

THE 1964 SPRING CROP TOMATO SITUATION

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THE SPRING CROP TOMATO SUPPLY SITUATION

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
The 1964 Spring Season Outlook -	
Florida	1
Texas	5
Mexico	5
Trends in Competition for Greenhouse Tomatoes and Competing Tomato Shipping Areas	6
Origin of Spring Crop Fresh Tomatoes Sold in the Ohio Greenhouse Tomato Market	9
Tomato Prices	9
Summary and Conclusions on 1964 Outlook.	14

The 1964 Spring Crop Tomato Situation

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Florida

Transplanting of the 1964 Florida spring tomato crop was completed by March 7. For winter and spring harvest 43,410 acres were planted, which was 870 acres less than last season (Table 1). Producers in Florida had 17,290 acres in various stages of growth and harvest as of April 18, 1964 compared with 18,780 acres at this date last year. This represents about an 8 percent decrease in this year's spring crop acreage from last season. The peak of the plantings occurred somewhat later this year than last and compares closely to 1961 (Chart 1). Harvest had been completed on 26,090 acres as of April 18, 1964.

Table 1. FLORIDA AND TEXAS ACREAGE INVENTORY 1963-64
SEASON AS OF APRIL 18, 1964

AREA	Stage of Development of Acres Growing or in Harvest							
	Acres for Harvest	Pre-Fruit Set	Fruit Set	Harvest Begin 2 Weeks	Harvesting Number Times Picked			Harv'd to date
					One	Two	3 or more	
FLORIDA								
Vine-ripe	5150	--	--	110	100	90	2820	1950
Dade County	19610	--	--	20	470	640	510	17970
Ft. Pierce	6340	200	1830	1430	180	--	--	2700
Immokalee	6360	120	320	1330	1300	500	--	2790
Manatee	5100	190	3520	710	--	--	--	680
N. Central	850	290	530	--	--	--	--	--
1963-64 Total	43380	800	6280	3600	2050	1230	3330	26090
1962-63 Total	44280	1040	3160	6570	3060	2530	3160	25500
TEXAS 1963-64	14750	8000	16600	150	--	--	--	--
Total Florida & Texas 1963-64	58130	8800	12880	3750	2050	1230	3330	26090

Source: U.S.D.A. Statistical Reporting Service, Orlando, Florida

¹Extension Specialist, Fruit and Vegetable Marketing, Ohio Cooperative Extension Service and Research Instructor, Fruit and Vegetable Marketing, Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, respectively.

Chart 1: Weekly Plantings of Florida Tomatoes *
1961, 1963, and 1964 Spring Crops

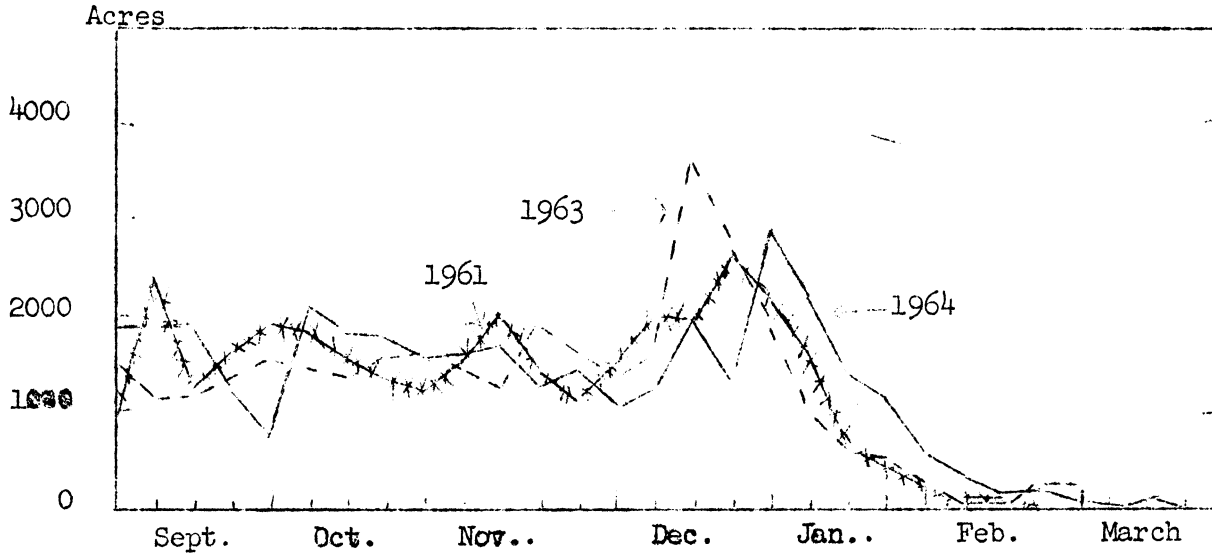
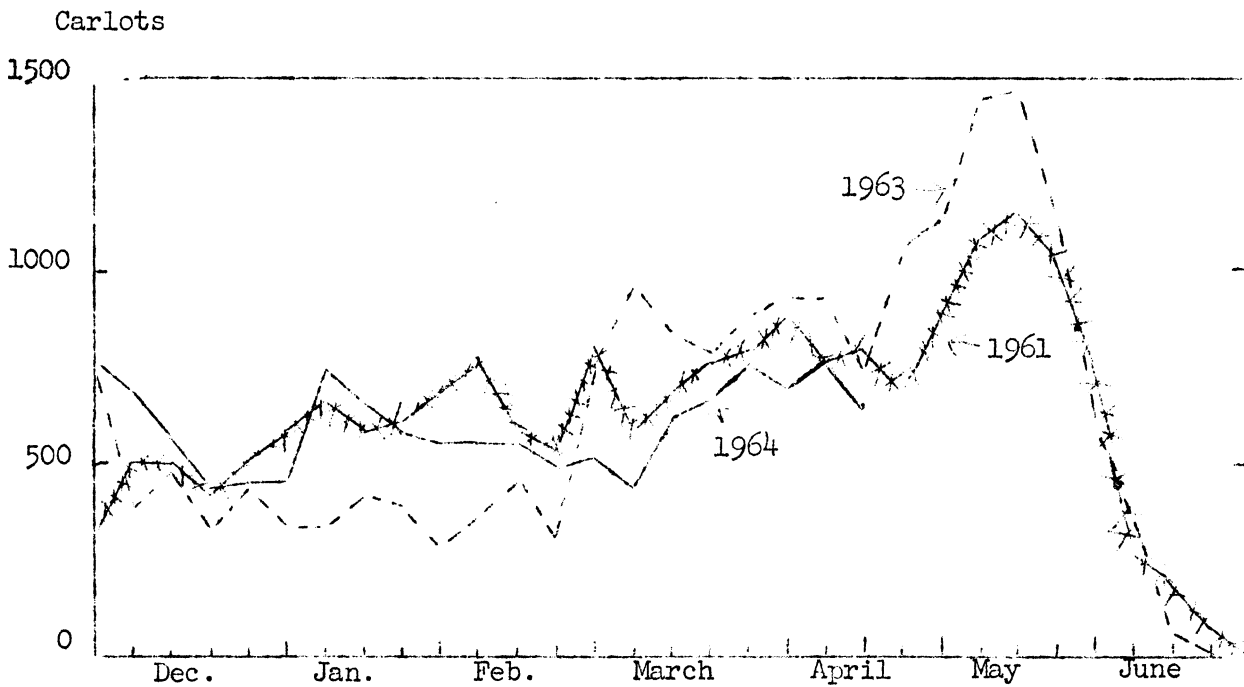


