

NORTH CAROLINA



BLUEBERRY SURVEY

1972 - 1973





State of North Carolina

Department of Agriculture

Raleigh

January 23, 1974

JAMES A. GRAHAM
COMMISSIONER

My Fellow North Carolinians:

It is a pleasure for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture to initiate a new program of Blueberry Statistics. The cultivated blueberry industry in North Carolina is of vital importance to the Tar Heel economy. This is the first issue of this publication, but blueberry statistics will become a regular part of our program as we endeavor to aid all facets of the State's agriculture.

The development of mechanical harvesters and the innovative efforts of growers and handlers all give support to the industry. I hope this survey can be an aid in industry planning, particularly in labor procurement and marketing. There could not be a more appropriate time for a statistical review than at the present.

We are one of only a few states who have initiated a blueberry statistics program. The North Carolina Crop Reporting Service has drawn on every possible source to make this comprehensive survey of our blueberry industry. They indicated to me that there was outstanding cooperation on behalf of growers, shippers and processors who all furnished data to make the survey a success. For your fine cooperative spirit, I say "thank you".

North Carolina ranks third in the Nation in blueberry production, following Michigan and New Jersey. I hope this booklet will have something of interest for you and that this segment of agriculture in the State will be better because of it.

With all good wishes.

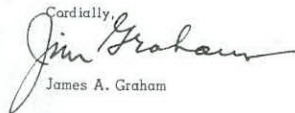
Cordially,

James A. Graham

TABLE OF CONTENTS

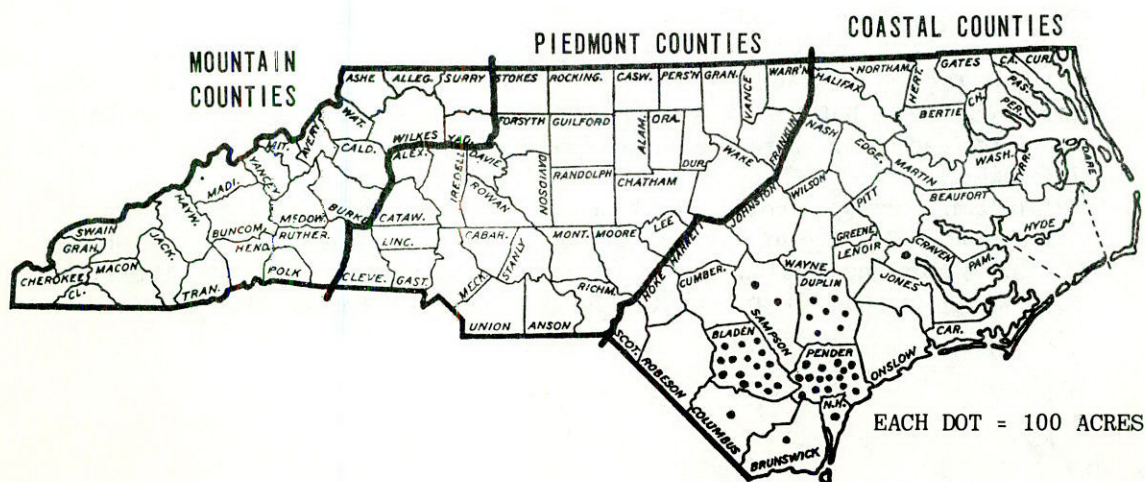
GENERAL

	Page
Map Of North Carolina	3
Introduction	4
Blueberries By Counties	5 & 6
Farms By Size Group	8
Price And Value	10

TABLES

1. BLUEBERRY FARMS AND ACREAGE BY COUNTIES, 1972	5
2. ACRES HARVESTED, YIELD AND PRODUCTION BY COUNTIES, 1972-1973	6
3. UTILIZATION OF BLUEBERRIES BY COUNTIES, 1972	7
4. NUMBER OF FARMS AND ACREAGE: BY FARM SIZE GROUPS, 1972	8
5. ACREAGE, YIELD AND PRODUCTION: BY FARM SIZE GROUPS, 1972	9
6. UTILIZATION OF BLUEBERRIES BY FARM SIZE GROUPS, 1972	9
7. BLUEBERRIES SOLD AND PRICES RECEIVED, 1972-1973	10
8. ACRES HARVESTED, YIELD, PRODUCTION, PRICE AND VALUE, 1972-1973	10

BLUEBERRIES BY COUNTIES



INTRODUCTION

The survey of the North Carolina blueberry industry, made during 1973, was conducted to provide acreage and production data by counties, thus providing the industry with an inventory of production capacity and a preview of potential trends. This is the first such survey in North Carolina. Due to the late start of the 1972 crop survey, it was decided to wait and obtain 1973 crop information before publishing the data. Beginning in 1974 the year's estimate will be released in October.

The blueberry industry, recognizing the need for more knowledge during the current period of critical adjustments in production and marketing, requested the Crop Reporting Service to collect information which would be helpful to the industry. A master list of blueberry growers was prepared from all known sources including the Extension Service, State Farm Census lists, Castle Hayne Research Station and others. All potential growers (over 300) were mailed a questionnaire for the 1972 crop survey. Second mail requests were made to those who did not respond. Those still not responding by mail were contacted by telephone or in person. All known potential growers were contacted in the 1972 survey. The 1973 crop survey was a mail survey only, thus all growers were not contacted and detailed breakdowns were not made for all items in 1973. A big thank you goes out to the growers who were extremely friendly and helpful in furnishing the data. Much appreciation is also extended to the Marketing Firms, who graciously consented to give us their sales and processing data, which we used as a comparison along with data supplied by growers. If this data was not available, the Blueberry Statistics Program would never have been initiated.

Despite an intensive effort to obtain a complete list of growers, it was apparent from marketing records and other supporting data that some incompleteness existed. Small allowances were made in the published tables to cover this incompleteness. Yield data relates only to the years 1972 and 1973 and therefore, may not necessarily be representative of performance for a given county over a period of years.

Counties with less than three growers were combined with other minor producing counties to facilitate publication and to avoid disclosure of individual operations in these counties. If a grower indicated he had acreage in two counties, separate questionnaires were filled out for each county and the acreage allotted to each county.

The terms 'bearing' acreage and 'harvested' acreage are not necessarily the same, but for this survey both are interchangeable. There were a few fields each year where yields were reduced by frost, but it was too minor to differentiate.

In this survey, a commercial blueberry farm was defined as a farm that had at least one-half acre of cultivated blueberries maintained for production.

All yield, production and price statistics are shown in 12-pint flats, which weigh 12 pounds. Processing sales were converted to flats for ease of comparison.

BLUEBERRIES BY COUNTIES

A total of 140 commercial blueberry farms were reported in the State. A commercial farm has to have one-half acre of cultivated blueberry bushes. Bladen, Pender and Duplin counties comprise the big three in North Carolina blueberries. These three counties have 82 farms, and account for 80 percent of the State's total acreage. Blueberry bushes in North Carolina in 1972 was estimated at 4,900 acres, of which 4,100 acres were of bearing age, with 800 acres being of non-bearing age. Bearing age acreage increased to 4,200 acres in 1973. Almost the entire crop is grown in the southeastern section of the State. There are also a few scattered farms located in the Mountain and Piedmont areas of the State, but their production is rather limited and used primarily in local sales.



BLUEBERRY FARMS AND ACREAGE BY COUNTIES, 1972

COUNTY OR AREA	Number Of Farms	ACREAGE OF		Total Acreage
		Bearing Age	Non-Bearing Age	
Bladen	39	1,425	205	1,630
Brunswick	6	95	5	100
Columbus	7	85	25	110
Craven	3	120	15	135
Duplin	21	640	60	700
New Hanover	3	115	15	130
Pender	22	1,220	350	1,570
Sampson	5	135	60	195
Other Coastal Plains	19	240	60	300
Mountain Counties	10	20	3	23
Piedmont Counties	5	5	2	7
STATE TOTAL	140	4,100	800	4,900

BLUEBERRIES BY COUNTIES

Bladen, Pender and Duplin counties had the honor of producing 600,000 flats of the State's 738,000 flats of blueberries in 1972. Bladen County has more acreage than Pender County; however Pender yields are higher, thus making Pender the biggest producer of blueberries in the State. The 1972 crop yielded 180 flats per acre State-wide. Spring frosts plus an over abundance of rain lowered 1973 yields to 155 flats per acre -- thus 1973 production at 651,000 flats was 12 percent below the 1972 output.

