Maine Wild Blueberries

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A field office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service
United States Department of Agriculture

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A special "THANK YOU" goes to approximately 400 Maine Wild Blueberry growers and processors who have helped us by completing the wild blueberry surveys during May and July.

BELOW AVERAGE CROP EXPECTED

Maine's 2005 wild (lowbush) blueberry crop is expected to total 70.0 million pounds, based on grower reported condition of the crop through mid-July. If realized, this forecast places expected production 52 percent above last year's output of 46.0 million pounds, but 13 percent below 2003 final production, and seven percent below the five year average crop of 75.0 million pounds.

Winter kill appeared minimal on the 2005 wild blueberry crop due to adequate snow cover throughout the winter; however, cool weather this spring delayed crop development and bloom by one to two weeks. Excessive rainfall in April and May created ideal conditions for blight and mummyberry, which are appearing widespread across the state. Wet weather in May also caused poor, spotty pollination in many areas, but some growers reported good luck with pollination in early June when sunny weather finally arrived in conjunction with a late bloom. Dry weather in June and July has growers reporting that this year's crop will be average to below average.

2004 Prices Revised: The average price per pound for Maine wild blueberries sold for processing in 2004 was 45 cents, a 12 cent increase over a year earlier. The average fresh market price per pound for Maine wild blueberries was $1.35 in 2004, 15 cents higher than in 2003. The total value of Maine's 2004 wild blueberry crop (fresh and processed) was placed at $21.0 million, down 22 percent from the 2003 value, due to decreased production.

MAINE WILD BLUEBERRIES: Production and Value, 1996 - 2005

Year	Total Production	All Price Per Pound[1/]	Total Value of Production[1/]	Fresh Blueberries[2/]			Blueberries for Processing		
				Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production	Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production
	1,000 Lbs	Cents	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Lbs	Dollars	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Lbs	Cents	1,000 Dollars
1996	59,198	57	33,590	268	--	--	58,930	57	33,590
1997	73,816	43	31,622	276	--	--	73,540	43	31,622
1998	62,981	46	29,166	360	1.00	360	62,621	46	28,806
1999	66,102	51	33,889	300	1.10	330	65,802	51	33,559
2000	110,990	40	44,732	420	1.20	504	110,570	40	44,228
2001	75,200	31	22,945	350	1.40	490	74,850	30	22,455
2002	62,400	29	17,860	400	1.25	500	62,000	28	17,360
2003	80,400	33	26,880	400	1.20	480	80,000	33	26,400
2004	46,000	46	20,970	300	1.35	405	45,700	45	20,565
2005[3/]	70,000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

[1/] All Price per Pound and Total Value of Production for 1996 - 1997 do not include fresh market blueberries.

[2/] Fresh Blueberry Price per Pound and Value of Production are not available before 1998.

[3/] Current year production forecast is based on growers' assessments as of mid-July.

The wild blueberry estimating program is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Maine Department of Agriculture as a service to growers and others in the industry. The next Maine Wild Blueberies report will be published and available on the Internet at http://www.nass.usda.gov/nh/ in late January 2005. It will contain the final production and preliminary price statistics for the 2005 crop as collected by the Maine Department of Agriculture.

