

FRUIT 2008

The four major fruit and berry crops grown in New Jersey are apples, blueberries, cranberries, and peaches. The mild winter and favorable spring growing conditions provided a good start for the 2008 fruit and berry crops. Sufficient soil moisture and above average spring temperatures were beneficial for fruit development. Pollination for most fruit crops was normal this year. Dry conditions in late spring and early summer, thunderstorms during the late summer, prolonged mild temperatures in fall, all had a different impact on this year's fruit crops. As the season concluded, blueberries had higher utilized production, while apples, cranberries, and peaches had lower production.

Total production of the four fruit and berry crops during 2008 amounted to 221.2 million pounds, up 4 percent from 2007's production of 213.1 million pounds. Value of utilized production of these crops totaled \$147.2 million, a 9 percent decrease from the 2007 total of \$162.3 million.

During 2008, among all major fruit and berry producing states in the nation, New Jersey ranked second in blueberry production, third in peach and cranberry production, and fifteenth in apple production. Ranking crops by value of production within the state, blueberries ranked first with \$82.0 million, cranberries ranked second with \$26.5 million, while peaches ranked third with \$23.9 million. Apples ranked fourth with \$14.8 million.

Peaches: It was a mostly favorable growing season as far as moisture and temperature. Dry conditions during the summer months had minimal effects as growers had irrigation in virtually all orchards. Hail damage in major producing counties resulted in less utilized production. Total production was 34,000 tons, up 6 percent from 2007, while utilized production totaled 26,000 tons, down 10 percent. Prices were lower because of competition from other states. The season average price was \$920.0 per ton (46.0 cents per pound), \$220 lower than last year's price. Value of utilized production was \$23.9 million in 2008, 27 percent less than 2007.

Gloucester County was the leading county with 18,000 tons, while Cumberland was second with 10,000 tons. All other counties totaled to 6,000 tons.

Apples: Growing season began favorably for apples in 2008. Fruit sets were good and ample. August hailstorms caused considerable damage to crop, but some apples were salvaged for juice. In general, higher prices offset production losses resulting in a higher value of production for New Jersey's apples compared to the previous year. Total apple production, 43 million pounds, was 2 percent higher than 2007. The season average price at 38.1 cents per pound was 15.2 cents higher than last year's. Value of utilized production was \$14.8 million in 2008 compared to \$9.6 million in 2007. The leading apple producing county was Gloucester with 14.0 million pounds. Atlantic and Burlington were second and third with 4.5 and 3.5 million pounds, respectively. Hunterdon and Warren tied for fourth with 3.0 million pounds each. Sussex County finished fifth with 2.5 million pounds.

Blueberries: The blueberry crops bloom and set of fruit were reported to be average to heavy. Blueberry production totaled 59 million pounds, an increase of 9 percent from last year. The season average price, at \$1.39 per pound, was down 28 cents from last year's record high. The value of utilized production for the 2008 blueberry crop was \$82 million, a decrease of 9 percent from 2007. Atlantic and Burlington counties were the leading blueberry producing areas.

Cranberries: Cranberry total production was 512,000 barrels, down 4 percent from the 531,000 barrels produced in 2007. The season average price was \$51.80 per barrel, up \$5.70 from last year. The value of production for the 2008 cranberry crop was \$26.5 million, up 8 percent from 2007. The cranberry crops bloom, set of fruit, and fruit size were average to heavy. Burlington county was the major cranberry producing area in the Garden State.