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# What Does the Iowa Farmer Want From Radio Market News ?

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**AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION, IOWA STATE COLLEGE**

**RESEARCH BULLETIN 413**

**AUGUST, 1954**

**AMES, IOWA**



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## SUMMARY

Most of the results in this report are based on a personal interview survey of Iowa open-country farmers. Ninety-six percent (178,000) of the operators of Iowa open-country farms sold one or more of Iowa's six top cash farm income products in 1948.

About 92 percent of the open-country zone farm operators listened to day-to-day broadcasts of market reports\* before making their last sales of butcher hogs, cattle, corn, soybeans, cream or whole milk and eggs.

Among farmers who sold hogs for slaughter or feeder purposes in 1948, 52 percent of those who listened to radio hog market reports before their last sale listened to hog market reports at 12 noon to 12:15 p.m. Eighty-four percent of the farmers who sold hogs listened during the noon hour to radio hog market reports. Forty-three percent of the farmers selling hogs listened to hog market news during the middle of the morning. Eighteen percent and 19 percent, respectively, of the hog sellers who listened to hog market reports listened to 9:45 and 10:30 a.m. hog market programs. These figures included a small number who listened to hog market news in both periods. These were the three highest 15-minute listening periods indicated in the survey of Iowa open-country farmers. The pattern of listening was similar for all six commodities in that the highest listening peak was during the noon hour.

Eighty-six percent of the farmers selling *hogs* depended more on their radios than upon any other way for getting hog marketing information. Sixty-three percent of the farmers selling *cattle* rated radio at the top.

By contrast, less than 15 percent of those selling *eggs* or *cream* said radio was the most important source of information in selling eggs or cream.

Radio broadcasts of the complete summary of the market, including top, range and low for all markets, were favored by 68 percent of the farmers who sold one or more of the six products in 1948.

\*The terms "market reports" and "market news" are considered synonymous.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION BY RADIO STATIONS

Presented below are important points of information from the survey and the action each piece of information suggests for radio stations desiring to provide better market news service for farm audiences:

1. Forty-three percent of the farmers selling hogs listened to hog market news during the middle of the morning when the prices at market places were being established. Similar percentages of farmers listened to mid-morning reports on other commodities also. In those areas where farmers cannot get mid-morning market news broadcasts, it is suggested that stations broadcast market news during the mid-morning hours.
2. Farmers paid attention to interior as well as to terminal hog and cattle reports, local and terminal grain reports and local cream and egg reports. It is suggested that radio stations could render better service by reporting those types of markets named which serve farmers in the station coverage areas. Other evidence indicates that farmers also want reports on smaller active livestock markets located near their farms.
3. The above two points suggest action for some low-power stations in areas where farmers cannot get mid-morning price reports on markets located near the station but can get reports on more distant markets. It is suggested that those stations broadcast local market reports before or after the mid-morning broadcasts of other markets by other stations. This information generally may be obtained by radio stations with little additional effort.
4. Farmers wanted more information on the grades which they sold. Since, at any one time, many grades are being sold, it is suggested that stations broadcast reports of prices paid for most of the grades of commodities sold in their coverage area.
5. Few farmers recalled listening to "market reports" on early morning farm programs. Further study is needed before action may be suggested regarding early morning market news. Further study also is desirable before action is suggested on several other important questions concerning market news.



# What Does the Iowa Farmer Want From Radio Market News?<sup>1</sup>

By J. PARRY DODDS and K. R. MARVIN

This is a report prepared from a more complete manuscript for the study entitled "How Do Iowa Farmers Obtain and Use Market News?"<sup>2</sup> The data for this study were gathered in three ways: (1) A survey<sup>3</sup> of the operators of 600 farms located throughout Iowa, in the open country, was made by the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station (in cooperation with the Production and Marketing Administration, USDA). In April and May, 1949, these farmers were interviewed about their marketing of six major farm products and how they obtained market news about prices and supplies of certain products at major markets. The questionnaire used included a number of aspects of farmers' market news gathering and use of market news. (2) Information on market news broadcasting was obtained by mail and personal interview from the 41 AM radio broadcasting stations in Iowa and from 14 out-of-state stations. (3) A review was made of previously published information on market news.

Because much of the information was obtained from a sample of farms and farm operators, most percentages, proportions and averages given in this report are only estimates for the open-country farm portion of the state. However, since the sample was chosen according to the laws of mathematical probability, it is possible to determine approximately how reliable these estimates are. For information about the reliability or precision of totals estimated from the survey data and how close to those estimates the true values<sup>4</sup> can reasonably be assumed to be, the reader is referred to the bulletin, "How Do Iowa Farmers Obtain and Use Market News?" to be published by the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station.

This report summarizes that portion of the data from the survey which applies to radio as a market news medium. It is hoped that this in-

formation will help those who broadcast market news to farmers and those who prepare market news reports or rewrite them for broadcasting. A companion report has been published giving similar information concerning newspapers.

Iowa has a unique market news arrangement in that it is the only state having daily, year-around hog and lamb market reports covering the packing plants and concentration yards over so large an area. Most Iowa farmers get a part of their living by selling hogs. Hogs alone accounted for 40 percent of Iowa's \$2,121,172,000 cash farm income in 1948.<sup>5</sup> From the standpoint of radio service, every Iowa farmer may choose any of several radio stations broadcasting many different types of market news programs. Nearly 100 percent of Iowa farmers have radios so that they may hear these programs and decide, first, whether to use radio market news and, second, what particular broadcaster's service to use.

## FACILITIES FOR BROADCASTING MARKET NEWS TO IOWA FARMERS

### WHAT SERVICE WAS OFFERED?

Farmers interviewed in the survey said they listened to 25 of Iowa's 41 AM stations for market news. Ten stations which did not broadcast market news, and six which did broadcast market news were not mentioned by any of the farmers interviewed. Farmers also named 14 AM stations located outside Iowa. Five of these were in Illinois, three in Minnesota, and two each in South Dakota, Nebraska and Missouri.

There was considerable difference from station to station in the amount of broadcast time devoted to market news reports.<sup>6</sup> Daily time spent reporting market news was as high as 104 minutes on the state-owned station, WOI, at Ames, 47 minutes on the privately-owned station with the highest total and as low as 4 minutes on another station. On the average, 21 minutes per day were devoted to market news broadcasts among the 39 stations farmers mentioned.

The Production and Marketing Administration

<sup>1</sup>Project 1031, Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa. Data were collected under a contract with the United States Department of Agriculture (under authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946). This report and statements herein are the responsibility of the authors.

<sup>2</sup>Project 1031, Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa, under contract with the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. This work was done under the general supervision of the Marketing and Facilities Research Branch, Production and Marketing Administration. Research and Marketing Act Project RM:C-55, "Improving the Effectiveness of the Wholesale Market News Service."