Blueberries: Price and Value by Crop, State and United States, 2002-2004

Crop, State and Year	Total Production	All Price per Pound	Total Value of Production	Fresh Blueberries			Blueberries for Processing		
				Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production	Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production
	1,000 Lbs	Dollars	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Lbs	Dollars	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Lbs	Dollars	1,000 Dollars
Wild Blueberries									
Maine									
2002	62,400	0.286	17,860	400	1.250	500	62,000	0.280	17,360
2003	80,400	0.334	26,880	400	1.200	480	80,000	0.330	26,400
2004	46,000	0.456	20,970	300	1.350	405	45,700	0.450	20,565
Cultivated Blueberries									
Alabama									
2002[1/]	670	0.944	406	430	0.944	406			
2003[1/]	600	1.070	482	450	1.070	482			
2004[1/]	980	1.230	699	570	1.230	699			
Arkansas									
2002[1/]	1,860	1.150	2,040	1,770	1.150	2,040			
2003[1/]	1,650	1.330	2,067	1,550	1.330	2,067			
2004[1/]	1,900	1.230	2,216	1,800	1.230	2,216			
Florida									
2002[1/]	3,100	6.400	18,560	2,900	6.400	18,560			
2003[1/]	3,800	5.200	18,200	3,500	5.200	18,200			
2004[1/]	6,000	4.500	25,200	5,600	4.500	25,200			
Georgia									
2002	17,000	1.020	17,420	8,000	1.570	12,560	9,000	0.540	4,860
2003	17,000	1.110	18,790	8,000	1.640	13,120	9,000	0.630	5,670
2004	21,000	1.130	23,770	10,000	1.640	16,400	11,000	0.670	7,370
Indiana									
2002	3,100	0.920	2,760	1,500	1.220	1,830	1,500	0.620	930
2003	1,900	1.170	2,106	1,300	1.320	1,716	500	0.780	390
2004	3,100	1.090	3,270	1,500	1.330	1,995	1,500	0.850	1,275
Michigan									
2002	64,000	0.816	52,240	22,000	1.210	26,620	42,000	0.610	25,620
2003	62,000	1.020	63,105	24,000	1.300	31,200	38,000	0.840	31,905
2004	80,000	1.220	97,210	36,000	1.600	57,600	44,000	0.900	39,610
New Jersey									
2002	43,000	1.110	46,790	37,000	1.170	43,290	5,000	0.700	3,500
2003	41,000	1.140	45,690	33,000	1.200	39,600	7,000	0.870	6,090
2004	39,000	1.170	45,630	33,000	1.210	39,930	6,000	0.950	5,700
New York									
2002	2,100	1.340	2,550	1,800	1.380	2,484	100	0.660	66
2003	2,100	1.290	2,578	1,950	1.300	2,535	50	0.860	43
2004	2,000	1.360	2,315	1,400	1.450	2,030	300	0.950	285
North Carolina									
2002	17,000	1.450	22,534	11,300	1.760	19,888	4,200	0.630	2,646
2003	22,500	1.550	34,777	16,100	1.850	29,785	6,400	0.780	4,992
2004	22,900	1.410	32,235	16,400	1.700	27,880	6,500	0.670	4,355
Oregon									
2002	26,500	0.737	19,525	11,000	1.000	11,000	15,500	0.550	8,525
2003	23,900	0.870	20,786	10,400	1.090	11,336	13,500	0.700	9,450
2004	34,000	0.806	27,418	13,400	0.970	12,998	20,600	0.700	14,420
Washington									
2002	13,650	0.714	9,741	2,850	1.220	3,477	10,800	0.588	6,264
2003	13,200	0.914	12,068	3,400	1.330	4,522	9,800	0.770	7,546
2004	18,000	0.889	16,000	5,000	1.250	6,250	13,000	0.750	9,750
United States									
2002	191,980	1.030	194,566	100,490	1.410	142,086	88,160	0.595	52,480
2003	189,650	1.170	220,649	103,620	1.490	154,533	84,280	0.784	66,116
2004	228,880	1.210	275,963	124,550	1.550	193,058	103,020	0.805	82,905

[1/] Small quantities of processed blueberries are included in fresh to avoid disclosure of individual operations.
SOURCE: **Noncitrus Fruits and Nuts – 2004 Summary** 3:00 pm July 6, 2005, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA

Wild Blueberry Comments 2005 by County, As reported on the July Grower Survey

CUMBERLAND, OXFORD, YORK: May/June in southern Maine had only 3 days for pollination! Flea beetle problem; will not harvest unless price of berries goes up. Wintered well, but heavy spring rains prevented spring work (tractor would get stuck in mud) and it rained through pollination. Blight and rain. Looking alright but lots of rain in spring. Bad year. A lot of blossom blight. Fence around the crop to keep land critters out & balloons for birds, but the birds do take lots of blueberries. Very poor bloom this year - excessive rain. Mummyberry, flea beetle damage. Good year, bearing lots of fruit. **FRANKLIN, KENNEBEC, LINCOLN:** Almost nothing was harvested; bad blight. The blueberry crop was VERY sparse last year; this year looks like it is going to be a much better year than last year; the pollination period was during a nice warm period so we think things will be very good. A damp May hindered pollination, crop looks to be average; red box berries will be a problem. Plenty of moisture resulted in poor weather for pollination; cold and wet, thus bees couldn't pollinate; Some early ones fell off. Wet spring caused poor pollination and problems with mummyberry and turkeys. Plenty of rain, does not look good at all. Too much grass and turkeys! Too much rain during pollination-crop looks spotty; berries very late and tiny. Too wet during pollination, looks like a small crop with a bad case of blight; some winter kill and bug damage. Not looking good; some patches mummyberries; wet pollination season 3 out of 4 weeks. **KNOX:** Good moisture and although weather during early pollination was poor the crop seems average. Worst fruit set I have ever seen because of lack of good pollinating weather. Bad weather during pollination; rain and heat resulting in very spotty pollination - one clone loaded with medium sized berries, next clone minimal fruit set; mummyberry and botrytis problems; disease control was hampered by poor 2004 crop. Too much moisture this spring affected pollination. Poor pollination weather. No winter damage - bloom was heavy but due to cold, rainy weather the bees didn't work during the proper time; have some mummyberry. Winter very cold, lots of moisture, bees couldn't pollinate due to cold and rain. Despite rain, wind and cold during most of the time bees were working pollination seems good; berries are late; set fly traps July 11. Blight and poor pollination. Heavy blossom blight. Expecting a poor crop; light bloom, poor pollination; the weather was too cold then too hot--weird weather--too much cold, early rain, then straight to 90 degrees (weird). Some premature ripening. Half of the crop came up with mummyberry disease. Everything is two weeks late; berries now just started getting blue. Very little winter/cold damage, insects -fleabeetle, spanworm, thrup, strawberry root weevil, are average; monilinia blight damage is average - treated most susceptible land, pollination was OK, but cold and rain kept it from being great. Poor pollination. 20% blight. Winter injury slightly above average, quality appears very good to excellent at this time, moisture has been excessive but we'll need a good soaking again soon, disease and insect damage has been very high this year. Does not look good; rain during pollination, may not harvest very much at all. The lot was wet and green - got very poor burn, about half didn't get burned at all; expect a poor crop this year. **PENOBSCOT, PISCATAQUIS, SOMERSET, WALDO:** Excessive moisture during spring killed off some blossoms. Looks good this year with good pollination but could use more rain. Too long a rainy season while blueberry crop was in bloom; pollination window was only about 3 days and was not long enough; a good probability of disease and insect problems due to the wet season. Everything is so late; bees in but then got a week of rain; red blight, spotted blight, too wet to spray. Cold winter; spring very rainy; blight and mummyberry took half the berries. It was a pretty crappy spring, but things are looking up. Weather conditions over the year stressed the fields. Winter kill. Cold wet spring, late bloom - late harvest. Insect or disease has taken 5% of total fields. Bad pollination! Too much rain=no bees. The flowers were not pollinated very much by bees because of the rain; it's been wet and cool during the blooming time of the berries and few bees in the field. More mummyberry than pervious years, fields too wet to spray Velpar, very little pollination because of rain. Little winter damage; plenty of moisture but too much rain during blossom during which the bees couldn't work resulting in lack of berry set; some mummy berry. Expect 50% of 2003 crop. Bad year; good bloom but bad weather during pollination. Things were going great until the damp cold wet weather of May; bees weren't able to work until June 1 and had been on since May 12. Problems with