the publications of the United States Department of Agriculture may wonder why they are grouped into classes or series, and what determines how they are named. What type of bulletin is published in each series, and what are the differences? In order to get and to use to the best advantage the agricultural information published by the department, and to avoid ordering bulletins they do not want, readers should have clearly in mind the characteristics of each series. In announcements or lists of department publications they see leaflets, farmers' bulletins, technical bulletins, department bulletins, circulars, miscellaneous publications, miscellaneous circulars, and statistical bulletins, as well as others of more special nature, and may be confused because of the large number of series or classes.

In general, agricultural publications may be divided into two groups: (1) More or less technical publications, presenting the results of research for those who, by training, education, occupation, or specialty, are able to make use of such information; and (2) popular publications, giving practical information in simple terms, so that it may be readily applied. Some publications are difficult to classify for they seem to belong to neither group.