

Delaware Agriculture in 2002 – Dry and Hot Weather Takes Its Toll

After five years in a row of high production of major crops across the U.S. the weather didn't cooperate to make it six straight years. Weather caused planting delays in major growing areas of the U.S., while in Delaware and the peninsula it was lack of rain and a string of 90 degree plus days that hurt crops, as well as lowering milk production. Commodity prices remained low thus biting deeper into farmers' income: less crop to sell at the continuing low prices.

Two bright spots in Delaware's commodity line-up were potatoes and watermelons. Our growers' crops hit the market at a time that brought them some of the best prices they had seen in many years.

As you read and look through this year's summary we are reviewing data from the thousands of 2002 Census of Agriculture reports. This once-every-five-years project is an effort to collect comprehensive information from every ag producer in Delaware and across the U.S. and its territories. One of the main benefits of the Census of Agriculture is the comprehensive county-level information that it provides, and will tell us just how land use, for instance, has changed since 1997. The results will be published in February 2004 and highlighted in this publication a year from now.

This annual bulletin summarizes information from many individual reports that are released throughout the year. A continuing thanks goes to the Delaware Department of Agriculture for providing the funding for this bulletin, and to Cindy Starr, DDA's graphics specialist for her composition for the cover.

We depend on:

- Delaware farmers,
 - Agribusinesses,
 - Extension staff from Delaware State University and University of Delaware
 - Staff from Farm Service Agency and many other agencies
 - Our phone and field staff of enumerators that contact farmers and businesses
- to provide the basic information that goes into our estimates. We depend on people that will take time to provide information.

Agriculture is the major land use and is an important industry in Delaware. I hope this publication helps show the reader how our agriculture changes, how diverse it is, and just how important it is to all of us.



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State Agricultural Statistician