Results from the 2012 Berry Pricing Survey

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In November 2012, Cornell CALS Dept. of Horticulture in conjunction with the NY Berry Growers' Association distributed a berry pricing survey to 500 commercial berry growers across the state. The purpose of the survey was to continue to make statewide berry pricing information available to commercial berry growers so they might better evaluate the economic returns of their various berry crops. Information collected would also give a picture of industry pricing trends since the initial survey conducted by the New York Berry Growers Association in 2006, along with a follow up survey conducted in 2009.

The 2012 pricing survey was the same as that used in 2009. Growers were asked to list prices they received during the 2012 season for four major berry crop commodities (strawberries, blueberries, brambles (raspberries, blackberries), and ribes (currants and gooseberries) – currently grown in NY State. There was also opportunity to include pricing information for other small fruit crops they might be marketing. Prices for berries marketed via pick-your-own (PYO), wholesale, and retail venues were requested. Growers were additionally asked to indicate whether or not they marketed their berries as value added products, and if they were organic producers.

117 growers responded from 39 counties, a 29% decrease over the number of berry growers responding in 2009 (Table 1). Onondaga, Oswego, and Wayne counties had the highest numbers of respondents with 8, 8, and 7, respectively. Of those growers responding, 12 indicated they were organic producers, more than double those organic producers responding in 2009 (5).

Table 1. Numbers of survey respondents and counties represented for years 2006, 2009 and 2012.

	2006	2009	2012
Total growers	48	162	117
Conventional growers	--	157	97
Organic growers	--	5	12
Counties represented	34	48	37

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents grew 2 or more berry crops. Of the 50 growers growing a sole berry crop, 32 grew blueberries alone, 12 grew only strawberries, 4 grew raspberries only, and 2 grew blackberries only.

Three producers indicated they were growing and marketing elderberries on a commercial scale; 1 producer indicated they were producing and marketing honeyberries commercially.

Forty-two percent of the responses were from farms with 3 acres or less of berries under production (Table 2). Farms with 4 to 10 acres of berries comprised 29 percent of respondents. 18 percent were from farms with 11 or more acres of berries under production; 11 percent of growers did not indicate farm size.

Table 2. Farm size and number of representative respondents.

Farm size (acres)	Number of growers responding	Percent
<1	25	21
1 to 3	24	21
4 to 6	23	20
7 to 10	10	9
11 to 20	11	9
>20	11	9
Acreage not designated	13	11
Total	**117**	

Thirty-five grower respondents indicated they marketed their crops through a single venue, with 14 marketing only through PYO, 2 marketing wholesale only, and 19 marketing only through retail sales. Seventy percent of growers responding used 2 or more marketing venues for their berry crops, primarily PYO and retail venues (Table 3). There were no significant changes in marketing venues observed between 2009 and 2012; numbers of growers using PYO, wholesale, retail and value-added sales remained relatively unchanged.

Table 3: Comparison of commercial berry growers using various marketing venues 2006, 2009and 2012 (percent).

Year	PYO	Wholesale	Retail	Value-Added
2006	83	67	85	26
2009	70	39	81	23
2012	74	39	83	22

Blueberries displaced strawberries in the 2012 survey in terms of dominating the PYO, and retail marketing venues used by growers reporting. Blueberries and strawberries were very close in terms of wholesale venues with 26, 24 growers using this venue, respectively. June-bearing strawberries were second highest for all 3 venues, followed by summer raspberries, and fall raspberries, respectively.

Table 4. Berry Crops by Marketing Venues, 2012.

	Number of Growers Using Venue			Percent Growers Using Venue			Total Growers
Berry Crop	**PYO**	**Wholesale**	**Retail**	**PYO**	**Wholesale**	**Retail**	
Strawberry-June	44	24	55	39	39	89	62
Strawberry- Day Neutral	7	6	10	55	55	91	11
Summer raspberry (all)	29	13	38	25	25	75	51
Summer red rasp.	29	11	34	23	23	72	47
Black rasp.	18	8	18	33	33	75	24
Purple rasp.	11	4	11	31	31	85	13
Fall Red rasp.	26	9	28	24	24	76	37
Blackberry	13	9	22	32	32	79	28
Blueberry	53	26	58	35	35	78	74
Gooseberry	5	1	4	13	13	50	8
Currant (all)	6	0	5	0	0	63	8
Red currant	5	0	4	0	0	57	7
Black currant	6	0	5	0	0	63	8
Elderberry	1	0	3	0	0	100	3
Honeyberry	1	0	1	0	0	100	1

Note: Minimum and maximum price are determined by the report of a single farm, whereas the average price includes all farms in the survey.

