

Fruit

There are five major fruit and berry crops grown in the Garden State: apples, blueberries, cranberries, peaches, and strawberries. During the 2004 growing season, the mild late winter and warmer than normal early spring temperatures limited freeze damage to the fruit and berry crops. Sufficient soil moisture and above average spring temperatures benefitted fruit development. Apples, blueberries, cranberries and peaches had lower production, while the production for strawberries was higher than 2003.

Total production of the five fruit and berry crops during 2004 amounted to 182 million pounds, down 5 percent from the previous year's production of 192 million pounds. Value of utilized production of these crops totaled \$90.0 million, a 3 percent decrease from the 2003 total of \$92.8 million. Value of utilized production was higher for strawberries, while the remaining fruit and berry crops declined from the previous year.

During 2004, among all major fruit and berry producing states in the nation, New Jersey ranked second in blueberry production; fourth in cranberry and peach production; and nineteenth in apple production. Ranking crops by value of production within the state, blueberries ranked first with \$45.6 million. Peaches ranked second with \$23.2 million, while cranberries ranked third with \$13.5 million. Apples and strawberries ranked fourth and fifth with \$5.74 million and \$1.94 million, respectively.

Apple production was normal and quality was good. Total apple production, at 38 million pounds, down 2 million pounds from 2003. The season average price, at 15.1 cents per pound, was 0.5 cents higher than in 2003. Value of utilized production was \$5.74 million in 2004 compared with \$5.84 million in 2003, down 2 percent. The leading apple producing county was Gloucester with 14 million pounds. Burlington ranked second with 3.3 million pounds and Warren ranked third with 3.2 million pounds.

Atlantic and Cumberland counties tied fourth with 3.0 million pounds each.

The peach bloom and set were early this year. Peach producers began harvesting earlier than usual. Fruit quality and size were generally good. Frequent rain and scattered thunderstorms not only interrupted the harvest schedule but also caused fruit to crack. Peach utilized production totaled 30,500 tons, down 2 percent from 2003. Season average price, at \$760.00 per ton (38 cents per pound), was \$20.00 per ton lower than last year's price. Value of utilized production was \$23.2 million in 2004, 4 percent lower than in 2003. Gloucester county was the leading county with 13,500 tons while Cumberland was second with 7,500 tons. Camden ranked third with 3,500 tons and Burlington ranked fourth with 1,600 tons, followed by Atlantic with 1,300 tons.

Cranberry growers in New Jersey produced a total of 402,000 barrels in 2004, a decrease of 78,000 barrels from 2003. The value of utilized production was \$13.5 million, down 12 percent from the \$15.3 million produced in 2003. Burlington county was the major cranberry producing area in the Garden State.

The 2004 total blueberry production of 39 million pounds was down 2 million pounds from 2003's total production of 40 million pounds. Value of utilized production was \$45.6 million compared to 2003's value of \$45.7 million. The season average price of \$1.17 per pound was up 3 percent from the \$1.14 per pound in 2003. This season average price for blueberries is the highest price on record that producers have ever received for the crop. Atlantic and Burlington counties were the leading blueberry producing areas.

There were 12,000 hundredweight of strawberries produced in New Jersey in 2004, 9 percent higher than in 2003. The season average price of \$162.00 per hundredweight is \$3.00 less than a year ago. The higher production level brought the value of production to \$1.94 million, compared to \$1.82 million in 2003.