mummyberry, blight, and pollination because weather cool and wet. **HANCOCK:** Looks good as of 6/29/05. Heavy snow fall, and very wet all spring; insect problem minimal, prospect looks ok. Some winter damage on high ground; berries are small and not pollinated, rainfall has been good; some mummyberry disease - less than average crop. No significant winter damage; wet spring caused some blight and bees didn't work well; should be a good crop overall if the weather cooperates. Little winter damage; bloom was 1-2 weeks late due to wet spring. Will not be harvesting any for the commercial market as it doesn't cover the expense! Little winter damage given extensive and late (April 5) snow cover; very heavy rains April to mid-May. The bees had very little chance to do a proper pollination as it was damp, cold, foggy and rainy. Pollination season terrible; wet due to rain, bees lazy and even when good weather bees didn't work well. Little winter damage but rain, rain and more rain this spring, with a great deal of blossom blight and a poor chance for bees to work. Bad winter; no blossoms. No winter damage; wet conditions affected pollination; some flea beetle outbreaks; getting dry as of 7/4/05; need 3/4" rain by 7/10. 2005 spring bloom was very heavy but due to wet and cold conditions the blossoms simply turned brown and rotted on the vines; I expect a very small 2005 crop. Worried because very wet during pollination. Very bad year. All blighted; wish that the price would go up. Does not look good at all. No winter damage; however, continuous 24 hour spring rains until middle of June has caused heavy blight, less bloom and bees unable to pollinate; outlook very bleak. No winter damage; very wet spring. 15% winter damage; good moisture but some blight and some insect damage. So wet that bees did not get the job done. No money + no work = no blueberries. Several weeks of wet and cold; blight has caused 50% loss. Wet spring with heavy rain is not good; didn't get to burn last year. No pollination this spring. Some late frost damage; wet spring, some disease and poor pollination. Bad blight; no harvest. Several weeks cold and wet, blight caused 50% loss this year. Too much rain. A lot of rain damaging the crop. Little winter damage, heavy blossom but cold wet spring; prospect for crop should be average or better if we receive decent weather through this summer. Rain during the whole month of May; need good weather, but it has been a terrible year. Too much rain=no pollination. Severe blight damage everywhere, large areas completely wiped out, at this time, poorest crop ever seen. Late blossom, little frost damage. Very wet spring; bees didn't work in rain; no bees = no berries. Poor year. Pollination light due to rainy season. No winter damage, spring rains during blossom time so the bees didn't work. No winter damage, lower than expected pollination because of weather. Too much rain for a good crop. The plants did not grow like they should have, they are short. A lot of witch grass this year. Grass has taken over and hasn't allowed blueberries to grow. Weather was bad. Cold and rainy during pollination period; bees don't like the cold! **WASHINGTON:** Much rain, the bees have had a hard time; not much sun, grounds look like they'll bring an average crop. Very little winter damage, great bud set but cold wet spring caused fungus and pollination problems; above average crop; moisture has been adequate through June but starting to dry out. Light to medium blight; pollination spotty due to weather. Looks like an average crop. Cold, wet spring. Need water; will be starting irrigation this weekend; hope it's better than last year. Dry spell right now, below average moisture so needs rain. Severe mummyberry problem. Wet weather in Maine, mummyberry abundant; there's many a slip between the cup and the lip! Very wet, some disease but should be a better crop then the past 5 years. Some winter damage, wet weather at blossom time, bees had rain for 2 weeks. Some winter damage, extremely wet spring caused some blossom disease, no insect problems yet; adequate rain so far; should be average or better crop. Bad blight. Some blight. Expecting an above average year for industry; pollination was hurt by steady rain, but a good crop that will be more than enough to affect next year's prices. Winter damage mild, too much moisture. Poor year, hit with blight. Terrible pollination; days wet and miserable. Early blossom blight. Too much rain. Bad pollination; way too much rain. Cold and wet during pollination. Hit pretty bad by winterkill this year. The weather has all but ruined the crop. Very little winter damage, more than average moisture. Slight winter damage, irrigation, no disease or insect problems. Things look bad because of rain; rotted roots. Snow cover all winter, bees worked very well; had no disease; bloom was late and very green for this time of year, 2 weeks behind. Little winter damage (good snow cover); too much