STRAWBERRIES

63 growers from 37 counties reported June-bearing strawberry pricing with Onondaga, Erie and Suffolk counties having the highest number of respondents. Most growers marketed their strawberries through retail (90%) and/or PYO operations (72%). Strawberries held a smaller wholesale market share (39%). Average prices for the 3 marketing venues again showed modest gains for 2012 (Table 5). Prices ranged from $1.00/lb. PYO to $7.50/lb. retail.

12 growers from 12 counties reported pricing for day neutral strawberries with average pricing at $2.91/lb. PYO, $4.08/lb. wholesale and retail pricing at an average of $4.53/lb. DN strawberry prices ranged from $1.00/lb. PYO to $8.00/lb. retail. Grower use of marketing venues for these closely mirrored those of June-bearing strawberries: Retail, 90%; PYO operations, 64%, and whole sale, 55%.

Table 5: Comparison of 2006, 2009 and 2012 pricing for NYS Strawberries, $/lb.

	Minimum			Average			Maximum		
	2006	**2009**	**2012**	**2006**	**2009**	**2012**	**2006**	**2009**	**2012**
PYO	$ 0.75	$ 0.83	$ 1.00	$ 1.31	$ 1.76	2.07	$ 2.80	$ 3.99	4.50
Wholesale	$ 1.17	$ 1.50	$ 1.50	$ 2.00	$ 2.30	2.34	$ 1.60	$ 6.00	6.00
Retail	$ 1.66	$ 1.80	$ 1.00	$ 2.38	$ 3.40	3.72	$ 3.33	$ 7.50	7.50

RASPBERRIES

Eighty-eight raspberry growers representing 36 counties responded. Orleans, Wayne and Yates counties had the most respondents. Raspberries were divided into summer and fall-fruiting types. Of the 58 growers reporting, 21 grew exclusively summer-fruiting varieties, 9 grew exclusively fall-fruiting varieties, and 58 grew both types (Table 6a).

Table 6a: Comparison of numbers of raspberry growers and types of raspberries grown, 2006, 2009, 2012.

Year	Total growers	Summer-fruiting	Fall-fruiting	Both types
2006	34	8	8	18
2009	81	19	11	51
2012	88	21	9	58

Note: One item of interest from this year's survey was the number of growers reporting crop failure due to a new invasive species in NY, Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD). Six raspberry growers took the opportunity to report via their pricing survey response cards they had experienced a complete crop loss in fall raspberries as a direct result of infestation by this pest. Late season summer raspberries, blueberries, blackberries and DN strawberries were also affected by this pest, as reported elsewhere. (*Loeb and Heidenreich,* 2012).

Summer-fruiting Raspberries

Fifty-three individuals from 34 counties grew summer-fruiting raspberries. A vast majority of summer raspberry growers marketed their crops retail (75%) in 2012. Fifty-seven percent marketed through PYO; 25% marketed wholesale. Average PYO prices for summer raspberries decreased slightly between 2009 and 2012, while wholesale and retail prices increased. Prices for summer raspberries ranged from $2.00/lb. PYO to $15.00 /lb. retail for the 2012 season (Table 6b).

Table 6b: Comparison of 2006, 2009and 2012 pricing for NYS summer raspberries, $/lb.

	Minimum			Average			Maximum		
	2006	2009	2012	2006	2009	2012	2006	2009	2012
PYO	$ 2.00	$ 1.67	$ 2.00	$ 2.72	$ 4.12	$ 3.92	$ 3.64	$15.33	$ 9.50
Wholesale	$ 2.44	$ 2.00	$ 3.30	$ 5.04	$ 4.33	$ 6.14	$ 7.11	$12.00	$ 12.00
Retail	$ 2.00	$ 1.50	$ 3.00	$ 7.09	$ 5.31	$ 7.32	$13.33	$13.51	$ 15.00

As noted in previous survey years, there was some variation in pricing for the different types of summer raspberries (Table 6c). Purple raspberries were priced less for all three marketing venues as compared to red and black raspberries. Red raspberry prices ranged from $2.00/lb. (PYO) to $15.00/lb. (retail). Black raspberry prices ranges from $2.00/lb. (PYO) to $15.00/lb. (retail). Purple raspberry prices ranged from $2.00/lb. (PYO) to $11.2/lb.5 (retail).

