

AN EVALUATION OF SELECTED RELEASES OF
MARKETING INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS
PREPARED BY THE
MICHIGAN COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION SERVICE

Thesis for the Degree of M. S.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Marcia May Gillespie

1958

THESIS



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FOR CONSUMERS PREPARED BY THE MICHIGAN
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE**

by

Marcia May Gillespie

A THESIS

**Submitted to the College of Agriculture of Michigan State
University of Agriculture and Applied Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Agricultural Economics

1958

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**AN EVALUATION OF SELECTED RELEASES OF MARKETING INFORMATION
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AN ABSTRACT

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Approved by

James D. Shaffer

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The purpose of this study was to evaluate the information released to consumers by the Marketing Information Agents of the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service. The major consideration in the evaluation was to determine the potential value or usefulness of the information to consumers. The information was also evaluated specifically in terms of the potential contribution made to the accomplishment of four objectives of the Marketing Information for Consumers (MIC) Program.

A sample of MIC releases was obtained by asking each of the ten MIC Agents to select four different issues of each of three kinds of printed releases which she had prepared during a one-year period ending in the summer of 1957. The sample of information used in this study probably represented better-than-average kinds of releases due to this method of selection.

The sample of releases was subjected to a content analysis to determine the types of information in MIC releases and the areas emphasized. Following this, the releases were evaluated by the author. The author's evaluation was based primarily upon findings from some current studies concerning consumer needs, interests, behavior, and other characteristics relevant to the consumer's food buying experience.

In order to validate the author's evaluations and to get a wider range of opinion concerning the potential value of the information, two panels were selected. One panel consisted of fourteen professional workers including home economists and agricultural economists. The second panel was a group of one hundred and five homemakers (consumers)

consisting of those willing to cooperate from a random sample of Lansing, Michigan, homemakers. The panel members were presented with several examples of information releases and a number of excerpts, and were asked to evaluate and comment upon the information.

In general the author tended to agree with the members of the two panels in evaluating the information. However, in total, the author was more critical than the professional panel and the professional panel was more critical of the releases than the consumers.

A high proportion (88 percent) of the MIC releases sampled contained some information of potential value to consumers. Both the homemakers and professional workers who participated in the survey expressed interest in food marketing information. A majority of the consumers said they would look for and read MIC releases and a majority of the professionals said they would like to be supplied with MIC releases for use in their work.

The most useful types of marketing information appeared to be current market situation information (the foods in season, the price and quality), and buying guide information. In this latter area, the specific emphasis should be on guides which aid the selection of the most suitable kind, form, size, or quality of food.

Marketing information presented in a concise form, with food features listed and prices and price comparisons in table form, is preferred to lengthy narrative. Homemakers want food prices. They want suggestions for what to serve and how to prepare the featured foods. They are particularly interested in "economy" meats. They prefer short-range forecasts (weekly or seasonal) to long-range forecasts (yearly) regarding what to expect in the food situation.

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A very high proportion (88 percent) of the releases contained information with some potential for achieving the Program objective to "encourage the consumption of foods in season and/or help move plentiful foods." In contrast to this, just over one-half of the releases contained information with some potential for achieving the Program objective to "help consumers understand the production and marketing process."

One-half or more of the MIC releases sampled could be substantially improved. Greater emphasis on practical ways in which homemakers can make adjustments in spending for food would appear to be one means of improving the value of the information for consumers. The content analysis indicated that some commodity groups, especially dairy products, cereal products, and fats and oils, received much less attention in relation to their importance in the average food budget than certain other groups, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of This Study

This study was undertaken to evaluate some of the information released by the Michigan Marketing Information Program for Consumers-- a Program organized under the Cooperative Extension Service. The information was evaluated primarily from the standpoint of its possible value to homemakers in food buying. The releases prepared for the printed medium were used as the basis of this study. No attempt was made to evaluate the information presented via the media of radio, television, lecture-demonstration, or display, all of which, together with the printed medium, are used in this Program to disseminate food marketing information to consumers.

Findings from this study and recommendations should be applicable, at least in part, to all of the Program's information, however. The information prepared for all media is similar in many respects, although each medium imposes certain limitations.¹

It is recognized that each Consumer Information Agent operates in an institutional environment under conditions over which she has little control. The Agent often does not have wide latitude in writing

¹The information must be adapted to suit the limitations of the particular medium, such as programming atmosphere and the requirements of editors and others.

the releases, and must adapt the information to suit the particular biases of food editors and others.

This study undertook specifically to answer the following questions:

- 1 What is the content of the printed releases?
2. How helpful is the printed information to consumers?
3. What is the attitude of consumers toward this kind of service?
4. What is the relationship between the Program's stated objectives and the information released?
5. Can the information be improved? If so, how?

The Michigan Marketing Information for Consumers Program

This Program, henceforth referred to as the MIC Program, is part of the Cooperative Extension Service, and supported jointly by Federal, State, and County funds. The Program was established in 1948. Its scope was expanded in 1954 as a result of a special appropriation from the State. By 1956, MIC projects were established in ten cities in Michigan.

The objectives of Michigan's MIC Program were established by law and administrative action and may be summarized as follows:

- A. To aid in the orderly marketing of agricultural commodities by:-
 1. Helping to move normal and abnormal supplies.
 2. Encouraging the acceptance of new and improved marketing practices.
 3. Reporting consumer wants and needs to producers and handlers.
- B. To assist in the more effective use of agricultural products by:-
 1. Encouraging consumption of foods in season and in abundant supply.

2. Informing consumers of availability, relative costs, selection, care, value, and use of agricultural products.
 3. Informing consumers about new products.
- C. To help consumers get maximum satisfaction from their purchases of agricultural products by providing them with timely marketing information and economic principles as a basis for decision making in selection, purchase, care and use of agricultural products with regard to consumer needs and resources.
 - D. To help consumers develop a better understanding of the marketing system, functions, and problems by providing them with information on such subjects as production situation, economic trends, marketing services, marketing costs, marketing margins, and changes in the marketing system.
 - E. To motivate people to adopt improved buying practices.²

The MIC Agents serving the ten Michigan projects work closely with other extension personnel, and also with retailers, wholesalers, processors, and producers in assessing, interpreting, and relaying food marketing information to consumers.

The MIC Evaluation Project

Michigan's MIC Program is seeking ways to improve its service to consumers. For this reason an evaluation study of the Program was initiated in 1956 in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University in cooperation with the Extension Service. Four graduate students, under the direction of Dr. J. D. Shaffer, were assigned areas of the Program to study and evaluate and to make recommendations as they seemed appropriate.

²Annual Report of AMA Project - Michigan 4525-6, Marketing Information for Consumers, (East Lansing, Michigan: Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, 1956), p. 5.

One of these studies, a counterpart of the immediate study, was an evaluation of marketing information written for restaurants, hospitals and schools.³ A second study dealt with consumer use of mass media for food information.⁴

A third study is currently underway and is an attempt to establish some indications of the current level of consumer knowledge of food buying.

The Procedure Used in This Study

The author⁵ reviewed a number of studies related to consumer food buying as an aid in developing standards for judging the information in MIC releases. Highlights of some of these studies are given in the following chapter. A content analysis was used to determine the subject matter content of a sample of the MIC releases. The data from the content analysis were related to the findings in the consumer studies in the evaluation process. This evaluation was primarily a critical review of the MIC releases. The emphasis was not placed on reporting the particular strength of the information.

³M. D. Boyts, "An Evaluation of Marketing Information for Restaurants, Hospitals, and Schools," (unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, 1957).

⁴R. E. Borton, "Consumer Use of Mass Media for Food Information," (unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, 1957).

⁵The author is a graduate in home economics and has been employed as a home economist and as a college teacher of home management.

A small panel of home economists and agricultural economists, and a group of homemakers evaluated some of the same material evaluated by the author. Their evaluation was used to verify some of the premises made by the author. The respondents also answered other questions related to consumer preference in food marketing information.

This was the background out of which recommendations were made for the Michigan MIC Program.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED CONSUMER STUDIES

The highlights of some of the available current studies related to consumer food buying are outlined in this chapter. A complete review of related consumer literature was felt to be beyond the scope of this thesis. The author was particularly fortunate, however, in having M. B. Minden's study,¹ in which over one hundred consumer publications were reviewed, as a reference. The findings reported in Minden's work were of greater influence than it is possible to indicate in this chapter. They were drawn on heavily by the author as guides and standards against which to measure the value to consumers of the information in MIC releases.

The printed MIC releases written for the "ultimate consumer" --"the person who eats, wears, lives in, or uses up the things which industry and agriculture have made or grown for him"²--were the basis of this study. The following terms were used in the study to describe or identify the ultimate consumer and/or the person who represents a consuming unit, namely, "consumer," "food buyer," "homemaker," and "food shopper".

¹M. B. Minden, "The Consumption Decision and Implications for Consumer Education Programs," (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Purdue University, Indiana, 1957).

²S. Chase and F. J. Schlink, Your Money's Worth, New York: Macmillan Company, 1927, p. 5.

Consumers' Food Buying Problems

The two outstanding food buying problems which homemakers say they have both relate to menu planning, according to a study by M. B. Minden. The two problems are: (1) how to add variety to menus within the average budget, and (2) how to satisfy food preferences of individual family members, where there is often a conflict in preference.³

Homemakers in Muskegon, Michigan, were asked if they had any particular questions (problems) about food buying and meal planning which they would like to have answered. The majority (53 percent) of these consumers said they did not have any particular problems.⁴ Of those responding, the two most common problems were: (1) difficulty in adjusting to increasing food prices, and (2) the lack of ideas for variety in planning meals, with family preferences to consider.⁵

Buying meat is another problem for many consumers. In both the Muskegon study⁶ and Borton's study,⁷ consumers expressed greater concern about buying meat than about buying any other one food. This problem has added significance in view of the fact that consumers, on the average, spend a higher proportion of their food dollars on

³M. B. Minden, op. cit., p. 222.

⁴M. Boyts, M. Gillespie, M. Strickland, "Attitudes and Behavior of Muskegon Homemakers as Related to Consumer Food-Buying Information," (a progress report from a consumer information evaluation study, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, March, 1957), p. 5. (Mimeographed.)

⁵Ibid., p. 4.

⁶Ibid., p. 5.

⁷R. E. Borton, op. cit., p. 129.

meats, fish, and poultry than on any other single food group. Unpublished data from the Michigan State University Consumer Panel for the period 1951-1954 showed that approximately 30 percent of the food dollar was spent on meats, fish and poultry. The amount spent on the other food groups gives an indication of the relative importance of the different food groups in the food budget:

Dairy (not including butter)	17.8
Bakery and cereal products.....	11.9
Vegetables	9.5
Fruits	8.9
Beverages	8.0
Fats and oils	4.9
Eggs	3.8
All other	5.2

The Level of Consumers' Food Buying Knowledge

The Muskegon study tested consumer knowledge and understanding of such fundamentals as: specific grades of eggs and meat; differences in can sizes; reasons for price differences between producers and consumers; terms used in connection with food, such as "marbling in meats," "pot roast," "protein foods," and others. The results indicated that a good deal of background information must be supplied to consumers to help them become more familiar with terms commonly used in food marketing information; for example, only one consumer in four correctly described a grade "A" egg; only one in four had a clear understanding of the term "marbling in meat"; almost half said they didn't know what "marketing costs" were, and another 43 percent thought marketing costs referred to the amount it cost for their food shopping. Only 3 percent had

a reasonably adequate understanding of the grade "U. S. Choice Beef."⁸

Minden tested consumer understanding of the term "basic seven," a term frequently used in nutrition information. The term had no meaning for 58 percent of the consumers; they did not even associate the term with food. Even though the terminology was not well understood, however, about two-fifths of the homemakers, when asked to describe an adequate diet, included four or more of the seven basic food groups.⁹

Some consumer studies indicated that consumer knowledge of specific prices of foods is limited. The Muskegon study reported that only 13 percent of the consumers answering knew the price of both large and small eggs at the time of the survey.¹⁰ Minden found that, although consumer knowledge of price was limited, a high percentage of homemakers could report total food costs for a recent period of time. This study pointed out too that the consumers with higher incomes had less knowledge of food prices.¹¹

Minden's findings also indicated that consumers' knowledge of price-making forces was limited. About one-half of the consumers felt that food prices were out of line.¹² When a particular food

⁸ M. Boyts, M. Gillespie, M. Strickland, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

⁹ Minden, op. cit., p. 153.

¹⁰ Boyts, Gillespie and Strickland, op. cit., p. 3.

¹¹ Minden, op. cit., p. 217.

¹² Ibid., p. 222.

was described as being "in plentiful supply," about three-fifths of the Indiana consumers surveyed associated a lower price with this information, however.¹³

Consumer Behavior and Buying Habits

Three factors are important to consumers in making their food buying decisions Minden reported. These are quality, price, and convenience, and generally in this order of importance. Family preference was another top-ranking consideration in the purchase decision for these Indiana homemakers.¹⁴ Muskegon homemakers, too, indicated that family preference was a prime consideration in buying most foods.¹⁵

How does price enter into the decision making process? Minden reported that the consumers studied did not weigh individual prices so much as they used price as a frame of reference with their more or less fixed total food budget in mind,¹⁶ and also as a means of making adjustments in spending.¹⁷ When planning and buying foods, homemakers appear to think first in terms of the total week's food needs and the total cost, next in terms of one day's menus, and finally, in terms of the individual foods at one meal. The cost-per-serving approach to price information is of little use then,

¹³Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁵Boyts, Gillespie and Strickland, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁶Minden, op. cit., p. 217.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 225.

unless related to the total week's food buying experience, Minden concluded. As an alternative, she suggested lumping cost considerations on the basis of menus or costs per meal.¹⁸ Muskegon homemakers, too, showed less interest in costs per serving than in other types of food buying information.¹⁹

What effect have price forecasts (outlook) on consumer buying behavior? The majority (62 percent) of Muskegon consumers studied, when asked if they would have postponed a particular meat purchase if they had known it would be cheaper in one week, said "no." Only 14 percent said they would have postponed the purchase.²⁰ About one-quarter of this consumer sample said that before canning or freezing, however, they looked for information as to whether prices would be higher or lower.²¹ The author interpreted these results to mean that outlook information would influence the timing of quantity purchases (where savings are more likely to be significant) more than it would influence the timing of small-sized purchases bought for immediate consumption.

Many consumers do preserve foods and would be able to benefit from outlook information. The Muskegon study found that at least half of the consumers interviewed did some home canning in the period of the survey. Comparatively few foods were canned. The most

¹⁸Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁹Boyts, Gillespie and Strickland, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁰Ibid., p. 4.

²¹Ibid., p. 9.

commonly canned items were peaches, tomatoes, pears, pickles, and applesauce. The amount spent on foods for canning was small in relation to the total food budget, however. Only about one-fifth of the homemakers did any home freezing. Something less than one-third of the Muskegon homemakers owned or had access to home freezers. A small proportion (again about one-third) of those with freezer space had made quantity purchases of food for freezing in the most recent 12-month period.²² Similar results to these were shown in a National Food Consumption Survey taken in 1955. Additional data in this latter study showed that those households in which food was frozen, froze an average of 353 pounds per year per household. Eighty-five percent of the food frozen was meat, and beef was the chief meat. Those households in which canning was done, averaged 209 pounds of food canned per year. In total, however, more food was canned than frozen.²³

Do consumers plan their food shopping? The majority (53 percent) of the Muskegon homemakers interviewed used a shopping list of some kind.²⁴ The Indiana consumers in Minden's study indicated that prior planning was important to them.²⁵ The written shopping list was only one of several methods of planning mentioned in both

²²Ibid., pp. 8-11.

²³U. S. D. A., "Home Freezing and Canning by Households in the United States," Report No. 11, Household Food Consumption Survey, 1955, p. 1.

²⁴Boyts, Gillespie and Strickland, op. cit., p. 6.

²⁵Minden, op. cit., p. 219.

studies. There was little indication in Minden's study that shopping plans were made with direct consideration for single and specific meals, although one out of two homemakers said she planned meals one day or more in advance.²⁶ There is seeming contradiction in this latter. One interpretation might be that the majority of consumers do some kind of planning before food shopping, but not in relationship to planned meals. A day's meals are planned around the foods on hand after shopping.

Once a week shopping trips were most common in Minden's study, with Friday and Saturday the preferred days.²⁷ More women than men do the shopping for food. Sixty-eight percent of 2,104 households in Lansing reported that the homemaker (female head) did the food shopping. An additional 13 percent of the households reported that the food shopping was done by the husband and wife together.²⁸

Do consumers select different grades and qualities of food according to the intended use? Forty-two percent of the consumers in Minden's study felt that the best grade should be bought at all times, while only 25 percent felt that a second grade was often quite satisfactory.²⁹ The data were too limited, Minden felt, to conclude

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 220

²⁸ J. D. Shaffer, "Profile of Lansing Consumers," Quarterly Bulletin, Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, Vol. 39, No. 4, May, 1957, pp. 578-582.