Chart 2: Weekly Shipments of Florida Tomatoes*
1961, 1963, and 1964 Spring Crops



* U.S.D.A. Statistical Reporting Service, Orlando, Florida.

Chart 3: Weekly Plantings of Tomatoes - Florida and Texas*
1963 Spring Crop

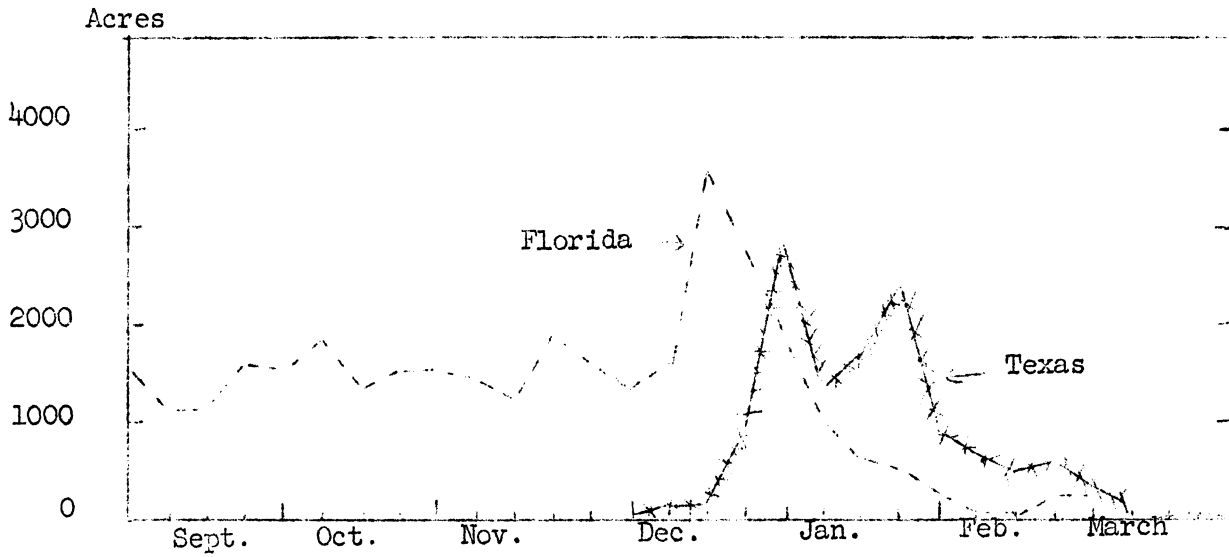
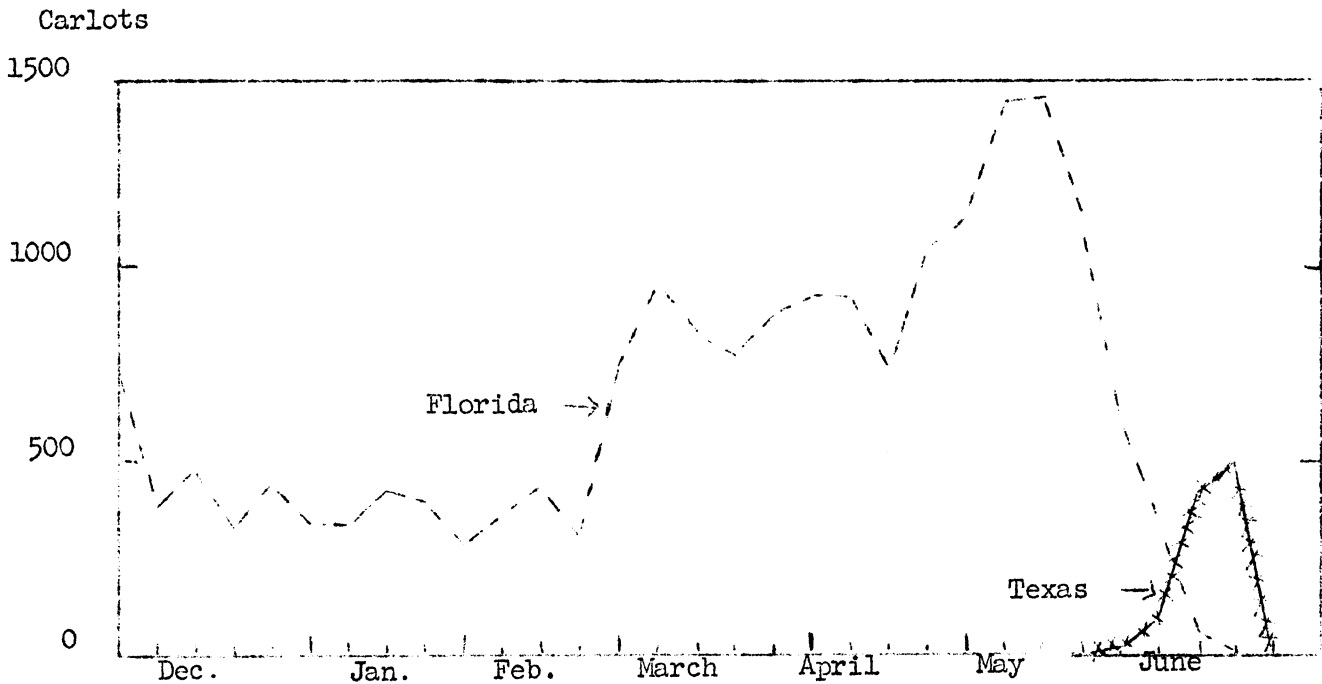


Chart 4: Weekly Shipments of Tomatoes - Florida and Texas
1963 Spring Crop



* U.S.D.A. Statistical Reporting Service, Orlando, Florida.

Vine-ripes - A total of 5,150 acres were planted for winter and spring harvest (Table 1) which represents a 25 percent increase over the 4,120 acres planted last season. Harvest was complete by April 18 on 1,950 acres which is 42 percent more than were harvested on this date in 1963. Plant condition continues to decline in older fields due to the effects of age and higher temperatures. Fruit quality was mostly fair and fruit size declining as of April 18. Production will continue to decrease with only very light supplies expected after May 15.

Dade County - Harvest is 92 percent complete and volume is on the decline. Only 20 acres remained in the pre-harvest stage as of April 18 (Table 1). Condition of small acreage remaining for harvest is fair. Disease has caused considerable trouble. Fruit quality, size, and yields are fair to good. Harvest usually ends in this area in early May.

Fort Pierce - Light harvest of the spring crop began during the week of April 11. There were 3,280 acres in the pre-harvest stage as of April 18 (Table 1) compared to 3,210 acres on the same date last season. Plant conditions and fruit set are very good.

Immokalee-Fort Myers - Volume is on the increase as the spring acreage rapidly comes into production. Fruit quality, size, and yields are good. Peak volume can be expected in late April or early May. General plant condition is good. There were 3,570 acres in the harvest and pre-harvest stage as of April 18 (Table 1), which was 480 acres less than the 4,050 acres a year ago.

Mantee-Ruskin-Wauchula - Harvest expected to start about May 1. Plant condition is generally good. There are 4,420 acres planted for spring harvest this year compared to 4,140 acres last year.

North Central - Scattered frost on March 31 and April 1 caused some top leaf burn and some plant loss. Plant condition generally is good as of April 18. Warm weather is speeding up growth. Early fields are setting fruit with first harvest expected by May 15. There are 850 acres planted for spring harvest this year compared to 940 acres set last season.

Total tomato shipments from Florida since January 1 through April 18 were about the same as last year. However, shipments from January 1 through February 29 averaged 41 percent above the same period of a year ago, and 26 percent below for the period of March 1 through April 11 (Chart 2). Most shipments to date have been from the vine-ripe and Dade County areas, but other producing areas are rapidly coming into production.

