



# New England Agricultural Statistics Service

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



## NASS

22 Bridge St, Third Floor  
PO Box 1444  
Concord, NH 03302

Aubrey R. Davis, Director  
www.usda.gov/nass

603-224-9639  
Fax: 603-225-1434  
nass-nh@nass.usda.gov

## Maine Wild Blueberries

### July 2002

July 25, 2002

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

### BELOW AVERAGE CROP EXPECTED

Maine's 2002 wild (lowbush) blueberry crop is expected to total 55.0 million pounds, based on grower reported condition of the crop through mid-July. This forecast would place production 27 percent below last year's production of 75.2 million pounds, and would make up merely half of the record crop produced in 2000.

Most growers surveyed reported that crop prospects were at or below average this year, due to factors such as damage from the previous year's drought, cold and wet conditions during pollination, insects, wildlife and disease.

Growers detected minimal winter kill on the 2002 wild blueberry crop. Damage from the 2001 drought was reported throughout the state; bushes appeared burnt in some areas from lack of moisture the previous year. Weather was cool and rainy during the spring of 2002, delaying bloom and making it difficult for bees to pollinate. In effect, an uneven ripening occurred in most areas. Mummy berry disease has been prevalent this year, as well as insect problems.

As of mid-July, crop development was approximately one week behind normal and many berries had yet to turn blue.

### WILD BLUEBERRIES: Production and Value, 1992 - 2002

STATE & YEAR	Total Production 1,000 Pounds	All Price per Pound <sup>1/</sup> Cents	Total Value of Production 1,000 Dollars	Fresh Blueberries <sup>2/</sup>			Blueberries for Processing		
				Production 1,000 Pounds	Price per Pound Dollars	Value of Production 1,000 Dollars	Production 1,000 Pounds	Price per Pound Cents	Value of Production 1,000 Dollars
<b>Maine</b>									
1992	84,513	41	34,519	320	--	--	84,193	41	34,519
1993	64,562	28	17,979	350	--	--	64,212	28	17,979
1994	59,495	30	17,744	350	--	--	59,145	30	17,744
1995	65,944	32	21,004	305	--	--	65,639	32	21,004
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 <sup>3/</sup>	55,000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

<sup>1/</sup> All Price per Pound and Total Value of Production for 1992 - 1997 do not include fresh market blueberries.

<sup>2/</sup> Fresh Blueberry Price per Pound and Value of Production are not available before 1998.

<sup>3/</sup> Current year production forecast is based on growers' assessments as of mid-July.

### BLUEBERRY COMMENTS 2002 BY COUNTY, AS REPORTED ON THE GROWER SURVEY

**CUMBERLAND, FRANKLIN, KENNEBEC, OXFORD, YORK:** Severe frosts in mid-May will probably result in a 50% loss. Flea beetle damage. Looks like it will be a bad crop this year. Was too wet in May, bees stayed in their hives. No visible winter damage. Rain has been sufficient. We are looking for a good season. No winter damage. Last year's drought hurt the fruit buds, especially around ledge areas. Looks like we could have a good average crop. Plenty of rain now, but will have to have it all of July. Prospects for an average season. The drought caused lots of problems. Deer - some bud foraging. Light frost damage near bloom. Average rain. Three freezes during blossom. Some insect problems. Fair amount of blight. Very poor crop - very hot and dry during summer of 2001, which produced few fruit buds, many clones had no buds at all. Late snow during bloom froze some buds. Some acreage is not worth harvesting, prices are too low to bother. Things don't look too good. Cold temperatures this spring, didn't warm up until late.

**HANCOCK:** The frost got some plants this year and last year it was the drought. The blueberry plants are diseased and have bugs. The cold damp weather has done a job on them.. Better crop than 2001! Very poor weather for bees to work. Last year's weather dried out bushes. Berries are spotty. Mild winter, no drought problems, too much rain right now. Too many bears

around. Winter damage because of lack of snow cover. Cool weather during bloom. It will be a poor year because of the drought last year. The bushes look burnt. Not a good crop - cold, wet spring. Rain during bloom, more bugs, more turkeys after the bugs - knocking blooms/berries off. Some thrip damage (red leaf), mummy berry. Light to moderate fly count. A lot of bare spots, believed to be caused by the drought in the summer of 2001. If we get enough rain from now until August 1, things will be okay. Heavy bloom, but rained during blossom, so the set was light. Crop looks light, bees didn't do much. 2001 summer drought severely affected the 2002 crop. Crop was hit by a late frost and blight. The overall blueberry crop state-wide will probably be below average. Hail storms. Many berries are right on top of the bushes, not deep in the bushes. Poor pollination. Most of the vines are shorter than average with fewer berries. Very little winter damage or insect problems. Plants not recovered from 2001 drought as yet, yields will be lower. Had some good showers. No winter kill, some heavy frost late May, good moisture. We need to be paid a fair price to exist. Deer are taking over the fields. Dry last summer, which killed a lot of vines. Blight this year and poor set of berries. Patchy - some light set, some heavy set. May was one of the coolest on record, have lots of blight. The drought burned a lot of the bushes.