²⁹ Minden, op. cit., p. 222.

how important this quality-use relationship is to consumers. Minden concluded, that the importance of the relationship probably differs widely from item to item and that a multipurpose product may be the one desired in many instances.³⁰

Consumer Interest in Food Marketing Information

Consumers appear to be interested in all kinds of information related to foods. A very high percentage (91 percent) of the Muskegon homemakers who took a newspaper, said they looked for food information (either regularly or occasionally).³¹

Borton's study indicated that consumer interest in food marketing information is high. On the average, one-half of all homemakers in the Michigan areas surveyed was reached by the MIC Program through the combined media, at some time. In one specific week, in the cities with MIC Programs, almost one-third of the homemakers, on the average, was reached.³² Borton's results, too, reinforced findings reported in other studies, that the printed medium is the medium consumers prefer for food marketing information. Borton pointed out, however, that "newspaper readership of Michigan's MIC releases leaves much room for expansion."³³

Consumer interest in five subject areas was tested by Minden, namely, time management, food buying (foods available, the price and

³⁰ Ibid., p. 227.

³¹ Boyts, Gillespie and Strickland, op. cit., p. 6.

³² R. E. Borton, op. cit., p. 131.

³³ Ibid., p. 135.

quality), food selection (quality considerations in buying foods), economizing, and nutrition. Interest appeared to be quite high and about equal for the first four topics, with slightly more interest shown in time management. Considerably less interest, however, was shown in nutrition information than in the first four topics. The results are labelled "tentative" in view of the fact that "selected but limited questions were used."³⁴ Minden concluded that nutrition information, if included, would have to "ride along" with other more "interesting" kinds of information to be acceptable to consumers.³⁵

The Appeals to Which Consumers Respond

How is consumer interest tapped? How are consumers motivated to adopt new practices, to try new foods? Minden found that consumers respond to three kinds of appeals, namely, prestige, creative, and social.³⁶ On the basis of this, information which would be useful and yet "appeal" might include some of the following: ideas of what to serve to be the best hostess, wife, or mother in town, suggestions to help consumers be more creative in planning, buying, and preparing foods, or up-to-date information on new foods, food trends, and fashions. .

³⁴Minden, op. cit., p. 213.

³⁵Ibid., p. 224.

³⁶Ibid., p. 224.

Summary

This survey of consumer studies gives some insight into the nature and buying habits of consumers. The findings from these studies are not conclusive but the writer was guided by them in evaluating the MIC information. A summary of the findings follow:

1. Consumers are interested in food marketing information, as indicated by the size of the audience contacted by Michigan's MIC Program over a period of time, and by the numbers who read newspapers for food information.

2. Consumers say that they are more interested in information related to the management of time, and to information on food buying, food selection, and economizing than they are in nutrition information. The latter, if included, will have to "ride along" with other "more interesting" kinds of information if it is to be read.

3. Consumers regard meal planning as one of their chief problems associated with food buying and preparation. Menu suggestions to fit the "average" budget, and ideas for adding variety to meals would help consumers with this problem.

4. Consumers say they have more problems in buying meat than any other food, and consumers, on the average, spend more on meat than on other food groups.

5. Consumers do not have a good understanding of some words and terms commonly used in food buying information. Grades in meats and eggs are not well understood.

6. Individual food prices are used most generally by consumers as a frame of reference with the total (weekly) food budget in mind.

Information which helps the consumer to relate individual price to total food costs and suggests how adjustments can be made, should be helpful to consumers.

7. Consumer knowledge of price-making forces is limited as is consumer understanding of marketing costs. Information which will help consumers understand the economics of price, and information which describes the services and costs involved in marketing foods, will develop a greater appreciation of the whole marketing process, and of the part in it which consumers play.

8. The factors which influence consumers' food buying decisions most commonly are quality, price, convenience, and family preference.

9. Outlook information is more likely to influence the timing of quantity purchases than it is the timing of small-sized purchases.

10. More homemakers are canning than freezing. The total amount, by weight of food canned, is greater than the amount of food frozen. About 85 percent of the food frozen is meat. Information related to home canning of such foods as peaches, tomatoes, pears, apples, and pickling items, and to home freezing of meats, in particular, will interest that segment of homemakers (50 percent or more) who preserve foods.

11. Most food buyers do some type of pre-planning, thinking first in terms of the total week's food needs, next in terms of one day's menus, and then in terms of the individual foods to be served at a meal. Planning can be made easier for consumers if they have access to a concise outline of the seasonally plentiful meats, vegetables, fruits, and other foods.

12. Consumers are motivated by prestige, creative, and social appeals. Food marketing information which incorporates these appeals will encourage consumers to make changes in buying habits, and in other ways, motivate them to change behavior or attitudes.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTENT OF PRINTED MIC RELEASES

The content of the sample of MIC releases is outlined in detail in this chapter. These data were compared with the findings in the reviewed consumer studies, in the process of assessing the potential value to consumers of the information in the MIC releases.

Kinds of MIC Releases

Market Situation Releases

Market situation releases¹ are written for newspapers and generally appear weekly. Each release is a run-down of the current local market situation, and intended to be a shopping guide for consumers. Not all Consumer Information Agents write this type of release, whereas some Agents write more than one such release weekly for different newspapers in their areas. Food fillers (essentially abbreviated market situation reports) appear daily in newspapers in some of the Program areas. Food fillers and market situation releases were combined in this study to make a sample of forty-seven issues representing nine cities.

¹See copies of market situation releases in Appendix, pp. 120-121.

Feature Articles

This type of release is also written weekly in some centers for local and district newspapers. This kind of release covers buying information for one or two food commodities. Thirty feature articles from 7 cities made up this sample.

Commodity or Store Sheets

Weekly commodity sheets² generally feature one product in season locally. They are supplied to some food stores in limited quantities for distribution to customers. They are also distributed by mail to consumers (a service discontinued in 1957), and by home demonstration agents, food handlers, and others in touch with consumers. On occasions, the information has been written cooperatively with other agencies such as the Poultry and Egg National Board. Not all of the Agents write this type of release. Twenty-eight commodity sheets from seven cities made up this sample.

Other Types of Printed Releases

The three kinds of releases, previously mentioned, make up the largest proportion of printed material written by the Consumer Information Agents. In addition, some of the Agents write special releases for home demonstration agents and teachers, and special outlook reports. These releases were not sampled.

²See copy of commodity sheet in Appendix, p. 122.

The Weekly Communications Schedule for Printed Releases

The total number of printed releases distributed weekly was given in the 1956 annual report as follows:³

Newspaper:

- 18 daily papers in 10 city projects
- 55 weekly newspapers in 5 city projects
- 1 monthly newspaper in 1 city project

Commodity Sheets and Store Sheets:

- 21,650 per week in 228 stores in 6 city projects

Information is also supplied to home economics teachers, to home demonstration agents, to food editors, and to home economists in business, who in turn relay the information to homemakers.

The Sample of MIC Releases

The three major kinds of MIC releases, namely, market situation releases (with which food fillers were included), feature articles, and commodity or store sheets made up the sample for this study.

The information evaluated was that prepared by the Agents for print, but not necessarily the same information which appeared in print after editing. The Consumer Information Agent in each of the ten city projects selected four representative issues of each type of printed release, written between June, 1956 and June, 1957. Combined, these made up a total sample of one hundred and five issues. The Agents selected the issues on the basis of those best representing

³ Annual Report - 1956. op. cit., p. 13.

the approach used in the area and those which, in their opinion, best fulfilled the Program's objectives.

This method of sampling was used rather than a random system because of the varying circumstances in each area which influence the writing of the releases. An over-abundant local crop may explain several references to a particular commodity in a local release. A special community project may explain the theme in a particular marketing release. Some issues represent the general pattern of information better than others, it appears. For this reason, the Agents made the selection of "typical" releases.

The author assumed that better-than-average types of releases were included in the sample as a result of this method of selection. It should be kept in mind that in all likelihood this evaluation study deals with a sample of releases superior to a sample selected at random.

The sample represented just less than 10 percent of the total number of issues written by all of the Agents in one year (eleven hundred and fifty is approximate total). It was believed to be a practical size of sample in view of the time requirement for analyzing the content of each issue.

The Content Analysis Method

The instrument found useful for describing the content of the information was the content analysis. This method breaks information down into its component parts for measuring the frequency

of mention and the relative emphasis on the different types of information.

Categories and sub-categories were set up to represent the different types of information occurring in Michigan's MIC printed releases. These categories and sub-categories were intended to be as nearly as possible mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Some information was scored under more than one category, however, and these exceptions will be explained.

The following categories and sub-categories were established to represent the principle types of information:

1. Current market situation
2. Outlook.
3. Buying guides.
 - (a) Identification of product.
 - (b) Quality characteristics.
 - (c) Quantity guides.
 - (d) Guides for selecting the most suitable kind or form, size, or quality of a food.
4. Management guides and practices.
5. Storage and use
 - (a) Care and storage.
 - (b) Use and preparation.
6. Nutrition.
7. Production and marketing.

These categories and sub-categories were in turn broken down into forty-eight sub-divisions describing the type of information in detail. They will be discussed later.

The information in the three kinds of MIC releases was scored according to the numbers of each kind of release in which each

of the various types of information occurred, regardless of the amount of such information in each issue. In addition, data were collected to show the frequency with which each different type of information occurred in the three kinds of MIC releases.

The information content in the first three categories of information was recorded by food groups. An example of the scoring of an excerpt of current market situation information follows.

Red apples in abundance bring a Fall look to fruit counters, and plums and peaches make room for them. Grapes are abundant. Chicken and turkey are good eating at low cost.

Type of Information	Occurrence	Meat, Poultry Fish	Fruits and Vegetables	Dairy	Eggs	Total Frequency
		Number Mentioned				
Current market situation information	X	2	4	0	0	6

Where several varieties of food were mentioned, they were scored only once under current market situation (e.g., Spanish onions and globe onions were scored as "one" under "fruits and vegetables"). Both fresh and the processed forms were scored under "fruits and vegetables."

The content analysis, as a method, is criticized because of the extent to which subjectivity enters into the scoring. The writer attempted to overcome this by defining the categories and sub-categories as specifically as possible and also by making them, as nearly as possible, mutually exclusive.

Three other graduate home economists scored and evaluated independently some of the same material as the author. When the scores and evaluations were compared, they were found similar in most instances, with no serious conflicts of judgment. All of the issues were scored a second and some a third time by the author, at intervals, to determine the amount of consistency over time. The scoring method showed a high degree of consistency over time.

The Content Analysis Data

The information in each issue was analyzed for the types of information contained and the frequency of mention of the different types of information. The data for the three different kinds of releases were recorded and discussed separately.

Types of Information and the Emphasis on These Types of Information in MIC Releases

The data in Table 1 gives a comparison of the types of information which occurred in the three kinds of MIC releases. These data will be discussed with the data in Table 2, in which the emphasis on the different types of information, by frequency of occurrence in the different releases, is shown. The data in Table 2, it should be pointed out, gives the relative (not absolute) emphasis on the types of information. No attempt was made to count the number of lines, phrases, or in other ways to determine the absolute emphasis in the information.

TABLE 1

THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF THREE KINDS OF MIC RELEASES CONTAINING DIFFERENT TYPES OF INFORMATION

Types of Information	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Number of Issues of Sample	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues of Sample	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues of Sample	Proportion of Sample
Current market situation	45	96	20	67	17	61
Outlook	33	70	11	37	4	14
(Price)	44	94	20	67	13	46
Buying guides						
Identification of product	41	87	18	60	21	75
Quality characteristics	21	45	10	33	19	68
Quantity guides	24	51	12	40	14	50
Guides for selecting most suitable kind, form, size, or quality of food	22	47	13	43	11	39
Management guides and practices	38	81	20	67	18	64
Storage and use						
Care and storage	18	38	15	50	24	86
Use and preparation	41	87	29	97	26	93
Nutrition	24	51	19	63	12	43
Production and marketing	28	60	25	83	24	86
Number of issues analysed	47		30		28	

TABLE 2

THE FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF SEVEN MAJOR TYPES OF INFORMATION IN THREE KINDS OF MIC RELEASES

Type of Information	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Current market situation	814	53	29	10	41	9
Outlook	96		12		11	
(Price)	(686)*	--	(43)*	--	(43)*	--
Buying guides	473	27	113	29	251	41
Management guides and practices	90	5	31	8	24	4
Storage and use	146	8	130	33	221	36
Nutrition	55	3	34	9	24	4
Production and/or marketing	56	3	41	11	43	7
Total count	1730	100	390	100	615	100
Number of issues	47		30		28	

* Not included in total count.

The data in Tables 3 to 8 inclusive, will be discussed with reference to the emphasis on the different types of information in the three kinds of releases.

Value judgments regarding the optimum proportions for the different types of information in each kind of release entered into the author's evaluation of the information, presented in Chapter IV.

Market Situation Releases

Current market situation information was given in a high proportion of these releases, according to the data in Table 1, and for an average of seventeen food items per issue for the total sample as seen by the data in Tables 2 and 3. All but two issues of the market situation releases contained this type of information. One of these two issues contained outlook only and another was a novelty-type issue.

Information described as "current market situation" included any of the following: the foods which are in season; the extent of the supply, the quality, and the current local prices

The information in the market situation releases was scored also by food groups and these data are given in Table 3.

In market situation releases, the two food groups, meats, poultry, and fish; and fruits and vegetables, accounted for a very high proportion (over 90 percent) of the food products mentioned. One-third more fruit and vegetable items were mentioned than meat, fish, and poultry items in this kind of release. The proportions of dairy products, cereal products, and eggs mentioned in market situation releases were low.

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF EACH OF THREE MAJOR TYPES OF INFORMATION
IN MARKET SITUATION RELEASES BY FOOD GROUPS

Type of Information	Kind of Food Item					Total Number Mentioned	Average Number Items per Issue
	Meat, Poultry, Fish	Fruits and Vegetables	Dairy	Eggs	All Other		
Number of items mentioned							
Current market situation	307	453	20	29	5	814	17
Outlook	36	53	2	4	1	96	
(Price)	320	303	11	47	5	686	15
Buying guides							
Identification of product	80	215	1	44	7	347	8
Quality characteristics	7	26	0	0	0	33	
Quantity guides	21	18	0	1	0	40	2
Guides for selecting most suitable kind, form, size, or quality of a food	41	10	0	2	0	53	
Number of issues	47						

Outlook information was identified in a high proportion (70 percent) of the market situation releases (Table 1). "Outlook" refers to information which describes what to expect in the market situation in future regarding any of the three factors, supply, price, or quality. Outlook information, where it occurred, was usually in combination with current market situation information.

Price information, regarded as part of either outlook or current market situation information, occurred in a very high proportion (94 percent) of market situation releases (Table 1). The data in Table 3 show that an average of fifteen price references occurred per issue for the total sample of these releases.⁴

The most common type of price information was in terms of a description of price (Table 4). "Price relationships" made up the second largest proportion of the total price references (30 percent), and in this case, it was chiefly current price related to the past or future price (outlook). Types of price information which occurred less than once per issue, on the average, were costs per serving, price relationships for different grades or qualities of a food, price relationships between nutritional substitutes, and factors affecting price.

A price reference, in some cases, qualified to score under more than one sub-category, for example: "Frying chickens this week at 33 to 36 cents a pound, are an economy buy." This excerpt was scored under both "price per unit" and "price description."

⁴Market situation releases showed wide variation in the numbers of food items and price references per issue. One issue included as many as 47 price references, another included as few as two price references.

TABLE 4
FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRICE INFORMATION
IN THREE KINDS OF MIC RELEASES

Type of Price Information	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Price described, e.g., "economical", "reasonable"	287	42	14	33	7	17
Price per unit	130	19	0	0	0	0
Cost per serving	30	4	4	9	12	29
Price related to:						
Past or future prices	112		4		1	
Different forms of a food	58	30	9	49	8	44
Different grades or	18		0		4	
qualities of a food	14		8		5	
Nutritional substitutes						
Factors affecting price	37	5	4	9	4	10
Total	686	100	43	100	41	100
Number of issues	47		30		28	

The four types of buying guides which occurred in all of the releases are listed in Table 1. The buying guide which occurred in the highest proportion of market situation releases was the guide "identifying" (distinguishing) the food products mentioned. This guide accounted for almost three-fourths of the buying guide information, averaging seven occurrences per issue, according to data in Table 5.

The most common means of identifying foods in market situation releases were in the following terms: (1) the area in which the food was grown or manufactured (e.g., Idaho potatoes), (2) brand or variety (e.g., globe onions), (3) description of size, flavor, shape, location on carcass, or description of other features. Grades and standards were not so commonly used as a means of identifying products in any of the three kinds of releases.

Some information qualified as either "product identification" or "quality characteristics." Such information was scored under one or the other categories but not under both.

The type of quantity guide most frequently mentioned was in terms of the number of servings per unit (pound, bushel), or the number (amount) to allow per serving. Quantity guides in economy-value terms (the size having the lowest unit cost) were not frequent in market situation releases, nor in either of the other kinds of releases.