Texas

The Rio Grande Valley of Texas had 14,750 acres in various stages of growth on April 18, 1964 which was 1,850 acres more than the 12,900 acres available for harvest on the same date last year. The increase in acreage over last year is 15 percent. Condition of the plants is generally good. Many of the fields are blooming and setting fruit. Harvest usually starts about May 1 and ends June 15-30. Good volume is expected the last half of May this year.

Mexico

Shipments of vine-ripes and mature greens reached their peak during the week ending April 11. Supplies from Mexico usually decline rapidly after May 10 and end by mid-June. In 1963, only 298 carlots were imported into the U. S. after May 11, 1963, and represented only 3 percent of all Mexico tomato shipments from January 1 through June, 1963.

Trends In Competition for Greenhouse Tomatoes
and Competing Tomato Shipping Areas

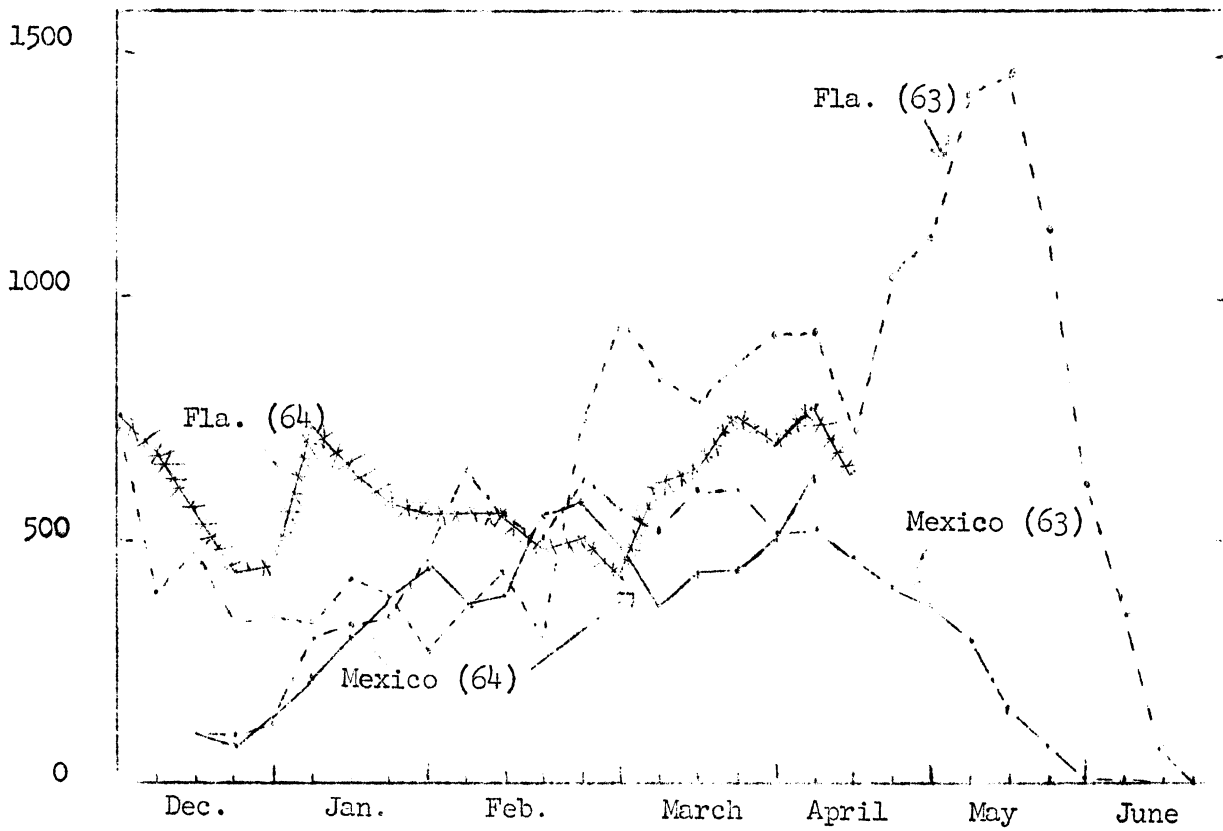
The main competition for the Ohio spring crop greenhouse tomatoes comes from Florida, Mexico, and Texas. California ships some tomatoes during the Ohio spring greenhouse tomato season, but only 2 carlots were received into the Cleveland and Cincinnati terminal markets from January 1 to June 30, 1963. Florida and Mexico are the main competitors for greenhouse tomatoes during March and April and the first half of May. Florida shipments usually decline from mid-May on. In 1963, Mexico shipped 298 carlots into the U.S. after May 11 which was only 3 percent of all shipments from there during the January 1 to June 30 period. Texas production begins about May 1 and continues fairly strong during May, then tapers off during June.

Chart 5 shows tomato shipments from Florida and Mexico for 1963 and into April, 1964. 1964 Florida shipments of 9,761 carlots through April 18 compared with 9,700 carlots for the same period of 1963 which is less than 1 percent increase over last year. Mexico shipments of 6,457 carlots through April 11, 1964, are 10 percent less than the 7,156 carlots during the same period in 1963. Mexico shipments reached a peak during the week of April 11, and will decline gradually until Mid-May and rapidly until the end of June.

