

Chairman's Report

A.O.C.C.



Les Giroud
Chairman, A.O.C.C.

As Chairman of the A.O.C.C. it gives me pleasure to report on various aspects of the onion industry, and the achievements of the A.O.C.C. over the past twelve months.

During 1983/84, we saw onions sold at very high prices in direct contrast to 1982/83, when onions were often sold below cost. Those fortunate enough to still be in the industry no doubt recouped some of their previous season's losses. This season, indications are that plantings in most districts have increased. It seems that after a season when prices escalate, many become carried away with planting large areas without stopping to think whether they have a market. In the past, this has had a disastrous effect on the industry.

The A.O.C.C. meetings have been well attended in the Department of Primary Industry room in Melbourne. I believe Melbourne is the most central location for holding meetings. We thank the D.P.I. for the use of the conference room and also the assistance of the D.P.I. personnel.

Some recent matters involving A.O.C.C. include the following:—

BAG SIZES — Onion bag size is an issue discussed at length at our meetings, and with merchant/packers and growers from most States. It is common to see a large range of bag sizes, weights and quality in our markets. The A.O.C.C. has recommended to Australian United Fresh that a 20 kg bag be standardised for Australian markets.

NEW ZEALAND IMPORTS — The A.O.C.C. sent a delegation to New Zealand last year because Australian growers feared that New Zealand onions were being dumped on the already over-supplied and under-priced Australian market. The importance to Australian growers of trying to grow and pack only No. 1 quality in well-filled 20 kg bags, and not leaving the door open to New Zealand and other countries, must be stressed.

SHIPPING — Better stowage and freight conditions have been achieved as a result of numerous meetings with shippers. Experimentation on the use of different shipping containers has progressed well, and if successful will be a great help in exporting onions.

EXPORT INSPECTION FEE — A delegation from the A.O.C.C. went to Canberra to discuss the Export Inspection Fee to be imposed by the Federal Government. The delegation was received by the Primary Industry Minister, Mr. John Kerin, who was very sympathetic but said inspection was costing the government a lot of money. The Treasury had decided to collect half the cost of export inspection. The Australian onion export industry over the past three years has struggled to survive by holding costs, negotiating the most favourable possible freight conditions and economising on employment. Any charge on inspection of export onions imposed by the government can only be regarded as a tax on the industry. This matter is still being discussed within government.

EXPORT GRADE STANDARDS — New standards and procedures are currently being drafted for Export Grade Standards by the D.P.I. Close consultations with Mr. Ray Brough have enabled A.O.C.C. to have its say in drafting the revised standards.

Finally, I would like to thank our editors and the Department of Agriculture, New South Wales for undertaking to inaugurate this magazine, which I hope proves a valuable medium for the industry. I would like to thank all A.O.C.C. members and the Secretary Mr. Reg Miller for their interest and enthusiasm over the past twelve months and wish everyone a good year in 1984/85.