Guides for selecting the most suitable kind and/or form, size and/or quality of a food occurred in nearly one-half of the market situation releases (Table 1), averaging just more than one reference

TABLE 5
FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF BUYING GUIDES IN THREE KINDS OF MIC RELEASES

Type of Buying Guide Information	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Identification of Product						
"New" product	13		1		2	
Area grown or manufactured	97		7		6	
Description--size, flavor, etc.	70		18		34	
-available forms	2		4		26	
-content, ingredients, etc.	12		3		27	
-how used or prepared	36		5		7	
Brand and variety	86		8		36	
Grade and standard	31		11		0	
Diagram	0		2		17	
Sub total and percent	347	73	59	52	155	62
Quality Characteristics						
Description--good quality	26		9		18	
-poor quality	6		2		2	
Comparison--quality with quality	1		0		0	
Grades and standards	0		1		2	
Sub total and percent	33	7	12	11	22	9
Quantity Guides						
Servings per unit or allowance						
per serving	22		11		36	
large quantity purchasing	4		3		4	
Economy and/or value terms	14		1		0	
Available storage space	0		1		0	
Sub total and percent	40	8	16	14	40	16

Type of Buying Guide Information

Market Situation

Kind of Release
Feature Percent

Commodity Sheet
Frequency Percent

TABLE 5 -- Continued

Type of Buying Guide Information	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Guides for Selecting Most Suitable						
Kind, Form, Size or Quality of a Food						
Family preferences	2		1		0	
Flavor, texture, appearance						
related to use	20		18		29	
Food value	3		0		0	
Convenience aspects	4		0		0	
Economy-value terms	24		7		5	
Sub total and percent	53	11	26	23	34	14
Grand Total	473	100	113	100	251	100
Number of Issues Analysed	47		30		28	

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per issue in the total sample of market situation releases (Table 5). These guides in economy-value terms occurred in about one-half of the market situation releases, on the average. There were few instances of this selection guide occurring in terms of convenience, or of family preference.

In all, an average of ten buying guides per issue occurred for the sample of market situation releases.

Buying guides were given for less than one-half of the meats mentioned in market situation releases, on the average (Table 3). Approximately one in four meats mentioned in these releases was "identified." About one-half of the fruits and vegetables mentioned in market situation releases were "identified." Relatively few buying guides, other than this, were given for fruits and vegetables in proportion to the numbers of these food items mentioned in market situation releases.

Management guides and practices (suggestions to increase efficiency in planning, buying, and preparing foods) were identified in a high proportion (81 percent) of the market situation releases (Table 1). The total sample of these releases averaged two management guides per issue, shown in the data in Table 6.

Specific suggestions for economizing in the use of resources was a type of management guide which occurred more commonly than some other types. Recommended marketing practices (e.g., "When buying meat buy by grade") was another type of guide which was mentioned almost as often as once per issue.

TABLE 6

**FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF MANAGEMENT GUIDES
AND PRACTICES IN THREE TYPES OF MIC RELEASES**

Kinds of Management Guides and Practices	Type of Release		
	Market Situation	Feature	Commodity Sheet
	Frequency of Mention		
How to economize in use of resources	40	10	10
How to judge value or cost or make price comparisons	6	4	1
Marketing practices specifically recommended	42	17	13
Where to locate informa- tion	2	0	0
Total	<u>90</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>24</u>
Number of Issues	47	30	28

Some information was scored under both "management guides" and "buying guides," for example: "Select large bags of small-sized apples (school boys) to get the most eating for your money these days." This excerpt was scored as both a buying guide (guide for selecting most economical type of eating apple) and as a management guide (a way of economizing in the use of resources).

Storage and use information was separated into two sub-categories. Less than one-half of the market situation releases (38 percent) contained care or storage information (Table 1). Use and preparation information, on the other hand, was identified in 87 percent of these releases.

Three storage and use items occurred, on the average, in each issue of the market situation releases, as shown in the data in Table 7. An average of one recipe for every three issues and two brief use suggestions per issue occurred. Menu suggestions were infrequent in the total sample.

Nutrition information was contained in about one-half of the issues (Table 1), and an average of about one reference occurred per issue for the total sample (Table 7). The most common form in which nutrition information was given, was in terms of the components of the food (e.g., calcium, iron, carbohydrate, and others). The contribution these components make to health, the nutritional comparisons of foods, and the kinds of foods that substitute nutritionally was information which did not occur frequently in these releases.

Information describing the production process or the marketing system occurred in less than two-thirds (60 percent) of the market situation releases. An average of about one such reference per issue was identified in the sample of market situation releases, as shown in Table 8.

The sub-categories in production and marketing information were not mutually exclusive. Where there was ambiguity, the information was scored under only one category. Information in some cases, however, was scored under both "management guides" and under "production and/or marketing information," for example: "Corn must be kept cold to keep its freshness, so look for iced display cases when buying fresh corn." This excerpt was scored as both a management guide and as a production and/or marketing guide.

TABLE 7

FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF STORAGE,
USE AND NUTRITION INFORMATION

Type of Information	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Care and storage practices						
Good storage	22		15		22	
Poor storage	0		0		1	
Food preservation	4		3		12	
Sub total and percent	26	13	18	11	35	14
Use and preparation information						
Recipes	14		26		81	
Brief use suggestions	101		85		104	
Menus or food combinations	5		2		1	
Sub total and percent	120	60	113	68	186	76
Nutrition information						
How nutrients preserved	4		1		2	
Food substitutes and/or nutritional comparisons	9		7		8	
Balanced menu or diet--dietary requirements	7		6		3	
Food components	33		18		9	
Contribution of components	2		2		1	
Nutrition research	0		0		1	
Sub total and percent	55	27	34	21	24	10
Grand Total	201	100	165	100	245	100
Number of Issues Analyzed	47		30		28	

TABLE 8
FREQUENCY OF MENTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCTION AND
MARKETING INFORMATION IN THREE TYPES OF MIC RELEASES

Types of Production and Marketing Information	Kind of Release		
	Marketing Situation	Feature	Commodity Sheet
	Frequency of Mention		
Description of production or forms in which foods are marketed	22	22	21
Marketing services and/or costs	5	2	3
Laws and/or regulations associated with food marketing	2	3	1
Grading or branding or labelling explained	10	3	5
Marketing terms defined	9	5	11
Research and/or developments and/or trends in marketing	5	5	2
Problems in production and/or marketing	3	1	0
Total	<u>56</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>43</u>
Number of Issues Analyzed	47	30	28

The type of production and/or marketing information which occurred most frequently in these releases was in terms of a description of the production process and/or of the forms in which foods are marketed. A description of marketing services and/or their costs was not common in any releases. Explanations of grading, branding, and labelling were not frequent in any of the releases either. A total of at least nine terms associated with food marketing were defined or explained in these releases.

The two major types of information in market situation releases, namely, current market situation (with outlook included), and buying guides, together accounted for approximately 80 percent of the total information⁵ (Table 2). Four other types of information occurred much less frequently, and combined, accounted for the remaining 20 percent of the total information.

Feature Articles and Commodity Releases

The emphasis in both feature articles and commodity releases was on buying guides, and storage and use information (Table 2). An average of four buying guides were given for the one food item in feature releases. Over one-half of the buying guides mentioned in feature articles were in terms of the identification of the product (Table 5). Nine buying guides were given for the 1.5 food items mentioned, on the average, per issue of commodity release. Over one-half of the total buying guides mentioned in commodity releases were in terms of the identification of the product (Table 5). Diagrams were used in over one-half of the commodity releases as a means of identifying products.

Less than one-half of these two kinds of releases contained the type of buying guide described as "guides for selecting the most suitable kind and/or form, size and/or quality of a food.

Use and preparation information was contained in over 90 percent of both kinds of releases (Table 1). Feature articles

⁵"Total information" refers to the total count of the occurrences of information or frequencies of mention.

averaged about one recipe per issue and three brief use suggestions (Table 7). Commodity releases averaged about three recipes per issue and four brief use suggestions per issue (Table 7). Food preservation information occurred in almost one-half of the commodity releases, on the average, but very infrequently in feature releases. Menu suggestions or food combinations were very infrequent in these two kinds of releases.

Nutrition information was identified in less than two-thirds (63 percent) of the feature releases and in less than one-half (43 percent) of the commodity releases (Table 1). An average of about one nutrition reference per issue was identified for each of the total samples of releases (Table 7). Nutrition information was chiefly in terms of the components of the featured food.

Current market situation information was given in about two-thirds of the feature releases but in less than two-thirds (61 percent) of the commodity releases according to data in Table 1. Only about one-third of the feature articles and only four issues of the commodity releases contained outlook information.

Management guides and practices occurred, also, in about two-thirds of the feature articles and in less than two-thirds of the commodity releases (Table 1). An average of one such guide per issue was identified in each of the two kinds of releases (Table 6).

Production and marketing information occurred in a high proportion of both feature articles and commodity releases (Table 1), averaging one such reference per issue for feature articles, and 1.5 such references per issue for commodity releases (Table 8).

**The Number and Proportion of MIC Releases Containing
Different Types of Appeals**

The two appeals identified in the highest proportion of the sample of MIC releases, on the average, were the economy-value appeal, and the quality appeal. The quality appeal was more general in commodity releases than the economy-value appeal. The opposite was true for market situation releases as indicated by the data in Table 9. The other four appeals, namely, convenience, prestige, social, and creative, were identified in a very small number of any of the releases. No record was made of the frequency of the occurrence, or emphasis, on the different appeals in the sample of MIC releases.

TABLE 9

**THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF THREE KINDS OF MIC RELEASES
CONTAINING DIFFERENT TYPES OF APPEALS**

Type of Appeal	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Number of Issues	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues	Proportion of Sample
Economy/value	43	92	20	67	10	36
Convenience	4	8	0	0	1	4
Quality	30	64	16	53	18	64
Prestige	0	0	3	10	0	0
Social	0	0	3	10	1	4
Creative	1	2	5	17	2	7
Number of Issues Analyzed	47		30		28	

Summary

These data describe the content of information in the sample of one hundred and five printed MIC releases. A comparison of the data for the different kinds of releases showed a degree of overlap and a degree of complementarity in the types of information included, as well as some lack of emphasis on certain types of information in the total sample.

Buying guides were emphasized in all three kinds of releases in the MIC sample. Buying guides were given, chiefly, in terms of product identification. Guides for selecting the most suitable kind, form, size, or quality of a food was a type of information which occurred in less than one-half of all three kinds of releases. Buying guides were mentioned in economy-value terms a total of fifty-one times, and in terms of convenience, a total of four times in the MIC sample.

Market situation releases, in addition, emphasized situation information (outlook and price included), whereas feature articles and commodity releases emphasized storage and use information.

The two food groups, meats, poultry and fish; and fruits and vegetables, accounted for 90 percent of the food products mentioned in market situation releases. The proportions of dairy products, cereal products, and eggs mentioned in these releases were comparatively low.

A high proportion of the market situation releases contained management guides and practices, averaging two references per

issue. A high proportion of feature articles and commodity releases contained production and marketing information, averaging one and 1.5 references per issue, respectively.

The type of production and marketing information which occurred most frequently in all three kinds of releases was in terms of a description of the production process and/or of the forms in which foods are marketed. Marketing services and/or their costs were mentioned in only ten instances in the total sample.

Grades, standards, and brands were explained or described in eighteen instances in the total sample of MIC releases. Grades and standards were used to help identify or describe the quality of thirty-one food items, in the total of eight hundred and fourteen food items mentioned in market situation releases. A total of at least twenty-five terms associated with food marketing were described in the three releases sampled.

Use and preparation information was a type of information which occurred in a high proportion of all three kinds of releases. Menu suggestions, however, were mentioned a total of eight times only in the MIC sample.

Nutrition information did not occur in a high proportion of any of the three kinds of releases. Less than one-half of the commodity releases contained nutrition information. The most common type of nutrition information was in terms of food components, rather than in terms of nutritional comparisons of foods, the kinds of foods, that substitute, or in terms of the contribution food components make to health:

The two appeals occurring in the highest proportion of releases were the economy-value appeal, and the quality appeal. The convenience, prestige, social, and creative appeals were scored in very few issues of the total sample.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRITIQUE OF MIC INFORMATION

This chapter describes the process and the results of the evaluation of the information contained in the sample of one hundred and five printed MIC releases. Some of the assumptions made and conclusions reached in this evaluation are expressed as hypotheses in Chapter V.

The Evaluation Process

Several approaches were used in the evaluation process. The content analysis provided data which were compared to the findings in the consumer studies reviewed. The writer was familiar with releases from other MIC programs, which provided a basis for comparison of style and organization as well as information content. This background aided in the overall evaluation of the Michigan sample.

The information in the releases was evaluated from the standpoint of the extent to which some of the objectives of Michigan's MIC Program were met, and also from the standpoint of its potential value to consumers. Evaluation criteria were set up as a means of assessing this potential value to consumers.

The Evaluation Criteria

Ten criteria were set up as a basis for the evaluation of the information in the MIC sample. These were in the form of questions, for example: "Is this information written at the consumer's level of knowledge?" "Is it a suitable length?" "Would the information appeal to and interest consumers?" Other questions are listed in Table 10. Most significant was the summary question: "Is this information of value to consumers?" Scoring was done according to the "degree" of adequacy with which the information in each issue met each criterion. Some issues met the various criteria adequately, some in part only, and some not at all. Emphasis in the following discussion is placed chiefly on those areas in each kind of release where the information in total was scored less than adequate, with the author's justification for the value judgments made.

The Value to Consumers of MIC Information

Market Situation Releases

The information in approximately two-fifths of the market situation releases was judged adequate in meeting the criterion "something of value" (Table 10). The information in about one-fifth of these releases was judged as little or no value from the consumer's standpoint. The largest proportion of the sample (four-fifths) met the "value" criterion either adequately or somewhat adequately.

TABLE 10

NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF THREE TYPES OF MIC RELEASES MEETING ADEQUATELY TEN EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Number of Issues of Sample	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues of Sample	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues of Sample	Proportion of Sample
Information at consumer level?	34	72	18	60	15	54
Suitable length?	40	85	30	100	14	50
Easily read and understood?	38	81	24	80	14	50
Easily scanned?	27	57	25	83	5	18
Has it interest and appeal?	29	62	20	67	10	36
Clear directions?	25 ^a	61	22 ^b	76	13 ^c	50
Practical information?	28	60	20	67	9	32
Accurate information?	43	92	25	83	21	75
Is it complete and explicit?	9	19	11	37	4	14
Something of value?						
Adequate	20	43	10	33	7	25
Somewhat adequate	26	55	17	57	15	54
Not adequate	1	2	3	10	6	21
Number of issues	47		30		28	

^aOut of 41 issues with use and preparation information.^bOut of 29 issues with use and preparation information.^cOut of 26 issues with use and preparation information.

A fairly high proportion of market situation releases did not meet adequately certain evaluation criteria. These criteria and results will be discussed.

The information in approximately two-fifths of the market situation releases scored low (less than adequate) for scanning ease, in spite of the fact that a high proportion of the releases (four-fifths approximately) was scored easy to read and understand. The seeming paradox here is explained by the fact that while a good proportion of the information was written at the consumer's level of understanding, and the length was suitable, the presentation of the information was not concise. If time management is important to consumers, as one study indicated, consumers likely scan these releases only briefly, hoping to learn the highlights. The information in some issues had to be studied to learn the highlights.

The issues of market situation releases which scored high in ease of scanning had some or all of the following attributes: (1) featured foods were easy for the reader to pick out at a glance, in some cases they were listed in a concise introductory paragraph or as a menu featuring seasonal foods, (2) generally sentences and paragraphs were short with highlights in the lead sentence, (3) food groups were separated clearly, and easily identified, and (4) a moderate amount of price information was included with a limited number of price quotations.

The information in approximately two-fifths of the market situation releases scored low (less than adequate) for interest and appeal. Too complete a review and discussion of the current market

situation, and too many ideas concerning price, quality characteristics, and other situation information confused the reader, and reduced the interest rating of some issues. An outline of the foods in season, combined with a brief discussion of two or three commodities in each food group, was felt to be adequate. Variety in the presentation of price information added interest--some price description, some price quotations with frequent cost-value comparisons, and some discussion of the factors affecting price.

The information in some issues answered questions which consumers were not so likely to ask about the products under discussion, and left unanswered more likely and interesting questions. Those issues which were given a high interest rating stressed, in addition to a rundown of the foods in season currently, some of the following information:

1. Ways of economizing and making adjustments in spending by such means as the use of substitute foods; by the appropriate use of lower quality foods; by the purchase of seasonally plentiful foods in large quantities, where storage facilities were suitable; and by other means.

2. Time saving methods, which might include an introduction to new "convenience" foods, or suggestions for simplifying planning and shopping procedures and preparation methods.

3. Ways of adding variety to meals, with suggestions for the preparation of the less expensive meats as well as suggestions for appetizing food combinations.

A theme used in the presentation of the marketing information was not common, but when used appropriately, helped to unify and to increase the interest rating of the information. The occasional use of mouth-watering words to describe foods increased the appeal, for example: "snowy white cauliflower," and "meaty stewing chickens," and "tart pie apples."

Directions for the preparation and use of products were not sufficiently clear nor complete in approximately two-fifths of the market situation releases. Directions that were too general were scored down. Examples of this were: "Cook in small quantities at a low temperature," and "Cook at a low temperature for a long time." An example of a direction which was not complete enough for the reader to carry out follows: "Marinate the meat cubes overnight." The information in market situation releases has, necessarily, to be brief, but directions when given should be sufficiently explicit to give the reader some real guides for preparing and using the product.

The information in approximately two-fifths of the market situation releases was judged low (less than adequate) from a practical aspect. The data in Chapter III showed that buying guides were given for less than one-half of the meats mentioned in market situation releases (Table 3, page 29). Considering that the highest proportion of the food dollar is spent for meats, and that consumers say they have more problems concerning the purchase of meats, more buying guides for meats were needed in many of the market situation releases.

An example of a practical type of buying guide (and management practice) given in a market situation release follows:

Generally it is more economical to buy a whole fryer if you want legs, thighs, and breast and not use the rest, than it is to buy just the legs, thighs, and breast.

A second example of a "practical" guide follows:

Usually the whole ham is the best value if the family can use it, for it yields at least three servings per pound while halves and portions yield about two-and-a-half servings.

Long-range outlook information (yearly forecasts) was given occasionally but was judged impractical from the consumer's standpoint.

Some brief examples of information from market situation releases which were felt to be impractical for consumers to follow were :

Store eggs large end up.

Don't wash eggs until just before using.

Buy grade A eggs for poaching and frying, grades B and C for use in cooking and baking.

In the last instance, the advice was judged impractical because in the author's experience, grade C eggs are generally not available in food stores, and grade B eggs are only occasionally available. Similarly, the general and unqualified statement to "always buy meat by grade," was questioned in view of the fact that consumer knowledge of grades is limited (see Chapter II, page 8), and also because many food markets sell only one grade of fresh meat.

The information in a high proportion of the issues (three-quarters) was rated accurate, in so far as it was possible to check. In some instances, value judgments of the agents entered into their

writing, reducing the accuracy, such as: "Stewing chickens at the same price as broiler-fryers are a better value because of the large amount of meat to bone." The accuracy of this statement was challenged too from the standpoint that heavy stewers, with considerable fat, may be as expensive per serving as the broiler-fryers.

The information in approximately four-fifths of the issues of market situation releases was not sufficiently clear nor explicit to be rated "adequate." Additional information was needed in some cases to identify the foods mentioned (only one in four meats was identified, on the average) and to guide the consumer in the amount to buy (less than one quantity guide per issue was given, on the average).

Information which was not clear nor explicit, in the author's judgment, included wide price ranges without explanation, and price quotations without price or value relationships. The following value comparison did not make clear the basis for comparison: "Shoppers will find better grades of beef more reasonable." The following supply-price relationship did not make clear the net effect: "Today the number of beef animals ready to come to market is about 4 percent greater than a year ago, which has some influence upon the price you pay for beef."

Marketing information for dairy products was given very little emphasis in the market situation releases (Table 3, page 29). The author recognized that the numbers of fruits and vegetables on the market greatly exceeds the numbers of dairy products, which justifies some difference in emphasis for these two food groups. In view of

the fact, however, that consumers spend almost as much of their food dollar on dairy products as they do on fruits and vegetables (Chapter II, page 8), the decided difference in emphasis between the two food groups, which was evident in market situation releases, should be narrowed somewhat to give maximum help to consumers. Similarly, very little of the marketing information in market situation releases concerned cereal products, on which approximately 12 percent of the consumer food dollar is spent (Chapter II, page 8).

Information in market situation releases is necessarily brief, and hence the likelihood of suggestions and recommendations without adequate direction. Examples of this follow: "Look for quality in bananas," and "Choose lettuce carefully."

Feature Releases

The information in approximately one-third of the feature releases met adequately the criterion, "something of value" (Table 10). The information in only one-tenth of the issues (3 out of 30) was judged as little or no value from the consumer's standpoint. Nine-tenths of the sample met this "value" criterion either adequately or somewhat adequately.

The information in two-fifths of the feature releases was not at the consumer's level of knowledge. Technical terms, used to describe grades and standards and to describe the production and marketing of foods, contributed to a low score in some issues. The following terms were included in some issues and needed additional clarification: side pork, dry milk solids, range-fed beef, medium

grade beef, Boston butt, variety meats, front quarter cuts of beef, caponettes, deciduous fruits, artichokes, marbled lean, eye muscle, high quality protein, basic seven standards and others.

A high proportion of feature releases were easily scanned because they were generally written in an uncomplicated, straightforward manner, with short paragraphs and the highlights in the lead sentence of each paragraph, and with few price quotations.

The interest and appeal of approximately one-third of the feature articles was rated low (less than adequate). In some issues, information was included which was not presented in the light of consumer needs and interests, for example:

Take special care of pork in storage. Pork should be frozen as soon as possible after the carcass is well chilled. A quick freeze is recommended followed by 0 degrees or lower. Fresh pork can be satisfactorily stored at 0° F for 3 - 6 months.

More menu suggestions and ideas for food combinations would have increased the appeal and interest rating of feature articles in general (only two were given in thirty issues). Interest rating was lower where the "use" suggestions were merely listed, for example: "Use rhubarb for cobblers, salads, or puddings. " Contrast this with the appetizing serving suggestions for apples, given in one release, which follow:

Shine some for the fruit bowl, make several jars of apple sauce, but above all don't forget the many ways of baking with apples--deep dish apple pie, two-crust apple pie, or Dutch apple pie with crumb topping.

The interest rating of some issues was high because the marketing information was developed around some local interest or event. Some Agents wrote the marketing information from the standpoint

of the problems common to homemakers, identifying themselves with their audience, and their problems. Here again, the interest rating was high.

The information in about one-third of the feature issues was judged low (less than adequate) from a practical aspect. The unqualified suggestion in one issue to "cut the more tender muscle of the chuck into 1½ inch cubes for kabobs and grind the rest for hamburger" was felt to be too difficult for the "average" homemaker in light of her likely ability to identify the "eye muscle" and in view of the inadequacy of most household equipment for grinding raw meat.

Price-value relationships is a practical type of information and not so readily available to consumers from other sources, or through observation. At least one-third of the feature issues was lacking this type of information, and in no issues were price comparisons made between different grades or qualities of a food (Table 4, page 31).

The information in a little less than two-thirds of the feature issues was not sufficiently complete nor explicit to be scored "adequate." The kinds of information which were generally felt to be lacking in feature articles were: (1) explanations of, or information on grades, standards, and labels (included in 3 instances in 30 issues); (2) explanations of laws and regulations associated with food marketing (included in 3 instances in 30 issues); (3) definitions of marketing terms (only 5 were given in the total sample); (4) descriptions of marketing services and/or the costs of such services (given in only 2 instances in 30 issues);

and (5) guides for selecting the most suitable kind, form, size, or quality of food (less than one such item per issue was included).

A "complete" presentation was one in which most of the choices facing the consumer in buying the featured food were discussed, such as choices of form, quality, size, amount of service, kinds of food substitutes, with some price-value comparisons.

Some allowance must be made in these data concerning the completeness with which a subject was discussed in any one issue. The sample of four feature releases from each Agent was not large enough to show the extent of continuity and overlap in the subject areas discussed over the period of a year. On the other hand, findings in Borton's study indicated that many readers do not read the consumer marketing column every week.¹ This being the case, the Agent cannot rely on developing a subject over time but must make the information in each release more or less self-contained.

Commodity Releases

The information in one-quarter of the commodity releases was judged to meet adequately the criterion "something of value." The information in approximately one-fifth of the commodity releases (6 issues out of 28) was judged as "little or no value." Four-fifths of the sample met this "value" criterion either adequately or somewhat adequately (Table 10).

The information in just less than one-half of the commodity releases was not at the consumer's level of understanding for the same reasons given for feature releases.

¹Borton, op. cit., p. 142.

One-half of the commodity releases was judged too long.

The information in four-fifths of the issues was not easily scanned. These judgments are attributed to lack of organization and poor presentation of information in some issues. Some information would have been better presented in a tabular or outline form rather than in narrative form, such as, quality characteristics, varieties and uses for foods, directions for storage and preservation, and price-value comparisons.

The titles and sub-headings used for the commodity releases were not always sufficiently informative to contribute to scanning ease. Contrast for example the title head to a pork sheet, "Three Little Pigs Go to Market" with a more arresting and informative title, "Green Cabbage--Low Cost Vitamin C!"

The information in about two-thirds of the issues of commodity releases was not sufficiently interesting nor appealing to be scored "adequate." In some cases a poor layout and printing job was the reason for the lack of appeal. In other instances, the information lacked appeal because facts were stated, particularly explanations of grading and labelling, without making the consumer aware of how this could save her money, be safer, more convenient, or in other ways benefit her.

The question and answer technique used in one commodity sheet was judged an excellent form of presentation and one which would attract considerable interest and attention.

Brief appetizing serving suggestions rather than the average number of three full recipes per issue (Table 7, page 38)

would have captured consumer interest and shortened the releases. Some recipes were not written in standard form, which made them hard to follow. Again, some of the recipes were not the type which are quickly and easily prepared, a type most consumers seem to prefer.

The information in two-thirds of the commodity releases was rated low (less than adequate) from a practical standpoint, and generally for the same reasons given for feature releases (page 56). Most of the preservation information in commodity releases was freezing instructions. In view of the number of homemakers who still preserve by canning, this type of practical information was felt lacking in commodity releases generally.

An example of a buying and management guide judged practical (from the standpoint of the middle and upper income groups) was the advice to "buy a seven or eight-inch rib roast of beef, from which three different meals could be prepared at a lower average cost per pound than if each cut were bought separately." A similar type of "practical" buying and management guide was given also for the full-cut leg of lamb.

The information was not explicit in some issues for the reason that the key points, the message, was often obscure. One issue, for example, featured whole-grain cereals but the highlight of the message, namely, that these foods have high food value at a minimum cost, was buried in a maze of detail. Again, a commodity release featured beef steaks, but the reader's attention was not focussed on the key point, namely, that top quality steaks were available at the season's lowest prices.

The consumer buying a particular food product may have to decide between different qualities, varieties or grades, quantities, forms, amount of "built-in" service, and other possible choices. These choices were not adequately discussed, it was felt, in some commodity releases and hence the information was judged incomplete.

Less than one-half (43 percent) of the commodity releases contained nutrition information (Table 1, page 26), which is a type of information consumers appear to need (Chapter II, page 9), and one which combines well with marketing information. Nutrition information, where it occurred, was most generally given as a list of food components, such as: "Most cereals are enriched with thiamin, iron, and niacin." This information would have greater significance for the "average" consumer if it were combined with some explanation of the need for these vitamins in maintaining one's health.

Some nutrition information needed a basis for comparison to be meaningful. How well informed is the consumer who reads that "a potato contains only 100 calories"? How much better informed is the consumer who reads that "a small potato is no more fattening than an apple or an orange and contains only one-half the number of calories of a sugar doughnut."

Some information was not explicit for the reason that suggestions were made without giving adequate direction or information. For example, the suggestion was given to compare costs among different forms of peaches. The following information was supplied:

Fresh peaches	1 lb.....	4 servings
Canned peaches	1 lb. 13 oz.....	7 servings
Frozen peaches	10 oz.....	3 servings
Dried peaches	11 oz.....	5½ servings

It is doubtful whether the "average" consumer would know how to make the comparisons here unless shown, in detail, how to do it.

Summary

The most important evaluation criterion in the author's opinion, was expressed: "Is this information of value to consumers?" The "value" of the information was determined in effect from the rating given for nine other evaluation criteria used in scoring each issue. Judgment of an issue was made in total. The evaluation was not based on a single omission or occurrence, although excerpts were cited to indicate the factors which entered into the author's value judgments.

Market situation releases, as a group, met adequately the criterion "something of value" in a higher proportion of instances than feature articles, and these in turn than commodity releases.

The information in only a small proportion of all releases was judged as "little or no value." The author believes, however, that the content and presentation of 50 percent or more of each kind of release could be improved to make them even more valuable to consumers.

A high proportion of all releases was scored low (less than adequate) because the information was not sufficiently clear nor explicit. Similarly, the information in a high proportion of releases was scored low from the standpoint of its practical application for consumers.

Format and style were evaluated as well as the information content. All aspects were felt to influence the amount of attention which each release would attract and hold.

The Extent to Which the Information in the Sample
Met Four MIC Program Objectives

The information in each issue was evaluated from the standpoint of the extent to which it contributed to the potential achievement of four Program objectives. A high proportion (76 percent) of the total sample had some potential in meeting three or more of the objectives. The results follow:

Proportion of issues judged to have some potential for contributing to the achievement of:

All four objectives.....	42%
Three or more objectives.....	76%
Two or more objectives.....	91%
One or more objectives.....	100%

Each of the four objectives and the data relating to it, shown in Table 11, will be discussed briefly.

Objective I

Encourage the consumption of foods in season and/or help move plentiful food(s).

The information in a high proportion (70 percent) of both the market situation releases and the feature articles was rated "potentially good" from the aspect of its contribution toward the achievement of this objective. Only about one-third of the commodity releases was rated "potentially good," and the information in over one-third (36 percent) of the commodity releases was rated low with regard to its potential in fulfilling this objective.

TABLE 11

EXTENT TO WHICH THE INFORMATION IN THREE KINDS OF RELEASES MET FOUR MIC PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Objectives	Kind of Release					
	Market Situation		Feature		Commodity Sheet	
	Number of Issues	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues	Proportion of Sample	Number of Issues	Proportion of Sample
Objective I						
Encourage consumption of foods in season and/or help move plentiful foods	33	70	21	70	9	32
Potentially good	12	26	6	20	9	32
Some potential	2	4	3	10	10	36
No potential						
Objective II						
Provide adequate information on marketing and economic principles on which to base satisfactory decisions	22	47	5	17	3	11
Potentially good	21	45	18	60	13	46
Some potential	4	8	7	23	12	43
No potential						
Objective III						
Motivate to adopt better buying and management practices	18	36	8	27	5	18
Potentially good	26	55	14	47	17	61
Some potential	3	8	8	27	6	21
No potential						
Objective IV						
Help consumers understand the production and marketing process	11	23	4	13	1	4
Potentially good	17	36	14	47	12	43
Some potential	19	40	12	40	15	54
No potential						
Number of Issues	47		30		28	

The information which was given a high rating with reference to this objective drew the reader's attention to the high quality, value, or convenience factors of the seasonal foods, and possibly to the variety of ways in which the foods could be prepared and served.

Objective II

Provide adequate information on marketing and economic principles on which to base satisfactory decisions.

The potential of the information from the standpoint of this objective was good in almost one-half (47 percent) of the market situation releases, but the information in only 17 percent of the feature articles and 11 percent (3 of 28 issues) of commodity releases was rated "potentially good." A high proportion (43 percent) of the commodity releases was given the rating "no potential" with respect to fulfilling this decision-making aspect.

Information which was rated "potentially good" gave the consumer adequate direction regarding what to buy, when to buy, and possibly, where to buy.

Objective III

Motivate to adopt better buying and management practices.

The information in a little over one-third of the market situation releases was rated "potentially good" from the standpoint of its contribution to the fulfillment of this objective. This rating was given to a smaller proportion of the feature articles (27 percent) and to only 18 percent (5 out of 28 issues) of the commodity releases. The information in a high proportion of each kind

of release, had "some potential" with respect to the fulfillment of this objective.

The author felt here that consumers would only be motivated to change old practices and adopt new ones where the advantages of the new practices were pointed out. A high rating was given to information which combined reasons with the recommendations of how to (or not to) plan, buy, store or use foods.

Objective IV

Help consumers understand the production and marketing process.

Less than one-quarter of any of the releases was rated "potentially good" from the standpoint of the contribution toward the achievement of this objective. Two-fifths of both the market situation releases and the feature articles had "no potential," and over one-half (54 percent) of the commodity releases had "no potential" from the aspect of achieving this objective.

Information describing the production and marketing process was rated "potentially good" if it was written in terms a homemaker would be likely to understand and, possibly, from the standpoint of the implications to consumers.

Summary

The information in the three kinds of releases was evaluated from the standpoint of its potential value in contributing toward the achievement of four MIC Program objectives

The data indicated that a high proportion of the total sample made some potential contribution to the satisfaction of three or more of the objectives.

The information in all releases was generally rated lower from the aspect of its potential for helping consumers understand the production and marketing process than it was from the aspect of its potential for meeting the other three objectives. Proportionately fewer commodity releases than market situation releases and feature articles were rated "potentially good" with reference to the value of the information in fulfilling each of the four MIC objectives.

CHAPTER V

THE EVALUATION OF MIC INFORMATION BY TWO GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS

The purpose of this study is to assess the value of information in MIC releases from the standpoint of the consumer. It is important to have some indication of what consumers themselves think of this information. Two surveys were made involving homemakers as well as home economists and agricultural economists. The opinions and suggestions of these two groups, regarding the information, are discussed in this present chapter.

Seven hypotheses, based on the author's evaluation of the information, were developed from preceding data. These hypotheses were tested in the process of the responding groups' evaluation of the information. The results of testing the hypotheses are summarized in the concluding section of this chapter.

The Survey Method

A panel of fourteen, representing home economists and agricultural economists, was selected by the author to evaluate information from the sample of MIC releases. The panel members are employed as follows:

Homemaking teachers (Junior and Senior High School).....	3
Foods and nutrition teachers (College).....	2
Nutrition consultant (Health department).....	1
Home management teachers (College).....	2
Home demonstration agents (Extension).....	2
Professors of agricultural economics (Marketing).....	2
Graduate students (Consumer marketing).....	2

One hundred and five homemakers, selected on a random basis, from the cities of Lansing and East Lansing, cooperated in a survey made of consumers. The homemakers were contacted by an interviewer at their homes. One re-call only was attempted, hence the sample included few women working outside of their homes.

Homemakers were asked to read several samples of MIC releases,¹ and to write answers to questions, chiefly about these releases. The materials were left with the homemakers about one week and picked up by the interviewer. Some consumers took the questionnaire but did not fill it out. A total of two hundred and ninety-two homemakers were interviewed, and of these, one hundred and five (36 percent) filled out the questionnaire.

The characteristics of the consumer group are given in Table 12.

Certain biases in the consumer sample were evident when the characteristics (in Table 12) were compared to a representative sample of Lansing and East Lansing consumers, taken in 1956, in which two thousand one hundred and three families participated.

