

## PART VII

## Farm Marketing and Level of Living

Location and Transportation For Marketing

The Benton County farming region is well located for statewide and trans-continental marketing and is well-provided with rail, truck and water shipping facilities. There is transcontinental railway service by the Northern Pacific and the Seattle, Portland and Spokane Railway which connects with other lines in Spokane and Portland. Rail connections are good to the Puget Sound, Lower Columbia River and Spokane marketing areas. Rail travel time is less than 5 hours to each of these major markets and redistributing centers.

Truck hauling has been greatly improved in recent years by arterial interstate and state highways. U.S. Highways 410 and 97 traversing the Yakima Valley and crossing the Cascade Mountains over low passes give rapid connections with processors in the Yakima Valley and the populous wholesale, retail and processor markets of Puget Sound. U.S. Highways 830 and 30 and State Highway 8 give good access through the Columbia River Gorge to the major wholesale and grain terminals in the Portland and Lower Columbia River region. U.S. Highway 395 and State Highway 11 give rapid hauling to the greater Spokane area. Local facilities of state, county and farm-to-market roads are also good for delivery of crops and livestock from farms to local processors, shippers and wholesalers.

With recent completion of the navigation locks at The Dalles, Oregon and McNary Dam, Benton County has barge and small ship service for delivery of its bulky grain crops to tidewater ports on the Columbia River. Benton County wheat goes mainly to the lower Columbia River area for storage, processing or export.

Income: Value of Products Sold

Census of Agriculture data on the value of farm products sold show that the trend of gross incomes has been upward in recent years. All Benton County farms marketed \$15,379,000 worth of agricultural products in 1954 compared with \$7,398,000 in 1944 and \$8,573,000 in 1949. Gross returns to farmers have doubled since 1944.

Sales of farm products vary by different types and sizes of commercial farms. About 950 farms were classified as commercial receiving over \$250 per year for sales in 1954, and 650 were non-commercial with no significant receipts for farm production. Over one-fifth of the county farm income was received by large commercial farms who sell over \$25,000 worth of crops and livestock. Over one-third of the commercial farms were in the class that receive between \$5,000 and up to \$25,000 per year. Another third were in the class that receive \$250 to \$5,000 for farm products. Low income farms that take in less than \$2,500 per year were not common, numbering only 45 in 1954.

Total Value of all Farm Products Sold, 1954: \$15,379,081

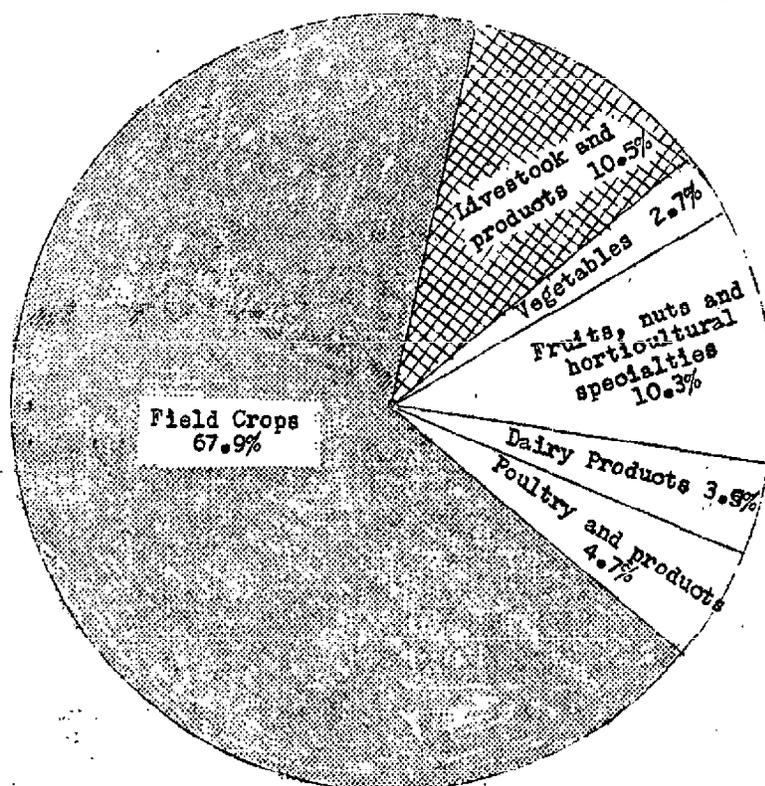


Figure 13.- Sources of Cash Income, Benton County Farms, 1954.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1954.

