

Standardization: What's Being Done?

by Charles B. Adams

"The industry may be on the threshold of conquering a long-standing problem—that of too many shipping cartons."

So begins a letter that introduced a nine-question survey on standardizing shipping cartons for potted plants sent to approximately 250 PMA-member growers and retailers by the Produce Marketing Association/Society of American Florists Box Standards Committee.

A similar survey on standardizing shipping cartons for cut flowers was sent by the committee to approximately 100 growers, shippers and wholesalers. Different surveys were sent because the products will require different box sizes, according to SAF executive vice president Ray Roper.

The surveys are soliciting responses about the issue of shipping carton standardization. The surveys address only shipping cartons for flowering and foliage plants.

Both surveys were designed to ob-

dry- and wet-pack cut flowers, according to PMA staff vice president Jim Johnson. Each group discussed possible box size standards and decided on a list to send to industry members for their review.

The surveys are similar, except for the questions concerning the proposed carton standards. However, both sets of proposed box sizes will fit a standard 40- by 48-inch grocery pallet.

clude dividers or not?

The proposed sizes in the surveys are not being released to the industry at large, to avoid any confusion that may result from retailers, shippers, growers or wholesalers believing the sizes in the survey are the committee's final proposals, according to Roper.

Responses from both surveys will be examined by the subcommittees

will snap to attention," Johnson says. "They (retailers) want boxes that aren't all over the board in sizes."

Growers, shippers, wholesalers and retailers all are being asked their opinions on the topic of standardization in order to seek a mutually agreeable set of standards, he says.

The task of deciding on a set of standards isn't easy. "If you talk to 100 growers, you're going to get 100 different answers. Every grower is going to want his box sizes used," Johnson says.

Overall, the committee hopes to improve floral shipping and distribution from grower to consumer. "We're trying to make the entire distribution system more efficient," Johnson says.

Roper said the idea for the joint committee came from SAF members who attended the 1984 Floral Seminar at the PMA convention in Washington, D.C. One of the topics discussed at the seminar was the need for box standardization. The SAF

Standardization: The Benefits

- **Development of practical size standards for cartons.**
 - Boxes would fit on standard grocery pallet.
- **Reduction of number and variety of cartons now used.**
- **Increased efficiency during loading and shipping of product.**
 - Better comparison of product by retailers.
 - Improved warehouse storage.
- **Better quality product reaching consumers.**

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Both surveys were designed to obtain industry members' opinions about the issue of standardization. "With the support of the industry, PMA and the Society of American Florists (SAF) will mount a major campaign to promote standard carton sizes for potted plants, potted flowers and cut flowers," according to the letter.

The surveys were assembled during the standards committee's first meeting during the SAF convention in San Antonio, Texas. Also during that meeting, it became evident to those in attendance that the committee should be split, with one sub-committee covering potted and flowering plants and the other covering

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Among the questions on the potted plant survey were:

- Do you think the standard-size cartons should be side-loaded or top-loaded?;
- Should the standard-size cartons be stapled, folded or taped?;
- Should the standard-size cartons include plant trays or not?;
- Should the standard-size cartons be waxed or not?;
- What should the box strength be for the standard cartons?; and
- Should the standard cartons in-

next meeting on Oct. 18 at the PMA convention in San Francisco, Johnson says.

The committee hopes to make a formal announcement of its proposals at the convention. When the committee makes its proposals known, compliance will be strictly voluntary, Johnson says.

However, "We also realize if the four or five largest supermarket chains say 'We're not going to buy from you (growers) unless you meet these standards,' then the industry

tribution from grower to consumer. "We're trying to make the entire distribution system more efficient," Johnson says.

Roper said the idea for the joint committee came from SAF members who attended the 1984 Floral Seminar at the PMA convention in Washington, D.C. One of the topics discussed at the seminar was the need for box standardization. The SAF members contacted Roper concerning a joint effort by both organizations to tackle the issue.

The PMA agreed such an effort would be beneficial, and the first meeting at the SAF convention was scheduled.

The committee hopes that standard box sizes will result in lower transportation, storage and wholesale costs, and better-quality products reaching retailers.

"If we are willing to compromise on this issue for the benefit of the industry, we can do away with the glut of box sizes and streamline our distribution system," according to the letter. □

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The 1985-86 *Florida Foliage*

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