

marketing

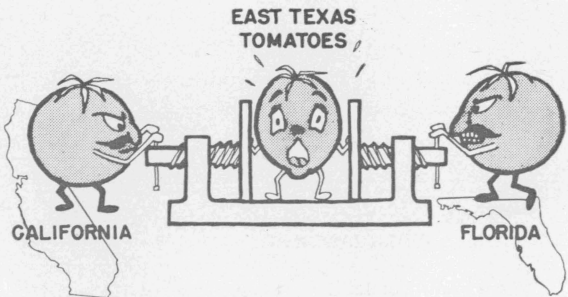
EAST  
TEXAS  
TOMATOES



Pink tomatoes have been grown and marketed successfully by farmers in the Grand Saline area of Van Zandt county for a number of years. Growers and local produce men in other areas of East Texas also are finding it profitable to market pink tomatoes. Production also has been successful in numerous districts throughout the United States and interest in pink tomatoes is increasing. East Texas green-wrap tomato growers may want to consider the potential of pink tomatoes in view of recent industry developments.

Green-wrap tomatoes played an important role in the agricultural economy of East Texas for many years. Farmers often received more than \$4,000,000 from their sales. In 1946 nearly 5,000 cars of tomatoes were shipped from 30,000 acres in the area. Tomato packing sheds also furnished seasonal employment for many local people.

From this peak, the acreage dropped rapidly to less than 5,000 in 1958. A number of factors combined to make the 1958 shipping season the worst in the area's history — only 11 carloads were shipped. The acreage was reduced further in 1959 by more than half and marketing conditions remained unfavorable.

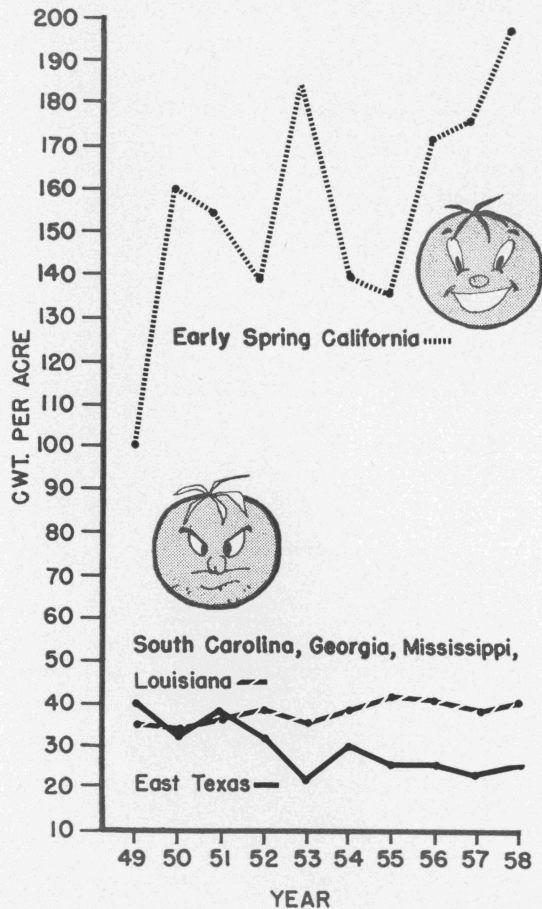


The short shipping season in East Texas is being squeezed by competition from California and Florida.

# MARKETING EAST TEXAS TOMATOES

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East Texas is finding it difficult to compete with many areas in the production and marketing of green-wrap tomatoes.



Trend of tomato yields in East Texas and in competing areas.

Poor harvesting and marketing practices result in high-cost operations, reduce the quality of the product and affect adversely the reputation of East Texas tomatoes.

The following practices can be cited as deficient:

1. Picking tomatoes with too wide a range of maturity
2. Inadequate field grading
3. Poorly adapted and padded field containers
4. Little protection from the sun
5. Inadequate market information
6. Poor buying and grading practices



The outlook for East Texas pink tomatoes is brighter.

East Texas conditions do not lend themselves readily to many recent technological developments in tomato production, packing and marketing because of the small acreage per producer and the short shipping season.

