

## PART VII

## Farm Marketing and Level of Living

Location and Transportation For Marketing

In terms of its major agricultural commodities, Columbia County is suitably located for marketing in the western states region and transcontinentally to the eastern United States. Major goods produced here are grains and canned peas and asparagus which can be shipped long distances. In terms of its less perishable crops and livestock which undergo some shrinkage or quality change, it is at a slight disadvantage in competition with areas nearer major urban centers and terminal markets. The farming region centered at Dayton is somewhat distant by highway and rail from major Pacific Northwest cities and terminals and this distance is reflected in higher freight rates and hauling charges than those paid by producers and shippers in other competitive areas. There is only a small local consumer market. It is a large surplus food area that must distribute agricultural products to distant markets either before or after they are processed. Perishable vegetable production is sold to major canneries located within the immediate region. Grain and cattle, however, must be shipped to major terminals at Spokane or on the Pacific Coast. Dayton is nearly 300 miles from Seattle, 265 from Portland and 130 from Spokane.

Railroad and trucking facilities for moving bulk shipments of grains and carload lots of canned vegetables are modern. Branch lines of Northern Pacific and Union Pacific connect Dayton and Starbuck with transcontinental lines at Walla Walla, Pasco and Spokane. Numerous grain warehouses and elevators and loading sidings are on these railways. Three interstate commerce licensed motor carriers and numerous agricultural exempt carriers are available for hauling farm products. Highway most used is the modernized cross-state highway U. S. 410 passing through Dayton and connecting with Walla Walla, Clarkston and other major cities. The area is connected with Spokane by the modern highways U. S. 295 and 195. Within Columbia County there are 488 miles of surfaced, improved and graded public roads suitable for agricultural trucks. Most farms are readily accessible by trucks.

Income: Value of Products Sold

Census of Agriculture data on the value of farm products sold show that farm income has been trending upward in recent years. All Columbia County farms marketed agricultural products worth \$9,389,700 in 1954, compared with \$6,094,200 in 1949. This is an increase in gross returns to farmers of about 54 percent since 1949. Columbia County ranks high in the state in per-farm average gross income.

Sales of farm products and farm incomes vary by type and size of farms. About five-sixths of the county's 351 farms are commercial--selling products valued at over \$250 per year. The majority of Columbia County farms are classified as above-average to high-income farms. In 1954 about one-half of all commercial farms in the county were in economic Class I, with sales of over \$25,000 for the year. Another one-fourth were Class II farms which made sales in excess of \$10,000. Over four-fifths of all farms in the area exceeded the