<sup>3</sup>More information on how the survey was made is given in Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup>By true values we mean the values which would be obtained if the operators of all farms in the open-country portion of Iowa had been interviewed—rather than just the operators of the sample of 600 farms.

<sup>5</sup>Official revised estimates of the USDA Bureau of Agricultural Economics for 1948 published in Farm Income Situation, June 1950.

<sup>6</sup>Radio market report broadcasting information obtained for April-May, 1949, by mail and personal interview with all Iowa AM stations and those out-of-state stations mentioned by farmers interviewed.



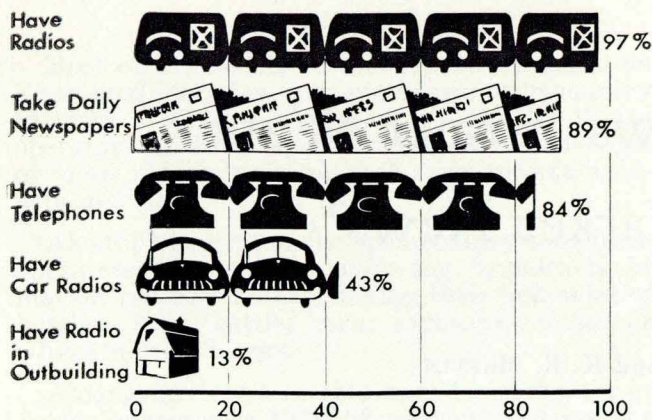


Fig. 1. The ways farmers could get market news at their farms. (Percent who had direct access to each medium of communication.)

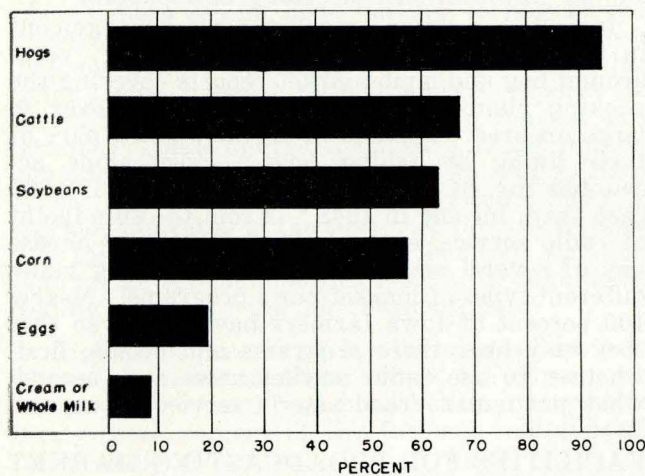


Fig. 2. Radio listening according to product. (Percent of farmers selling each product.)

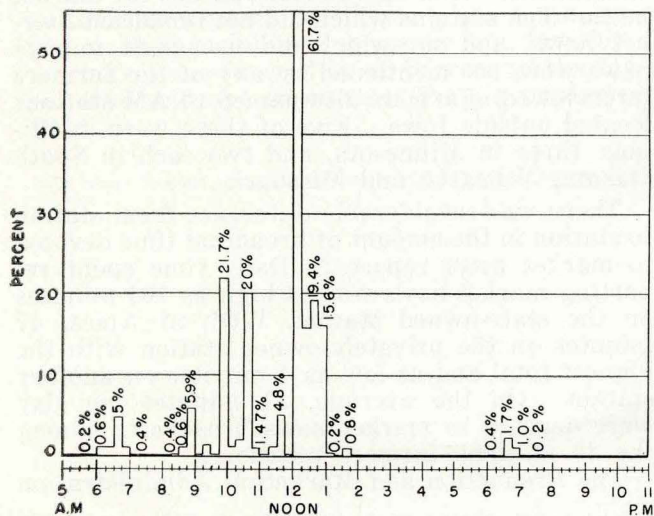


Fig. 3. When farmers listened to radio hog market news. Each bar represents the percent listening at any time during each 15-minute period. (Percent of 475 farmers selling hogs who listened to any hog market news before last butcher hog sale.)

conducted an annual survey of radio stations to discover how many carry market news reports on their daily programs. Information in table 1 is taken from the "PMA Directory of Market News Broadcasts" for each year.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF STATIONS BROADCASTING MARKET NEWS IN THE UNITED STATES BY YEAR

Year	No. stations in United States	No. stations broadcasting market news	Percent of all stations
1945	928	424	45.7
1946	961	489	50.9
1947	1,043	744	71.3
1948	1,732	1,079	62.2
1949	1,944	1,137	58.5

In Iowa, 76 percent of the AM stations reported that they were broadcasting some market news daily in 1949.<sup>8</sup>

#### WHAT RECEIVING EQUIPMENT WAS THERE ON IOWA FARMS?

The survey of 600 Iowa farmers indicated that the households of about 97 percent of Iowa's estimated 186,913 open-country zone farm operators had radios in working order on Jan. 1, 1949 (fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> Forty-three percent had radios in their cars. Thirteen percent reported having radios in barns and other outbuildings.

Farmers also had other ways of getting market news. Eighty-four percent had telephones which they could use for talking to prospective buyers about the market situation.<sup>10</sup> Eighty-nine percent took daily newspapers in which there are usually reports of certain important markets.<sup>11</sup>

#### HOW MANY IOWA FARMERS LISTENED TO RADIO MARKET NEWS?

Among the estimated 178,000 open-country farm operators who marketed any of Iowa's top six products in 1948, 92 percent listened to market reports from day to day before their most recent sale of at least one of those products.<sup>12</sup> The farmers selling hogs listened to radio market reports most. Ninety-four percent of that group listened to hog market reports before their last butcher hog sale (fig. 2). By comparison, only 8 percent of the equally large group of farmers who sold cream or whole milk listened to cream market reports in the month before the survey. In fig. 2, the bars represent the percent of farmers selling each product in 1948 who listened to day-to-day radio market news reports for those products before making their last sale or during the previous month, for cream or milk and eggs. (See Appendix A for uses made of market reports by buyers of farm products.)

<sup>8</sup>U. S. Production and Marketing Administration, Directory of market news broadcasts, Washington, D. C., May-June, 1945-49.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>1945 Census of agriculture, Vol. II, p. 306, shows that 72.8 percent of the farms in the United States had radios in farm dwellings that year.

<sup>11</sup>1945 Census of agriculture, Vol. II, p. 306, shows that 31.8 percent of all farms in the United States had telephones in farm dwellings that year.

<sup>12</sup>Although twice-monthly and monthly farm papers and magazines do not report day-to-day market news, they are a source of a long-range type of marketing information. Ninety-four percent of the farmers interviewed received one or more of these publications regularly.

<sup>13</sup>See Appendix C for more details about last sale.



