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AFRICAN OXYGEN SYMPOSIUM - 21.4.1969.

Mnr. die Voorsitter, ere-gaste, dames en here

Mag ek sê hoe bly ek is dat hierdie Simposium in Johannesburg gehou word.

Ek het u program gelees en ek beseft wat 'n omvattende studie gedoen is en waarvan die resultate gedurende u samesprekings hier ter sprake sal kom.

Ek wil graag hulde bring aan die organiserende komitee wat sonder twyfel aansienlike tyd en danke bestee het om hierdie Konferensie te organiseer en vir so 'n uitstaande paneel sprekers reëlings te tref.

Dank moet ook uitgespreek word aan African Oxygen Bpk. wat hierdie simposium geborg het. Sonder die hulp van 'n borg sou dit seker nie tot stand gekom het nie.

Ons het vannêre hier vergader vir 'n belangrike saak en ons het belangrike mense hier. Ek wil hulle welkom heet: die wetenskaplikes, die ingenieurs, die tegnisi vanaf regeringsdepartemente, inrigtings en sake-ondernemings wat hulle bemoei met die preservering van bederfbare goedere en die verspreiding daarvan na die verbruiker.

Dit is ook vir my 'n voorreg om hier te verwelkom diegene wat regstreeks verantwoordelik is vir die verspreiding van bederfbare artikels op 'n kleinhandelgrondslag

And now Mr. Chairman I would like to say a few words on the relationship of this Symposium to one of the services provided by the City Council, namely, a wholesale produce market for fruit and vegetables.

As you know a new market is being built at City Deep, due for completion towards the end of 1970, at an estimated cost of R8 million. Aware of the necessity for providing the most modern facilities, the Council sent a mission overseas in 1965 to study the marketing of perishable produce in all its aspects in the larger centres of the Western world.

What impressed the mission particularly were the materials used for packaging and the methods of controlled atmospheric storage to lengthen the life of fruit and vegetables so that they can be offered to the consumer in a fresh and appetizing condition. Time does not permit me to go into the details of the techniques adopted in this connection, but it will suffice to say that the Council approved the recommendation of the overseas mission to provide adequate cold storage at the new City Deep market. Consequently a five-acre site has been set aside for this purpose and also for the purpose of ripening rooms for fruit and vegetables.

It is intended to cater for the immediate requirements of the farmers and their agents and develop the capacity as demand warrants.

Surveys in the production areas have already been carried out to determine the initial requirements.

One of the problems of fresh produce marketing is that it is extremely difficult to control the volume of produce sent to the central markets each day. Consequently conditions of gluts and scarcity have been a feature at the old Newtown market. Although the quantity of produce destroyed in times of glut has been comparatively low - last year it averaged 0.5% of all the produce sold, I am convinced that cold storage can be a great factor in levelling the peak and valley periods of over-supply and under-supply to say nothing of preserving the condition of one of our most important items of food, fresh fruit and vegetables.

I visualise that the installation of cold storage at the new City Deep market will be of immense value to the farmers in that over-supplies of particular types of fruit and vegetables, with consequent sharp drop in prices can be prevented by being held over under controlled atmosphere storage conditions.

You may be interested to know that municipal markets in South Africa handled fresh produce to the value of over R61 million for the year 1967. The four largest markets, namely, Johannesburg, Capetown, Durban and Pretoria handled no less than 78% of the total turnover. It has been estimated that these markets handled, according to weight, an average 39 - 40% of the total fruit and vegetable production for the country. The turnover on the Newtown market for the financial year 1967/68 was in excess of R22 million. I quote these figures to indicate the important role which municipal markets play in the country's economy and the Johannesburg City Council is deeply conscious of its responsibilities in this respect.

I am told that modern technical research may make it possible for "Town's" gas applications to be used for the production of carbon dioxide for controlled atmosphere storage. Should this materialise Johannesburg may be in a position to supply gas from its Gas Works for this purpose. No doubt we shall be hearing more about this in the future.

It is expected that the consumption of fruit and vegetables will increase in the long-term and it seems likely that the economic climate in which the marketing of fresh produce takes place will undergo changes and will increasingly make higher demands on the abilities of both producer and distributor. Under such conditions there will be a higher demand for research and research workers who should give timely indication of anticipated changes and supply the basic information to producers and the trade so that adaptations to changing conditions may follow the proper course and take place in an orderly manner.

The normal population growth, the expected rise in per capita income, further urbanization of the population and the increase in consumption of fruit and vegetables, especially among the Bantu, will result in a larger consumption of fruit and vegetables locally.

Also it seems likely that a further shift in consumption from fresh to processed products is likely to take place. Processing techniques are being improved and in the long run they will reduce the cost structure of processing firms so that their products will, as far as prices are concerned, offer stronger competition to fresh products. In this respect the convenience factor is an important consideration.

There seems little doubt that the super-markets will increase their share in the retail trade and as time goes on they will demand special services regarding quantity, quality, uniformity, cooling, packaging, etc. since competition amongst these firms will be largely on a quality basis. Municipal markets will have to play their part in rendering these services.

The extent to which municipal markets will succeed in improving their rate of growth will depend on their ability to adapt themselves to changing conditions and the extent to which they will succeed in meeting competition of other marketing channels especially on the basis of services and costs. In building the new market at City Deep the Council has borne these factors in mind. But central markets as food exchanges have so many advantages for the farmer, the trade and the consumer that I am convinced they will increase their stature as time goes on.

Any application of techniques that will assist in providing the citizens of Johannesburg with better quality fruit and vegetables for all sections of the population throughout the year can only be welcomed as a step forward in providing better living conditions, and by extension for all citizens of the Republic. Mr. Chairman I wish your Symposium the success it deserves.

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