There are two main types of tomatoes that compete with the Ohio greenhouse tomatoes; vine-ripes and mature greens (tube). Vine-ripe tomatoes are usually grown on stakes and come from both Florida and Mexico. Mature green or tube tomatoes are usually grown without stakes and come from Florida and Mexico during winter and early spring and from Texas in May and June. Most mature green tomatoes are ripened in storage and repacked into

Chart 5: Weekly Shipments of Tomatoes, Florida and Mexico, 1963 and 1964 Spring Crops*

Carlots



* U.S.D.A. Statistical Reporting Service, Orlando, Florida.

plastic tubes holding 3, 4, or 5 tomatoes over-wrapped with a transparent film. Climatic conditions are influential factors in yields, timing and quality of these tomatoes. The "big freeze" in December 1962 caused heavy replanting in December that was largely responsible for the later season for Florida tomatoes during the late spring, 1963. This year's crop was planted in a more uniform manner and appears to be maturing more evenly. Assuming normal weather from here on, it appears Florida production will finish slightly earlier than in 1963 and without the heavy flush that occurred during mid-June last year. Texas production is estimated to be about 25 percent greater this year than in 1963.

Improved refrigeration in trucks and rail cars plus rapid transportation from the competing production areas has tended to reduce to some extent the locational advantage Ohio greenhouse tomato growers once enjoyed. It is possible to ship tomatoes from Florida by truck into Cincinnati in 12 hours or essentially overnight and into Cleveland within 20 hours. This enables the Florida growers to put their tomatoes into Ohio greenhouse market areas within the normal ripening period for tomatoes. Often the uniformity and appearance of these tomatoes look desirable and attractive to potential buyers. Too many people do not realize the inherent differences between Florida and Mexico vine-ripe and mature green tomatoes and Ohio greenhouse tomatoes. The lower competing price of vine-ripes and mature green tomatoes is enough to cause tomato purchasers to select them over greenhouse tomatoes. Thus, it seems that consumers must be able to recognize and appreciate the general higher quality of greenhouse tomatoes in order for greenhouse tomatoes to maintain or increase their share of the total tomato market.

Even though fewer acres were planted in tomatoes in Florida in 1964 than in 1963, it does not seem that production has been reduced substantially.

It seems unlikely there will be much lessening of competition from Florida in 1965. Continued improvement in varieties, yields, and transportation will tend to increase competition from Florida, Mexico, and Texas in future years for the spring greenhouse tomato crop. Thus, it behooves Ohio producers to also attempt to produce and market a high quality tomato and provide the essential services that go along with successful marketing.

Origin of Spring Crop Fresh Tomatoes Sold

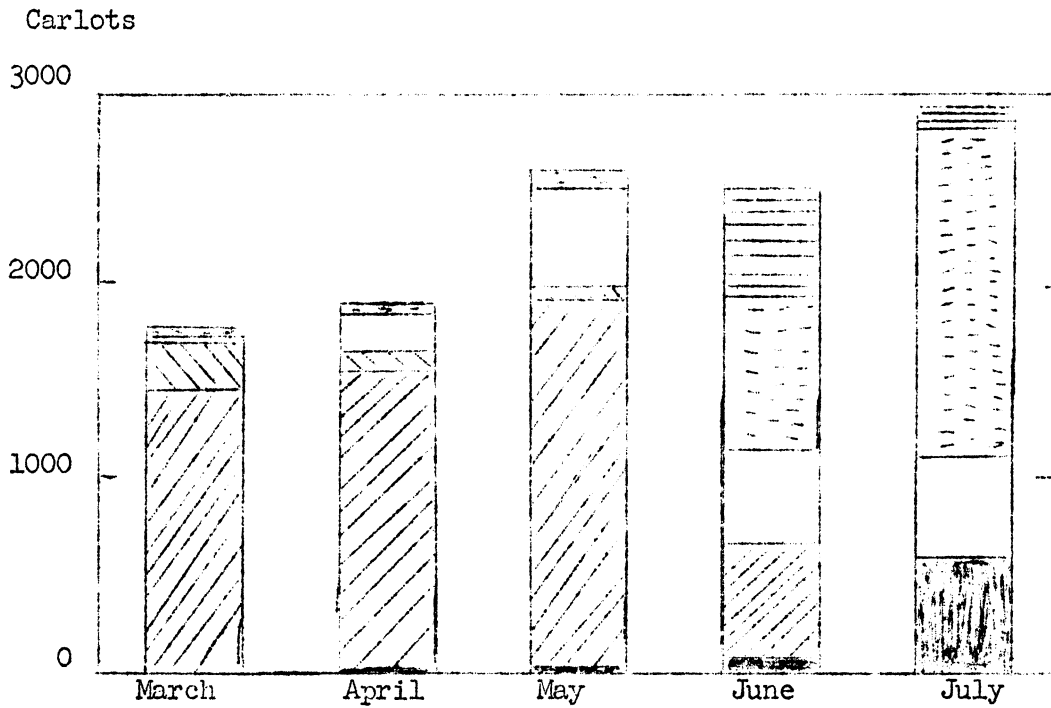
In the Ohio Greenhouse Tomato Market

Greenhouse tomatoes are marketed in volume over an area including most of the area east of the Mississippi River and as far south as Washington, D.C. and Louisville, Kentucky. Weekly unloads are reported in 16 cities within the described area. Chart 6 shows the production areas responsible for origin of shipments into these 16 cities from March through July, 1963. Ohio greenhouse tomatoes were an important segment of total unloads during April, May, June and part of July, 1963. The relative importance of Florida as a source of tomatoes during March, April, and May is striking and visibly apparent. Other states besides those shown individually on the chart become important for tomatoes in June and July.