## WHEN DID IOWA FARMERS LISTEN TO RADIO MARKET NEWS?

### TIME OF DAY

The time pattern for broadcasting and listening to market news for the other five top cash-farm-income products was much the same as that for hog market news. The uniformity of this pattern is largely due to the practice of covering several commodities in one broadcasting period.<sup>13</sup>

Farmers selling hogs in 1948 who said they listened to day-to-day hog market reports on the radio were asked what times they listened to hog market news on each station. Eighty-four percent of the farmers selling hogs mentioned hog market reports broadcast during the noon hour. The greatest number listening during any 15-minute period listened to hog market reports between 12 noon and 12:15 p.m. (fig. 3).

Forty-three percent of the farmer hog-sellers recalled listening to one or more daily hog market news broadcasts between 8:34 and 11 a.m., inclusive, before their last butcher hog sales. A complete review<sup>14</sup> of the programs to which farmers listened has shown that, in 1948 and 1949, the 8:34 to 10 a.m. broadcasts reported the prices paid for hogs soon after trading began on the terminal and interior markets. Market reports after 10 a.m. usually covered the prices that had become established for the remainder of the day. Market news on noon farm programs was found to be much the same as that available to farmers on morning programs after 10 a.m. The high-

est percentages of farmers listening to mid-morning hog market reports listened at 9:45 and 10:30 a.m.

It is believed that a strong interest in getting hog prices as soon as they are available is indicated by the percentages of farmer hog-sellers who listened to market news at various times between 9:45 and 11 a.m. Hog buyers, such as independent buyers, packer buyers and small trucker buyers, made up another group known to listen to these mid-morning radio market reports.<sup>15</sup>

Only a few farmers mentioned listening to "market news" presented in the early morning. The typical farm programs from 6 to 7 a.m. had little current market information. They were made up of farm organization and meeting news, national and state farm news, music and commercials plus a review of the previous day's markets and early estimated livestock receipts expected at major terminal markets. In the evening, a brief mention of the day's top prices was often included on the general news broadcast.

As shown by their service, broadcasters generally believe that the two best times for reaching farm audiences by radio are at noon and during the early morning hours from 6 to 7:30 a.m. Figure 4 shows that the highest percentages of stations were broadcasting programs containing some market news at those hours in 1948 and 1949.

Only a small percent of the farmers selling hogs

<sup>15</sup>R. C. Bentley, WOI market editor, Ames, Iowa, in conversation of October 1948. Bentley also said that an increasing percentage of correspondence to the WOI market news room commenting on the use made of market reports, both from farmers and hog buyers, is to the effect that they would like earlier reports of the opening prices.

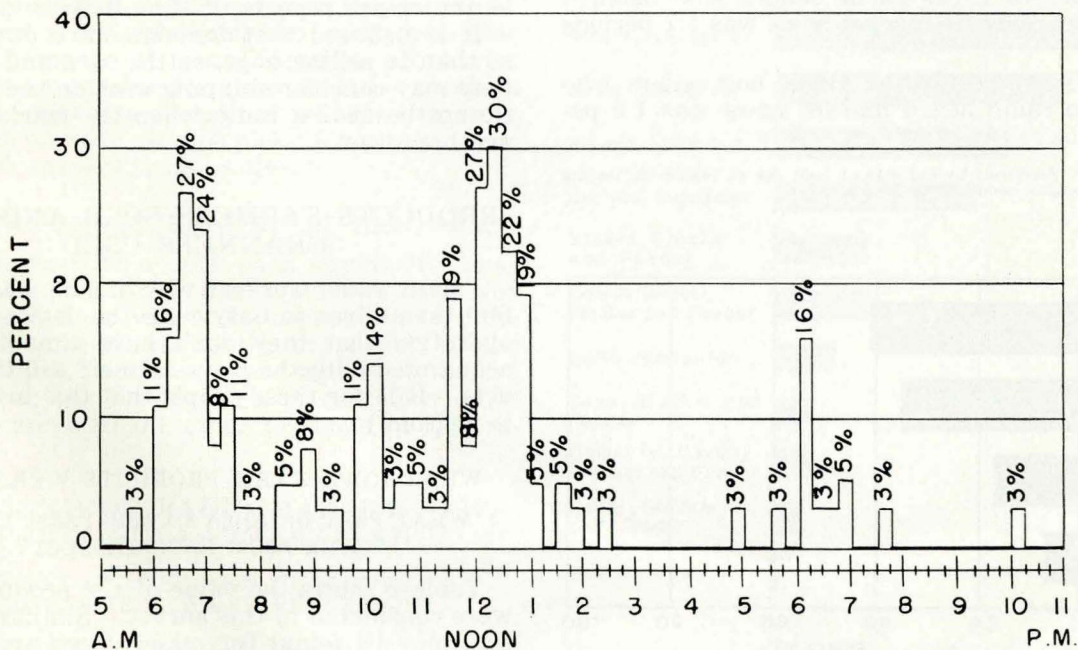


Fig. 4. When stations broadcast hog market news. Each bar represents the percent of stations broadcasting, by 15-minute periods. (Percent of all stations mentioned by farmers as source of hog market news.)



identified the early morning farm programs as market news programs when asked which station they listened to most at hog marketing time. ("At what times of day did you listen for hog market news on this station?") and for other stations they used ("What times did you listen to these?") (fig. 3). This small percentage is not believed to indicate that farmers didn't listen to early morning farm programs. Rather, it probably indicates that farmers didn't identify the information they heard on those programs as market reports. This may be because the small amount of market news broadcast at those hours has generally been a review of the previous day's trading, since the current trading did not get under way until after 8 a.m. The only current information available at this early hour was the advance estimate mentioned above.

Further study is needed that would go into several questions raised in this study. This would include study of why farmers did not mention market news broadcast on the early morning farm programs.

#### FREQUENCY OF LISTENING

Figure 5 shows that 41 percent of the farmer-marketers<sup>16</sup> listening to radio market news as they prepared to sell any of six commodities heard two reports daily. A total of 24 percent listened regularly three or more times a day for markets on some of these products.

Among the farmers selling cattle for slaughter or feeder purposes in 1948 and listening to radio cattle market news before their last sale, 47 percent listened to cattle market news but once each day. The remaining 53 percent listened regularly from two to five times per day. The average number of times cattle sellers who listened to radio heard cattle market news was 1.7 periods per day.

The average number of times hog sellers who listened to radio heard market news was 1.9 periods per day.

<sup>16</sup>Open-country farmers who had sold at least one of Iowa's six leading cash farm income commodities in 1948.

