

Chapter 3. The human setting

Chapter questions

- How can ecological management offer fruit growers special marketing opportunities?
- How can non-farm neighbors become valued customers and allies of farming?
- How can a grower attract and retain the skilled workers needed for ecological fruit management?

Fruit growers operate within a human setting that affects their production choices as much as the natural setting. The human setting begins with the grower

and extends to the families and employees on whom growers rely, the communities where fruit is grown, distributors and processors who establish intermediate markets, the consumers who buy the fruit and the diners who eat it. The human setting also includes the organizations that research and advise on all these stages from farm to table, as well as the government agencies that regulate various aspects of growing and processing fruit. To fruit growers interested in ecological management, this setting offers special challenges as well as special opportunities.

Production and marketing strategy: How best to grow fruit depends upon who will buy it

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In the supermarket produce department, large, perfect, individual apples sell for double the price of the medium-sized bagged apples across the aisle. Organic apples sell for even more. The first price difference arises because most consumers prefer large, good-looking fruit to smaller, less striking fruit. The organic apples attract a still higher premium from consumers who perceive them as a healthier choice.

The growers who produce the three classes of apples follow different marketing strategies. The bagged apples are a **commodity** and cost the least to produce. To make a profit,

A. Schilder