Table 36.- Crops Marketed From Benton County Farms, 1954.

Type of Crop Sold	Amount Received By Farmers (Dollars)	Percent All Crops Sold
Field Crops (wheat, barley, field corn, alfalfa, potatoes, sugar beets, mint)	\$10,440,846	84.0
Fruits (peaches, pears, cherries, apples, apricots, prunes, grapes)	1,561,976	12.5
Vegetables (asparagus, green peas, sweet corn, lettuce, tomatoes, rutabagas, carrots and melons)	407,964	3.3
Horticultural Specialties (trees, shrubs, cut flowers, plants, bulbs, seeds, etc.)	22,080	.2
Total amount received by farmers for cash crops	\$12,432,866	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Marketing Livestock: Cattle, Sheep and Hogs

Trade in live animals to meat packers, feed yards and breeders is a major activity in Benton County agricultural marketing. Sales of live animals were made by over 680 farms and total returns were over \$1,571,000 during 1954. Livestockmen sell individually to country buyers from meat packing houses and feed yards, but in most cases animals are being hauled to terminal stockyards and community livestock sales yards for competitive bidding by various buyers. Major auction yards used by the livestockmen are state licensed union and community yards at Prosser, Sunnyside, Toppenish, Wapato and Walla Walla. Slaughter outlets include 8 state or federal inspected plants in Yakima County, one at Pasco and one at Walla Walla.

Finished and feeder beef cattle and some cull dairy cattle are the major livestock items. Over 7,700 head of cattle worth over \$1,130,000 were marketed in 1954. Calves for feeders and stockers number about 2,700 per year with a sale value of nearly \$145,000. In 1954 there were 590 farms which sold cattle and calves. Some farms specialized in dry-lot feeding of range cattle for slaughter markets.

Table 37.- Livestock and Livestock Products Marketed  
Benton County, 1954

Class of Livestock Products Sold	Quantity Marketed	Amount Received By Farmers
<u>Dairy Products</u>		
Whole milk-----	14,821,825 lbs.	\$ 558,029
Butterfat-----	78,751 lbs.	42,807
Total all dairy products		\$ 600,836
<u>Poultry and poultry products</u>		
Chickens-----	62,641 birds	\$ 58,131
Eggs-----	379,412 dozen	167,229
Turkeys, ducks, geese-----	90,428 birds	504,429
Total all poultry & poultry products		\$ 729,789
<u>Animals sold alive</u>		
Cattle-----	7,765 head	\$1,130,666
Calves-----	2,765 head	144,528
Hogs and pigs-----	3,695 head	113,280
Sheep and lambs-----	10,867 head	176,023
Horses and mules-----	114 head	7,353
Total all animals sold alive		\$1,571,850
<u>Other livestock and livestock products sold</u> -----		\$ 42,011
Total amount received for livestock and livestock products-----		\$2,944,486

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Sheep and lambs and wool are second to cattle in market value. In 1954 there were over 10,800 head sold as slaughter lambs, breeding stock and feeders. Sales were made by 63 farms and the total receipts were \$176,000. Sheepmen in

1954 sold over 84,000 pounds of wool for a return of over \$42,000. Wool generally is pooled and shipped to Portland and other national wool markets under direction of the Washington Wool Growers Association.

Hogs were marketed to Yakima Valley, Puget Sound, Portland and Spokane packing house buyers by 160 farms during 1954. Some farms specialized in hog feeding using Yakima Valley corn and eastern Washington barley. About 3,700 head were sold during 1954 bringing a return of \$113,280 to hog feeders.

### Marketing Poultry and Eggs

Trade in poultry and poultry products has increased nearly two-fold since 1950. Most of it is on a cooperative basis. Poultrymen have expanded their markets in the immediate market area of the Yakima Valley and the Tri-cities and have produced a large volume of turkeys in recent years for export to major Pacific Northwest cities. Over 400 poultry producers sold eggs, chickens and turkeys during 1954 and total off-farm sales were more than \$729,000.