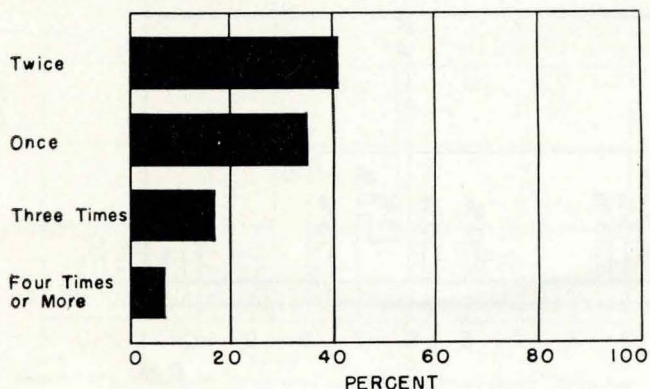


Fig. 5. Number of times a day that farmers listened to market news. (Percent of farmer-marketers who used radio for market news.)

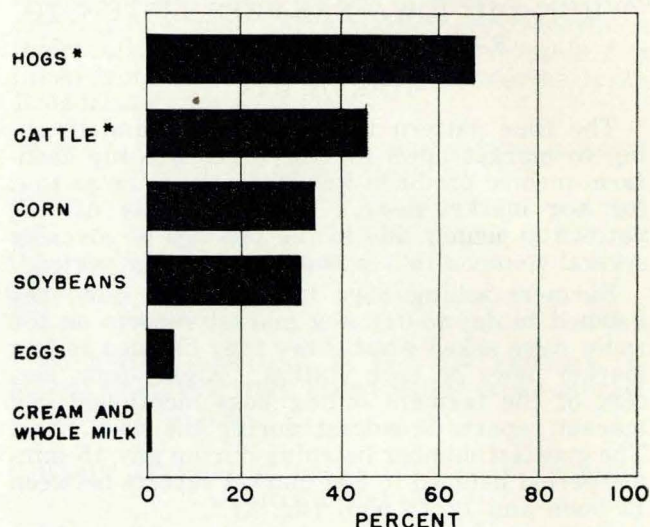


Fig. 6. Commodity market report for which farmers had someone else listen. (Percent of farmers selling each commodity in 1948.)  
\*For slaughter or feeder purposes.

Farmers selling corn who listened to radio corn market news listened 1.7 times per day on the average. Cream and whole milk sellers listened 1.2 times per day to cream market news.

This indicates that large numbers of farmers want market news more than once each day.

#### WHO LISTENED?

Figure 6 shows that, among farmers selling hogs, 67 percent had someone else listen to hog market reports when the farmers themselves could not listen. In contrast, only 1 percent of cream and milk sellers reported having anyone else listen when they themselves could not listen to the cream reports.

It is believed that farmers have others listen so that, in selling hogs, cattle, corn and soybeans, they may consider shipping even on the days they cannot be near a radio when the market reports are broadcast.

#### PRODUCTS FARMERS SOLD AND SALES CHANNELS USED

(Many radio workers who handle market news find themselves so busy with the detail of station operation that they don't have time to become acquainted with the ways farmers sell their products. It is for these people that this brief review is written.)

#### WHAT IOWA FARM PRODUCTS WERE SOLD?

#### WHAT PART OF IOWA'S CASH FARM INCOME CAME FROM EACH PRODUCT?

Table 2 shows the value of the products which were considered in this survey. Similar information may be found for other states by commodities in the USDA publication, "Agricultural Statistics," for the current year.



**WHAT WEIGHT CLASSES OF HOGS WERE SOLD?**

Eighty-three percent of the open-country farmers sold hogs for slaughter or feeder purposes in 1948. Figure 7 shows that the animals sold in farmers' last butcher-hog sales represented a wide range of weight classes. Farmers marketed the greatest numbers in the classes between 220 and 269 pounds. However, some farmers sold hogs below 200 pounds and over 400 pounds in weight.

**WHAT KINDS OF CATTLE DID FARMERS SELL?**

Two-thirds of the farmers sold some cattle for slaughter or feeder purposes in 1948. Those farmers sold several different kinds of cattle. Figure 8 shows the relative numbers of sales in this survey in each of the 11 market news classes of the United States Department of Agriculture Market News Service. This figure applies only to the last sale before the interview. Although the highest number of sales was of slaughter steers, they made up only 31 percent of all sales. Since farmers could sell more than one kind of cattle in their last sale, the percentages totaled more than 100.

**WERE EGGS SOLD ON THE BASIS OF GRADES?**

Seventy-two percent of the farmers sold eggs in 1948. Thirty-eight percent of the farmers who sold eggs sold them on a grade basis. Those grades were based either on weight per dozen or weight and interior quality as determined by candling each egg.

**SALES CHANNELS**

Farmers may sell their products to several alternative kinds of outlets or sales channels. Figure 9 shows how the commodities included in this survey started on their way to the consumer. Most of these sales channels are easily available to large numbers of Iowa farmers. However, farm pick-up service for eggs and the markets for whole milk are restricted to those farmers located on or near an egg pick-up route or near whole-milk market truck routes.

**WERE PRICES AGREED UPON AT THE FARM?**

Each farmer who sold each commodity was asked, "Was the price for a given weight (or grade) agreed on before the commodity left the farm?" Figure 10 shows the proportion of the sales in which the prices were agreed on before commodities left the farmer's place. Corn, hogs and soybeans lead the other products in this respect.

**WHAT KIND OF RADIO MARKET NEWS REPORTS DID FARMERS WANT?**

**WHAT GRADES AND QUALITIES DID FARMERS WANT REPORTED?**

There are three recognized types of radio market reports: (1) the top price for the day on a single market or the top market, (2) price range

**TABLE 2. PROPORTION OF IOWA CASH FARM INCOME OBTAINED FROM MAJOR FARM PRODUCTS, 1948\***

Product	Cash farm income in thousands of dollars	Percent of total cash farm income
Hogs and pigs	850,580	40
Cattle and calves	492,004	23
Corn	164,792	8
Eggs	132,600	6
Dairy products (including farm butter)	181,490	9
Soybeans	82,747	4
All others†	216,959	10
Total cash income	2,121,172	100

\*From Farm Income Situation, June 1950.  
†Oats, wheat, hay, other crops, other livestock and livestock products, and government payments make up this class.

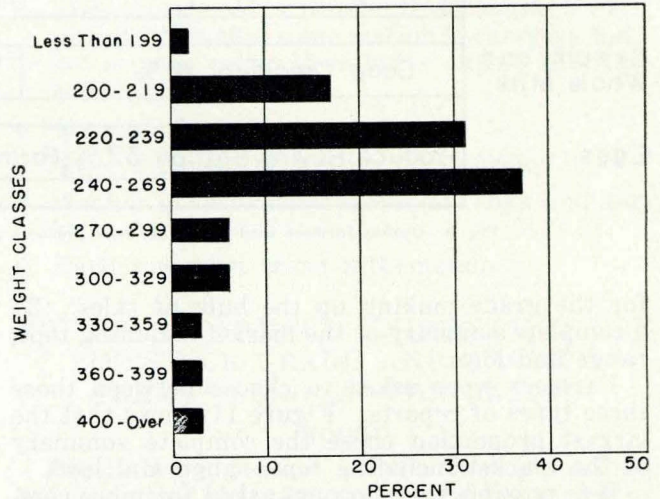


Fig. 7. Weight classes of butcher hogs reported in last sale. (Percent of lots sold.)