Total Value of Farm Products Sold in 1954: \$9,389,700

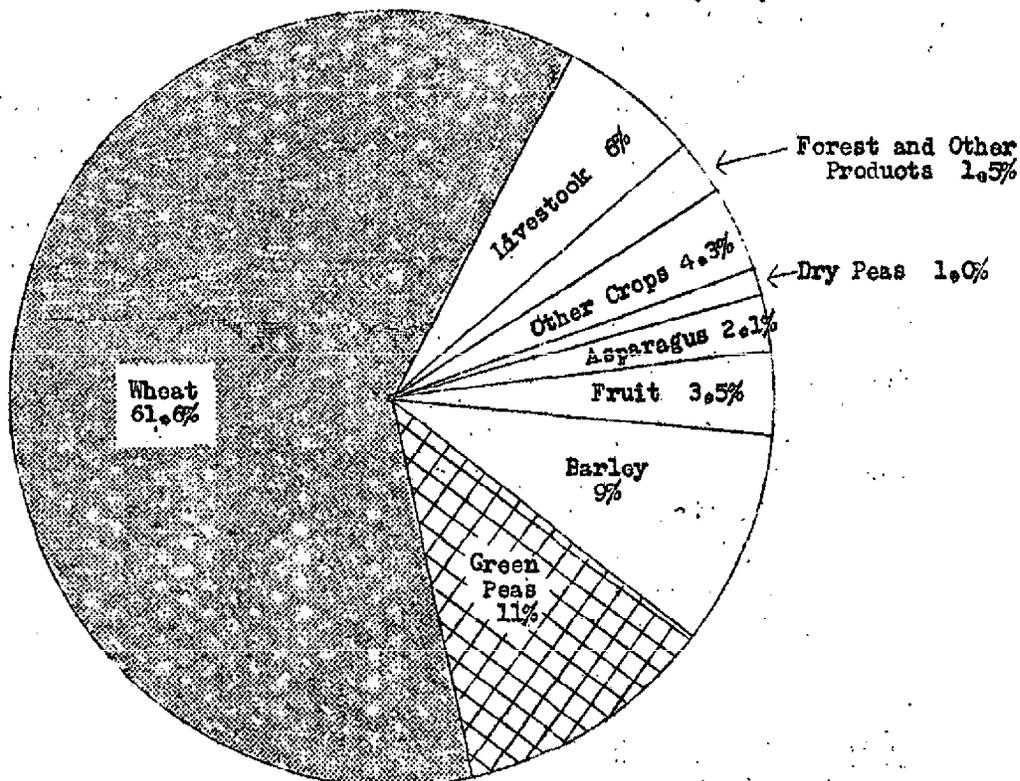


Figure 13.- Sources of Cash Income, Columbia County, 1954

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

\$5,000 level of farm sales receipts for the Census year of 1954. Large-scale growing of cash grain crops and extensive contracted acreages growing peas and asparagus contribute to the general pattern of high income farms.

Marketing Field Crops: Wheat, Barley, Oats, Dry Peas, Hay

About 76 percent of all farm marketings in Columbia County are field crops with wheat by far the most valuable commercial crop. In 1954 Columbia County growers sold about 2,900,000 bushels for \$5,800,000 and wheat sales accounted for over 61 percent of all marketing returns to farmers. Barley is a second major cash grain crop and oats are of minor importance. In 1954 about 714,000 bushels of barley were sold by farmers returning them approximately \$850,000. Only 18,600 bushels of oats worth \$16,000 were sold.

Dry field peas for seed and for human use amounted to sales of 18,000 hundred-pound bags in 1954. Dry pea growers received about \$95,000 for their total crop. Hay was a minor cash crop. About 500 tons of alfalfa were traded locally or trucked to distant markets in 1954. It had a market value to growers of about \$11,000.

Facilities for grain and dry pea trading, storage, shipping and hauling are well-developed within and adjacent to Columbia County. There are 17 state licensed public grain warehouses within the county with a total capacity of

3,249,500 bushels. Dayton and Starbuck have the largest storages in the county. Much of the grain and peas are also delivered to storage houses in Walla Walla and Whitman Counties.

Table 27.- Crops Marketed From Columbia County Farms, 1954

Type of Crops Sold	Amount Received By Farmers (Dollars)	Percent All Crops Sold
Field Crops (wheat, barley, oats, dry peas, hay, potatoes, etc.)	\$7,147,055	81.8
Vegetables (green peas, asparagus)	1,240,974	14.2
Fruits, Nuts and Berries (apples, peaches, cherries, apricots)	325,455	3.7
Horticultural Specialties (trees, shrubs, cut flowers, plants, vines, etc.)	18,000	.3
Total amount received by farmers for cash crops	\$8,731,484	100.0

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

#### Marketing Commercial Vegetables - Peas and Asparagus

Since the early 1930's Columbia County has been Washington's second most important area in value of commercial green peas and asparagus marketed from farms. In 1954 there were over 16,000 tons of green peas marketed to canneries in Columbia and Walla Walla Counties. Peas were the county's second most valuable cash crop in 1954 returning growers about \$1,040,000. Green peas are vined and delivered immediately to canneries at Dayton, Waitsburg and Walla Walla. Peas are grown by both company owned farms and under contract by individual growers. Dry peas and seed peas are a related commercial crop valued at about \$95,000 per year. The second most valuable processing vegetable cash crop is asparagus. In recent years about 1,400 tons have been cut per season for the canneries of the immediate region. Asparagus marketed for canning and freezing returned growers in Columbia County approximately \$200,000 in 1954.

#### Marketing Fruit

Apples and other tree fruits such as peaches, apricots and cherries are commercial crops returning growers an annual return of over \$300,000 per year. Fruit accounts for about 3 to 4 percent of all marketings. Fruits are shipped fresh to distant markets. Dayton is the principal shipping point. In a recent year there were 80 carload lots of apples and mixed fruits shipped from Dayton.

#### Marketing Cattle, Hogs, Sheep and Wool

Sales of live animals for slaughter and for stockers and feeders totaled over \$548,000 in 1954 and made up about 6 percent of the county's farm economy. Cattle and calves are the major items sold, bringing more than \$470,000. Hogs are second, making up sales of about \$58,000. Sheep and wool were minor, sales amounting to about \$17,000.