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*Large food-chain demands* for exacting quality, size and volume are not being fulfilled under present East Texas conditions.

*Bad weather* has plagued the East Texas tomato producer for several years. Growers have experienced large losses of planted acreages — up to 40 percent — because of bad weather. Frequent showers during the harvesting season also have made many tomatoes unmarketable.

The already *short shipping season* (about 3 weeks during June) is being squeezed by competitors.

*Tomato yields* in East Texas are lower than in competing areas and are declining, whereas, yields in competing areas are increasing.

Green-wrap tomatoes are not being produced competitively in East Texas at present and the future appears to offer little hope for improvement.

### **Pink Tomato Production and Marketing Factors**

1. Preharvest production costs for green-wrap and pink tomatoes are similar.

2. The yield of pink tomatoes in relation to green-wrap tomatoes may be affected favorably by a weight increase during the maturing process, but affected adversely by weather, growth cracks and other damage. However, East Texas growers are finding that pink tomato yields are sufficient for profitable production.

3. Pink tomatoes have a slightly higher harvesting cost per acre than green-wrap tomatoes.

4. The harvesting season for pink tomatoes is slightly later and a little longer than the picking season for green-wrap tomatoes. The season normally begins about June 10 and lasts a month.

5. The prices paid for pink tomatoes in East Texas have been more stable than the prices paid for green-wrap tomatoes.

6. Pink tomato prices generally are higher than green-wrap prices and retail store tests show a consumer preference for pink tomatoes.

7. Since tomato production in East Texas is typically a family operation, the extra labor required in picking pink tomatoes may be a profitable outlet for family labor that otherwise is not used.

### Market Outlets for Pink Tomatoes

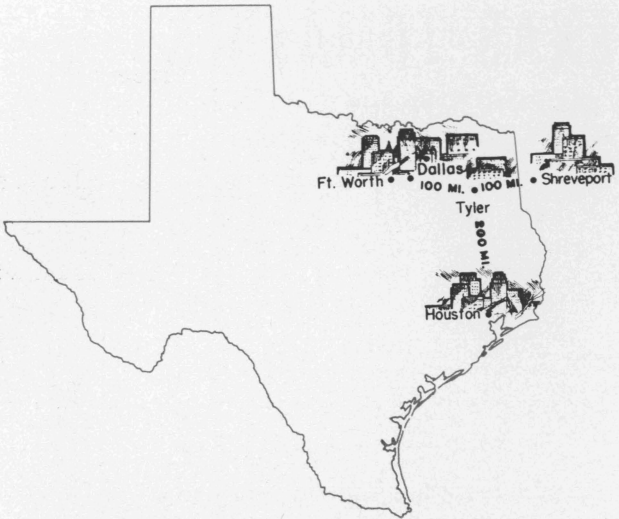
Out-of-state markets provide the biggest market potential. One pink tomato packing shed in East Texas has operated successfully for a number of years by selling most of its tomatoes in the Midwest.

The suburban population around East Texas is growing rapidly and provides an expanding market for pink tomatoes. Most



Out-of-state markets provide the biggest market potential.





The suburban population around East Texas is a growing market.

East Texas grocery stores now feature "home-grown" pink tomatoes, but the amount they can use is limited.

### **Requirements for Successful East Texas Pink Tomato Marketing**

1. Selection of crack-resistant varieties that have eye appeal and keeping qualities.
2. Picking at proper stage of maturity. (See your county agricultural agent for further information.)
3. Close attention to product quality at all stages of production and marketing.
4. Efficient packing operations.
5. Sufficient volume:
  - a. To ship frequently enough to maintain quality
  - b. So that the packing operation can be efficient
  - c. To attract and supply large-scale buyers

6. Available market outlets through established buyers.

7. Adequate markets news information.

### References

MP-288 *"Costs and Returns of Growing and Marketing Pink and Green-wrap Tomatoes, Northeast Sandy Lands Area," Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.*

MP-378 *"Marketing East Texas Fruits and Vegetables," Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.*