

What's Going On In Flower Marketing Research

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During 1958, 24 states were carrying on one or more research projects on marketing floricultural products. In addition to these, the United States Department of Agriculture had two projects in progress, and Hawaii and Puerto Rico had one project each.

The principal financial support for these projects comes from the federal government. Additional funds are supplied by the states. In a few instances the floricultural industry makes some financial contribution.

The marketing research programs span the industry from the grower though to and including the consumer. The results are of use and of value to growers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers.

Most of the states have been or are involved in studies to determine how the industry operates. This basic information serves the researcher as well as industry members, because it points out specific problem areas and aids in directing efforts towards objective with the greatest potential.

Merchandising experiments and consumer preference studies have been carried on by Cornell, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Texas as well as several other states. Retail florists, supermarkets, variety stores, growers, wholesalers and other members of the industry cooperated in these studies.

Merchandising efforts have been aimed primarily at expanding the sales of flowers by developing the flowers-for-the-home market. Tests have been made to measure consumer acceptance of various kinds of flowers, numbers of flowers preferred, colors preferred, acceptance of packages, effects of various display methods, success of weekend specials and consumer reaction to various prices.

Cornell developed the Aqua-Pak to serve the home market. New Jersey, Louisiana and other stations are working on new consumer packages. Ohio and Texas have done considerable work in developing and marketing potted plants for home use through mass outlets. Michigan and Texas used consumer panels to get information on what people look for when they buy flowers, and how they can be encouraged to buy more.

Pennsylvania worked closely with retail florists in developing a program to stimulate consumer interest in buying flowers. Consumers were interviewed during their studies to find out why they buy flowers. Cornell also

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worked with retail florists, developing weekend cash and carry special programs.

Michigan has several projects in progress in cooperation with retail florists. These include studies of pricing, merchandising planning and operating costs. They also are making a study to measure the effect of allied promotion programs on flower sales.

Alabama, California and Colorado are making investigations of the handling and packaging of flowers. Colorado developed a new kind of shipping carton for carnations. Alabama has flower keeping quality trials in progress.

Wisconsin has underway a study to determine the effects of inter-regional competition. The question of the economic impact of new areas of production on old areas of production is of great interest to industry members.

Indiana, Iowa and Missouri have worked on setting up new grade standards for several flowers. Some of the standards have been established and the next step will be to test these standards under market conditions. Washington completed a study in which they measured the difference in price paid for graded and ungraded carnations, chrysanthemums and snapdragons. They found that there was some price advantage to grading under the conditions existing during these tests, but this was apparently small.

Cornell is cooperating with other states in the Northeast in making a study of the marketing practices of growers, wholesalers and retail florists. A sample of growers have already been interviewed. A sample of the other groups will be interviewed soon. The information from this study will be used to test new and improved practices that will be of benefit to the industry as a whole. A continuing program with merchandising is also being carried on and additional investigations will be made to find ways to expand and improve flower marketing.

The members of the industry have cooperated well with researchers. It is only through this type of cooperation that flower marketing research can be continued and progress in marketing be accomplished.