BLUEBERRY COMMENTS 2002 (CONT'D)

**KNOX, LINCOLN:** Bees didn't get going when the bushes first started to bloom. Very wet. Had frost in May, might not get any berries this year. Drought last season, but received moisture last month so things are looking better. No winter damage, moisture good, little disease, few insects. Conditions improving. Little winter damage, quality looks good as of July 1, moisture has been good up to July 1. Average disease and insect problems, treatments were successful. Weeds are generally no problem. Cloudy, cold pollination period. Some negative effects from last year's dry summer. Have some strawberry root worm. Expect a below average crop. Things look pretty good, but need some rain because bushes are drying out. Some mummy berry - damp spring, seagulls and turkeys are a big problem. Weed problems, including strawberry root, St. John's Wort. Good year, adequate moisture for good berry quantity and size. Pollination was good despite cool spring weather. Vines have been affected by 2001 drought - only produced average bloom and bud set at best. Looks like adequate rainfall this year. Conditions don't seem all that great this year. Problems with bunch berries and grass. A lot of mummy berry this year due to wet weather this spring. Harvest will be 1-2 weeks late because of cool, wet spring. Wild turkeys desiccated last year's potential crop - scare tactics do not work! So far adequate moisture. Bunch berries are starting to come in, also loose leaf strife and vetch. Damp spring gave needed rain, but berries are small due to lack of warm sun. Wild turkeys are serious problem - no state or local adequate controls.

**PENOBSCOT, PISCATAQUIS:** The bloom looked really good but then it was hit by frost. Had some blight damage. Lost money with blueberries last year - overhead was greater than income for the blueberries. Cool, wet spring. Inactive bees. Berries don't look good, not much out there. Not many berries, if any. Cold weather during pollination - not as many blossoms this year. Frost in blossom time. Wet weather kept bee activity down. Cold, wet weather during pollination - adverse effect on crop. **WALDO:** Weed and grass problems. Wild turkeys are getting to the blueberries before we can pick them. Little rain now will still make a difference, last year's drought affected this year's crop. The biggest problem may have been water last year, not many buds to make blossoms, some clones completely died back - many of those clones have sent up new shoots which are in bud setting stage. The berries need more water this year. The turkeys and deer are waiting for their harvest as the berries ripen. Bumblebee population is low. Wet weather during much of the bee pollinating period. Price keeps dropping. Low winter damage. Heavy mummy berry, not caught in time. Good pollination of remaining blossoms, good bumblebee population. Plenty of moisture this year. Mummy berry, thrip through field. Strawberry root worm. Insects probably caused a 10-15% reduction. Except for insects, things are about normal for this time of year. No winter damage. The quality looks good up to now. There has been sufficient rainfall. There was more evidence of thrip on new burn this year due to the slower start because of cold weather.

**WASHINGTON:** Last year's drought hurt this year's crop. Too cold to germinate. Blight problems. Increase in disease and insects. General prospects are poor. Frost, insect and animal problems. Lost some bushes to frost, will not be harvesting due to poor crop and no income from it. Berries look small, some blight, span worm. Cold, late spring, will be a late crop. Crop was hit by 3 frosts, so there won't be any blueberries. Too much rain. It will be a small crop. Flea beetle, span worm. About one week behind normal. Better than average crop. Don't see much fruit. Mummy berry - sprayed, but rain washed it off. Vetch is a problem. The berries look good. Too cold & wet to pollinate in the spring. Miserable weather. Lots of frost damage. Had lots of insects and blight because of dampness, might come up with 50%. The cold spring set things back, but the following weeks seem to have made up the difference. Expect yield to be down due to damp bloom season and dry 2001. The crop will be very small. Warm weather in mid-winter opened some buds, then a cold, moist spring brought in blight, causing blossom damage. Several frosts in the spring caused poor fruit set. Disease and insect problems are under control, pollination was very light. Season doesn't look promising. The product price fell, but harvest price has skyrocketed - NAFTA/Canadian companies to blame. Spotty mummy berry and frost damage. Pollination light, haven't seen much for insect problems. Predict less than average crop, and much less than fair prices. Looks like a bad crop year, might not harvest at all. Last year's drought caused bud set to be less than average, this year's potential crop is less because of it. Blight heavy because of cold, wet spring. Wet and cool during bloom so poor pollination, patchy set and size. Excessive disease and insect problems due to mild winter. Expect good crop. Cold, damp weather in the spring - late bloom/poor pollination. Noticeable blight and mummy berry. Expecting below average crop. Three frosts, second of which temps averaged 18-30 degrees while in full bloom. Fungal diseases very prevalent. Had to invest in irrigation. About 10 days late, fields are spotty. Crop does not look that good. So far there has been plenty of water available, but a cold, late spring has set the crop back and encouraged fungus diseases. Everybody has at least some mummy berry. Worst year ever, very cold & rainy during pollination, also caused disease problems. Biggest problem was drought last year - hurt this year. Blight, span worms. Prospects don't look good and the price is terrible! Insects (span worm) were bad. Below average production predicted. Spotty, some frost damage this spring, blossom set not good. Not many flower buds, mummy berry evident because of cold, foggy spring. Wet fields prevented spraying early. Late picking this year. Late bloom, cold/wet while bees were out in the fields. Due to a wet spring there was above average disease problem (mostly mummy berry). Mummy berry bad this year. Poor pollination weather - bumblebees saved the day, they worked in cold, wet weather. Cold, damp weather during bloom, not as heavy a set as might have been.

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 Maine Wild Blueberry report is published and available on the Internet in July. The next Wild Blueberry report will be published and available on the Internet in late January 2003. It will contain the final production statistics for the 2002 crop as collected by the Maine Department of Agriculture.

AUBREY R. DAVIS, Director

DAVID LUCKENBACH, Deputy Director

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICIANS: Emily McAllister, Robin Helrich

PERMIT NO. G-38  
USDA  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
FIRST CLASS  
PRESORTED

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE  
POST OFFICE BOX 1444  
CONCORD NH 03302-1444  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED