

REASON FOR APPEARANCE

As chairman of the association's committee I have just mentioned, I have heard an increasing number of complaints from many growers and other organizations whose producers of fruits and vegetables are being adversely affected by the mounting imports of these commodities from low-wage countries.

The American farmers who are being hurt, pay American wages to American workers, and support our Government and our economy. Our farmers find it increasingly difficult to continue to do so in competition with unregulated imports of the nature I have just described.

This is evidenced by the sharp decline in Florida winter production of several crops, such as tomatoes and strawberries during the past 2 years.

FLORIDA WINTER PRODUCTION OF TOMATOES AND STRAWBERRIES

	Harvested acres	Total pro- duction
Tomatoes:		
1965.....	21,900	19,273
1966.....	19,100	18,595
1967.....	17,800	18,453
Strawberries:		
1965.....	3,200	22,903
1966.....	2,300	22,042
1967.....	2,000	21,717

¹ 1,000 40-lb. crates.

² 1,000 flats.

Source: Florida Agricultural Statistics Vegetable Summary 1967.

I formerly grew tomatoes, limes, and avocados as well as some other vegetables in south Florida and employed approximately 375 workers. Now I employ about 75 workers and only grow potatoes, a crop which is highly mechanized and not so vulnerable to foreign competition as are other fruit and vegetable crops which have and will continue to have higher manpower requirements for production and harvesting.

SOURCE AND NATURE OF PROBLEM

Some years ago the principal foreign competition threat to our fruit and vegetable industries came largely from two countries—Cuba and Mexico. Cuba was one of our most favored nations and the recipient of all the benefits of our liberal trade policies. It went Communist.

Since 1955, the total U.S. fresh vegetable imports from Mexico have increased fivefold and are continuing to increase at an even more alarming rate. Imports of some of the fruits from that country which compete with our own domestic production are also not far behind in this trend.

Florida, together with other traditionally winter production areas of the United States, has the capacity to supply the needs of our Nation for the fruits and vegetables on which we are now experiencing this foreign competition. We cannot, however, use this capacity since much of our capital and technology is moving to these countries where wages and taxes are lower.

Mexico, which is responsible for about 80 percent of this problem, is not a member of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade),