

FRUIT 2009

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 2009 fruit and berry crops. Sufficient soil moisture and average spring temperatures were beneficial for fruit development. Pollination for some fruit crops were delayed by rainy weather. Mild conditions in late spring and early summer, timely rainfall through the mid to late summer months and cooler temperatures, all had a different impact on this year's fruit crops. As the season concluded, apples, cranberries, and peaches had higher utilized production, while blueberries had lower production.

Total production of the four fruit and berry crops during 2009 amounted to 221.5 million pounds, slightly up from 2008's production of 221.2 million pounds. Value of utilized production of these crops totaled \$150.0 million, a 1 percent increase from the 2008 total of \$147.8 million.

During 2009, 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 sixteenth in apple production. Ranking crops by value of production within the state, blueberries ranked first with \$65.3 million, peaches ranked second with \$33.7 million, while cranberries ranked third with \$30.0 million. Apples ranked fourth with \$21.0 million.

Peaches: Conditions for peaches were excellent during the growing season. Minor frost damages provided natural thinning. Fruit sizes were large and quality was good. The market was steady and prices were strong through Labor Day. Total production was 35,000 tons, up 3 percent from 2008, while utilized production totaled 33,000 tons, up 27 percent. The season average price was \$1,020.0 per ton (51.0 cents per pound), \$100 higher than last year's price. Value of utilized production was \$33.6 million in 2009, 41 percent more than 2008.

Gloucester County was the leading county with 18,000 tons, while Cumberland was second with 11,000 tons. All other counties totaled to 6,000 tons.

Apples: Growing season began favorably for apples in 2009 with mild temperatures and adequate rainfall. Limited pollination and frost during bloom in some areas resulted in smaller crops. Overall quality, size, and color were good. In general, higher prices resulted in a higher value of production for New Jersey's apples compared to the previous year. Apple production totaled to 43 million pounds, same as 2008. The season average price at 49.9 cents per pound was 11.8 cents higher than last year's. Value of utilized production was \$21.0 million in 2009 compared to \$14.8 million in 2008. The leading apple producing county was Gloucester with 14.5 million pounds. Hunterdon and Warren tied for second with 4.0 million pounds each. Sussex County finished third with 3.0 million pounds.

Blueberries: The blueberry crop's bloom and set of fruit were reported to be average. Blueberry production totaled 53 million pounds, a decrease of 10 percent from last year. The season average price, at \$1.23 per pound, was down 16 cents from last year. The value of utilized production for the 2009 blueberry crop was \$65.3 million, a decrease of 20 percent from 2008. Atlantic and Burlington counties were the leading blueberry producing areas.

Cranberries: Cranberry total production was 555,000 barrels, up 8 percent from the 512,000 barrels produced in 2008. The season average price was \$54.00 per barrel, up \$1.00 from last year. The value of production for the 2009 cranberry crop was \$30.0 million, up 10 percent from 2008. 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.