The nature of the biases in the sample of consumers used in this study are summarized as follows:

1. A higher proportion of families with three or more members was represented.
2. A higher proportion of homemakers in the age group 30-44 years was represented, and smaller proportions in the age groups above and below this range.

¹See MIC releases in Appendix, pp. 120-122.

TABLE 12

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONSUMER GROUP

Characteristics	Number of Consumers	Proportion of the Total Respondents
Family Size		
Over six	7	7
Three - six	70	67
Less than three	22	21
(No answer)	6	6
Age of Homemaker		
Under thirty	14	13
30-44 years	48	46
45-64 "	26	25
65 or over	10	10
(No answer)	7	7
Schooling of Homemaker		
Some grade school	1	1
Grade eight completed	4	4
Some high school	19	18
High school completed	30	29
Some college	18	17
College completed	23	22
(No answer)	10	10
Income of Family Unit		
Less than \$2,500	3	3
\$2,500-4,999	22	21
\$5,000-7,999	46	44
\$8,000-9,999	12	11
\$10,000 or over	10	10
(No answer)	12	11

3. A higher proportion of homemakers with some or complete college education was represented.

4. A higher proportion of homemakers in the higher income levels (over \$5,000 per year) was represented.

The education bias was expected in view of the fact that the respondents were asked to read three releases and to write answers to questions, all of which took time and thought.

The education and income bias of this consumer group were reflected, in all probability, in their evaluation of the information. This group would likely understand information and terms which a group more representative of the lower education level would not understand. They would tend to be less critical of information from the aspect of money-saving value and its practical value, the author feels. The evaluation results which follow, therefore, do not express the opinion and judgment of the low income, low education consumer groups, so much as they represent the thinking of the middle and upper income and education groups.

The Questionnaires

Similar questionnaires were developed for use with each group of respondents. A number of the questions were based on information in two market situation releases used in the MIC sample and previously evaluated by the author. The releases used with the questionnaires typified average and above-average types of releases and thus represented what Michigan MIC Program can do, not necessarily what it always does do.

The releases were chosen to illustrate differences in style, organization, content, and length, in order to facilitate comparison. The market situation release "A"² was written in a simple, straightforward style. The price information and value comparisons in this release did not include price quotations, a menu suggestion was given, the different food groups were clearly set apart and identified by group headings.

Market situation release "B"³ was written in a conversational style. Frequent price quotations and value comparisons were given; the release was longer than release "A" although fewer food products were mentioned in release "B".

Excerpts of information from three kinds of MIC releases were included in both questionnaires. These excerpts were selected to illustrate differences in types of outlook, price, buying guides, and other types of marketing information. Respondents evaluated the usefulness of the information in each excerpt.

The consumer group, in addition, was asked to evaluate the information in one commodity release.⁴ This issue was written after the sample for this study was drawn. Changes have been made in commodity releases, and the author felt that this issue was more typical of the type of commodity release written currently.

The professional respondents evaluated the samples of information from the aspect of the value of the information to the "average

²See market situation release "A" in Appendix, p. 120.

³See market situation release "B" in Appendix, p. 121.

⁴See commodity release in Appendix, p. 122.

consumer,"⁵ and also, the degree to which the information met each of four Program objectives.

Consumer respondents compared and evaluated the releases and excerpts from the standpoint of the amount of help they themselves would get from the information. Both groups were asked to give suggestions for improving the releases.

Consumer Interest in Food Marketing Information

The majority of the consumer group said they would look for and read MIC releases. Eighty-five percent of those answering the question, "Would you look for and read market situation releases in your newspaper?" said "yes." Eighty-three percent of the consumers answering said they would look for and read commodity releases. A number qualified their "yes" answers by saying: "If the releases were readily available and in the same spot in the newspaper (or store) each week."

The consumers were asked how often they read the market situation release in the local city newspaper. Sixty-three percent said they read it at least once a month. The others said they read it less than once a month or never. Borton reported that 55 percent of the Lansing consumers sampled in his study read the MIC releases at least once a month.⁶ The results of the two studies are not significantly different.

⁵The term "average consumer" was not defined in the questionnaire.

⁶Borton, op. cit., p. 92.

The Value of Information in MIC Releases

The fourteen panelists (professionals) rated the information in each of two market situation releases from the standpoint of the "help it would be to consumers in its present form." The results are given in Table 13.

TABLE 13

THE VALUE OF INFORMATION IN TWO MARKET SITUATION RELEASES

Item	Rating		
	High Value	Some Value	Little Value
Professional Response			
Release "A"	6	7	1
Release "B"	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>11</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>3</u>
Percentage	<u>39</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>11</u>

The author's rating of each release fell at the group's modes.

One-half of the aggregate professional response fell in the "some value" rank. A very high proportion (89 percent) of the aggregate response was included in the combined ranks "high value" and "some value."

The reader is again reminded that the above evaluations were based on two of the better MIC releases. The evaluation needs to be interpreted in this light.

Is the information in MIC releases of more value to one consumer than to another? This question was not asked in either of the questionnaires but some opinion relevant to the question was expressed incidentally by the respondents.

One professional who works with low income consumers made the following comment with reference to the information in the market situation releases: "This won't reach them. You're talking way above them and they're the ones who need help so desperately."

One consumer read the releases but did not fill out the questionnaire. She did, however, volunteer her opinion of the information. The essence of this consumer's opinion follows:

These forms (releases) are not for us homemakers who have to depend on a weekly check of \$60.00. We do not pay 80 cents to \$1.00 for meats. We buy roasts at 49 to 59 cents a pound, and some chicken. We don't have a freezer, except the one in the refrigerator. We can't have the vegetables we can afford. We eat such things as baked apples, apple sauce, rice pudding.

The above comment has added significance in view of the fact that a small proportion of the homemakers in this survey, it will be recalled, was from the low education, low income group.

A comment pertaining to the value of the information, by one of the professionals, expressed in effect the opinion that only those consumers who had some motivation to begin with would be helped by the information in the releases, but for others, the value would be negligible.

These opinions are only suggestive of areas which should be given further consideration and study.

The Extent to Which the Information in MIC Releases
Met Four Program Objectives

The respondents in both groups compared and evaluated the information in two market situation releases from the standpoint of its potential for satisfying four MIC Program objectives. The consumers, in addition, evaluated the information in the commodity release from the standpoint of its potential contribution to the achievement of some Program objectives.

The data from the two questionnaires were regarded as comparable, although the objectives were stated in slightly different terms in each questionnaire. (Note: The reader is again referred to the samples of questionnaires and releases contained in the Appendix.)

Objective I

Points up the availability of foods in season. (Professional questionnaire)

This objective was tested only by the professional respondents.

The results are shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14

THE RATING OF TWO MARKET SITUATION RELEASES WITH RESPECT TO THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF A PROGRAM OBJECTIVE (I)

Item	Rating		
	High	Medium	Low
Professional Response			
Release "A"	12	2	0
Release "B"	7	5	2
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Aggregate Response	<u>19</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>
Percentage	<u>68</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>7</u>

The author's evaluation of release "A" fell at the same rank as the mode of the professional group. The information in release "B" was rated "medium" with reference to the achievement of this objective.

The majority (68 percent) of the aggregate professional response fell at the "high" rank. Release "A" was rated high by more professionals than release "B" from the standpoint of meeting this objective.

Objective II

Helps the consumer make more satisfying food buying decisions. (Professional questionnaire)
Helps in deciding what foods to buy. (Consumer questionnaire)

The data for both responding groups are given in Table 15.

TABLE 15.

THE RATING OF TWO KINDS OF MIC RELEASES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A PROGRAM OBJECTIVE (II)

Item	Rating		
	High	Medium	Low
I Professional Response			
Release "A"	5	7	2
Release "B"	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u>
Percentage	<u>39</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>18</u>
II Consumer Response			
Release "A"	32	26	10
Release "B"	<u>28</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>10</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>60</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>20</u>
Percentage	<u>44</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>15</u>
III Consumer Response *			
Commodity Release	73	20	10
Percentage	<u>71</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>10</u>

*The number of usable answers was much higher for commodity releases than for market situation releases in all cases.

The author's evaluation of both releases fell at the same rank as the modes of the professional group.

The largest proportion of the aggregate professional response in evaluating the information in the market situation releases in this instance, fell at the "medium" rank. The largest proportion of the aggregate consumer response fell at the "high" rank for the same releases. The scoring differences were small between the two groups, however.

The information in the commodity release, with reference to the achievement of this objective, was rated "high" by a majority (71 percent) of the consumers. It was also rated high by the author.

Objective III

Interests the consumer in becoming a more efficient food buyer and manager. (Professional questionnaire)
Helps save time and energy. Helps save money.
(Consumer questionnaire)

The data for both responding groups are given in Table 16.

The author assigned a "medium" rank to the information in release "A" and a "high" rank to the information in release "B", from the standpoint of interesting the consumer in becoming a more efficient food buyer and manager.

The largest proportion of the aggregate professional response fell at the "medium" rank. Similarly, the largest proportion of the aggregate consumer response fell at the "medium" rank with reference to both the time and energy-saving potential and the money-saving potential of the information in the two market situation releases.

TABLE 16

**THE RATING OF TWO KINDS OF MIC RELEASES WITH RESPECT TO THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF A PROGRAM OBJECTIVE (III)**

Item	Rating		
	High	Medium	Low
I Professional Response (Helps increase efficiency)			
Release "A"	5	5	4
Release "B"	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u>
Percentage	<u>39</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>18</u>
II Consumer Response (Helps save time, energy)			
Release "A"	23	31	14
Release "B"	<u>19</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>23</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>42</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>37</u>
Percentage	<u>31</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>27</u>
III Consumer Response (Helps save money)			
Release "A"	18	41	6
Release "B"	<u>40</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>58</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>11</u>
Percentage	<u>45</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>8</u>
IV Consumer Response (Helps save time, energy)			
Commodity Release	56	28	17
Percentage	<u>55</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>17</u>
V Consumer Response (Helps save money)			
Commodity Release	68	21	13
Percentage	<u>67</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>13</u>

Release "B" was rated "high" by more consumers than release "A" from the standpoint of the money-saving potential of the information, whereas release "A" was rated "high" by more consumers than

release "B" from the standpoint of the time and energy-saving potential of the information.

The majority of consumers assigned a "high" rank to the information in the commodity release from both the time-saving aspect and the energy-saving aspect. The author's rating of this release fell at the "medium" rank from the standpoint of its potential for saving time and energy; at the "high" rank from the standpoint of its potential for saving the consumer money.

Objective IV

Helps the consumer understand how foods are produced and marketed. (Professional and consumer questionnaires)

The data for both responding groups are given in Table 17.

The writer gave a "medium" rating to both market situation releases from the standpoint of meeting the above objective.

The largest proportion of the aggregate professional response fell at the "low" rank for the market situation releases. The largest proportion of the aggregate consumer response, on the other hand, fell at the "medium" rank for these releases from the standpoint of helping consumers understand how foods are produced and marketed.

The information in release "B" was rated "low" by ten of the fourteen professionals, whereas only three professionals rated the information in release "A" as "low" with reference to meeting objective IV. The consumer group did not show such a marked difference between the scores of the two market situation releases.

TABLE 17

**THE RATING OF TWO KINDS OF MIC RELEASES WITH RESPECT TO THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF A PROGRAM OBJECTIVE (IV)**

Item	Rating		
	High	Medium	Low
I Professional Response			
Release "A"	5	6	3
Release "B"	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>10</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>13</u>
Percentage	<u>25</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>46</u>
II Consumer Response			
Release "A"	23	29	15
Release "B"	<u>26</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>16</u>
Aggregate Response	<u>49</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>31</u>
Percentage	<u>37</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>23</u>
III Consumer Response			
Commodity Release	45	33	22
Percentage	<u>45</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>22</u>

The information in the commodity release was rated "high" by just less than one-half (45 percent) of the consumer group from the standpoint of contributing to the achievement of objective IV. The author rated the potential of the commodity release "medium" from the standpoint of satisfying objective IV.

Summary

The value judgments of the two responding groups showed a fairly high degree of similarity when the preceding data are reviewed. The greatest difference of opinion occurred in the evaluation of the information in the market situation releases from the

aspect of meeting the Program objective: "Helps the consumer understand how foods are produced and marketed." In this instance 46 percent of the aggregate professional response fell at the "low" rank, whereas only 23 percent of the aggregate consumer response fell at the "low" rank.

A majority of respondents in both groups rated the information in the market situation releases either "high" or "medium" with reference to the potential achievement of some Program objectives.

The commodity release was rated "high" by more consumers, on the average, than the two market situation releases from the standpoint of meeting these Program objectives.

Suggestions for Improving the MIC Releases

The professional group assigned numerical scores in their comparisons and evaluations of the various aspects of the market situation releases. The average scores, shown in Table 18, were used as an indication of preference with regard to subject matter, organization, style and length.

TABLE 18
SCORES ASSIGNED TO DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MARKET SITUATION RELEASES

Item	Aspects				Total
	Subject Matter	Organization	Style	Length	
Professional Response (Maximum score)	(10)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(25)
Release "A"	7	5	4	5	21
Release "B"	9	3	3	3	18

The average total score was higher for release "A" than for release "B". The subject matter content of release "B" was preferred on the average, however, to that of release "A" and the chief reason given was that the type of price information in "B" was preferred.

The main differences in the price information between the two releases were: (1) in release "B" price quotations were given but none were given in release "A", and (2) in release "B" five price-value comparisons were made, in release "A" only one price-value comparison was made. Another difference noted was that release "B" included more buying and management guides than release "A".

The style and organization of release "A" were preferred to the style and organization of release "B" according to the average numerical scores shown in Table 18. The chief differences in the style and organization of the two releases were:

1. The food groups in release "A" were clearly separated and distinguished by spacing and group headings, but the food groups in release "B" were not so well identified.
2. Release "A" was written in a simple, straightforward style, while release "B" was written in a conversational style with frequent descriptive phrases.
3. The paragraphs in release "B" were generally longer than those in release "A".
4. The lead sentences of each paragraph in release "A" outlined the highlights of information, and this styling was not used so consistently in release "B".

The length of release "A" was preferred by the professional respondents to that of release "B". A high proportion (72 percent) of the consumers scored release "A" as "just the right length." One-half of the consumers rated release "B" as "just the right length" but the majority (12 out of 14) of the professionals rated release "B" as "too long." One professional commented about release "B" as follows: "As valuable as the material is to the consumer, it would be rejected or skimmed rapidly because of its length and poor form." Release "B" was one to two paragraphs longer than release "A" in spite of the fact that more foods were mentioned in "A" (sixteen) than in release "B" (fourteen).

The length of the commodity release was rated "just right" by 89 percent of the consumers. The commodity release was just a single page.

Suggestions for Improving Market Situation Releases

The two responding groups made suggestions for improving release "A" and some of these follow:

- A. Suggestions for improving the information content of release "A":
 1. Include price quotations, more price relationships (pork versus beef, etc.), and costs per serving.
 2. Include more buying guides similar to those in release "B". (Quality characteristics for asparagus specifically were needed.)
- B. Suggestions for improving style and organization of release "A":
 1. Shorten and present information in outline form, tabulate or list the foods in season under headings.
 2. Use a column to the right of the narrative for price quotations.
 3. Give these releases an identifying title head which readers will come to know and recognize.

4. Use a standard form for menu writing (foods listed one below the other, in order of service) both to attract attention and to make reading easier.
5. Eliminate the "folksy" dialogue.

The two responding groups made suggestions for improving release "B" and these follow.

- A. Suggestions for improving the information content of release "B":
 1. Include menu and preparation suggestions. (Suggestions for "economy" meats were mentioned specifically.)
 2. Reduce the amount of "buymanship" information and the number of price quotations.
 3. Increase the amount of seasonal outlook information.
 4. Reduce the amount of information on meats and increase the amount on fruits and vegetables.
 5. Outline seasonal foods weekly, but feature one "best buy."
- B. Suggestions for improving style and organization of release "B":
 1. Shorten.
 2. Tabulate the statistics (e.g., meat prices, servings per pound, costs per serving).
 3. Shorter paragraphs and use paragraph headings.
 4. Write information in simpler English. A "clever" style is not necessary for this type of release.
 5. Use eye-catching drawings occasionally for presenting information.

Suggestions for Improving the Commodity Release

The suggestions given most frequently by the consumers for improving the commodity release follow:

1. Include more discussion of the different varieties and grades of both fresh and commercially processed peaches.
2. Include information on canning methods. (Two consumers wanted time costs included with preservation instructions.)
3. Point out the varieties of peaches recommended for eating fresh, and include serving suggestions for fresh peaches.
4. Reduce the amount of detail in cost comparisons. (Specific reference was made to the cost comparisons of processed fruit per pint at various prices per bushel for fresh peaches. Cost differences here were felt to be too small to merit the detailed breakdown.

The Kind of MIC Release Consumers Prefer

The consumer group was asked which of two kinds of MIC releases (market situation releases or commodity releases) they would prefer to have weekly in their local newspaper. Market situation releases were preferred, but only by a small majority. Fifty-eight percent preferred market situation releases; 42 percent preferred commodity releases.

Types of Information MIC Releases Should Include and Emphasize

A list of eight subject areas was given to the professionals. Respondents checked the types of information they felt should be included in MIC releases, and of these, the types which should be emphasized. Many respondents indicated that all of the areas listed should be included in food marketing releases. The results are given in Table 19.