Major markets for Columbia County livestock are in the general Blue Mountain region of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Livestockmen haul to auction yards and meat packers in Walla Walla, Clarkston, Pasco and Colfax. Some rail and truck shipments are sent to Spokane or Portland. Walla Walla is the principal market place for feeders and finished cattle. Wool is generally pooled with that of several other southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon counties and is sent to wool auctions in Portland, Oregon.

Table 28.-- Livestock and Livestock Products Marketed  
Columbia County, 1954

Class of Livestock Products Sold	Quantity Marketed	Amount Received by Farmers
<u>Dairy Products</u>		
Whole milk-----	474,154 lbs.	\$ 22,005
Butterfat-----	25,446 lbs.	12,611
Total all dairy products		\$ 34,616
<u>Poultry and poultry products</u>		
Chickens-----	4,395 birds	\$ 5,083
Eggs-----	63,003 dozen	28,043
Turkeys, ducks, geese-----		5,700
Total all poultry & poultry products		\$ 38,826
<u>Animals sold alive</u>		
Cattle-----	2,386 head	\$288,308
Calves-----	2,374 head	183,676
Hogs and pigs-----	1,752 head	57,824
Sheep and lambs-----	1,018 head	17,028
Horses and mules-----	20 head	1,705
Total all animals sold alive		\$548,541
<u>Other livestock and livestock products sold-----</u>		
Total amount received for livestock and livestock products-----		

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

#### Marketing Dairy Products

Marketing dairy products such as whole milk and cream has declined in Columbia County in recent years. In 1954 there were only four farms selling whole milk and their total sales were 475,000 pounds valued at only \$22,000. In 1954 about 50 farms made sales of cream, selling 40,000 pounds of butterfat valued at \$12,600. Local milk and cream is mainly sold to and distributed by two creameries in Dayton and a dairy plant in Pomeroy of Garfield County. The local market is relatively small in consumers and includes parts of Columbia, Garfield and Walla Walla Counties.

#### Marketing Poultry, Eggs

Poultry marketing--a small commercial sideline--consists mainly of sales of eggs and turkeys to Walla Walla region handlers and processors. Sales of

eggs were about \$28,000 in 1954 sold from over 170 farms, having declined considerably since 1950. Sales of live chickens were made by about 70 farms with a total value of \$5,100. Turkey production for markets has dropped since 1950. Only 5 farms sold a total of 600 birds in 1954 worth about \$6,000. Poultry and egg production is not sufficient for local needs and supplies are shipped in from Walla Walla. Principal processing and handler markets for eggs and poultry entering trade are at poultry product plants in Walla Walla. Some small producer sales are made to retailers in Dayton and Waitsburg and some sales are made directly off farms.

### Marketing Forest Products

In recent years forest products from private farmer-owned woodlands have become more important in Columbia County agriculture. Farms and ranches in the Blue Mountains region sell and utilize over \$30,000 worth of timber products annually. In 1954 there were 17 farms that sold a total of over 4 million board feet of sawlogs. Principal markets for timber are three lumber mills operating in the Dayton area.

Table 29.- Forest Products on Farms, Columbia County, 1954

Type of Product	Farms Reporting	Quantity
Firewood and fuelwood cut-----	12	124 cords
Fence posts cut-----	11	4,442 posts
Sawlogs and veneer logs cut-----	17	4,319 M bd. ft.
Pulpwood cut-----	4	354 cords
Total value of farm forest products sold and used on the farm-----	18	\$30,761

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

### Specified Farm Expenditures

Columbia County farmers who reported expenditures in 1954 spent over \$3,185,000 during the year for feed, labor and supplies used in crop and livestock production. Chief farming expense was for hired labor. Nearly 280 farms

Table 30.- Specified Farm Expenditures in 1954, Columbia County

Type of Expenditure	Farms Reporting	Expenditure of all Farms	Average Per Farm
Machine hire.....	207	\$ 363,690	\$1,757
Hired labor.....	279	1,568,763	5,623
Feed for livestock and poultry	238	195,269	820
Gasoline, petroleum fuel & oil	299	374,969	1,254
Commercial fertilizer.....	275	683,114	2,484
Lime and liming materials.....	1	7	7
Total production costs.....		\$3,185,812	

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

hired labor and some of the growers of green peas and asparagus made heavy outlays for harvest labor. Labor costs averaged over \$5,600 per farm. Commercial fertilizer costs were second, averaging \$2,484 per farm. A third major cost was for gasoline, diesel fuel and oil used heavily in the mechanized wheat farming of the region. There were 300 farms using petroleum products and the average was over \$1,250 each in annual payments for petroleum. Compared with 1949, costs for labor, fertilizer, petroleum products, feed and all other supplies were greater in 1954. Servicing and supplying Columbia County's 356 farms is an important basis of local business in Dayton and Starbuck as well as in Waitsburg and Pomeroy in adjacent Walla Walla and Garfield Counties.