Tomato Prices

Prices and total returns are of primary importance to greenhouse tomato growers. The overall supply of all tomatoes have a significant effect on the price level for greenhouse tomatoes. The mere presence of tomatoes available to the consumer from November until greenhouse tomatoes come into volume production tends to take the "edge off the market" even for early greenhouse tomatoes, which once brought high prices. The Florida and Mexico expansion during the past ten years has been a contributing factor in this regard. A high quality product is generally associated with a higher price level than for average quality. Selection of acceptable varieties coupled with recommended and efficient production and marketing practices should result in a desirable product that provides a satisfactory return.

Chart 6 : Origin of Fresh Tomato Unloads in Sixteen Eastern and Midwestern Cities, Spring 1963



- ▨ Texas
- ▧ Other States
- ▩ Ohio (Mainly greenhouse tomatoes)
- ▤ Mexico
- ▥ Florida
- ▦ California

*U.S.D.A. A.M.S. 427,492, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Unloads, Washington, D. C.

Prices seldom follow the same pattern from one year to the next. Prices are determined by the forces of supply and demand in the market. Adequate information on relative supplies available can enable a marketing organization to obtain the best market price for the particular time or day. The presence of large buying firms represented by chain stores and wholesale dealers creates a situation where organized marketing by growers is necessary to provide equal price negotiations on the selling side.

Charts 7 and 8 show prices of greenhouse, vine-ripe, and tube (mature green) tomatoes^{1/} in the Cleveland and Cincinnati markets for 1961, which compared similarly in plantings to 1964. Greenhouse tomatoes showed similarly higher prices over the other two competing kinds in both Cleveland and Cincinnati throughout the 1961 season.

Charts 9 and 10 show prices for the 1963 season for both Cincinnati and Cleveland for all three major types of tomatoes. Greenhouse tomatoes showed narrower differences between the other two types than during the 1961 season shown on Charts 7 and 8. During mid-June, 1963, vine-ripes brought higher prices than greenhouse tomatoes in the Cincinnati market. This was largely due to the late plantings following cold weather in December, 1962 and January, 1963, with a resultant accumulation of tomatoes for harvest in June. Prices for greenhouse tomatoes in Cleveland stayed above both vine-ripes and tube tomatoes during the 1963 spring marketing season.

^{1/} Units of the three types are on an equivalent weight basis: Greenhouse, 8-~~lb.~~ lb. basket (U. S. 1 medium); vine-ripes, 8- lb. box; and tube carton with 10 14-oz. tubes approximately equal to 8 lbs.

Chart 7: Prices of Fresh Tomatoes on the Cleveland Wholesale Market
March 15 - July 10, 1961

Dollars

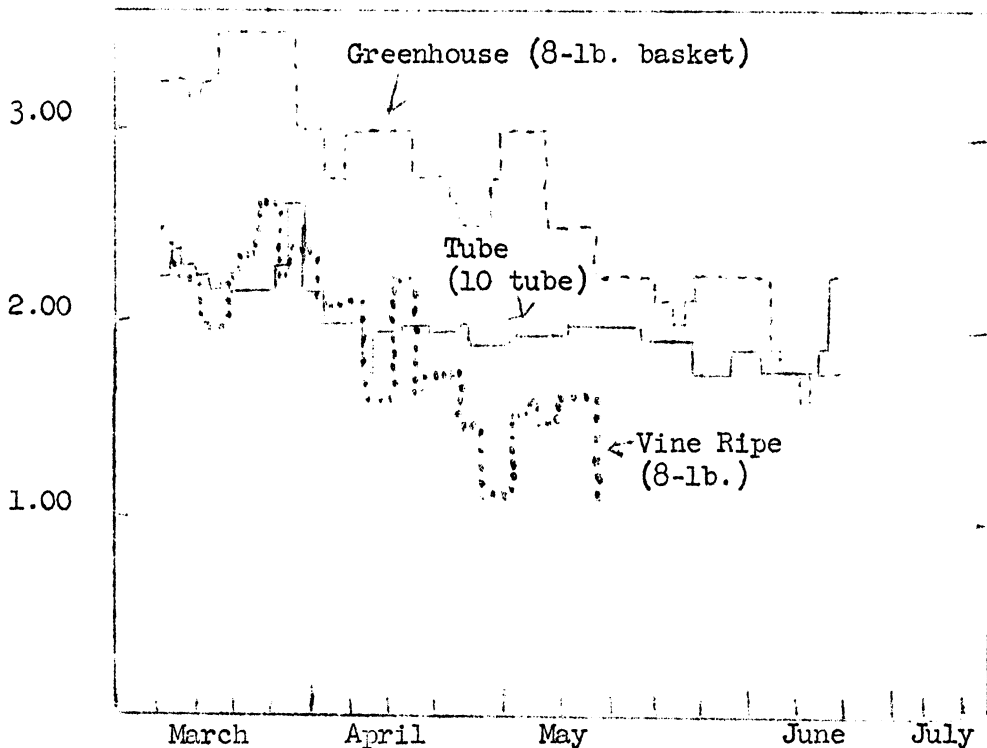


Chart 8: Prices of Fresh Tomatoes on the Cincinnati Wholesale Market, March 15 - July 10, 1961