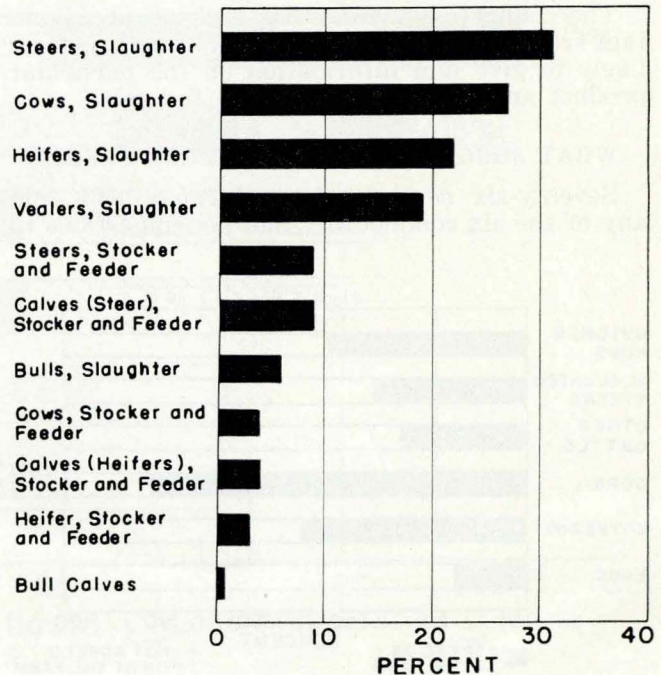


Fig. 8. Kinds of cattle sold in last sale. (Percent of all lots which were sold at last sale.)



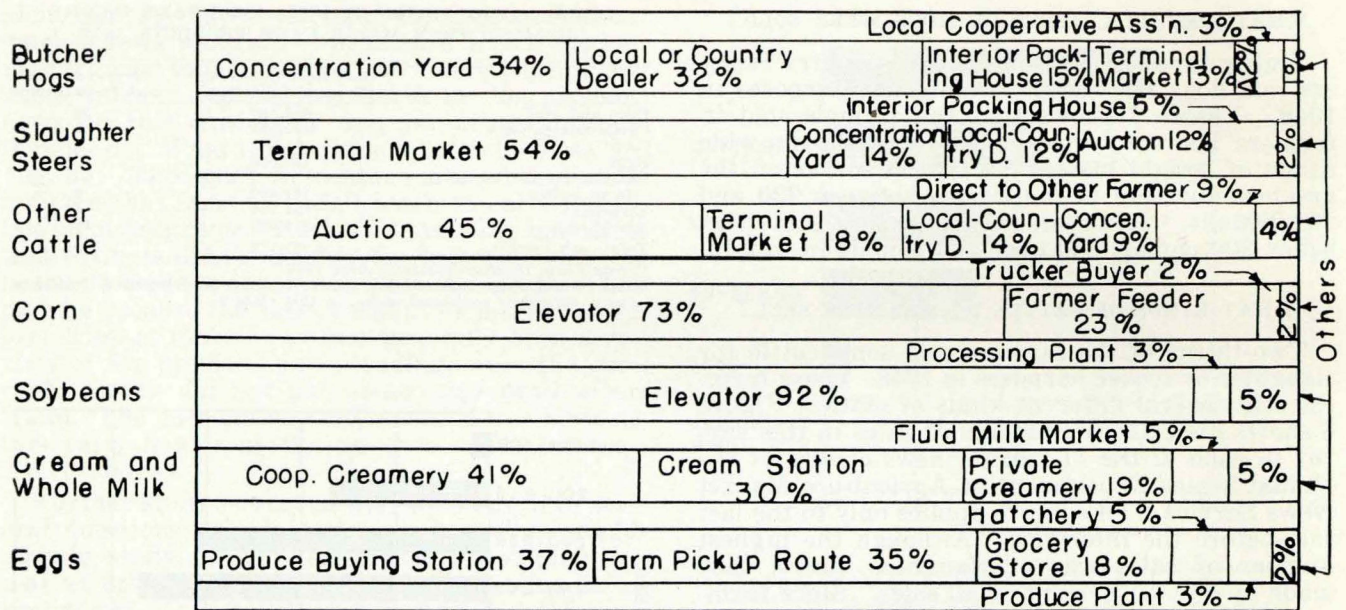


Fig. 9. Outlets farmers used in selling their products at last sale. (Percent of farmers selling each product.)

for the grade making up the bulk of sales, (3) a complete summary of the market including tops, range and lows.

Farmers were asked to choose between those three types of reports. Figure 11 shows that the largest proportion chose the complete summary of the market including tops, range and lows.

It is possible that farmers asked for more complete market news reports than they would be willing to hear. However, the numbers who listened to mid-morning reports, which are fairly long and complete, indicate that the complete summary was wanted by farmers.

The complete summary has a clear-cut advantage from the farmer's viewpoint in that it is most likely to give him information on the particular product and grade which he has for sale.

#### WHAT SUGGESTIONS DID FARMERS OFFER?

Seventy-six percent of the farmers who sold any of the six commodities had no suggestions to

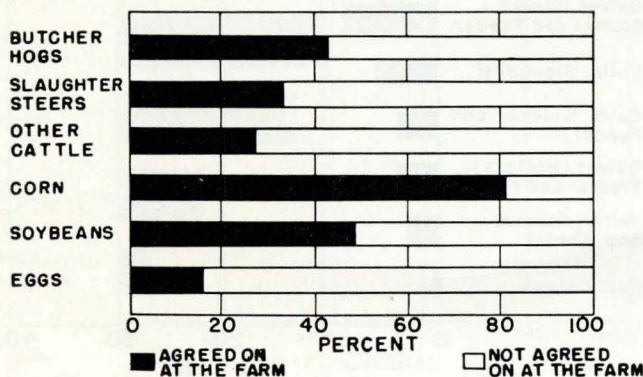


Fig. 10. Sales that were based on prices agreed on before product left farm. (Percent of last sales reported for each commodity.)

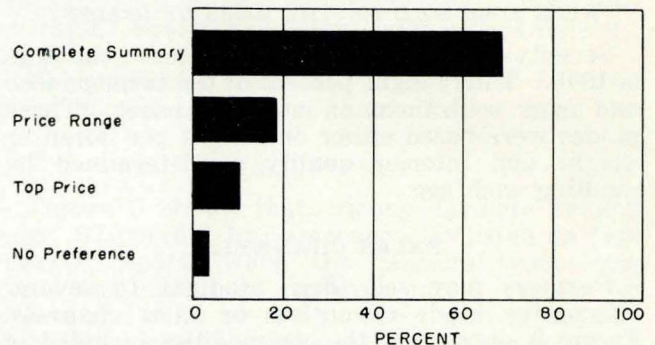


Fig. 11. Kind of market news reports farmers preferred. (Percent of all farmers who sold any of six products in 1948.)

offer when asked, "In what way would you like to change market news reports as they are on the radio or in print?"