TABLE 19

TYPES OF INFORMATION MIC RELEASES SHOULD INCLUDE AND EMPHASIZE

Types of Information	Professional Response	
	Areas to Include	Areas to Emphasize
	Number of Respondents	
Current market situation	13	12
Outlook	11	4
Buying guides		
Quality characteristics	10	10
Quantity guides	9	9
Kind, form, size, quality of a food	14	12
Management guides	10	2
Storage and preservation	11	2
Use and preparation	12	4
Nutrition	9	2
Production and marketing	12	3

The two subject areas mentioned most frequently for emphasis were: (1) current market situation, and (2) buying guide information. The type of buying guide mentioned most frequently for emphasis was "guides for selecting the most suitable kind, form, size or quality of a food."

Previous data (Table 2, page 27) showed that: the emphasis in market situation releases was on current market situation information and on buying guides; the emphasis in feature articles and commodity releases was on buying guides and storage or use information. The emphasis on buying guide information in all three kinds of releases was placed on product identification. (Table 5, pages 33-34). Less than one-half of the issues in each of the three kinds of releases contained buying guide information classified as "guides for selecting the most suitable kind, form, size or quality of a food."

The Demand for MIC Releases by Professional Respondents

The professionals were asked if they would like to be supplied with food marketing information, and if so, the form in which they would like it written.

Ten of the fourteen panelists (all of those who are currently teaching or advising in the area of foods from the consumer's standpoint--preparation, management or marketing) said they would like to be supplied with this information. Many of the respondents qualified their answers. Some professionals felt that at least two of the three forms suggested would be useful to them. The response to the question follows:

1. A release similar to the commodity sheet (see release in Appendix) would be useful to six professionals.

2. A release similar to the market situation articles (see releases in Apperdx) would be useful to four professionals.

3. A demonstration topic related to food marketing, with an outline, would be useful to three professionals.

Some of the qualifications and comments which were made by the professional group are listed below.

1. Put the information given in the market situation releases in a form similar to that used in the commodity release. (One professional)
2. Give a brief run-down only of the current "best buys" in food, with price quotations and a few price comparisons. (One professional)
3. Similar information to that given in the market situation releases is given in the U. S. D. A. plentiful foods sheets which are available to teachers and others.

Evaluation of Price Information

Five excerpts of different types of price information were evaluated by all of the respondents. These excerpts, with one exception, were taken from the sample of MIC releases. The excerpts and the evaluations, with comments, are discussed in the following section.

Price Excerpt I

Comparative price information was given in the following terms:

Broiler-fryer prices will interest most homemakers. There is about a 20 cent per pound difference in fryers depending upon size, quality, and whether they are cut up or whole.

TABLE 20
EVALUATION OF PRICE EXCERPT I

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	5	4	5	0
Consumer Response	47	32	17	9

The author rated this information "not useful." Here, it was felt, more information was needed to guide the consumer in her choice of size, quality, and amount of service.

As many professionals rated this information "not useful" as rated it "useful." Almost one-half of the consumers rated this "useful information" as indicated in Table 20.

Some of the recommendations made for increasing the value of this excerpt follow:

1. Make information more explicit. This doesn't tell me anything I don't know.
2. Give value comparisons.

Price Excerpt II

Comparative price information in different terms from the previous excerpt follows:

Right now pork sausage will cost you less than bacon for those better breakfast menus we're always talking about.

As shown in Table 21 a majority in both groups rated this information "useful" as did the author. Ten of fifteen consumers who

TABLE 21
EVALUATION OF PRICE EXCERPT II

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	10	3	0	1
Consumer Response	59	24	15	7

rated this information. "not useful" did so because they don't eat or like sausage, an answer which applied to the food discussed and not necessarily to the type of price information.

Price Excerpt III

The following excerpt gives comparative price information by means of a cost breakdown.

Plump breaded-and-cooked chicken thighs cost about \$1.00 for a package of 4. Serve 2 thighs per person and spend 50 cents. Look expensive? If you buy a fresh fryer for 43 cents a pound and allow 3/4 pound of chicken per person, you spend about 33 cents for a serving of fried chicken.

TABLE 22
EVALUATION OF PRICE EXCERPT III

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	14	0	0	0
Consumer Response	48	29	21	7

Table 22 summarizes the respondents' reaction to this excerpt.

A decided difference was shown in the evaluations between the two groups. All of the professionals rated this "useful information" as did the author. Just less than one-half of the consumers, however, rated this "useful information."

Some of the consumers who scored this excerpt "not useful" gave the following as their reasons:

1. It is not realistic to give costs per serving. My boys eat far more than this and I can't buy this way.
2. The information is confusing.

Other reasons did not apply to the type of information but to the food discussed.

Several professionals expressed the opinion that this type of price information "helped a homemaker think through that which she couldn't likely do without help." Several other professionals felt that this was an excellent teaching aid but only one such excerpt should be included per issue. Another added that it might be made even more complete by including quality and convenience comparisons.

Price Excerpt IV

The following excerpt gives price quotations with a list of "features" for the week.

When considering prices, remember it's the price per serving that really counts. A meat that appears high in price may in the long run give you more for your money because of more servings per pound.

Featured pork items this week include whole hams at 49 to 69 cents per pound, shanks as low as 39, and butts as low as 53 cents a pound. Pork chops range from 39 to 79 cents a pound.

TABLE 23
EVALUATION OF PRICE EXCERPT IV

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
Number of Respondents				
Professional Response	5	7	2	0
Consumer Response	55	27	18	5

One-half of the professionals rated this information "perhaps useful" whereas the majority of consumers rated it "useful" as shown in Table 23. The author rated it "not useful" as information for consumers.

Two suggestions for improving this excerpt were made by the respondents from both groups:

1. Include more information to make value comparisons possible (e.g., costs per serving).
2. Include explanations for the wide price ranges.

A few consumers commented that price information did not interest them. They bought what they wanted regardless of price. They were most interested in high quality foods which the family liked.⁷

Price Excerpt V

The following excerpt gives the "features" for the week without price quotations or value comparisons.

⁷The reader is again reminded that the sample was biased in favor of homemakers in the higher income groups.

Other selections that represent good values include frozen ocean perch, large tom turkeys, and leg of lamb in a group of markets. Stewing chickens will go a long way in stretching food dollars. Smelt is available and cost per serving is very reasonable.

TABLE 24
EVALUATION OF PRICE EXCERPT V

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	7	6	1	0
Consumer Response	57	29	11	8

The author rated this price information "not useful" for it was felt that the consumer could get this much information from a foodstore advertisement.

However, as shown in Table 24, one-half or more of the respondents in both groups rated this excerpt "useful information." Some respondents in both groups, however, made recommendations for improving this excerpt, some of which are:

1. Include price quotes and value comparisons
2. Define the term "reasonable"
3. Group only like foods together

Evaluation of Outlook Information

Two types of outlook information were included as excerpts in both questionnaires. These, with the evaluation data and comments, are given in the following section.

Outlook Excerpt I A

A different example of short-range outlook information was given in the two questionnaires. I A was included in the professional questionnaire; I B was given in the consumer questionnaire. The evaluation data were comparable in the two cases and are given in Table 25.

Eggs and beef are headliners for the week. Both are in heavy supply and are excellent buys in the local markets. Beef prices are not expected to go much lower, if any--so, this might be a good time to think about restocking the freezer.

Outlook Excerpt I B

The peak of the strawberry season for flavor and quality is expected to fall about the end of next week. You might like to plan your preserving accordingly.

TABLE 25
EVALUATION OF OUTLOOK EXCERPTS I A, I B

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	9	5	0	0
Consumer Response	71	24	8	2

The majority of respondents in both groups rated these excerpts of short-range outlook "useful information" as did the author.

Outlook Excerpt II

The excerpt to illustrate long-range outlook information was the same in both questionnaires, and follows with the data relating to it tabulated in Table 26.

From a December release: More chicken and turkey will be produced in 1957 and egg production is expected to be larger than in 1956. Retail broiler prices may rise slightly during 1957 but turkey prices through the summer should remain lower than last year.

TABLE 26
EVALUATION OF OUTLOOK EXCERPT II

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	0	6	8	0
Consumer Response	32	37	33	3

The ratings for the two groups in this case were not similar. The majority of professionals rated this information "not useful." The consumer group was split three ways in the evaluation of this information, only about one-third of the group rated the information "not useful." The author rated it "not useful" for the "average" consumer.

Evaluation of General Food Marketing Information

Various excerpts were included in both questionnaires to test the value of different types of general food buying information from the standpoint of the "average" consumer. These, together with the evaluation data and comments, are given in the following section.

General Food Marketing Excerpt I

The two excerpts which follow make recommendations of what to buy and how to prepare it. Excerpt I follows with the related data given in Table 27.

The low cost chuck roast can make a valuable contribution to grill cooking. The more tender muscles of the chuck can be cut into 1-1/2" cubes for kabobs--the rest of the roast can be ground for hamburger for another cook-out. The cubes cut for kabobs are marinated overnight and threaded on skewers for grilling--with mushrooms, onions, peppers or tomatoes.

TABLE 27

EVALUATION OF GENERAL FOOD MARKETING EXCERPT I

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
Number of Respondents				
Professional Response	7	4	3	0
Consumer Response	42	42	18	3

One-half of the professionals rated this "useful information." Less than one-half of the consumers gave this rating to the information. The author rated this information "not useful."

Some of each group rated the information "useful" because it gave them new ideas for using "economy" meats they said.

Some other respondents who rated this information "not useful" did so because they said it would be too difficult a procedure to carry out.

General Food Marketing Excerpt II

The second general food marketing excerpt follows.

If you're looking for something in the moderate price range, pork shoulder is an excellent choice. When roasted with your favorite stuffing and served with fresh apple-sauce, pork shoulder becomes the mainstay of a substantial autumn meal.

The responses to the excerpt are shown in Table 28.

TABLE 28

EVALUATION OF GENERAL FOOD MARKETING EXCERPT II

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
Number of Respondents				
Professional Response	8	5	1	0
Consumer Response	63	22	15	5

A majority of both groups of respondents rated this "useful information" as did the author. Several professionals, however, gave their suggestions for making the information more useful and these follow:

1. Give a more original accompaniment for pork than applesauce.
2. Include the approximate cost per serving.
3. Give an indication of what a "moderate price range" is.

General Food Marketing Excerpt III

This third excerpt gives information on the current market situation.

Marketings of lettuce, local fall crop potatoes and apples are expected to remain at a high level.

TABLE 29

EVALUATION OF GENERAL FOOD MARKETING EXCERPT III

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	2	3	9	0
Consumer Response	42	35	26	2

Table 29 shows that a much higher proportion of professionals than consumers rated this information "not useful" although about one-quarter of the consumers rated this information "not useful." The author's rating fell at the "not useful" rank.

Some respondents in both groups felt that this was information which they would read and forget. Eleven consumers said they regarded the foods mentioned as staple items which they bought regardless of price. One of the most frequent suggestions made to improve this excerpt follows:

Define or make clear the meaning of the term "marketings at a high level." (Five consumers and one professional indicated by their replies that they associated either high price or high quality with this term.)

General Food Marketing Excerpt IV

The following excerpt recommends to the consumer a type of marketing practice.

When buying turkey, check the labels. The more mature birds require longer cooking.

The response to this excerpt is given in Table 30.

TABLE 30

EVALUATION OF GENERAL FOOD MARKETING EXCERPT IV

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	4	4	4	2
Consumer Response	63	21	17	4

A much higher proportion of consumers than professionals rated this information "useful." The professionals who answered were divided evenly three ways in their opinions as to the degree

of usefulness of this information. The author rated this excerpt "perhaps useful" for the reason that it drew attention to a good marketing practice, but needed more specific information to be useful.

Some respondents in both groups felt that this information would be known by all but the most inexperienced cooks. Some fifteen consumers, however, in their comments contradicted this when they said this information was new to them and would help them plan cooking times. Suggestions made to improve this excerpt follow.

1. Include information as to just how much longer to cook mature birds.
2. Tell the reader just what information she would find on the turkey label to indicate maturity--age? weight? sex?

Evaluation of Nutrition Information

Four excerpts, illustrating different types of nutrition information, were included in both questionnaires. These, together with the evaluation data and comments, are given in the following section.

Nutrition Excerpt I

Two excerpts pertaining to the nutritional value of milk were included in both questionnaires. The first of these reads as follows:

Milk helps keep the ageing bones (and whose aren't) from getting brittle and tends to keep the body percolating at top efficiency.

The data in Table 31 shows that over one-half of those responding in both groups rated this nutrition excerpt "useful

TABLE 31
EVALUATION OF NUTRITION EXCERPT I

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	7	4	2	1
Consumer Response	58	16	24	7

information" as did the author. The one reason given by both groups for giving this rating was that the information was easy to understand. The reason some respondents rated it "not useful" was that this information was already known. One professional felt that the information was too vague, another felt that such a blanket statement was not accurate and said: "Milk alone cannot be given full credit for bone health."

Nutrition Excerpt II

The following excerpt also refers to the nutritional value of milk.

Milk is always a best buy. Mrs. Consumer spends about 17% of each food dollar on dairy products and finds it money well spent. With the money outlay for each quart of milk, she buys 144% of her daily calcium requirement, 120% of her needed riboflavin, 62% of the protein required, and 31% of the daily quota of vitamin A.

The evaluations of this excerpt, given in Table 32, were not so similar for the two groups as they were for the previous nutrition

TABLE 32
EVALUATION OF NUTRITION EXCERPT II

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	3	8	3	0
Consumer Response	57	26	16	6

excerpt. A much higher proportion of consumers than professionals rated this second excerpt "useful information." The majority of professionals rated this information "perhaps useful." The author rated it "not useful."

Some of the suggestions given for improving this excerpt were:

1. Simplify the information.
2. Put the information in terms of a woman's recommended daily allowance for milk.
3. Give a basis of comparison to pinpoint "best buy."

Nutrition Excerpt III

A third nutrition excerpt follows with the evaluation data concerning it in Table 33.

A potato a day is an economical way to add energy, vitamin C, vitamin B, iron, calcium and phosphorus to the daily diet. Weight watchers need not fear potatoes--one medium potato has but 100 calories.

A much higher proportion of consumers than professionals rated this "useful information" although the mode in both groups fell at this rank. The author rated this information "perhaps useful."

TABLE 33
EVALUATION OF NUTRITION EXCERPT III

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	7	5	1	1
Consumer Response	70	21	7	7

Some of each group commented that this was straightforward nutrition information, especially useful to dieters, and interesting because it was in terms of calories.

Two professional respondents felt that unless some indication of the vitamin and mineral content were given, consumers would place too much reliance on the potato as a source of such nutrients as vitamin C, when in fact potatoes contain variable and small amounts of this and other nutrients.⁸

Nutrition Excerpt IV

A fourth nutrition excerpt follows with the evaluation data concerning it in Table 34.

Why are eggs a good buy? Because an egg contains high quality complete protein, plus necessary vitamins and minerals. Nutritionists recommend one egg each day in your diet.

⁸The reader is referred to p. 110 for a discussion of the possible reason for the difference between the different groups of respondents in the evaluation of the nutrition excerpts.

TABLE 34
EVALUATION OF NUTRITION EXCERPT IV

Response	Rating			
	Useful Information	Perhaps Useful	Not Useful	No Answer
	Number of Respondents			
Professional Response	7	6	1	0
Consumer Response	66	20	12	7

One-half or more of both groups of respondents rated this "useful information." The one reason expressed for this rating was that it was straightforward information given in terms of economy and nutrition, which was of interest. The author rated this excerpt "perhaps useful."

Several professionals questioned the recommendation of as many as seven eggs a week when newer U. S. food standards recommend only four to five eggs weekly. Thirteen consumers felt that this was not new information, therefore not useful to them, except as a reminder.

A suggestion made to improve the excerpt follows:

Show how eggs compare nutritionally and price-wise with substitute foods. (One professional said that information in terms of food alternates was particularly useful to low income consumers.)

The Hypotheses

Seven hypotheses were developed from the author's evaluation of the sample of MIC releases. The evaluation of some of these

releases and of excerpts from MIC releases by a total of one hundred and nineteen respondents, provided a means of testing the hypotheses. The results are regarded as tentative in view of the small number of respondents who participated in the survey, and the small amount of MIC material which the respondents evaluated.

The results are summarized and presented in this section with statements of the hypotheses.

Hypothesis I

Consumers are interested in food marketing information as presented in Michigan's MIC releases.

The majority of one hundred and five consumers said that they would look for and read market situation releases and commodity releases, typified for them by three samples of MIC releases.

Sixty-three percent of this consumer group said they read the market situation releases which appeared in their local newspaper at least as often as once a month.

These findings help to confirm this hypothesis.

Hypothesis II

The information in Michigan's MIC releases, in general, has potential value for consumers.

The group of fourteen professionals evaluated the information in two market situation releases (representing average and above-average MIC releases) from the standpoint of its overall value to consumers. A high proportion (89 percent) of the aggregate response

was included in the two ranks "high value" and "some value." This evaluation helps to validate this hypothesis.

The information in three sample releases was evaluated by the respondents from the standpoint of the potential for meeting some Program objectives. These results, outlined under hypothesis III, also help to confirm this hypothesis.

Hypothesis III

The information in Michigan's MIC releases, in general, has potential with respect to meeting four MIC Program objectives.

Objective I. Points up the availability of foods in season.

