

# VEGETABLES

**1999 Vegetable Season:** Vegetable growers in New Jersey experienced a disastrous growing season during 1999. The growing season started in March due to warmer than average temperatures. Meanwhile, the temperatures in April and May were generally below average. Dry conditions, which began in March, lasted the whole growing season. Rainfall was approximately 15 inches less than normal in central Jersey, 13 inches less in north Jersey, and 9 inches less in south Jersey. Growing conditions were favorable for early spring vegetables. Topsoil moisture became short while planting late spring and summer crops, making irrigation and spraying necessary. Many late summer and early fall plantings were interrupted due to drought conditions. September rainfall raised the topsoil moisture to normal levels, but it was too late for this year's growing season. For many farmers, this was the worst growing season ever realized. Harvested acreage of total principal vegetables was down 11 percent. Production declined 25 percent from the previous year.

**Fresh Market Vegetables:** Area harvested for the seventeen principal fresh market vegetables in 1999 totaled 37,400 acres, compared with 42,600 acres in 1998; down 5,200 acres. Production amounted to 4,241,000 hundredweight, a 29 percent decrease from the 6,015,000 hundredweight in 1998. Overall yield in 1999 averaged 113 hundredweight; down 20 percent from the previous year.

Harvested acres for the seventeen principal fresh market vegetables declined or remained the same due to the drought, with the exception of pumpkins, which increased 100 acres. Harvested acres of asparagus, collards, kale and spinach remained unchanged. The sharpest decline in acres harvested was sweet corn; down 2,600 acres. The total value of the seventeen principal fresh market vegetables sharply decreased 38 percent from 1998 as a result of disastrous levels of production with much lower season average prices.

Ranking New Jersey's principal fresh market

vegetables by value of production shows that bell peppers were first with \$20.3 million, Jersey fresh tomatoes were second with \$17.3 million and cucumbers, sweet corn, and summer squash ranked third, fourth, and fifth with \$7.4 million, \$6.6 and \$6.2 million, respectively.

**Processing Vegetables:** Harvested acreage in 1999 of the seven major processing vegetables (tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, green peas, snap beans, lima beans, and sweet corn) totaled 9,950 acres, compared with 10,300 acres in 1998; down 3 percent. Harvested acres increased for green peas, snap beans and sweet corn. Total production, at 56,500 tons, is an 11 percent decrease from 63,360 tons in 1998. The season average price was \$130.50 per ton, compared with \$138.70 per ton in 1998; down 6 percent. The 1999 value of production at \$7.4 million was down 16 percent from \$8.8 million in 1998.