Slightly over three-fourths of the 1972 crop was sold for fresh market use. Of the 564,000 flats sold for

fresh use, 93 percent were sold through cooperatives, associations, food and produce companies. The remaining 7 percent were marketed through roadside stands, local retailers or pick your own operations. Processing uses accounted for 23 percent of the 1972 crop. With the shift to more mechanical harvesting, plus the scarcity of labor, 28 percent of the 1973 crop went for processing.

Not all the blueberries harvested leave the farm -- it is estimated that about 5,000 flats are consumed on the farm, are given away to friends and relatives or are disposed of in other ways.

ACRES HARVESTED, YIELD AND PRODUCTION BY COUNTIES

COUNTY OR AREA	1972			1973		
	Acres Harvested	Flats Per Acre	Flats Produced	Acres Harvested	Flats Per Acre	Flats Produced
Bladen	1,425	165	235,000	1,430	145	207,500
Brunswick	95	150	14,200	95	140	13,300
Columbus	85	230	19,500	80	245	19,600
Craven	120	220	26,400	120	160	19,200
Duplin	640	180	115,000	670	155	104,000
New Hanover	115	200	23,000	115	185	21,300
Pender	1,220	205	250,000	1,270	165	209,500
Sampson	135	130	17,500	135	125	16,900
Other Coastal Plains	240	150	36,000	260	125	32,500
Mountain Counties	20	40	800	20	295	5,900
Piedmont Counties	5	120	600	5	260	1,300
STATE TOTAL	4,100	180	738,000	4,200	155	651,000

UTILIZATION OF BLUEBERRIES BY COUNTIES - 1972

COUNTY OR AREA	Flats Produced	SOLD FOR		Other Utilizations //	Value
		Fresh Market	Processing		
		<i>Flats</i>	<i>Flats</i>	<i>Flats</i>	<i>Thousand Dollars</i>
Bladen	235,000	160,500	73,500	1,000	1,000
Brunswick	14,200	12,900	1,250	50	60
Columbus	19,500	16,400	3,000	100	90
Craven	26,400	24,000	2,300	100	105
Duplin	115,000	102,000	12,500	500	535
New Hanover	23,000	10,700	12,250	50	95
Pender	250,000	188,600	59,000	2,400	1,105
Sampson	17,500	15,200	2,200	100	82
Other Coastal Plains	36,000	32,500	3,000	500	170
Mountain Counties	800	700	-	100	3
Piedmont Counties	600	500	-	100	2
STATE TOTAL	738,000	564,000	169,000	5,000	3,247

// Includes blueberries used in farm households, given away, etc.



FARMS BY SIZE GROUP

The data was also summarized by size of farm. Seven size groups are represented, ranging from one-half acre to over 200 acres. Size was based on total blueberry acreage in the farm. Of the 140 blueberry farms in the State, the largest number of farms were in the 20 to 49.9 acre size group. This group accounted for 43 farms. The next largest group was the below five acre classification which had 40 farms. The 20 to 49.9 acre farms cultivate nearly 30 percent of the State's acreage. Farms in the four largest size groups (above 20 acres) cultivate 93 percent of the Tar Heel acreage. The average size of all blueberry farms in the State is 35 acres.

Production follows a similar pattern as acreage, with the largest four groups producing 91 percent of the State's blueberries. Again the 20 to 49.9 acre size group is the leader in production with 233,000 flats -- 32 percent of the Tar Heel total. The large 200 acre plus farms produced the most blueberries per acre -- 190 flats.



