

Fruit

Five major fruit and berry crops grow in the Garden State: apples, peaches, blueberries, cranberries, and strawberries. Overall weather conditions were fair for the fruit and berry crops during 2000. However, early season hail storms, cooler summer temperatures, and excessive moisture in early fall had a negative impact on the fruit and berry crops.

Total production of the five fruit and berry crops during 2000 amounted to 200.5 million pounds, down 14 percent from 1999 production of 232.1 million pounds. Value of utilized production of the above crops totaled \$77.9 million compared with \$77.8 million in 1999.

During 2000, among all major fruit and berry producing states in the nation, New Jersey ranked second in blueberry production; third in cranberry production; tied for fifth in peach production; and fourteenth in apple production. Ranking crops by value of production within the state resulted in blueberries first with \$36.1 million. Peaches ranked second with \$24.8 million, while cranberries ranked third with \$9.3 million. Apples and strawberries ranked fourth and fifth with \$6.2 million and \$1.5 million, respectively.

New Jersey apple growers facing increased production costs and tough competition domestically and internationally since the early 1990's, have found it hard to stay in the business. Therefore, apple acreage has been decreasing annually. Apple production in New Jersey totaled 50.0 million pounds in 2000, same as in 1999. Utilized production, at 46.0 million pounds, was 4 million pounds less than a year ago. Value of utilized production totaled \$6.2 million in 2000, down 3 percent from 1999. Gloucester county was the leading apple producing county, accounting for 48 percent of the State's total production. Cumberland county ranked second at 4.0 million pounds. Burlington county rank third with 3.5 million pounds. Atlantic and Camden counties ranked fourth and fifth with 3.0 million pounds and 2.5 million pounds, respectively.

Total peach production in the Garden State for 2000 totaled 65.0 million pounds, down 5.0

million pounds from 1999. Unutilized production was estimated at 7.0 million pounds, the result of smaller fruit size and hail damage during early summer. The 2000 value of peach production was \$24.8 million compared to 1999's value of \$26.0 million, down 5 percent. Gloucester county was the leading peach growing county in the state with production of 36.0 million pounds or 55 percent of the total State's production. Cumberland was second with 11.5 million pounds. Atlantic and Camden counties tied for third with production at 5.0 million pounds each. Burlington was fifth with production of 2.3 million pounds.

The 2000 blueberry total production was estimated at 35.0 million pounds, down 6.0 million pounds from 1999. Value of utilized production was \$36.1 million compared to 1999's value of \$36.6 million. Atlantic and Burlington counties are the leading blueberry producing areas. The season average price of \$1.06 per pound was up 13 percent from 93.8 cents per pound in 1999.

Cranberry growers in New Jersey produced 489,000 barrels in 2000, a decrease of 202,000 barrels from 1999. The value of production was \$9.3 million, up 22 percent from \$7.6 million in 1999. The cranberry industry had a marketing order under which growers could only sell 85 percent of their sales history to the processors for the 2000 crop year. These restrictions applied to all five of the major cranberry producing states. Due to the marketing restrictions, some growers cut back on inputs or acres to restrict production and cut costs. Burlington is the major cranberry producing county in the Garden State.

The mild winter did not adversely affect the strawberry plants. Crops developed early with minimum frost damage, but cooler spring temperatures reduced the production. Strawberry growers harvested 16,000 cwt. of strawberries in 2000 compared with 20,000 cwt. in 1999. The area harvested, at 450 acres, was unchanged since 1994. The season average price was \$94.00 per hundredweight, a new record high price in New Jersey. Value of utilized production was at \$1.5 million, compared with \$1.3 million in 1999.