Following are some of the suggestions given as to content changes:

1. More summary type programs.
2. Give price on average and low quality sales. Most of us sell at these prices. Less emphasis on high prices.
3. More detail on cattle market.
4. Give today's prices and note changes from previous day.
5. Add stock of meat on hand and prices.
6. Add a soybean market report.
7. Add turkey reports in the fall.
8. Want local market reports.
9. More information on nearby cream and egg prices.



WHAT MARKET POINTS DID FARMERS PAY ATTENTION TO FOR MARKET NEWS?

To determine what markets farmers wanted to have reported, they were asked, "On each of the following commodities you sold last year, what market place did you pay closest attention to on the radio and in newspapers?" and "What other market points did you check in this manner?" Figure 12 shows the kinds of markets farmers mentioned in answer to the questions.

Since it was possible for farmers to name more than one market point, the total percentage exceeds 100 in most cases. For instance, among farmers who sold hogs, the average number of markets mentioned was 1.5. Therefore, the total percentage of markets named was 150 percent of the number of farmers who answered the question.

Farmers' interests in the various markets available to them changed as they considered the sale of each different product. Both the central and interior markets were considered important by hog farmers. For the selling of cream and eggs, the central market had little value to the seller. There was a large group among those selling cream and eggs who did not consider any market information. This condition is due partially to the small amount of cream and egg market information available and also to the necessity for selling these products regularly to a single outlet which provides a pick-up service.

WHEN DID IOWA FARMERS WANT TO HEAR MARKET NEWS?

Figure 4 shows the times farmers listened to radio hog market news. It may be true that

those were the times farmers wanted to hear their market news for all products. But the times that market news reports are broadcast influence farmers' listening habits also. When the farmers who sold any of the six products were asked about changes they would like in news, 6 percent offered preferences as to time:

1. Earlier market reports.
2. Markets at a better time for listening.
3. Complete markets (summary) at 11:30 a.m. to 1:29 p.m.
4. Complete markets (summary) at 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
5. Stations should schedule their market news programs so that some station is carrying market reports every 15 minutes during the marketing day.
6. More market reports.
7. More complete programs on Saturday.
8. Weekly government reports on hogs and turkeys.
9. Earlier market trend information.

DID IOWA FARMERS UNDERSTAND THE LIVESTOCK GRADE AND QUALITY TERMS<sup>17</sup> USED ON THE RADIO?

HOGS

Eighty-three percent of the farmers selling hogs indicated that they understood the grades of

<sup>17</sup>U. S. Production and Marketing Administration, Terms used in livestock market news, USDA, Washington 25, D. C. This publication, which has been released since the time of the survey, would be helpful to radio market news broadcasters.

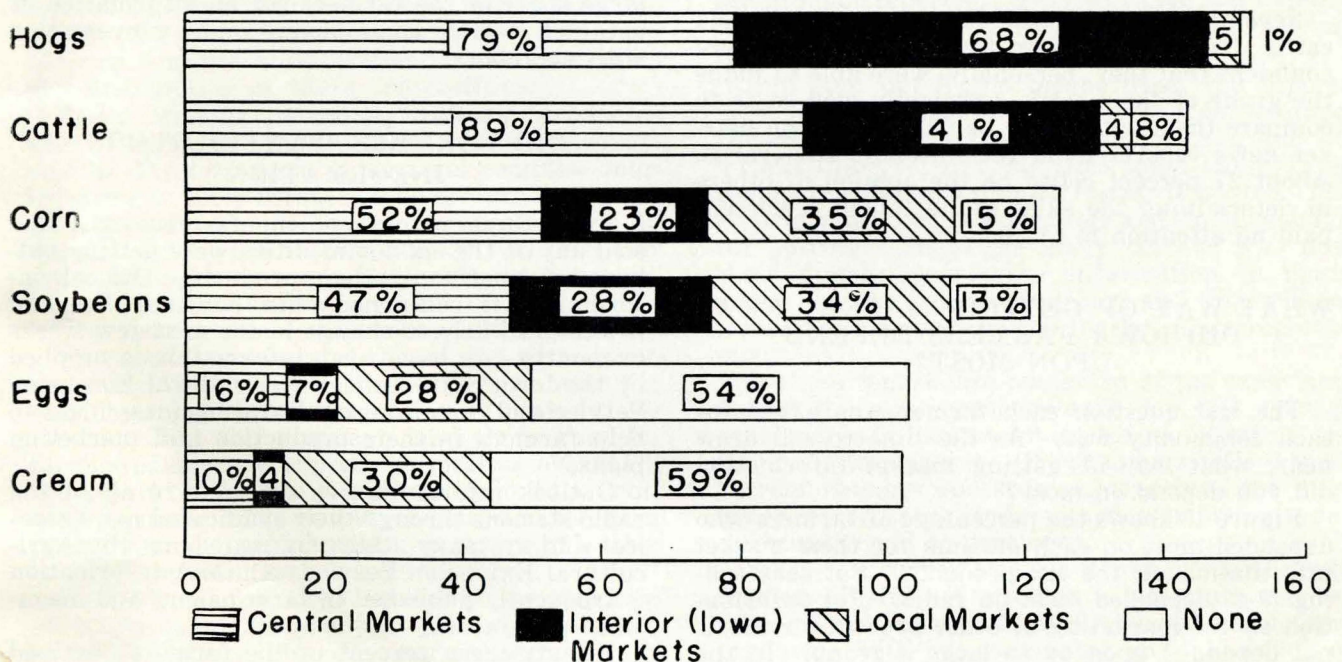


Fig. 12. Market points that farmers watched for market news as they prepared to sell their commodities. (Percent of farmers selling each commodity in 1948.)