NUMBER OF FARMS AND ACREAGE: BY FARM SIZE GROUPS - 1972

SIZE GROUPS (Acres)	Number Of Farms	ACREAGE OF		Total Acres
		Bearing Age	Non-bearing Age	
0.5-4.9	40	70	10	80
5.0-9.9	15	80	20	100
10.0-19.9	18	240	40	280
20.0-49.9	43	1,260	180	1,440
50.0-99.9	12	750	100	850
100.0-199.9	8	820	240	1,060
Over 200.0	4	880	210	1,090
STATE TOTAL	140	4,100	800	4,900

ACREAGE, YIELD AND PRODUCTION: BY FARM SIZE GROUPS - 1972

SIZE GROUPS (Acres)	Acres Harvested	Flats Per Acre	Flats Produced
0.5-4.9	70	135	9,500
5.0-9.9	80	125	10,000
10.0-19.9	240	185	44,500
20.0-49.9	1,260	185	233,000
50.0-99.9	750	180	135,000
100.0-199.9	820	170	139,000
Over 200.0	880	190	167,000
STATE TOTAL	4,100	180	738,000

UTILIZATION OF BLUEBERRIES: BY FARM SIZE GROUPS - 1972

SIZE GROUPS (Acres)	Flats Produced	SOLD FOR		Other Utilizations L/	Value
		Fresh Market	Processing		
		<i>Flats</i>	<i>Flats</i>	<i>Flats</i>	<i>Thousand Dollars</i>
0.5-4.9	9,500	9,200	-	300	36
5.0-9.9	10,000	9,300	500	200	46
10.0-19.9	44,500	43,200	1,100	200	215
20.0-49.9	233,000	203,200	28,000	1,800	1,050
50.0-99.9	135,000	102,100	31,000	1,900	570
100.0-199.9	139,000	101,000	37,600	400	620
Over 200.0	167,000	96,000	70,800	200	710
STATE TOTAL	738,000	564,000	169,000	5,000	3,247

L/ Includes blueberries used in farm household, given away, etc.

PRICE AND VALUE

Tar Heel growers received an average of \$4.40 per flat for their 1972 crop of blueberries. The price growers received for their fresh market sales, including roadside stands and pick your own sales averaged \$4.73 per flat; however the equivalent price for the processing portion of the crop averaged only \$3.30 per flat.

Value of the 1972 crop was \$3,247,000 -- of which 81 percent was attributed to Pender, Bladen and Duplin Counties. Included in the value is the small amount of blueberries used in the farm household or given away. In the breakdown by size groups, farms with over 20 acres of blueberries account for 91 percent of the value.

The 1973 overall average price received by growers fell 5 cents per flat under 1972 prices for an average of \$4.35. Farm income in 1973 from blueberries was reduced 13 percent as a result of 103,000 fewer flats being sold for fresh market. The reduction in flats sold for fresh market was due to a 87,000 flat cutback in production, plus a 16,000 flat increase in the quantity of berries sold for processing.

Excluded from production were approximately 27,500 flats that were not harvested in 1972 because of labor shortages, low prices or other economic conditions. About 40,000 flats were not picked in 1973 for the same reason.

BLUEBERRIES SOLD AND PRICES RECEIVED - 1972-1973

YEAR	Flats Produced	FRESH SALES		PROCESSING SALES		
		Flats Sold L/	Price Per Flat	Flats Sold	AVERAGE PRICE	
					Dollars Per Flat Equivalent	Cents Per Pound
1972	738,000	569,000	4.73	169,000	3.30	27.5
1973	651,000	466,000	4.75	185,000	3.36	28.0

L/ Includes value of flats used in farm household, given away or disposed of in other ways.

ACRES HARVESTED, YIELD, PRODUCTION, PRICE AND VALUE 1972-1973

YEAR	Acres Harvested	Flats Per Acre	Flats Produced	Average Price To Growers (All Sales)	Value L/
				\$ Per Flat	Thousand Dollars
1972	4,100	180	738,000	4.40	3,247
1973	4,200	155	651,000	4.35	2,832

L/ Includes value of flats used in farm household given away or disposed of in other ways.

FEDERAL-STATE CROP REPORTING SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture
Statistical Reporting Service

North Carolina Department of Agriculture
Division of Agricultural Statistics

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