### Agricultural Income Compared to Other Income

Agricultural income in Columbia County leads by far all other sources of income. Income from sales of farm products and agricultural employment makes up over 48 percent of the total and is far more important than manufacturing, commercial and professional trades and other nonfarm occupations. A recent study by Washington State College shows that agricultural net income has been gaining in annual value.

Table 31.- Types and Sources of Income 1950-1952, Columbia County 1/

Type and Source of Income	Income in Dollars by Years			Percentage of County Income by Years		
	1950	1951	1952	1950	1951	1952
Agriculture	\$3,839,000	\$2,947,000	\$4,373,000	47.8	40.0	48.6
Construction	79,000	86,000	114,000	1.0	1.2	1.3
Government	513,000	579,000	647,000	6.4	7.9	7.2
Manufacturing	716,000	871,000	842,000	8.9	11.8	9.4
Service	374,000	413,000	404,000	4.8	5.6	4.5
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	341,000	402,000	425,000	4.2	5.5	4.6
Trade	924,000	927,000	1,053,000	11.5	12.6	11.7
Miscellaneous	99,000	99,000	95,000	1.2	1.3	1.1
Property Income	512,000	542,000	556,000	6.4	7.4	6.2
Other Income	628,000	495,000	483,000	7.8	6.7	5.4
Total	\$8,025,000	\$7,361,000	\$8,992,000	100.0	100.0	100.0

1/ John A. Guthrie and Stanley E. Boyle, County Income Payments in Washington, 1950-1952. Pullman, Wash. Washington State College, Bulletin No. 26.

### Level of Living on Columbia County Farms

Columbia County farm families have a standard of living which is considerably above the national and state averages. Average farm family net income was last estimated at \$3,200. The state average was \$2,380 and the national average \$1,567.

On the whole, farm people have not enjoyed a level of living as high as city people. Farm incomes measured in dollars received for labor or goods sold are lower on the average than urban incomes. City people also have readily

available more conveniences. Because of isolation and the scattered location of farm and ranch homes it is difficult to obtain electrical, telephone, sewer, running water and even highway service. Services are often too costly for public and private utility companies to provide for all rural homes and farmsteads, particularly in remote or inaccessible areas. In numerous cases, incomes are too low for farmers to put in their own electrical, water and other conveniences which families in city neighborhoods take for granted.

In Columbia County the ownership and use of conveniences generally associated with a modern standard of living are above national and state averages. Many new modern farm homes have raised the average greatly since 1945. Good rural electrification development has been accomplished by private and public utilities since 1935. Over 76 percent of all farms are now served with electricity.

Columbia County farms are well-mechanized with tractors, combines and trucks and most farm homes used for year-round residence are well-equipped with electrical appliances and other conveniences. Columbia County farm families are above national and state averages in the ownership of hot water heaters, home freezers, refrigerators, telephones, central heating and modern plumbing. In Columbia County, as a whole, farms have modern homes and standards of living are above the general average for all American agriculture.

Table 32,-- Indices of Level of Living of Columbia County Farm Families, 1950 Compared with State and National Averages

Index Items	Percentage of total farm families with listed index items		
	United States	Washington	Columbia County
Farm Family Level of Living	122	154	170
Median Income per Family	\$1,567	\$2,380	\$3,200
Electricity	78.3%	92.5%	76.4%
Electric Hot Water Heater	17.4	49.1	55.2
Electric Washing Machine	58.7	85.4	70.9
Home Freezers	12.1	14.5	23.6
Mech. Refrigerators	62.7	77.4	96.6
Telephone	38.2	57.5	75.1
Hot and Cold Water Plumbing	23.8	70.4	81.0
Central Heating	18.1	17.8	64.0
Houses with More than One Person per Room	22.3	15.7	7.5
Automobiles	63.0	77.5	69.4
Travel 10 Miles or More to Trading Center	21.4	20.5	25.1

Source: Walter L. Slocum and Carol L. Stone, The Farm People of Washington at Mid-Century. State College of Washington, Washington Agric. Exp. Stations. Bulletin 557, February 1955. Pullman, Washington.

Numerous commercial grain, vegetable and livestock farms in the Touchet and Tucannon Valleys contribute greatly to the local and state economy. Columbia County's wheat and commercial vegetable production places it among the leading counties of America in these commodities.