

Grape Fruit.

Sources of United Kingdom Supplies.

THE following extract is taken from the third Report—Fruits—of the Imperial Economic Committee on Marketing and Preparing for Market of Foodstuffs produced in the Overseas Parts of the Empire.

Grape fruit is a newcomer to the United Kingdom market, but the demand for it is increasing rapidly. Three-quarters of the quantities consumed are grown in foreign countries, the United States being the main source of supply. Within the Empire, South Africa and the British West Indies are roughly of equal importance, but the quantities which they supply together were in 1924 less than one-third of the amount imported from the United States. The following statistics show the main sources from which the United Kingdom derived its supplies in 1924 :—

<i>Countries whence consigned.</i>	<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
United States of America ...	58,556	72'0
Other foreign countries ...	2,511	3'1
Total from foreign countries ...	61,067	75'1
South Africa ...	9,084	11'1
British West Indies ...	9,867	12'1
Other British Territories ...	1,349	1'7
Total from British Territories ...	20,300	24'9
Total Imports ...	81,367	100'0
Re-exports ...	3,487	—
Net Imports ...	77,880	—

Periods of Harvesting and Marketing.

By organisation and close attention to cultivation the American grape-fruit growers have succeeded in maintaining their fruit on the United Kingdom market practically continuously throughout the year. South African and West Indian supplies are, in a sense, complementary to each other in that each arrives on the market when the other is absent. South African grape fruit is on the market from June to September, and West Indian supplies from December to April. This fact should be of great advantage to Empire producers who, by co-ordination of their efforts, should be able, when their production is developed on a sufficiently large scale, to maintain Empire grape fruit on the market the year round.

United Kingdom Consumption and Trend of Supplies

The grape fruit did not appear as a separate item in the United Kingdom Trade Statistics until 1920. To show the progress of the trade, we give the figures of imports from the main supplying countries for 1920, 1922, and 1924. These statistics are as follows :—

Countries whence consigned	1920		1922		1924	
	Cwt.	Per cent.	Cwt.	Per cent.	Cwt.	Per cent.
South Africa ...	1,824	13·3	6,233	19·7	9,084	11·1
West Indies ...	2,814	20·5	5,534	17·5	9,867	12·1
Total Overseas Empire...	5,061	36·9	11,919	37·7	20,300	24·9
United States of America	8,013	58·3	19,181	60·7	58,556	72·0
Total Foreign ...	8,673	63·1	19,681	62·3	61,067	75·1
Total Imports ...	13,734	100·0	31,600	100·0	81,367	100·0
Re-exports ...	310	—	1,570	—	3,487	—
Net Imports ...	13,424	—	30,030	—	77,880	—

The total value of grape fruit imported into the United Kingdom, as returned to the customs authorities, in recent years has been :

1923	£ 78,357
1924	140,686

Although, as already stated, the grape fruit is a newcomer to the United Kingdom, it has received a ready welcome and its consumption has grown very rapidly in four years. Nevertheless, the quantities consumed per head of the population are still very small, as the following figures show :—

Consumption per head for 1920 ...	lbs. 0·03
Consumption per head for 1922 ...	0·07
Consumption per head for 1924 ...	0·18

Grape fruit for the United Kingdom market is drawn in the main from one foreign and two Empire sources. In each of the three cases the trade has grown rapidly, but from the United States of America the supply has leapt up during the last year or two. With the causes and effects of this we deal in our main Report, as the grape fruit typifies in many respects certain forces which are at work in the United Kingdom fruit market.

Producing Countries.

Grape fruit is grown in *South Africa* in practically all the orange-growing districts, but certain coastal strips are more favourable for the production of a good commercial article than the inland areas. Government standards of grading and packing are laid down for all grape fruit exported. Three grades only are permitted to be exported under the following descriptions ; "Fancy," "Choice," and "Standard." The regulations define these grades and specify the qualifications with which the fruit must comply to be included in one or other of them.

As in the case of oranges, these regulations are administered by Government Inspectors. The whole of the exported supply of grape fruit from South Africa is controlled by the South African Fruit Growers' Exchange in the same way as has already been described in regard to oranges.

The Grape Fruit grows wild on many of the *West Indian* islands. Its export is not subject to any special standards of grading and packing prescribed either by producers' organisations or by the local Governments. The shipment of Jamaican grape fruit to the United Kingdom is undertaken by Messrs. Elders and Fyffes, who own the only refrigerated steamship service between Jamaica and the United Kingdom. Messrs. Elders and Fyffes are a British registered company subject to the control of the American corporation, the United Fruit Company. In the case of the other West Indian Colonies, certain supplies are forthcoming and are shipped to the United Kingdom by various boats. There is no organised trade. The fruit, in such cases, is marketed through the ordinary channels.

Although grape fruit is grown in Australia, practically none is exported.

There are considerable possibilities of grape fruit production in *West Africa*, where experimental plots have recently been cultivated with considerable success, the crop being very heavy. Further local investigation is, however, necessary into the quality of the fruit, the cost of establishing production on a commercial scale, and the provision of land and labour. *We recommend that local investigation into these questions should be undertaken by the local Governments and that their inquiries should be correlated by the Executive Commission.*

The competition to which Empire grape fruit is exposed in the United Kingdom market comes from fruit of California and Florida origin. The latter is marketed under a well-known trade name, the actual indication being stamped on the skin of the fruit. This is undoubtedly the ideal way of indicating the origin of fruit, for unlike the paper wrapper adopted for South African and West Indian fruit, it cannot be removed when the fruit is exhibited for sale. Californian grape fruit production is organized by the Californian Fruit Growers' Exchange and marketed by exactly the same machinery as operates for oranges. By careful cultivation of the fruit a very high standard of quality and appearance has been secured. Very careful grading is carried out before the fruit is marketed. The success of the United States organizations supplying grape fruit to the United Kingdom market constitutes a striking illustration of the possibility of creating a market which did not exist before.

Marketing.

Generally speaking, grape fruit is grown under much the same conditions as oranges, although we are told that proximity to the ocean is an advantage. The statements dealing with oranges made in the preceding sections of this Report in respect of such matters as organization, finance, and methods of sale apply equally to grape fruit.