rain caused some blight; above average crop; So far, so good. Wet spring will play factor in harvest and bees were out while it was raining. Not looking good at all! A little bit of blight and a very wet spring. Minor winter damage, very weedy, fields too wet to get on early; some mummyberry. Winter damage was light; poor pollination weather; generally average crop. Some clones got blossom blight on a third of their bloom. Winter damage light; pollination weather too wet; early fungus and blight light mostly. Spotty; too much rain when the bees needed to work. Heavy damage from blight and mummyberry. Some mummyberry. Bad blight and no bees due to rain and cold weather. Too much rain=no pollination AGAIN. Lots of rain and wind, pollination was not good. Not looking very good because it rained during the entire month of May; blight, mummy berry, and pollination problems due to the rain. Some spots of blight because chemicals to treat the blueberries can be expensive. Started with a heavy bloom but frost caused it to drop; poor year. Rain during pollination time; caused a lot of mummyberry. Bad year; too much rain and small berries. Cold wet spring but the buds looked good, areas of blight when blossoms came and bees didn't pollinate well because of weather. Lots of blight and winter kill, too much wet weather. A lot of rain and wind; pollination was not good. Bad weather and bad pollination; everything else is ok. Staggered pollination, unusually heavy bloom. Wet May set everything set back 2-3 weeks behind. Good snow cover, cold and wet May; 17 days of rain in a row; severe blight and an average crop at best. Wet spring, poor pollination. It appears that there was little winter damage; however, because of the heavy moisture this spring, the blossom quality was low and the berry set is low too. Not optimistic at all for this year's crop. Wet season, fields are weedy, mummyberry problems and a late harvest; unless July is hot and dry, price better increase or acreage will decrease. Very poor year; too much rain and no pollination. Not very much winter kill; cold and damp during blossom time, some mummyberry damage. Very little winter damage, quality looks good this year. Crop is a week behind. Little winter damage; some blossom blight; moisture adequate until now; looks like an average to somewhat better than average crop. High percentage of blight; continuous rain in spring, no opportunity to spray organic fungicide; about 30% of fields affected. Blight light to medium; pollination spotty, more than average pinheads. Moisture has been plenty so far, if it continues should be good berries but not a lot of them. Everything is a little late this year but other than that it all looks ok. Some areas of mummyberry damage. Too much rainfall during development period, bees didn't have a chance to work; too much predation from wild turkeys, gulls, bears and other wildlife. Little bit of blight and poor pollination. Very little winter damage but a lot of blight and mummyberry. No winter damage on any of the crop lots; on one lot, there are an unusual amount of weeds-barren berry, broken fern, bunch berry and surrell-probably making essentially half the lot as non-harvestable. Too much rainy weather, bees couldn't work but bushes seem to have small berries started; amount of harvest is questionable. Rain for 23 days straight caused pollination problems and then fungal problems; we could still have an average crop if good weather persists. Spots of frost damage on some fields and berries look behind for this time of year. No noticeable winter damage; too much moisture; mummyberry; poor crop harvest expected; too early to tell quality. Not looking good now, started good and now turning brown; less than normal expected. Winter damage light; poor pollination weather; generally an average crop. Too much rain; water standing in the fields in places; impossible for machinery to go into the fields in some areas; spots of mummyberry. Unusual year for grass because of wet spring. Some fruit fly; poor pollination; only 4 days without rain. A lot of mummyberry. The berries are small because they are late so predict a poor year.

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