

1976 was a year most vegetable growers would like to forget

By MATTHEW VALE

The end of the year is a time when most of us look back on what we have accomplished and look forward to better things to come. 1976 was a year that many growers would like to forget.

The first few months were a struggle to sell a large crop of carrots which never brought more than \$1 per bushel; in many cases, it was far less.

A large volume was fed to cattle. There were some hopes that the stabilization board would help to reduce the large financial losses, which most growers were facing. However, after several months of negotiations, Ottawa came across with a meagre \$2.25 per ton which would not pay for the seed.

The 1976 growing season was also less than desirable. Apart from a warm month of April, the early spring was cold and wet. June was more like what we were looking for, warm and dry, but the months that followed produced cool temperatures and lots of rain.

Diseases were more pre-

valent than usual, particularly "blast" in onions. Harvesting weather was deplorable; rain and cloudy weather hampered field operations which were mostly stop and go. Although storage temperatures were fairly good for carrots, the high humidity caused a lot of headaches for onion growers.

The market situation has made some compensation for all these problems. The price of carrots and onions has been somewhat better than last year and prospects for the new year are good.

The reason for this is that growers in other parts of the world have had and are still having still bigger battles with the weather than we have had. Everyone has heard about the drought in Europe and the shortages.

In particular, potatoes and onions have been in great demand by European buyers and large quantities have been going overseas. Although most of the onions have been shipped by U.S. shippers, the effect has been a steady market for us as well.

Recent abnormal rainfall in the southern USA, mainly Texas, is affecting the growth of onions and carrots and the volume that may be expected in the next few months.

The acreage of these crops will certainly be down from normal and the quality could be affected due to the wet field conditions so far. So as we go into the new year, there seems to be nothing new as far as marketing our produce is concerned.

As usual, our marketing problem is really a production problem. The weather factor continues to play a big role in the volume of production. Growers usually say that they are better off in say that they are better off if we all produced less and received more. No one can argue with this philosophy.

Since no one will volunteer to reduce production (this is against a grower's nature), the weather is left to do the regulating for us.

As we go into the New Year, I would like to wish my friends and readers a healthy, happy and prosperous 1977 and good markets.