The professional respondents evaluated the information in two market situation releases, with reference to the achievement of the objective. The majority (68 percent) of the aggregate response here fell at the rank "high" (potential). One-quarter of the aggregate response fell at the rank "medium" (potential). These results help to validate this hypothesis.

Objective II. Helps the consumer make more satisfying food buying decisions.

All respondents evaluated the information in two market situation releases (the consumers in addition evaluated the information in one commodity release) from the aspect of the potential contribution made to the achievement of this Program objective and to the achievement of each of two other Program objectives.

A large proportion (82 percent) of the aggregate professional response fell at the two ranks "high" and "medium" (potential) with

reference to the achievement of objective II. Similarly, a large proportion (85 percent) of the aggregate consumer response fell at the "medium" and "high" ranks in the evaluation of the information in the market situation releases with reference to the objective. The majority (71 percent) of the consumers rated the information in the commodity release "high" with respect to its potential for meeting this objective.

These results help to confirm this hypothesis.

Objective III. Interests the consumer in becoming a more efficient food buyer and manager. Helps save time and energy. Helps save money.

In the evaluation of the two market situation releases, a large proportion of the aggregate professional and consumer response fell at the rank "medium" with respect to the potential achievement of this objective. The majority (67 percent) of consumers rated the information in the commodity release "high" with respect to the potential for meeting this objective.

These results help to validate this hypothesis.

Objective IV. Helps the consumer understand how foods are produced and marketed.

Almost one-half (46 percent) of the aggregate professional response fell at the rank "low" (potential), however, more than one-half (54 percent) of the aggregate professional response fell at the two ranks "high" and "medium." Well over one-half (77 percent) of the aggregate consumer response in the evaluation of the market situation releases fell at the two ranks "high" and "medium" (potential). The majority of consumers rated the information in the commodity

release either "high" or "medium" with respect to the potential for meeting this objective.

These results confirm this hypothesis, to some extent.

Hypothesis IV

Michigan's MIC releases, in general, could be improved from the standpoint of their value to consumers.

The professional group rated the overall value to consumers of the information in two market situation releases. More than one-half (61 percent) of their aggregate response fell at one of two ranks, "some value" or "little value." The majority of this group apparently felt that the information in the releases could be improved in order to be rated "high" from the standpoint of its value to consumers.

The consumer group indicated by their response that the value of the information in the two market situation releases in particular could be improved, and be more help to them in deciding what foods to buy; in saving time, energy, and money; and in understanding how foods are produced and marketed. Consumer opinion regarding the value of the information in selected excerpts indicated that, here again, the information could be made more useful. The group made numerous suggestions for improving the excerpts of information taken from MIC releases.

These results help to validate this hypothesis.

Hypothesis V

Food marketing information for consumers should emphasize three areas: (1) the current market situation, (2) buying guides, and (3) management guides.

Only the first two of these areas were mentioned for emphasis by a majority of the professional respondents. Management guides were mentioned for emphasis by only two of fourteen respondents. Guides for selecting the most suitable kind, form, size, or quality of a food was a type of buying guide mentioned for emphasis by twelve of fourteen respondents. In view of the fact that this type of buying guide can also be classified as a management guide, the results in testing this hypothesis are inconclusive.

Hypothesis VI

Consumers prefer, as a weekly entry in the newspaper, information on the overall market situation to a single food feature.

Market situation releases (the overall market situation) were preferred to commodity releases (single food feature) as a type of weekly article in the local newspaper by a small majority. Fifty-eight percent of the consumers preferred market situation releases, 42 percent preferred commodity releases.

These results help, somewhat, to confirm this hypothesis.

Hypothesis VII

The author's value judgments were more like than unlike the value judgments of other home economists and economists, and more like than unlike the value judgments of consumers; the value judgments of home economists and economists were more like than unlike consumers' value judgments.

The author's evaluation of MIC releases and of excerpts of information from MIC releases was compared to the evaluation of the same material by other home economists, economists, and consumers (homemakers). A summary of the results are given in Tables 35 and 36.

TABLE 35

A COMPARISON OF THE AUTHOR'S EVALUATION OF INFORMATION WITH
THE EVALUATIONS BY TWO GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS

Classification	Author's Rating
	Number of Instances
Coincided with the mode of the professional group	10
Fell above the mode of the professional group	2
Fell below the mode of the professional group	5
Coincided with the mode of the consumer group	7
Fell above the mode of the consumer group	0
Fell below the mode of the consumer group	11

TABLE 36

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO RESPONDING GROUPS' EVALUATIONS

Classification	Professional Group Rating
	Number of Instances
Coincided with the mode of the consumer group	9
Fell above the mode of the consumer group	0
Fell below the mode of the consumer group	7

Evaluation comparisons were not made in three instances where no mode occurred.

The following are the conclusions drawn from these data:

1. The author's value judgments were more often like than unlike the value judgments of other home economists and economists.
2. The author's value judgments were more often unlike than like the value judgments of consumers.
3. The value judgments of home economists and economists were more often like than unlike the value judgments of consumers

Where there were differences, the author and the professionals rated the information lower than the consumer group.

The differences in the ratings among the different respondents might possibly be attributed to such factors as the following:

1. Consumers (and agricultural economists) are not, on the average, technically able to judge some kinds of information. For example, many consumers assumed that the nutrition excerpts, included in the questionnaire, were correct, when in fact, some professionals questioned their accuracy.

2. Consumers would tend to be less critical of the information than the professional respondents (most of whom were trained in some phase of foods). Consumers would tend to up-grade their response as a result.

3. The author felt that the greatest contribution to the Program would come from a critical evaluation of the information, and for this reason, pointed out as many apparent defects as possible.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was an evaluation of some of Michigan's Marketing Information for Consumers releases, to assess the value of the information to consumers and to determine the extent to which some of the Program's objectives were met. The efforts of those involved in this MIC Program are undoubtedly limited by factors unknown to the author, but with the knowledge available, the author made recommendations for improving the Program where they seemed appropriate.

The information was studied by means of a content analysis, a method of breaking material down into its component parts, to compare with known standards. A small panel of fourteen "professionals" (home economists and agricultural economists) and a group of one hundred and five homemakers evaluated specific releases and excerpts from releases, and, in so doing, tested the hypotheses proposed by the author. In view of the size of the sample of information and the size of the surveys, the results of this study may better be regarded as suggestive than as substantially conclusive.

Conclusions

The major findings of this study are summarized in the following ten conclusions.

Conclusion

1. Consumers, in general, want food marketing information.
2. Eighty-eight percent of the MIC releases sampled contained some information of potential value to homemakers.
3. Fifty percent or more of the MIC releases sampled could be substantially improved.
4. The market situation releases sampled were rated higher by the author than feature releases, and these in turn, higher than commodity releases, from the standpoint of the potential value of the information to consumers.
5. a. Eighty-three percent of the releases have information which has some potential to contribute to the satisfaction of the objective: "Encourage the consumption of foods in season and/or help move plentiful foods."
- b. Seventy-five percent of the releases have information which has some potential to contribute to the satisfaction of the objective: "Provide adequate information on marketing and economic principles on which to base satisfactory decisions."
- c. Eighty-one percent of the releases have information which has some potential to contribute to the satisfaction of the objective: "Motivate to adopt better buying and management practices."
- d. Fifty-five percent of the releases have information which has some potential to contribute to the satisfaction of the objective: "Help consumers understand the production and marketing process."

6. The following commodities tended to be under-emphasized in market situation releases:

- a. Dairy products
- b. Bakery and cereal products
- c. Fats and oils, and beverages

7. The following types of information, or motivating appeals, appeared to be under-emphasized in the total sample of MIC releases.

- a. Menu suggestions and food combinations.
- b. Explanations of marketing services and marketing costs.
- c. Explanations of grades, standards, or brands.
- d. Guides for selecting the most suitable kind, form, size or quality of a food.
- e. Convenience, prestige, social, and creative appeals.

8. The two areas which should be emphasized in food marketing releases, according to the professional respondents are:

- a. Current situation information.
- b. Buying guides. (Guides for selecting the most suitable kind, form, size or quality of foods, was the buying guide mentioned most frequently for emphasis.)

9. Consumers appear to want the following features in food marketing information:

- a. Food prices.
- b. Value comparisons, simply stated and conclusive.
- c. Short-range outlook (weekly, seasonal) in preference to long-range outlook (yearly).
- d. Concise information pointing up food features, preferably by food groups.

e. Serving suggestions for foods.

10. The professionals who teach or advise in the area of foods want food marketing information supplied to them.

Recommendations

The following are some suggestions for improving MIC releases in general:

1. Reduce the amount of narrative and condense the information by using some of the following methods:

- a. Tabulate prices, cost comparisons, and other statistics.
- b. List food features.
- c. Use diagrams, charts, pictures.
- d. Use the question-answer technique, where appropriate.
- e. Present highlights in lead sentences of each paragraph.

2. Use a distinctive title head for all MIC releases for identification purposes.

3. Include more time-saving suggestions for planning, buying, and preparing foods.

4. Simplify adjustments in the food budget by including more of the following kinds of information:

- a. Suggest appropriate uses of lower quality foods.
- b. Show how foods can be substituted. Discuss comparable market baskets, comparable menus.
- c. Include frequent price-value comparisons (e.g., fresh vs. processed; grade A vs. grade B; pork vs. beef;

service vs. non-service; large quantity vs. small;
current vs. seasonal price).

5. Include frequent suggestions for food combinations and brief preparation suggestions, for "economy" meats in particular.

6. Identify meats and poultry products (e.g., Boston butt, capons, caponettes, broiler-fryers, pork loin, pot roast, side pork, variety meats).

7. Discuss grades and standards, food laws and regulations, from the consumer's point of view (i.e., the possible benefits or otherwise).

8. Give more emphasis to a discussion of price-making forces (i.e., costs of marketing, influences of supply-demand, and economic conditions).

9. Teach nutrition in terms of the food budget, one's health, food habits and problems.

10. Build the information in commodity releases and feature articles around one or two key points.

11. Plan a series of feature articles based on common food problems and consumer interests such as:

- a. Meal planning on a low income; on a moderate income.
- b. Why and how to save in food shopping.
- c. Changes in the food industry.
- d. Food laws that make eating safe.
- e. Consumers look at the costs of marketing foods.
- f. Questions asked by the "young marrieds" about food buying.

The following recommendations refer specifically to market situation releases:

12. Separate the information into distinct food groups.
13. Identify featured foods clearly, possibly by:
 - a. Listing under "Meat Features," "Poultry Features," etc.
 - b. Giving a weekly menu suggestion.
 - c. Printing featured foods in bold type or italics.
14. Feature one "economy meat" weekly and include such information as:
 - a. Buying guides.
 - b. Preparation suggestions.
 - c. Menu suggestions.
15. Include more marketing information on dairy products, cereal products, fats and oils, and less on fruits and vegetables.

Areas for Further Study

This study pointed up the need for research in at least two areas. One area concerns the low income group of consumers who "need help so desperately," as one professional respondent said. We need to know the kinds of information this consumer group wants and needs, how they can be reached via the mass media, how low income consumers rate MIC releases, and other pertinent information.

The differences between a professional group and a homemaker group in evaluating information, is another area in which further study is needed. The author and the professional group tended to rate information similarly. Homemakers tended to rate information

higher than the author, and higher also than other professionals. We need to know which group's judgment is more significant in planning a Marketing Information Program for consumers. We need to know also if homemakers, on the average, recognize and want the type of information they need. These and other related questions require further study.

Concluding Remarks

The author would like to make the recommendation that consideration be given in the MIC Program to enlarging the existing service to home economics teachers, to home demonstration agents, to public health nutritionists, to food editors, and others working with consumers in the area of foods, who are able to adapt the information supplied to them to suit the audience they serve.

The author would like to make the final recommendation that a group of planners, to include possibly the Program's coordinator, food editors, home economists, agricultural economists, communications specialists, and homemakers, review the information sampled for this study and the data compiled, with the objective of giving further interpretation to these data, and possibly, further recommendation.

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APPENDIX

MARKET SITUATION
RELEASE "A"

May 15, 1956.

Meals can be mighty attractive these days if you key your May menus to the Spring market situation. Take this menu: Ground beef patties, new potatoes, perfectly cooked asparagus, green cabbage salad and strawberries and cream. Not an elaborate meal, it's true, but one that's satisfying for family appetites and purse.

You can change the meat course and still keep in the moderate cost range. Let's go shopping for this week's food for the family.

MEATS--Look for meat values in forequarter cuts of veal and beef this week. Veal shoulder roast or chops, and beef chuck, ground beef, or short ribs are among the thrifty cuts. Both veal and beef quality is good.

Pork prices have advanced in the past few weeks, but especially good buys are found in thick sliced bacon and Boston Butts.

For the first time in several weeks, the price of stewing chickens is less than that of frying chickens. No need to puzzle over which gives you the most meat for your money--the stewing chicken does.

VEGETABLES--Michigan asparagus has finally come popping through the ground even though it has been discouraged by several weeks of unusually cold Spring weather. This means that California asparagus will now be supplemented by local supplies. The asparagus season will be short, so this is the time to start making plans for freezing or canning some for next winter's use.

The first California long white potatoes are expected this week. These new supplies should help lower present rather high potato prices.

King cabbage should fill a space on market lists as supplies continue to be heavy; prices to be

low. Other attention getters include improved quality of green peppers, green onions, and greenhouse tomatoes.

FRUITS--Shipped-in strawberries are near their peak in supply. Take caution in selection for some berries have been damaged by recent rains. You can enjoy these strawberries now--and be thinking forward to strawberry time in Michigan--about three weeks hence.

Bananas are slightly higher in price than last week. Oranges are priced about the same as last week but quality is poor.

This is really the in-between season for fresh fruits. But better times are just ahead. In the meantime check frozen and canned fruits for stock-reducing sales.

MARKET SITUATIONRELEASE "B"

May 16, 1957

Whatever your family's favorite meat, it's abundant this week. Pork supplies are big enough to keep prices in line with other "best choices." Cooler weather makes chuck and rib beef roasts popular. Frying-size chicken prices remain at your-can-afford-it-often levels. This week add more poultry to your shopping list. Four to eight pound turkeys and grown-to-your-taste, meaty roasting chickens "belong" if you watch appetites and pennies too.

Buying pork this week? Be sure to figure the cost per serving before deciding which cut. Center cut pork chops won't cost more than 30 cents a serving, and may cost as little as 20 cents. That's because the price range per pound is 60 to 90 cents. Boston butt roast, unless quite fat, are economy at 35 to 50 cents a pound. Figure about 2½ servings from a pound of Boston butt and a serving costs 14 to 20 cents.

Rib end pork loin roasts cost 35 to 50 cents a pound. This price may prompt you to cut your own pork chops. If you do choose to cut your own, the roast you choose must have the backbone scored or sawed through.

Some stores are featuring smoked pork cuts at special prices. Keeping quality (when refrigerated) of smoked cuts is excellent, but remember, freezing for longtime storage is not recommended. You'll find smoked picnics priced at 35 to 43 cents a pound. Four-pound canned picnics are \$2.49.

Cost per serving is the same, whether you buy the smoked or the canned picnic. There is a flavor difference, and if you prefer definitely smoked flavor, smoked picnic is the better choice.

Cool weather turns appetites toward roast meat. Chuck roast (U. S. grades good and choice) at 40 to 50 cents a pound is one possibility. Another possibility? Standing rib roast, or boneless frozen rib roast.

Standing rib roast is priced at 70 to 80 cents a pound. Frozen boneless rib roast is 90 cents to \$1 per pound with a "special" special of 80 cents a pound. Price wise, the frozen roast is a better buy but, pound for pound, it will take longer to roast.

Appetites can celebrate the price of chicken, 40 to 50 cents a pound. For a change of poultry choose a 4 to 8 pound turkey. Cost of the small turkey is 50 to 60 cents a pound, and, it barbecues! An extra choice for the indoor oven is the grown-extra-meaty roasting size chicken. The price is 50 to 60 cents a pound.

Best yet for quality is homegrown asparagus, 20 to 25 cents a pound. In some stores, you may pay as much as 45 cents a pound for fresh asparagus. When you find such asparagus, it is the "broken off" stalks, rather than "cut off." Broken off stalks have very little (if any) white on the stalks and with 20 cents difference in the price per pound, the price per serving is the same, broken or cut.

Red, outdoor grown rhubarb is the pie-maker's choice. Team it with fresh pineapple or fresh strawberries for pie and sauce.

While shopping, take a turn past the frozen food and canned goods counters. Sales on canned freestone peaches, pears and frozen strawberries can ease some of your summer preserving chores or maybe tease those "right now" eaters.

COMMODITY RELEASE

WHEN YOU BUY "PEACHES"

TO FREEZE OR NOT TO FREEZE

If you decide to buy commercially frozen peaches from the grocery store, you pay about 30 - 36 cents per pint. Less if you buy in larger quantities from a freezer-locker plant. Canned peaches from the grocery store cost less, and freezing or canning your own is least expensive.

YOU MAKE THE CHOICE

Michigan peach season is here again. To can or not to can, to freeze or buy commercially frozen? Many questions! What ever your answer.....know what you are looking for; choose from early and late varieties.

1957 Michigan Peach Calendar

Red Haven ----- August 5-10th
Hale Haven ----- August 15-29th
Kalhaven ----- August 20-25th
Fairhaven ----- August 20-25th
Elbertas --- Aug. 28th - Sept. 18th

Red Haven, a yellow freestone peach, is considered one of the best freezing varieties.

You'll find these peaches before and after the dates given, but these are peak dates.

Can or freeze your own peaches..... either way it costs about 16 cents per pint if you pay \$3.50 for a bushel of fresh peaches.

Cost of Freezing or Canning Peaches

Cost per bushel	Cost of fruit per pint*	Freezing or canning cost**	Total cost per pt.
\$3.00	8¢	7¢ *	15¢
3.50	9¢	7¢ *	16¢
4.00	10¢	7¢ *	17¢

* 1bushel yields 16-25 quarts canned or frozen peaches

** Includes sugar, container, and ascorbic acid cost.

Peach Cost Comparison

Type of pack	Cost per pint
Frozen --- from store	30 - 36¢
Canned --- from store	20 - 24¢
**Frozen --- at home	16 - 20¢
**Canned --- at home	16 - 20¢

**Does not include cost of owning and operating a freezer, canning equipment, and fuel.

IF YOU DECIDE TO FREEZE -- ***

1. Choose plump, firm peaches without bruises or blemishes. Smaller sizes are just as good, provided they are mature and ripe.
2. Make 40 or 50 percent sirup by adding 4 cups hot or cold water to 3 or 4 cups sugar. Stir over low heat until sugar dissolves, then boil for 5 minutes. Cool.
3. Add ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) to sirup. This prevents peaches from darkening. Purchase ascorbic acid at any drug store, follow directions on bottle.
4. Peel peaches, remove pits. Cut each half into 4 to 6 pieces.
5. Pack quickly into containers, leaving as little head room as possible.
6. Pour cool sirup over peaches, label and freeze promptly.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the addresses are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

2. The second part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of chairman and vice-chairman. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

3. The third part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of secretary and treasurer. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of clerk and recorder. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

5. The fifth part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of auditor and comptroller. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

6. The sixth part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of assessor and collector. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

7. The seventh part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of engineer and surveyor. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

8. The eighth part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of judge and justice. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

9. The ninth part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of sheriff and coroner. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

10. The tenth part of the document is a list of the names of the members of the committee who have been elected to the office of clerk and recorder. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the offices are given below each name. The list includes names such as Mr. J. H. Smith, Mr. W. B. Jones, and Mr. C. D. Brown.

PROFESSIONAL PANEL QUESTIONNAIREPART I

Market Situation releases, similar to the two enclosed (yellow pages) appear weekly in local newspapers. Each release is in general a run-down of the local market situation--and intended to be a shopping guide for consumers in the area.

After reading both releases, please answer the questions below.

1. The two releases were selected to illustrate slightly different approaches to essentially the same kind of marketing information. Would you score each release on the following points: (Feel free to comment)

R E L E A S E "A"

	Optimum Score	My Score	Comment
a. <u>Subject Matter</u> -- Not readily available from other sources and of value to consumers.	10		
b. <u>Organization</u> -- of material for logical presentation and ease of reference.	5		
c. <u>Style</u> -- of writing for interest and clarity.	5		
d. <u>Length or amount of material:</u> Just right? too long? too short?	5		
	25		

R E L E A S E "B"

	Optimum Score	My Score	Comment
a. <u>Subject Matter</u> -- Not readily available from other sources and of value to consumers.	10		
b. <u>Organization</u> -- of material for logical presentation and ease of reference.	5		
c. <u>Style</u> -- of writing for interest and clarity.	5		
d. <u>Length or amount of material:</u> Just right? too long? too short?	5		
	25		

2. How well does each release meet the four objectives of the Program listed below? Include comment as you like.

ObjectivesR E L E A S E "A"

	Rates	High	Med.	Low	Comment
a. Points up the availability of foods in season.					
b. Interests the consumer in becoming a more efficient food buyer and manager.					
c. Helps the consumer make more satisfying (to her) food buying decisions.					
d. Helps the consumer understand how foods are produced and marketed.					

R E L E A S E "B"

	Rates	High	Med.	Low	Comment
a. Points up the availability of foods in season.					
b. Interests the consumer in becoming a more efficient food buyer and manager.					
c. Helps the consumer make more satisfying (to her) food buying decisions.					
d. Helps the consumer understand how foods are produced and marketed.					

- 3a. How helpful would the information in each release be to the consumer in its present form? Check (✓) answer below:

R E L E A S E "A"

Very helpful ()
 Some help ()
 Not much help ()

R E L E A S E "B"

Very helpful ()
 Some help ()
 Not much help ()

- b. Additional Comment: How could each release be made more helpful?

Release "A"Release "B"

PART II

1. There are various subject areas included in food marketing releases. In your opinion, what are the important kinds of information which should be included in an education program of this kind? Check (✓) below.

Kinds of Information

- a. SEASONAL PRODUCT INFORMATION. _____
(The local market situation,
peaks in supply, price and
quality.)
- b. OUTLOOK INFORMATION _____
(What to expect in supply, price
and quality.)
- c. BUYING GUIDES
- i Characteristics of good quality. _____
- ii Quality guides _____
- iii Guides for selecting most suitable _____
form or quality of a food
- d. MANAGEMENT GUIDES _____
(Recommendations such as when to buy
in quantity for a variety of uses,
good shopping practices etc.)
- e. HOW TO STORE AND PRESERVE FOODS _____
(Includes short & long-time storage)
- f. HOW TO USE AND PREPARE FOODS _____
(Includes brief menu suggestions)
- g. NUTRITION INFORMATION _____
(Food alternates, ways of preserving
nutrients for good nutrition etc.)
- h. NEW AND NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION AND _____
MARKETING OF FOODS
(Kinds, costs of marketing services,
trends in merchandising, regulations
protecting consumers etc.)

2. Other information which should be included: _____

3. Which three types of information, from the above list, are the most important for consumer marketing releases?

List letters only _____ & _____

Comment _____

PART III

1. The following are excerpts from prepared releases. From the consumer's viewpoint, how useful is each sample of information as it is given here?

- a. "Eggs and beef are headliners for the week. Both are in heavy supply and are excellent buys in the local markets. Beef prices are not expected to go much lower, if any--so, this might be a good time to think about restocking the freezer."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful
 Comment _____

- b. From a December release: "More chicken and turkey will be produced in 1957 and egg production is expected to be larger than in 1956. Retail broiler prices may rise slightly during 1957 but turkey prices through the summer should remain lower than last year."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful
 Comment _____

- c. "The low cost chuck roast can make a valuable contribution to grill cooking. The more tender muscles of the chuck can be cut into 1-1/2" cubes for kabobs--the rest of the roast can be ground for hamburger for another cook-out. The cubes cut for kabobs are marinated over-night and threaded on skewers for grilling--with mushrooms, onions, peppers, tomatoes or similar."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful
 Comment _____

- d. When buying turkey: "Check the labels. The more mature birds require longer cooking."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful
 Comment _____

2. How useful are the following in helping a consumer decide what to buy?

- a. "Marketings of lettuce, local fall crop potatoes and apples are expected to remain at a high level."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful
 Comment _____

- b. "If you're looking for something in the moderate price range, pork shoulder is an excellent choice. When roasted with your favorite stuffing and served with fresh applesauce, pork shoulder becomes the mainstay of a substantial autumn meal."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

- c. "Other selections that represent good values include, frozen ocean perch, large tom turkeys, and leg of lamb in a group of markets. Stewing chickens will go a long way in stretching food dollars. Smelt is available and cost per serving is very reasonable."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

3. Which of the following excerpts are useful types of price &/or value information for the consumer?

- a. "Broiler-fryer prices will interest most homemakers. There is about a 20 cent per pound difference in fryers depending upon size, quality and whether they are cut up or whole."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

- b. "Right now pork sausage will cost you less than bacon for those better breakfast menus we're always talking about."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

- c. "Plump breaded-and-cooked chicken thighs cost about \$1.00 for a package of 4. Serve 2 thighs per person and spend 50 cents. Look expensive? If you buy a fresh fryer for 43 cents a pound and allow 3/4 pound of chicken per person, you spend about 33 cents for a serving of fried chicken."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

- d. "When considering prices, remember it's the price per serving that really counts. A meat that appears high in price may in the long run give you more for your money because of more servings per pound.

Featured pork items this week include whole hams at 49 to 69 cents per pound, shanks as low as 39, and butts as low as 53 cents a pound. Pork chops range from 39 to 79 cents a pound."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

4. The following excerpts deal with nutrition information. How useful is each?

- a. "Milk helps keep the ageing bones (and whose aren't) from getting brittle and tends to keep the body percolating at top efficiency."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

- b. "Milk is always a best buy. Mrs. Consumer spends about 17% of each food dollar on dairy products and find it money well spent. With the money outlay for each quart of milk, she buys 144% of her daily calcium requirement, 120% of her needed riboflavin, 62% of the protein required, and 31% of the daily quota of vitamin A."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

- c. "A potato a day is an economical way to add energy, Vitamin C, Vitamin B, iron, calcium and phosphorus to the daily diet. Weight watchers need not fear potatoes--one medium potato has but 100 calories."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

- d. "Why are eggs a good buy? Because an egg contains high quality complete protein, plus necessary vitamins and minerals. Nutritionists recommend one egg each day in your diet."

Useful Perhaps useful Not useful

Comment _____

PART IV

RE: Teaching Material

(Optional)

Marketing Agents are supplying information to Home Demonstration agents and Home Economics teachers. Through this means many more consumers are being reached than would otherwise be possible by the marketing agents alone. This cooperative approach has been growing.

We would like to know what interest and need you would have for this kind of service in connection with your work. A sample of a type of "Commodity Sheet" (ordinarily distributed directly to consumers at food stores) is attached.

Market information supplied to you ~~could~~ take one of the following forms: -

- 1) Similar to the attached "Commodity Sheet"
- 2) Include a run-down of current good food buys.
- 3) A brief demonstration on a marketing topic with a teacher's guide.

Possibly, students ~~could~~ be supplied with loose-leaf copies of the marketing information as well. The topics could be as varied as from "How To Buy Turkeys" to "Grading and Labelling of Foods."

Would you want this kind of information supplied to you? Yes () NO ()
 If so, in what form would you prefer the information?
 Any further comments?

CONSUMER PANEL QUESTIONNAIREPART I

Market Situation releases, similar to the two enclosed (on yellow pages) appear weekly in local newspapers in Michigan. Each release is a run-down of the local market situation for the week--and intended to be a shopping guide for food for consumers.

The two releases enclosed illustrate slightly different approaches to essentially the same kind of buying information. After reading both releases please answer the questions below.

- - - - -

1a. Which release do you prefer?

Prefer Release "A" ()

Prefer Release "B" ()

b. Why do you prefer this one? _____

2. Compare the two releases for the amount of help each would be to you in:-

- | | <u>Release "A"</u> | <u>Release "B"</u> |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| a. Deciding what foods to buy? | | |
| Very helpful. | () | () |
| Moderately helpful. | () | () |
| Little or no help | () | () |
| b. Saving you time and energy? | | |
| Very helpful. | () | () |
| Moderately helpful. | () | () |
| Little or no help | () | () |
| c. Saving you money? | | |
| Very helpful. | () | () |
| Moderately helpful. | () | () |
| Little or no help | () | () |
| d. Learning more about how foods
are produced &/or marketed? | | |
| Very helpful. | () | () |
| Moderately helpful. | () | () |
| Little or no help.. . . . | () | () |
| e. Feel free to comment on your comparisons above: | | |

3. Which parts of the information in either release would you find most helpful?

4. What is your opinion about the length or amount of material in each release?

R E L E A S E "A"

Just right ()
 Too much ()
 Too little ()

R E L E A S E "B"

Just right ()
 Too much ()
 Too little ()

5. What suggestions do you have for making each release more useful to you?
 (Any additional information? Different way of giving information? etc.)

R E L E A S E "A" _____

R E L E A S E "B" _____

- 6a. Would you look for and read this kind of weekly food buying information?

Yes () No ()

- b. Please comment on your answer _____

- c. Have you read the marketing release in the Lansing State Journal--called "Lansing Buy Lines" by the Consumer Information agent?

Almost every week ()
 About once or twice a month ()
 Less than once a month or never ()

- d. Any Comment? _____

PART II

Commodity Sheets (similar to the "Peach" sheet enclosed) are another form in which marketing information is put out by the Michigan Marketing Information for Consumers Program. These sheets are supplied to some food stores in Michigan on request, for distribution to shoppers. Each week one commodity in season is featured.

Please look over the "Peach" sheet and answer the following questions about it.

- - - - -

1. How much help would the information in this release be to you in:-

a. Deciding what foods (or forms of a food) to buy?

Very helpful.....()
Moderately helpful..()
Little or no help...()

b. Saving you time and energy?

Very helpful.....()
Moderately helpful..()
Little or no help...()

c. Saving you money?

Very helpful.....()
Moderately helpful..()
Little or no help...()

d. Learning more about how foods are produced and/or marketed?

Very helpful.....()
Moderately helpful..()
Little or no help...()

e. Feel free to make additional comment on the above _____

2. Which parts of the information in this type of release would you find most helpful?

Page 4

3. What is your opinion about the length or amount of material in this release?

Just right amount ()
Too much ()
Too little ()

4. What suggestions do you have for making this release more useful to you?
(Any additional information? Different way of giving information? etc.)

- 5a. Would you look for and read this kind of weekly food buying information?

Yes () No ()

- b. Please comment on your answer: _____

6. Which of the two types of releases--the Market Situation (on yellow pages) or the Commodity Sheets ("Peach" page) would you prefer as a weekly entry in your local newspaper?

Market Situation Releases preferred ()
Commodity Releases preferred ()

PART III

1. The following are excerpts from prepared releases. How useful to you is the information in each sample as given here?

- a. "The peak of the strawberry season for flavor and quality is expected to fall about the end of next week. You might like to plan your preserving time accordingly."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not Useful. . . .

Comment _____

- b. From a December release: "More chicken and turkey will be produced in 1957 and egg production is expected to be larger than in 1956. Retail broiler prices may rise slightly during 1957 but turkey prices through the summer should remain lower than last year."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not Useful.

Comment _____

- c. "The low cost chuck roast can make a valuable contribution to grill cooking. The more tender muscles of the chuck can be cut into 1-1/2" cubes for kabobs--the rest of the roast can be ground for hamburger for another cook-out. The cubes cut for kaboba are marinated over night and threaded on skewers for grilling--with mushrooms, onions, peppers or tomatoes."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- d. When buying turkey: "Check the labels. The more mature birds require longer cooking."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

2. How useful are the following in helping you decide what to buy?

- a. "Marketing of lettuce, local fall crop potatoes and apples are expected to remain at a high level."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- b. "If you're looking for something in the moderate price range, pork shoulder is an excellent choice. When roasted with your favorite stuffing and served with fresh applesauce, pork sholder becomes the mainstay of a substantial autumn meal."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- c. "Other selections that represent good values include, frozen ocean perch, large tom turkeys, and leg of lamb in a group of markets. Stewing chickens will go a long way in stretching food dollars. Smelt is available and cost per serving is very reasonable."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- 3.. Which of the following excerpts are useful types of price/value information to you?

- a. "Broiler-fryer prices will interest most homemakers. There is about about a 20 cent per pound difference in fryers depending upon size, quality and whether they are cut up or whole."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- b. "Right now pork sausage will cost you less than bacon for those better breakfast menue we're always talking about."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- c. "Plump breaded-and-cooked chicken thighs cost about \$1.00 for a package of 4. Serve 2 thighs per person and spend 50¢. Look expensive? If you buy a fresh fryer for 43¢ a pound and allow 3/4 pound of chicken per person, you spend about 33¢ for a serve of fried chicken."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- d. "When considering prices, remember it's the price per serving that really counts. A meat that appears high in price may in the long run give you more for your money because of more servings per pound.

Featured pork items this week include whole hams at 49 to 69 cents per pound, shanks as low as 39, and butts as low as 53 cents a pound. Pork chops range from 39 to 79 cents a pound."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

4. The following excerpts deal with nutrition information. How useful is each?

- a. "Milk helps keep the ageing bones (and whose aren't) from getting brittle and tends to keep the body percolating at top efficiency."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- b. "Milk is always a best buy. Mrs. Consumer spends about 17% of each food dollar on dairy products and finds it money well spent. With the money outlay for each quart of milk, she buys 144% of her daily calcium requirements, 120% of her needed riboflavin, 62% of the protein required, and 31% of the daily quota of vitamin A."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- c. "A potato a day is an economical way to add energy, Vitamin C, Vitamin B, iron, calcium and phosphorus to the daily diet. Weight watchers need not fear potatoes--one medium potato has but 100 calories."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

- d. "Why are eggs a good buy? Because an egg contains high quality complete protein, plus necessary vitamins and minerals. Nutritionists recommend one egg each day in your diet."

Useful. Perhaps useful. Not useful.

Comment _____

PART IV

We are not concerned with identifying your answers but for purposes of this study we need to know something about you. Please write your answers below:

1. For how many do you prepare meals daily? (Include yourself)

Total number.....

Number of children (under 16 yrs.)
Number of adults (over 16 yrs.)

2. Into what age group do you fit?

Under thirty ()
30-44 years ()
45-64 years ()
65 or over ()

3. What grade in school did you complete?

Some grade school ()
Completed grade 8 ()
Some high school ()
Completed high school ()
Some college ()
Completed college ()
Other (Specify).....

4. About what is your family's total yearly income?

Less than \$2500 ()
\$2500 - \$4999 ()
\$5000 - \$7999 ()
\$8000 - \$9999 ()
\$10,000 or over ()

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