New York Berry Price Information - 2020

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***Editors' Note**: This is an edited version of the 2020 biennial price information survey supported by the NYS Berry Growers Association. The survey collects price information so that commercial growers can make future pricing decisions. Given the rise in input costs growers should take time to absorb the information in this article, and click here to access the unedited version which includes more detail about the survey and respondent demographics as well as information related to how much spending in 2020 was specific to the pandemic. Kristen Park will be presenting the data in full at the 2022 Empire Producers EXPO in January. The berry sessions are available both in-person and virtually.*

Summary

Ninety-nine farms in 37 counties that are currently producing berries completed the survey. Although the number of returned surveys was lower when compared to the previous study conducted in 2018, the results are robust. The average berry acreage was 9 acres and the average total farm size 177 acres. The size distribution of berry acres is similar to that from the 2018 survey. A large majority of our respondents farmed other crops in addition to berries.

The survey results indicate the prices of berries in New York State increased across most marketing channels for each berry, although some exceptions exist. This is important to note as the entire berry season took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, approximately 80% of the farms reported having increased expenses to comply with the pandemic safety measures.

The prices that growers received ranged greatly. These likely depended on many factors, but producers selling their berries at a price significantly less than the average sales price found in the report may want to re-evaluate their prices for the good of the industry as a whole.

Survey Data

More respondents grew blueberries than any other berry variety, followed by June-bearing strawberries, summer raspberries, fall raspberries, blackberries, and day-neutral strawberries(Table 4). Thirteen percent of growers produced other berry types, including aronia berries, currants (black and red), gooseberries, honeyberries, juneberries, black raspberries, and saskatoon berries. While many berry growers (47.5%) grew only one berry variety, some growers (20.2%) grew four or more varieties. June-bearing strawberries and day-neutral strawberries are considered different varieties, as are summer and fall raspberries.

Table 1. Percent of Respondents Producing Different Berry Varieties

Berry variety	% of respondents
Blueberries	77.8
Strawberries-June bearing	41.4
Strawberries-day neutral	10.1
Raspberries-summer	39.4
Raspberries-fall	15.2

Blackberries	16.2
Other varieties	13.1

Most respondents sold berries through u-pick (80.3%) as well as various retail channels (76%),such as farmers markets, farm stores and stands (Table 2).

Table 2: Percent of Respondents Using Various Marketing Channels

Marketing Strategy	2009	2012	2018	2020
		% of respondents		
U-pick (pick your own)	43.2	63.2	79.5	80.3
Wholesale	24.1	33.3	40.2	40.6
Retail	50.0	70.9	76.1	76.8
Value Added	14.2	18.8	22.2	29.3

*A farm is counted as having participated in retail operations if they participated in one or more of the following; farm store, fruit stand, farmers market, or other retail practices

Berry Price Data

Prices for four major berry crops, strawberries, blueberries, brambles, and ribes, and sold through various market channels, including u-pick, wholesale, and retail (farmers market, farm stores andstands, retail stores, and online orders) were gathered (Table 3).

U-pick and wholesale prices for almost all berry types, the exception being blackberries, increased in 2020. Interestingly, retail prices, an average of all types of retail including farm store, farmers market, sales to retailers, and online sales, dropped from 2018. Whether the pattern of price increases in u-pick and wholesale and decrease in retail were a result of marketpressures from the pandemic is uncertain.

Table 3: Average Price per Pound, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2018 and 2020

Berry	2006	2009	2012	2018	2020	**2018-2020 price change**
Blueberries			*average price $ per pound*			*$*
U-pick	1.49	2.21	2.17	2.83	2.89	0.06
Wholesale	2.39	2.99	3.08	3.44	3.64	0.20
Retail	3.88	4.21	4.84	5.41	5.19	(0.22)
Strawberries						
U-pick	1.32	1.76	2.07	2.68	3.2	0.52
Wholesale	2	2.3	2.34	2.74	3.26	0.52
Retail	2.38	3.4	3.72	5.11	4.24	(0.87)
Raspberries-summer						

U-pick	2.72	4.12	3.92	4.14	4.87	0.73
Wholesale	5.04	4.33	6.14	4.84	5.84	1.00
Retail	7.09	5.31	7.32	8.11	8.54	0.43
Raspberries-fall						
U-pick	2.99	3.88	3.81	4.54	4.76	0.22
Wholesale	5.21	4.79	5.53	5.91	6.6	0.69
Retail	6.93	6.54	7.66	8.74	7.89	(0.85)
Blackberries						
U-pick	NA	3.89	4.45	4.69	5.36	0.67
Wholesale	NA	4.69	5.58	5.72	5.43	(0.29)
Retail	NA	6.26	7.07	7.94	8.05	0.11

* Retail is an average across all retail outlets, including farmers markets, farm stores and stands, retail stores, and online orders

Conventional vs Organic Prices

We compared prices of conventional berries to organic berries (Table 4) and see some strong differences depending on the berry type. The u-pick prices for blueberries, strawberries, and summer raspberries were quite similar, but their wholesale prices were significantly higher.

