

regulation was to help maintain the price differential between the prices for larger sizes and those for smaller sizes. At the start of the season, larger-sized fruit command a premium price. The f.o.b. price can be \$4 to \$10 more a carton than for the smaller sizes. The last three seasons, the f.o.b. price for a size 27 has averaged around \$13.50 per carton in October. This compares to an average f.o.b. price of around \$5.80 per carton for a size 56 during the same period. In the three years before the issuance of a percentage size regulation, the f.o.b. price for large sizes dropped to within \$1 or \$2 of the f.o.b. price for small sizes by the middle of the season due to the oversupply of the smaller sizes.

Percentage of size regulation has helped sustain the price differential, maintaining higher prices for the larger-sized fruit. During the three years before regulation, the average differential between the carton price for a size 27 and a size 56 was \$3.47 at the end of October and dropped to \$1.68 by mid-December. In the six years with percentage of size regulation, the average differential between the carton price for a size 27 and a size 56 was \$5.43 at the end of October, \$3.78 in mid-December, and remained at around \$3.10 the first week in May.

The Barber study also states that f.o.b. revenues for larger sized red grapefruit benefited substantially from percentage of size regulation. Of the \$18.9 million increase in total fresh f.o.b. revenues for red grapefruit the last six seasons, nearly \$16.7 million can be attributed to gains made by fruit larger than sizes 48 and 56.

According to the Economic Analysis and Program Planning Branch, USDA, the margins between the prices for the various sizes of red grapefruit have remained fairly constant throughout the seasons covered under percentage of size regulation. However, if the domestic market becomes glutted with too many small-sized grapefruit (48 and 56), these margins would be negatively impacted and total grower returns would be reduced.

The goal of this percentage of size rule is to reduce the volume of the least valuable fruit in the market and strengthen grower prices and revenues. Without this rule, the fresh grapefruit market will become glutted with small-sized fruit, which will have a negative impact on prices for larger-sized fruit and grower returns. Absent this rule, the price margins between sizes (23, 27, 32, 36, 40, 48, and 56) will diminish and ultimately result in lower grower returns. This rule is intended to fully supply all markets for small sizes with

fresh red seedless grapefruit size 48 and 56, while avoiding oversupplying these markets to the detriment of grower revenues.

The Committee believes percentage of size regulation has also helped stabilize the volume of small sizes entering the fresh market. During deliberations in past seasons, Committee members concluded once shipments of sizes 48 and 56 reached levels above 250,000 cartons per week, prices declined on those and most other sizes of red seedless grapefruit. The last six seasons during the weeks regulated by a percentage of size regulation, weekly shipment of sizes 48 and 56 red seedless grapefruit remained near or below 250,000 cartons for nearly 90 percent of the regulated weeks. Also, based on the Barber study, while percentage of size regulation has been successful in controlling the volume of small sizes entering the fresh market, it has had only a limited effect on total shipments.

In addition, an economic study by Florida Citrus Mutual (Lakeland, Florida) dated April 1998, also found that the weekly percentage regulation was effective. The study stated that part of the strength in early season pricing appeared to be due to the use of the weekly percentage rule to limit the volume of sizes 48 and 56. It said prices were generally higher across the size spectrum with sizes 48 and 56 having the largest gains, and larger-sized grapefruit also registering modest improvements. The rule shifted the size distribution toward the higher-priced, larger-sized grapefruit, which helped raise average f.o.b. prices. It further stated that sizes 48 and 56 accounted for only 17 percent of domestic shipments during the same period in the 1997–98 season, as small sizes were used to supply export customers with preferences for small-sized grapefruit.

In addition to the success of past regulations, there are other circumstances warranting the consideration of establishing percentage of size regulation. For the three seasons, 1999–2000, 2000–01, and 2001–02, the percentage of the remaining crop represented by small sizes in February averaged around 53 percent. This compares to an average of 31 percent for the same month for seasons 1995–96 through 1997–98. These three seasons, 1999–2000 through 2001–02, averaged a greater percentage of smaller sizes across each month, October through February, than over the three seasons 1995–96 through 1997–98. For the seven seasons prior to the 2002–03 season there has been a movement toward an increased volume of small sizes as a percentage of the overall crop. For the

2002–03 season, grapefruit sized larger than in the previous seasons and small sizes were not as dominant a factor. However, while the crop sized well throughout last season, it is unclear how the 2003–04 crop will size. It is possible that the 2003–04 crop may produce the volume of small sizes represented in the majority of past seasons, making an even greater supply of small-sized fruit available for market.

Problems with the European and Asian markets could also impact the volume of small sizes available. These markets have shown a strong demand for the smaller-sized red seedless grapefruit. However, the reduction in shipments to these areas experienced during the last few years is expected to continue during the upcoming season due to their weak economies. This could result in a greater amount of small sizes for remaining markets to absorb.

The market for processed grapefruit is also a consideration. Approximately 48 percent of red seedless grapefruit is used for processing, with the majority being squeezed for juice. However, this outlet offers limited returns and is currently not profitable. Of the last six years, only 1999–2000 produced on-tree returns for processed red seedless grapefruit exceeding \$1 per box. When on-tree returns for processed grapefruit drop below a dollar, there is pressure to shift a larger volume of the overall crop to the fresh market to benefit from the higher prices normally paid for fresh fruit. From 1977 through 2000, the differential between fresh prices and processed prices has averaged \$3.55 per box. Consequently, growers prefer to ship grapefruit to the fresh market.

Statistics from the Florida Department of Citrus estimated that at the start of the current season over 35 weeks worth of grapefruit juice remained in inventory. Due to available inventories, on-tree prices for processed red seedless grapefruit for the 2003–04 season will most likely mirror prices from past seasons and remain below a dollar. A fair percentage of red seedless grapefruit shipped for processing are smaller sizes. With limited returns for processed grapefruit, an additional volume of small sizes could be shifted toward the fresh market, further aggravating problems with excessive volumes of small sizes.

Further, red seedless grapefruit production continues to exceed demand. This has contributed to the low returns and led to economic abandonment. According to information from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the seasons of 1995–96, 1996–97, 1997–98, 2000–01, and 2001–02 had an average economic abandonment of