

VEGETABLES 2009

2009 Vegetable Season: The mild winter, sufficient moisture and near normal spring temperatures were favorable for the spring vegetables. But some growers were concerned the weak demand would adversely affect the prices. The major vegetables planted acres were lower than a year earlier. Prolonged wet conditions in late spring had adversely impacted the planting of summer crops. Temperatures were below normal, which slowed the growth of most of the crops. Once entering the summer months, subsoil moistures were varied depending on the localities. Vine crop production in the northeastern and some southern parts of the state was seriously reduced by blights. There were measurable amounts of rainfall in the fall season and temperatures were generally lower than normal. Harvest of vegetable crops was winding down in the second week of October, a week earlier than usual. Also included in 2009 harvested acres was some preserved land which had never been utilized for growing vegetables.

As the season concluded, production of asparagus, collards, eggplant, lettuce, pumpkins, sweet corn, and tomatoes were higher, while cabbage, cucumbers, kale, bell peppers, snap beans, spinach, summer squash, and winter squash had lower production. Production of escarole and endive were unchanged. Total value of production of principal fresh market and processing vegetables showed a 11 percent increase from a year ago.

Vegetables for Fresh Market: There are 16 fresh market vegetables in the USDA-NASS, New Jersey Field Office estimating program. Area harvested for these fresh market vegetables in 2009 totaled 32,600 acres, compared with 32,400 acres in 2008, up 200 acres. Production amounted to 5.1 million hundredweight, a decrease of 3 percent from the 5.3

million hundredweight produced in 2008. Overall yield in 2009 averaged 157 hundredweight per acre, down 5 hundredweight from the previous year. The season average price was \$34.10 per hundredweight compared with \$29.40 in 2008, a sharp increase of \$4.70 per hundredweight.

Among the fresh market vegetables, bell peppers, pumpkins, and snap beans had higher harvested acres in 2009 than in 2008. Spinach, summer squash, and winter squash had lower harvested acres in 2009 than in 2008. Asparagus, cabbage, collards, cucumbers, eggplant, escarole/endive, kale, lettuce, sweet corn, and tomato acres remained the same. Despite the lower production level, the much higher season average price was enough to offset the decline of production. The value of production showed an increase of \$20.2 million to a total of \$175.0 million.

Ranking New Jersey's fresh market vegetables by value of production, tomatoes were first with \$33.9 million, and bell peppers were second with \$31.4 million. Sweet corn, lettuce, and cucumbers were third, fourth, and fifth with \$22.8 million, \$13.8 million, and \$11.3 million, respectively.

Vegetables for Processing: Harvested acreage in 2009 of major processing vegetables totaled 5,300 acres, compared with 6,050 acres harvested in 2008. Harvested acres increased for green peas, sweet corn, and tomatoes, while snap bean acres declined. Spinach acres remained the same. Carrots and cucumber for pickles were no longer in the estimate program. Total production, at 50,790 tons, was a 14 percent decrease from the 58,740 tons in 2008. The 2009 value of production, at \$8.37 million, was up \$1.5 million from \$6.9 million a year earlier for comparable vegetables.