We did not have enough fall raspberry observations or blackberry u-pick observations to reportthese prices.

Table 4. 2020 Prices of Conventional Berries versus Organic Berries

Berry	Conventional	Organic	Difference*
	average price $ per pound		*$*
Blueberries			
U-pick	2.83	3.18	0.35
Wholesale	3.22	5.02	1.80
Retail	5.00	5.97	0.97
Strawberries			
U-pick	3.16	3.48	0.31
Wholesale	2.82	5.02	2.20
Retail	5.25	5.54	0.29
Summer Fruiting Raspberries			
U-pick	4.86	4.90	0.04
Wholesale	5.47	6.88	1.41
Retail	8.13	10.00	1.87
Fall-Fruiting Raspberries			
U-pick	5.10	NA	NA

	Wholesale	7.00	NA	NA
	Retail	8.82	NA	NA
Blackberries				
	U-pick	5.36	NA	NA
	Wholesale	5.72	6.00	0.28
	Retail	7.94	8.68	0.74

* Difference = organic average price – conventional average price

Observations and Pricing Opportunities

The average berry prices in Table 4 above reveal general changes in the average prices from 2018 and 2021. We can also examine the current year's minimum and maximum prices receivedby growers by market channel to see what they might reveal about pricing opportunities.

Table 5 below reveals the price ranges for berries sold through the market channels. Factors thatmay explain some of the differences between the minimum and maximum prices reported include:

- Farm location – farms located in more urban settings or in metro areas will have opportunities to charge more for their products. Higher prices might also be possible in high traffic, tourist areas. And higher prices might also be needed in areas where the costsof living and farming are greater.
- Production method – organic methods of production may be more expensive and certainly are rewarded with greater prices. In addition, berries produced in protected environments, such as high tunnels, can grow and ripen earlier than field produced berries and frequently can command higher prices before supplies increase during theheight of the growing season.
- Berry variety – day-neutral strawberries can sometimes command a price premium as they can be produced off-season when field-grown berries are low or non-existent. Specialty or novel berries may also command a premium if the farm is located in an areawhere consumers are eager to try new and interesting berries.
- Farm services – services such as containers, baskets, or flats available to customers or even available bathroom facilities might lead a farm to consider paying for the servicesthrough slightly higher prices.

Table 5. 2020 Berry Price Ranges

	Prices per pound		
Blueberries	Average	Minimum	Maximum
U-pick	2.89	1.50	7.00
Wholesale	3.64	1.70	6.67
Retail	5.28	2.50	8.00
Farm store/stand	5.03	2.50	10.00
Farmer's market	5.32	3.33	8.00
Online	5.65	4.50	6.50
Strawberries	Average	Minimum	Maximum
U-pick	3.20	2.00	7.00
Wholesale	3.26	1.50	8.75
Retail	5.20	2.50	14.50
Farm store/stand	5.02	2.75	15.00
Farmer's market	5.84	2.75	14.50
Online	8.40	4.00	12.00
Raspberries	Average	Minimum	Maximum
U-pick	4.85	2.50	8.00
Wholesale	9.04	2.00	14.50
Retail	9.04	4.25	14.50
Farm store/stand	8.79	4.00	15.00
Farmer's market	8.19	4.00	16.00
Online	-	-	-
Blackberries	Average	Minimum	Maximum
U-pick	5.36	4.50	8.00
Wholesale	5.43	2.00	8.00
Retail	8.05	3.00	14.50
Farm store/stand	8.24	3.50	14.50
Farmer's market	7.71	5.00	10.00
Online	-	-	-
Other berries	Average	Minimum	Maximum
U-pick	4.38	2.50	8.00
Wholesale	7.41	4.00	12.00
Retail	7.41	3.33	15.00
Farm store/stand	8.77	3.33	15.00
Farmer's market	6.37	3.00	12.00
Online	-	-	-

Conclusions

As noted earlier, the survey results indicate the prices of berries in New York State increased across most marketing channels for each berry, although some exceptions exist.

One on-going concern is that data collected since 2006 show that many farmers are pricing their berries significantly lower than the average prices found in the state. If demand, as well as local market indicators, suggest the seller could increase their sales prices, they are advised to do so. Farms that sell crops at a significantly lower price than the average state price/lb. make it difficult for other NYS farmers to receive fair compensation for their work.

Thank you to all NYS commercial berry growers who responded to the 2020 pricing survey.