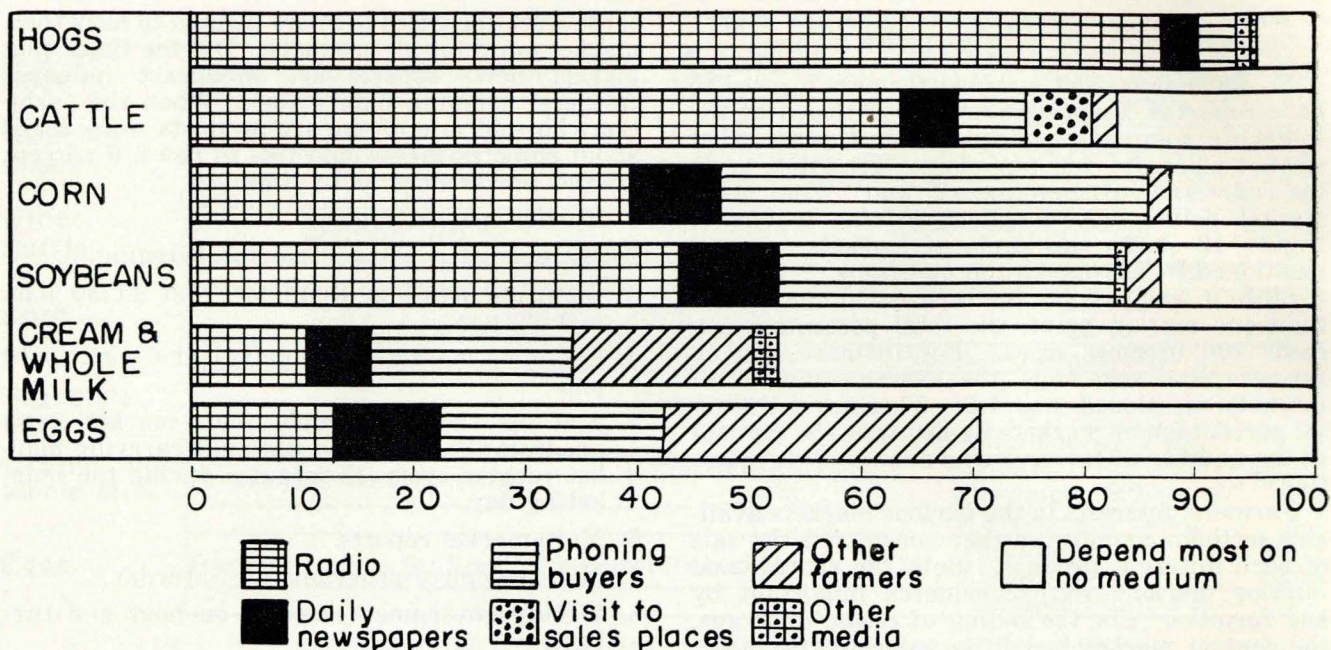


Fig. 13. Ways of getting market information depended on most. (Percent of farmers who had sold any of a commodity in 1948.)

hogs as reported in the market news. In other words, 83 percent believed they could use the market news reports to determine what price their salable hogs would bring on the various markets on the day they heard the broadcasts.

Fifteen percent said that they relied on the opinion of others to determine what the grade of their hogs might be. Two percent said they paid no attention to grade.

#### CATTLE

Seventy percent of the farmers who had sold cattle (for slaughter or feeding) in 1948 were confident that they, personally, were able to judge the grade of their cattle sufficiently well so as to compare them with cattle being reported on market news reports from the different stockyards. About 27 percent relied on the opinion of others in determining the sales grade; about 3 percent paid no attention to grade.

#### WHAT WAY OF GETTING MARKET NEWS DID IOWA FARMERS DEPEND UPON MOST?

The last question each farmer was asked for each commodity was, "As the time to sell drew near, what way of getting market information did you depend on most?"

Figure 13 shows the percentage of farmers who depended most on each medium for their market information on the six products. Farmers selling hogs depended most on radio. For information on the marketing of other products, radio is not depended upon by so large a group. In the grain market, for instance, there is only a minimum of radio reporting of cash transactions

from day to day, and these are for the large terminal markets. Here, because few stations broadcast grain quotations on nearby points, farmers depended for market news upon the grain elevators, traders and, in some cases, government representatives who stand ready to buy or loan on the grain. The farmer seeking local grain prices had to get them by phone or in person to supplement the terminal reports available via radio and newspaper.

In cream or whole-milk and egg marketing, a large share of the farmers got no information or obtained it from their buyers or by conversation with neighbors.

#### DID FARMERS WANT OUTLOOK INFORMATION?

Forty-three percent of the farmers who had sold any of the six commodities were getting outlook information on their products. Outlook information is concerned with how supplies and prices are likely to change in the next few weeks or months. In Iowa, such information is supplied by the Iowa State College Agricultural Extension Service and certain agricultural business firms to help farmers in their production and marketing plans.

Outlook information is available to all of the radio stations through their syndicated news services and, in many states, by mail from the Agricultural Extension Service. Outlook information is frequently published in farm papers and magazines and in daily newspapers.

Twenty-three percent of the farmers obtained outlook information from the twice-monthly farm papers they read. Twelve percent used monthly



farm magazines. Radio was credited by 6 percent as a source of outlook information. Twenty-nine percent named but one source of outlook information, and 14 percent of the farmers named two or more sources of outlook information.

Among all farmers questioned, 75 percent said they wanted to get some outlook information or wanted more of it.

Farmers who wanted some or more outlook information were asked how often they would want to read outlook material and at what hour they'd like to hear it on the radio. Sixty percent of these farmers wanted to read outlook information weekly, and 20 percent asked for it daily. This tends to show that farmers wished to be kept up to date on the changes that might be expected in their markets.

Practically all of the farmers who wanted outlook information wanted to hear it on their radios at noon. This again indicates the strong farm listenership which radio has enjoyed at noon.

## APPENDIX A

### MARKET NEWS AS A DOLLARS-AND-CENTS SERVICE PROGRAM

By R. C. BENTLEY

WOI Market Editor, Iowa State College

A market news report to be of maximum value "dollar-wise" to both the producer and the handler of farm products must be timely, complete and understandable. A much more stable and equitable market for the product is maintained if sellers and buyers have complete information on the supply of and the demand for farm products as soon as such information is available. The more completely informed both the buyers and sellers of a given farm commodity are, the lower the cost and the more efficient is the marketing and distribution of those commodities.

Radio stations in the agricultural producing areas should set aside definite periods throughout the day to present timely and complete market news to their listeners who are producers and handlers of farm products. A schedule can be worked out to the satisfaction of both the program and sales departments to show dollars-and-cents returns on such a service.

The sponsor may not be sold solely on the basis of fan mail from users of the market news information. At the outset, there may be more fan mail objecting to the reports than in praise of the reports. But the producers and those handling farm products will express themselves eventually in support of both the public service and the sponsors' products. The people who buy and sell farm products know the financial importance of a timely and complete market news service.

A *timely* market news service is one which reports the supply picture just as early as the figures are released by the market news service assembling the information. Whether it be 6:30 in the morning, when the first estimates are made

available, or whether it be at 8:30 in the morning, when the complete supply summary of the 12 public market totals is made available, these figures should be broadcast. The supply information is very important to the first handlers; it gives them an opportunity to size up the daily supply before the market opens throughout the industry. They also use this information to interpret the supply and demand picture for farmers in their area.