Dollars

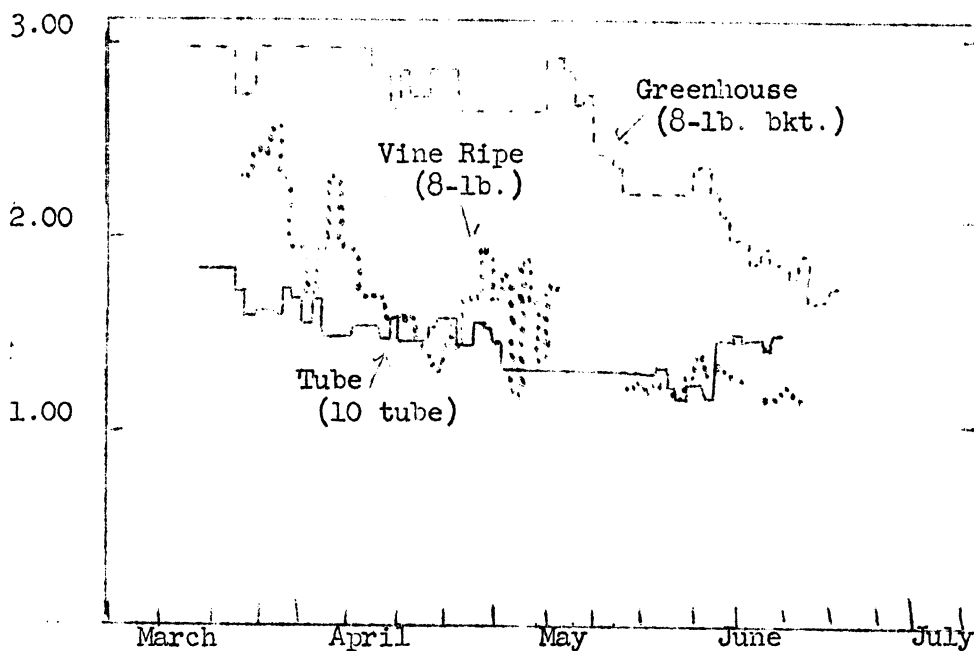


Chart 9: Prices of Fresh Tomatoes on the Cleveland Wholesale Market, March 15 - July 10, 1963