Turkey marketing was the major activity in 1954. About 50 turkey producers sold turkeys valued at over \$500,000 to buyers, slaughtering plants and cold packers. Major outlets were to processing plants of the Washington Cooperative Farmers Association at Yakima, Sunnyside and Kennewick and to meat packers in Yakima, Grandview, Toppenish, Kennewick and Walla Walla. With over 90,000 turkeys raised for market, Benton County is a surplus area in turkeys and distant markets are sought to consume its production.

Marketing fresh eggs, mainly through a cooperative, brought a total return of \$167,000 to over 300 producers during 1954. Over 379,000 dozen eggs were sold and nearly all of these went through local channels for fresh market in Yakima, Benton and Franklin Counties. A major channel was through the Washington Cooperative Farmers Association plants at Yakima, Sunnyside, Kennewick and Walla Walla.

Live chickens and broilers were sold by over 200 producers in 1954. Their volume in that year was over 62,000 birds selling for \$58,000. About seven poultrymen specialized in broilers or fryers for the fresh and cold pack markets. Most sales were made by producer-members of the Washington Cooperative Farmers Association but independent poultry packers and wholesalers at Yakima, Toppenish, Grandview and Kennewick were also important outlets.

### Marketing Dairy Products

Marketing fluid milk by dairymen is based on supplying the greatly increased industrial and urban population in the lower Yakima Valley and the Tri-cities area of Benton and Franklin Counties. This market has grown since 1940 to over 85,000 persons. Dairy farmers ship whole milk to fluid milk distributors and dairy plants in Yakima, Benton and Franklin Counties. In 1954 there were 224 milk producing farms in Benton County which shipped 14,821,825 pounds of fluid milk and over 78,000 pounds of cream. Their total returns were \$600,836. Major outlets were Yakima Dairymen's Association plants and distributors in Sunnyside, Grandview and Kennewick. Many Benton County dairymen are producer-members in this marketing cooperative. Other private distributing and factory plants which buy fluid milk and cream are in Pasco, Kennewick and Lower Yakima Valley cities.

Marketing Crops: Wheat, Small Grains, Hay, Corn

Wheat and other small grains are the major crops marketed in terms of value and volume of shipments. Facilities for country storage, shipping and hauling of the cash-grain crops are well developed. There are 12 state licensed public grain warehouses within the county. They have a total grain storage capacity of 5,354,000 bushels. In Kennewick there are three warehouses and the capacity is 3,995,000 bushels. Paterson has a capacity of 795,000 bushels in two warehouses. Other storage locations are at Whitstran, Prosser, Vista and Kiona.

During the 1954 marketing year, wheat and barley were the leading items in agricultural marketing. Cash grain sales brought in over \$5,575,000, over one-third of all farm gross income in Benton County. Census figures for 1954 showed that about 200 growers sold 2,300,000 bushels of wheat worth about \$5,000,000. Barley sales were made by 100 growers amounting to 463,000 bushels worth about \$475,000. Rye, oats and mixed grains in the amount of 97,000 bushels worth over \$100,000 were also marketed. These large stocks of grain were moved from the local public storages to flour millk, feed mills, government terminal storages and other terminals in the Pacific Northwest, California and eastern United States.

Alfalfa hay sales off farms amounted to nearly 20,000 tons worth about \$500,000. More than 240 growers sold alfalfa to local feeders of livestock and to truckers and shippers moving alfalfa to western Washington and other areas needing hay supplies. In addition, 1,000 tons or more of grain hay and straw worth about \$20,000 were sold. In more recent years field corn grain marketing has greatly increased. Sold in the Yakima Valley and to feed mills in all parts of the state, corn returned a value of over \$180,000 to 70 growers.

Marketing Fruit and Grapes

Tree fruits and grapes for processors and fresh markets were second to grains and hay in crop marketing value. Sales from orchards and vineyards were valued at over \$1,500,000 in 1954. The major outlet is to the fruit processing industry in the Yakima Valley extending from Kennewick to Yakima. This is one of the major areas in western United States where fruit and grapes are processed for distribution to national and foreign markets. The Benton County portion of the Yakima Valley also ships large volumes of fresh fruit and grapes to the urban markets of the Puget Sound Basin, the Lower Columbia River, Spokane and other cities in the west and midwest.

In 1954 the harvested and marketable fruit production of Benton County recorded by the Census included 26,000 boxes of apples, 1,000 tons of peaches, 1,500 tons of cherries, 1,780 tons of plums, 1,000 tons of apricots and 8,000 tons of grapes.

Exact data on the marketing and utilization of this production are not available, but a large share of it moved to fresh market. Large quantities was processed in canneries, juice plants and drying plants located in Grandview, Sunnyside and Yakima in Yakima County and at Prosser and Kennewick in Benton County. Some moved to Oregon plants too. Carlot shipment data for 1956 showed the following volumes loaded at receiving stations in the Benton

County and lower valley region of Yakima County: Grandview, 62 carloads of apples, 12 cars of cherries, 21 mixed fruits, 22 peaches, 62 pears, 137 plums; Sunnyside, 95 cars of plums; Benton, 5 cars of plums; Prosser, 4 carloads of grapes. Most fruit is marketed through five cooperatives in the lower Yakima Valley.

#### Marketing Vegetables and Potatoes

Vegetables for processing plants and fresh markets were valued at over \$400,000 in 1954. Asparagus sent to Yakima Valley processors and to state and national city fresh markets was the most valuable crop. In 1954 about 1,725 tons of asparagus were harvested for market. At \$203 per ton as an average price, this crop returned over \$350,000. Sunnyside was a major shipment point with about 60 carloads received from Yakima and Benton County growers. Other important vegetables sold are onions, rutabagas, sweet corn, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes and melons for regional and state-wide fresh markets.

Potatoes also are important in marketing. In 1954 over 73,000 tons were harvested for sale. The value of this crop to growers was over \$1,500,000 at 1954 price levels. Numerous potato shippers and buyers in the lower Yakima Valley handled the crop. There were 219 rail carloads shipped from Benton County warehouses and sheds at Prosser, Plymouth and Kennewick and a large amount went into the 1,873 carloads shipped from Yakima County points at Grandview, Sunnyside, Mabton, Toppenish and Wapato.

#### Marketing Specialty Crops: Hops, Mint and Sugar Beets

Dried hops and mint oil are two semi-processed specialty crops of high market value. In 1954 ten growers in Benton County produced over 1,150,000 pounds of dried hops for regional, national and foreign markets. At the 1954 average price of 38 cents per pound these growers received a total gross return of \$437,000. Hops are marketed through a cooperative and through brokers and buyers at Yakima.

Mint is marketed in the form of oil distilled from mint hay. In 1954 over 100 growers in Benton County sold a total of 185,000 pounds of oil through brokers and direct to processors located over the nation. This high value product had an average price of \$4.65 per pound in 1954 and Benton County growers received about \$865,000 for their oil exports in that year.

Sugar beets were a third major raw material crop. About 65 growers marketed 2,450 tons in 1954. Beets were trucked to a sugar mill at Toppenish in the lower Yakima Valley. At an average price of \$11.00 per ton, the off-farm sales of sugar beets returned \$26,950 to growers in 1954. Sugar beet acreage is determined largely by the Federal Sugar Act of 1948 which established market quotas and allocates acreage to the states growing beets.

#### Specified Farm Expenditures

Benton County farmers who reported expenditures in 1954 spent about \$4,605,439 for labor, equipment and supplies. Hired labor used in tree fruit, commercial vegetable and grain farming is the major production cost. Over 800 farms hired labor and they paid out a total of over \$1,749,000 for seasonal

and full-time hired help in the 1954 crop year. The second largest expense is for livestock and poultry feed. Over \$1,320,000 was spent for hay, grain and other feeds during 1954. A high degree of mechanized farming results in annual expenses of over \$660,000 for gasoline and oil and \$310,000 for machine hire. Farms of Benton County are a major source of employment and a large market for equipment and supplies. Supplying and servicing agriculture is an important basis of commerce in Prosser, Benton City and Kennewick.

Table 38.- Specified Farm Expenditures in 1954, Benton County

Type of Expenditure	Number of Farms Reporting	Expenditure of all Farms	Average Per Farm
Machine hire.....	818	\$ 310,664	\$ 379.78
Hired labor.....	812	1,749,237	2,154.23
Feed for livestock and poultry	1,188	1,320,510	1,115.40
Gasoline, petroleum fuel & oil	1,227	660,661	538.44
Commercial fertilizer.....	702	564,367	803.94
Lime and liming materials.....	---	---	---
Total production costs.....		\$4,605,439	

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

#### Agricultural Income Compared to Other Income Sources

Net agricultural income makes up less than 6 percent of the total income within Benton County. Even though it is an important farming county, the income from non-farm occupations in manufacturing, construction and service

Table 39.- Types and Sources of Income 1950-1952, Benton 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	\$ 6,561,000	\$ 6,283,000	\$ 7,201,000	5.9	4.6	5.3
Construction	30,306,000	46,884,000	36,261,000	27.4	34.1	26.7
Government	5,566,000	7,104,000	8,044,000	5.0	5.2	5.9
Manufacturing	34,665,000	43,856,000	48,169,000	31.4	31.9	35.5
Service	4,034,000	4,699,000	5,029,000	3.6	3.4	3.7
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	2,446,000	2,532,000	2,742,000	2.2	1.8	2.0
Trade	6,914,000	8,218,000	9,630,000	6.3	6.0	7.1
Miscellaneous	1,281,000	1,266,000	1,200,000	1.2	.9	.9
Property Income	11,244,000	11,919,000	12,314,000	10.2	8.6	9.1
Other Income	7,568,000	4,772,000	5,176,000	6.8	3.5	3.8
Total	\$110,585,000	\$137,533,000	\$135,766,000	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.

trades is far greater. Income from farming rose between 1950 and 1953 and ranged from \$6,283,000 to \$7,201,000 per year according to a study by the State College of Washington.

### Level of Living on Benton County Farms

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 homes it is more difficult for farmers to get electrical, telephone, sewer, running water and even highway service. These things often are too costly for private utility companies and government to provide for all rural residents particularly in mountainous or remote areas. In numerous cases, incomes are too low for farmers to put in their own electrical, water and other service conveniences which people living in compact city neighborhoods take for granted.

The ownership and use of conveniences generally associated with a modern standard of living are above national but slightly below state averages in Benton County. A recent study of rural-farm living levels over the state and nation based on Census of Agriculture figures found that Benton County had an index of 140 compared with 122 for the United States and 154 for the state of Washington.

Table 40.- Indices of Level of Living of Benton County Farm Families, 1950 Compared with State and National Averages

Index Items	Percentage of total farm families with listed index items		
	United States	Washington	Benton County
Farm Family Level-of-Living	122	154	140
Median Income per Family	\$1,567	\$2,380	\$2,307
Electricity	78.3%	92.5%	94.1%
Electric Hot Water Heater	17.4%	49.1%	53.4%
Electric Washing Machine	58.7%	85.4%	83.7%
Home Freezers	12.1%	14.5%	11.4%
Mech. Refrigerators	62.7%	77.4%	86.0%
Telephone	38.2%	57.5%	33.9%
Hot and Cold Water Plumbing	23.8%	70.4%	64.2%
Houses with More than One Person per Room	22.3%	15.7%	25.7%
Automobiles	63.0%	77.6%	78.2%
Travel 10 Miles or More to Trading Center	21.4%	20.5%	14.6%

Source: Walter L. Slocum and Carol L. Stone, The Farm People of Washington at Mid-Century.

Average farm family income was \$2,307 per year, far above the national average and nearly equal to the state average. Benton County farm homes as an average were above state and national standards in the use of electricity, electrical appliances and labor-saving machinery. Use of telephones and general telephone service were below state and national averages. Housing standards

and use of modern plumbing and heating also were slightly below state averages. Housing standards in the irrigated districts near Prosser and Kennewick are equal to those in all the high farm income areas of the state. Some isolated farm and ranch homes in upland areas, however, are too remote for telephone or electrical service. These remote farmsteads reduce the county average below state averages in some fixtures and conveniences.

Benton County agriculture in the span of about 75 years has grown and progressed to high importance in the state economy. As part of the recently irrigated lower Yakima Valley it has become prominent as a source of a variety of fruits, grapes and vegetables for regional and national trade in processed and fresh market foods. Its productive wheat lands also yield an important part of the state's major crop--wheat. The diversified pattern of farming also produces a large part of the state's turkey and beef output and large segments of valuable raw material crops such as hops, mint and sugar beets that are utilized within the region and over the nation.

Numerous well-managed irrigated and dryland farms contribute to the local and state economy today. These farms stand as living monuments to the faith and enterprise of the land pioneers who chose their homes in the valley lands of the Yakima River and along the Columbia River shore of Benton County.