

Vegetables

Cooler than normal temperatures, occasional heavy rains, and cloudy skies exerted heavy disease pressure on many vegetable crops. The spring planting started out normal with adequate temperatures and topsoil moisture. After late spring, rainy days and cloudy skies prevented much needed heat units for vegetable development. In some areas, planting and harvesting schedules were interrupted by frequent rains. Various disease, mildew, and other weather related problems occurred in many pumpkin fields. Yield of cabbage, collards, cucumbers, escarole and endive, Romaine lettuce, summer squash, winter squash, and sweet corn were down due to wet and cool conditions. Overall, prices showed a 4 percent increase as the result of lower supplies.

There are 17 fresh market vegetables in the New Jersey Agricultural Statistics Service estimating program. Area harvested for these fresh market vegetables in 2003 totaled 33,900 acres, compared with 36,800 acres in 2002; down 2,900 acres. Production amounted to 4.74 million hundredweight, a decrease of 16 percent from the 5.65 million hundredweight produced in 2002. Overall yield in 2003 averaged 140 hundredweight per acre, down 14 hundredweight from the previous year. Season average price was \$26.40 per hundredweight compared with \$25.40 in 2002, up \$1.00 per hundredweight.

Among the fresh market vegetables, only spinach had more harvested acres in 2003 than in 2002. Asparagus, cucumber, escarole and endive, kale, and leaf and Romaine lettuce acres remained the same, while the remaining vegetable acres declined. The higher season average price was not enough to offset the decrease of production. Therefore, value of production decreased \$18 million to a total of \$125 million.

In terms of harvested acreage, fresh market sweet corn has 7,800 acres of New Jersey

farmland devoted to its growth. Fresh market bell peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers were second, third, and fourth with 3,600, 3,100 and 3,000 acres, respectively.

Ranking New Jersey's fresh market vegetables by value of production showed that Jersey Fresh tomatoes were first with \$28 million, and bell peppers were second with \$25.6 million. Sweet corn, cucumbers, and summer squash, were third, fourth, and fifth with \$12.1 million, \$12 million, and \$7.7 million, respectively.

Fresh market tomato harvested acreage decreased 800 acres from 1998 to 2003, but yield per acre was at its second highest point in 2003 at 220 hundredweight per acre, right behind 2002's 230 hundredweight per acre. Fresh market bell peppers showed a similar trend in harvested acreage, decreasing 500 acres from 1998 to 2003. Bell peppers also showed the second lowest total production, at 882,000 hundredweight, in 2003 over that same time frame. Harvested acres for fresh market sweet corn have shown the most dramatic decrease from 1998 to 2003 of 2,800 acres. Price for fresh market sweet corn was at its peak in 2003 at \$23.90 per hundredweight, \$8.90 above the low of \$15.00 for this time period in 1999.

Harvested acreage in 2003 of the eight major processing vegetables (carrots, cucumbers, green peas, lima beans, snap beans, spinach, sweet corn, and tomatoes) totaled 7,000 acres, compared with 11,600 acres in 2002. Total production, at 52.5 thousand tons, was a 29 percent decrease from 73,600 tons in 2002. The season average price was \$115.90 per ton, compared with \$124.30 per ton in 2002; down \$8.40. The 2003 value of production at \$6.08 million was down 34 percent from \$9.15 million in 2002.