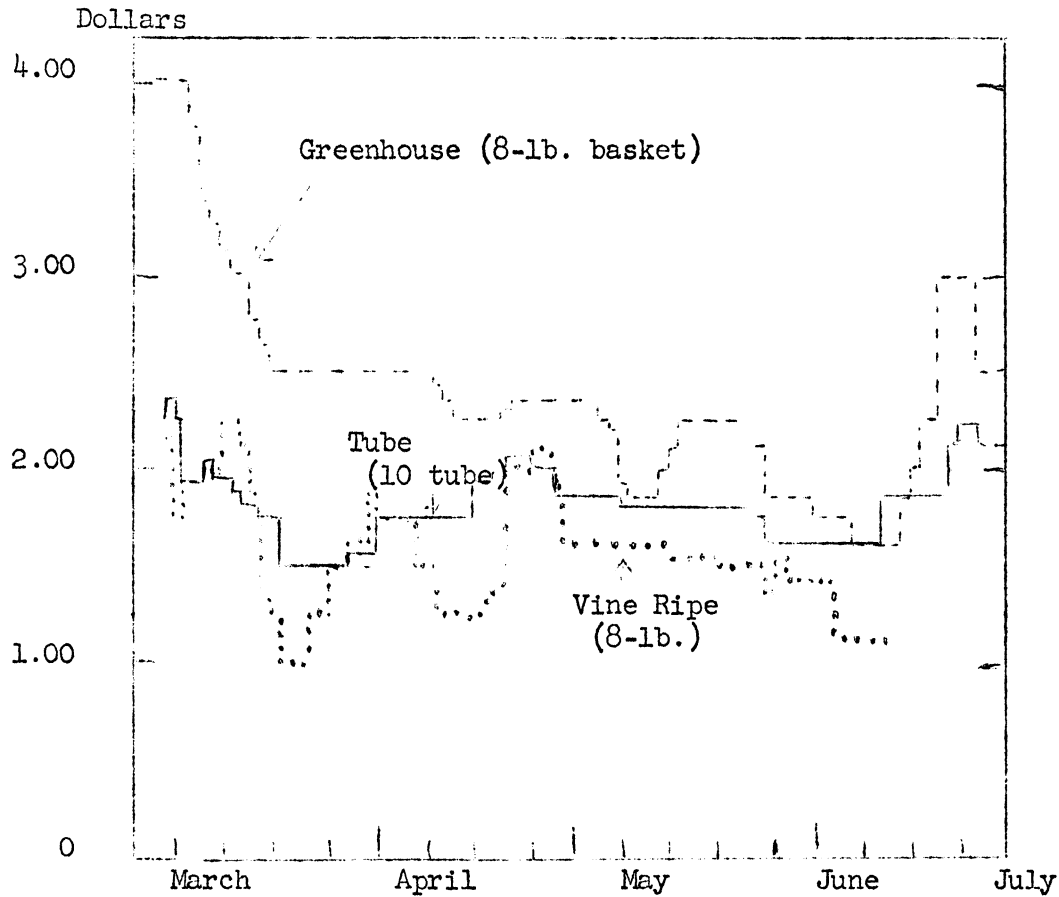
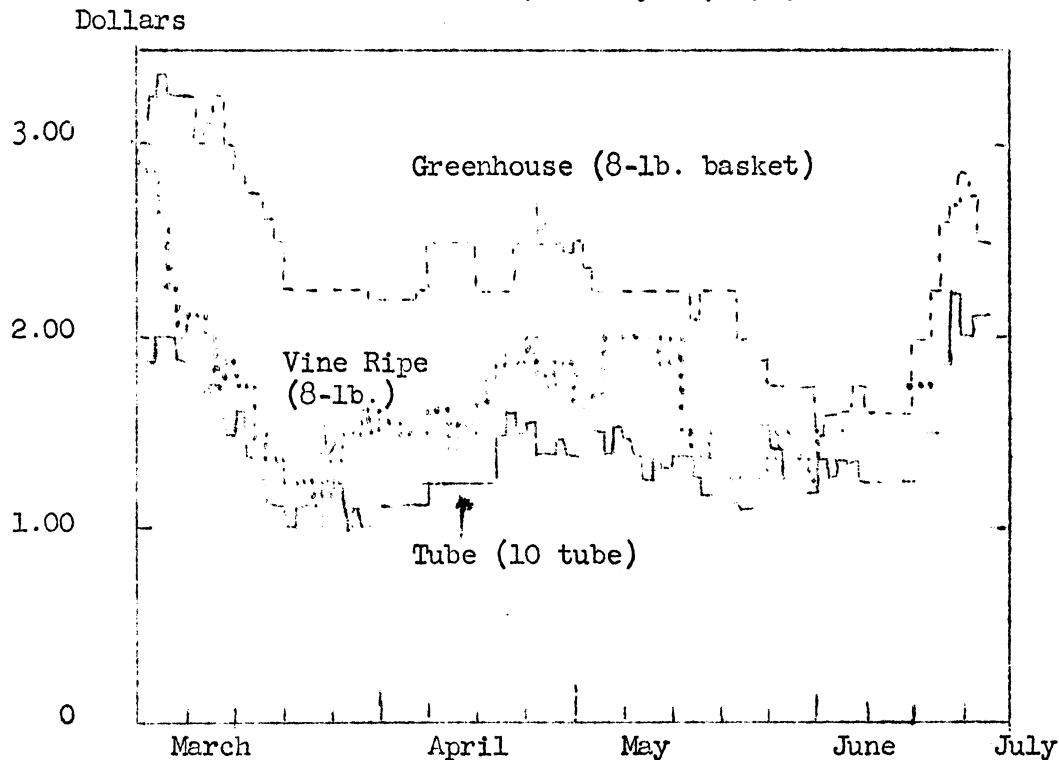


Chart 10: Prices of Fresh Tomatoes on the Cincinnati Wholesale Market, March 15 - July 10, 1963



Summary and Conclusions On 1964 Outlook

Information currently available suggests that the 1964 spring greenhouse tomato crop will face an improved market from last year. The early spring tomato crop in Florida is estimated to be 4 percent below last year and possibly maturing somewhat earlier, too. Harvest as of April 18 was 60 percent complete on acreage planted for winter and spring production. Mexico shipments reached their peak the week of April 11 and will decline sharply after mid-May. Texas acreage is about 15 percent above 1963, which will probably result in higher production. Texas production in 1963 was delayed by bad weather in early spring and resulted in a short season (Chart 4).

Vine-ripe tomatoes from both Florida and Mexico are expected to be nearly all harvested by mid-May. The main competition for greenhouse tomatoes will then come from Florida and Texas mature green (tube) tomatoes through May and June. Other southern states will furnish some tomatoes during June, too. A market glut similar to the one that occurred last June is less likely to occur this year as it appears Florida harvest will be completed slightly earlier than a year ago and result in a more even and orderly flow to market. Texas production is forecast above last year, but may not bring about the same effect as on the June market in 1963.

The market is bound to be competitive for the 1964 spring greenhouse tomato crop. The competing areas seem to be on a more normal schedule this year thus making the conditions somewhat more favorable for the spring greenhouse tomato crop. This does not mean that periods of heavy supplies and lower prices will not occur during the marketing period.

Individual growers and selling organizations should strive to keep abreast of the market situation and attempt to move production in as

orderly and efficient manner possible. Careful harvesting, handling, and packing methods plus adequate refrigeration will help maintain the inherent quality of the greenhouse tomato thereby enhancing its appeal to consumers. Any efforts to educate consumers about identification and use of greenhouse tomatoes with properly placed promotion can go a long way toward increasing consumption and demand for the "queen of tomatoes" -- the greenhouse tomato.