The second factor in the timeliness picture is the expression of demand through reports of prices paid for the available supply. As soon as sufficient purchases have been made to indicate the tone of the market and these prices are released by the market news service, they should be reported. The sooner they are broadcast after being released, the better, for this gives the sellers and buyers a firm basis on which to conduct their business as the day progresses. If changes in the demand occur as the day advances, these changes must be reported to the buyers and sellers so they can keep abreast of the market in the making.

A *complete* market news service is one which presents to the producer and handler of farm products the supply and demand factors for each of their alternative outlets. If the area served by a local radio station has several alternative outlets, such as one or more terminal markets as well as one or more interior packers and one or more buyers in the town where the station is located, then the market reports should cover these possibilities. The latter type of information—not available on the news service teletypes—may be obtained inexpensively by local station personnel. The report should cover the range of quotation on the various classes and weights of the product reported. This will give the listener the basis for deciding where, when and in what form to market his products.

And last, but by no means least, the reports must be presented in an *understandable* manner. Unless the listener is able to understand and interpret these reports, his time spent listening as well as the station's time on the air is wasted. The reports must be read accurately and slowly enough for posting. There are many persons who post these figures, furnishing information to many others during a marketing day, and this will increase the efficiency of the market news reporter many-fold.

If these reports are presented at the same time and in the same sequence each day, the average consumer will become interested in following the trends of the market. If consumers follow these current changes and seasonal trends in the market, a much more understanding public in your community will be developed.

Since this survey was concerned primarily with farmers, it did not attempt to ascertain the use made of market reports by first handlers of farm products. WOI has convincing proof, however, of the importance of its reports to first handlers of farm products. When WOI misses the morning



reports because of power failure, it can expect a flood of telephone calls from buyers of farm commodities. Many of them depend on the station for daily information by which they set their prices.

The detailed survey figures bring out the need of a timely and complete market news report. Study of the timing involved should help the broadcaster prepare a program which will meet the requirements of both the programming and sales departments.

## APPENDIX B

### HOW RADIO STATIONS MAY GET MARKET NEWS FOR BROADCAST

(A Short Bibliography)

Refer to:

- (1) Periodic Market Reports of the Agricultural Marketing Service, Washington 25, D. C., for a list of all federal Market News Services available, including a list of publications.
- (2) USDA Market News Service in the Midwest, USDA, 623 South Wabash, Chicago 5, Ill., for a directory of all midwest federal and federal-state market news reports including time available.
- (3) Agricultural Marketing Service. The market news services of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, D. C. 1949.
- (4) Agricultural Marketing Service. The market news service publications entitled:
  - (a) Fruits and vegetables, January 1948
  - (b) Dairy and poultry products, June 1948
  - (c) Grain, hay, feed and related commodities, January 1949(Each of these publications carries a history of operations in the commodities indicated in the title.) (1), (3) and (4) above may be obtained by writing:

Agricultural Marketing Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Washington 25, D. C.
- (5) Your nearby federal or federal-state Market News office which issues reports frequently during the day. These can be obtained by arrangement with the reporter in charge.
- (6) Your nearby farm products buyers, commission firms and exchanges which will issue paying prices frequently during the day. Arrangements may be made with such buyers and exchanges for broadcasting those prices.
- (7) The UP, AP and INS wire services which carry frequent releases from some of the above sources.

## APPENDIX C

### HOW SURVEY WAS MADE

In this survey, the farmers who were interviewed in April and May 1949 were those who operated "census" farms in Iowa open country.<sup>1</sup> Census farms were those 3 acres or more in size, or those under 3 acres which produced agricultural products valued at \$250 or more in 1948. Excluded from the survey were operators of farms with headquarters within the boundaries of towns and cities.

The sample consisted of 200 small open-country areas containing an average of 3.48 farms. These

<sup>1</sup>The open-country zone consisted of all the area lying outside of incorporated places, unincorporated named places and other unincorporated places with a 1940 population density of at least 100 persons per square mile.

areas were selected in a random systematic manner after all such areas in open country had been ordered geographically throughout the state. The sample areas were distributed over the state in such a way that at least one and generally two areas were located in each of the 99 counties. For each of the small sample areas, the operators of three farms were interviewed. In cases where there were more than three farms in a sample area, three were randomly selected, and their operators were then contacted for interview. Since some partnership operations were encountered,<sup>2</sup> there were 649 operators for the 600 selected farms.

Farmers were questioned about their most recent sales of corn, soybeans, cream or whole milk, and eggs, for those products which they had sold from their farms in 1948. Farmers who had sold, for either slaughter or feeder purposes, cattle and hogs from their farms in 1948 were asked about their most recent sales of cattle and butcher hogs respectively. In this way, information about the use of market news for at least one sale was reported by all farmers who made any sales in 1948. (Operators of 573 of the 600 farms had sold at least one of the six products in 1948.)

Among other questions, farmers were asked whether they used radio, what stations they listened to, what time they listened, what other ways of getting market news they used and what method was most important to them. On the average, an interview required a full hour if a farmer had sold all six commodities in 1948. Practically all farmers cooperated in answering the questions.

In order to simplify tabulation and calculation of estimates, the analysis of data was limited to 600 operator interviews—one for each farm. In each of the 44 partnership cases, the interview with the senior partner (by age) was selected as the operator interview for the farm. Marketing decisions for the various commodities sold from the farm in 1948 were usually made jointly by all partners. However, there were a few instances where only the junior partners had made the marketing decisions for particular commodities. For analysis purposes, the junior partners' information on marketing for the last sales of those commodities which had been marketed by the junior partners alone, was transferred to the senior partner questionnaire. Therefore, in about one-third of the partnership cases, the operator was treated as a composite individual as a marketer for the farm, and the data analyzed for the marketer was (1) the senior-partner data for all products on which the senior partner had helped make marketing decisions, and (2) the junior-partner data for products sold from the farm which the senior partner did not help market.

The reader may refer to the study report<sup>3</sup> for a more complete description of the survey procedure.

<sup>2</sup>Thirty-nine farms were operated by two-man partnerships; five farms, by three-man partnerships.

<sup>3</sup>Appendix A of the report, "How do Iowa farmers obtain and use market news?"—to be published by the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station.



dures, including the sampling technique, and for information about the reliability of the results of the survey.

In most instances a percentage represents an estimate of the number of Iowa open-country farmers having a particular characteristic expressed as a proportion of the estimated total number of farms in Iowa open country, or of some obvious subgroup of those farms. For example, in fig. 13, 86 percent is the percentage of sample farmers who had sold hogs for slaughter or feeder purposes in 1948 and said they depended

most on radio for hog-marketing information as the time to sell drew near. This percentage was obtained by dividing the number of hog-selling farmers who said they depended most on radio by the number of sample farms from which some hogs were sold in 1948 (for slaughter or feeder purposes), then expressing the result in percentage form. Because of the manner in which the sample was selected for the survey, such percentages calculated from sample data estimate farm and farmers' characteristics for all open-country Iowa.



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