

Vegetables

The mild winter, warm spring, persistent dry summer, and favorable fall weather each had varying effects upon the vegetable crops this season. The spring planting started out early. Temperatures were about normal, while topsoil moisture was short during late spring. Growing conditions and quality of spring vegetables were generally good. The persistent dry conditions during the summer had adversely affected yield and shortened the harvest period for certain summer crops. Production of sweet corn, bell peppers, summer squash, and pumpkins was significantly lower. Fall planting was lower than the normal level due to dry soil conditions. Overall, prices were generally good because of limited supplies.

As a result of federal government budget constraints, some of the vegetable estimates were dropped from the National Agricultural Statistics Service official estimate program. These crops include asparagus, eggplant, escarole & endive, and Romaine and other leaf lettuce. The New Jersey Agricultural Statistics Service, however, will keep these estimates through our state estimating program.

There are 17 fresh market vegetables in the New Jersey Agricultural Statistics Service estimating program. Area harvested for these fresh market vegetables in 2002 totaled 36,200 acres, compared with 36,900 acres in 2001; down 700 acres. Production amounted to 5.64 million hundredweight, a decrease of 5 percent from the 5.94 million hundredweight produced in 2001. Overall yield in 2002 averaged 156 hundredweight per acre, down 5 hundredweight from the previous year. Season average price

was \$25.40 per hundredweight compared with \$23.50 in 2001, up \$1.90 per hundredweight.

Among the fresh market vegetables, only cabbage and cucumbers had higher harvested acres in 2002 than in 2001. Asparagus, collards, eggplant, escarole & endive, kale, leaf lettuce, head lettuce, Romaine lettuce, and bell pepper acres remained the same, while the remaining vegetable acres declined. Despite the decline of acreage and production, the higher season average price was enough to offset the decrease of production. The value of production increased \$4 million to a total of \$143 million.

Ranking New Jersey's fresh market vegetables by value of production showed that Jersey Fresh tomatoes were first with \$27.3 million, and bell peppers were second with \$26.2 million. Sweet corn, cucumbers, and cabbage, were third, fourth, and fifth with \$17.2 million, \$11.9 million, and \$10.7 million, respectively.

Harvested acreage in 2002 of the eight major processing vegetables (carrots, cucumbers, lima beans, green peas, snap beans, spinach, sweet corn, and tomatoes) totaled 11,600 acres, compared to 10,500 acres in 2001. Harvested acres increased for green peas, snap beans, and sweet corn, while acres decreased for carrots, lima beans, spinach, and tomatoes. Total production, at 73.6 thousand tons, was a 6 percent increase from 69.7 thousand tons in 2001. The season average price was \$124.30 per ton, compared with \$134.90 per ton in 2001; down \$10.60. The 2002 value of production at \$9.15 million was down 3 percent from \$9.40 million in 2001.