Table 6c: 2012 pricing for NYS red, black, and purple raspberries, $/lb.

	Minimum			Average			Maximum		
(raspberry type)	Red	Black	Purple	Red	Black	Purple	Red	Black	Purple
PYO	$ 2.00	$ 2.00	$ 2.00	$ 3.91	$ 3.90	$ 3.73	$ 9.50	$ 9.50	$ 5.33
Wholesale	$ 3.30	$ 3.50	$ 3.50	$ 5.81	$ 6.25	$ 5.82	$ 8.75	$ 12.00	$ 8.00
Retail	$ 3.00	$ 3.00	$ 4.00	$ 7.39	$ 7.80	$ 7.09	$ 15.00	$ 15.00	$ 11.25

Fall-fruiting Raspberries

Thirty-seven growers from 24 counties grew fall-fruiting raspberries. One hundred percent of growers retailed their fall raspberries; 93% sold via PYO and 32% wholesaled in 2012. Average price for PYO fall raspberries fell slightly between 2009 and 2012 (Table 7). Average wholesale and retail prices increased for the same period. Maximum prices remained relatively stable for all three categories between 2009 and 2012.

Table 7: Comparison of 2006 and 2009 pricing for NYS fall raspberries, $/lb

	Minimum			Average			Maximum		
	2006	2009	2012	2006	2009	2012	2006	2009	2012
PYO	$ 2.00	$ 1.67	$ 2.00	$ 2.99	$ 3.88	$ 3.81	$ 5.82	$ 8.99	$ 8.99
Wholesale	$ 2.44	$ 1.77	$ 3.00	$ 5.21	$ 4.79	$ 5.53	$ 8.00	$12.00	$ 12.00
Retail	$ 2.00	$ 1.50	$ 3.75	$ 6.93	$ 6.54	$ 7.66	$12.00	$13.51	$ 15.00

BLACKBERRIES

Thirty-eight reported pricing for blackberries from 20 counties across the state. Suffolk and Wayne counties had the highest number of county blackberry growers. Fifty-eight percent of growers reporting marketed their blackberries retail; 34% through PYO, and 24% wholesale. 2012 prices for blackberries in ranged from $2.00/lb. wholesale to $13.50/lb. retail (Table 8). Average pricing across the 3 venues increased approximately $1.00/lb. over 2009 prices. **Note**: Data for this crop was not collected in 2006.

Table 8: Comparison of 2006 and 2009 pricing for NYS blackberries, $/lb.

	Minimum		Average		Maximum	
	2009	**2012**	**2009**	**2012**	**2009**	**2012**
PYO	$ 2.33	$ 2.00	$ 3.89	$ 4.45	$ 6.67	$ 9.50
Wholesale	$ 1.77	$ 2.50	$ 4.69	$ 5.58	$12.00	$ 12.00
Retail	$ 0.93	$ 2.00	$ 6.26	$ 7.07	$13.51	$ 13.50

BLUEBERRIES

74 growers from 31 counties reported pricing for blueberries. Onondaga, Oswego and Wayne counties had the highest number of respondents. Marketing for blueberries was split fairly evenly between PY0 (72%) and retail (78%), with retail being slightly higher. Thirty-five percent of growers wholesale marketed. Average pricing for PYO, retail and wholesale venues rose only slightly in 2012; pricing for blueberries continues to fall short of those obtained for other berry crops in NY.

Table 9: Comparison of 2006, 2009AND 2012 pricing for NYS blueberries, $/lb.

	Minimum			Average			Maximum		
	2006	**2009**	**2012**	**2006**	**2009**	**2012**	**2006**	**2009**	**2012**
PYO	$ 1.00	$ 0.99	$ 1.10	$ 1.49	$ 2.21	$ 2.17	$ 2.25	$10.00	$ 9.00
Wholesale	$ 1.75	$ 1.30	$ 2.00	$ 2.39	$ 2.99	$ 3.08	$ 3.00	$ 8.00	$ 5.00
Retail	$ 2.17	$ 0.75	$ 2.00	$ 3.88	$ 4.21	$ 4.84	$ 5.33	$12.00	$ 12.00

RIBES (CURRANTS AND GOOSEBERRIES)

Currants

Ten growers from 5 counties reported pricing for currants with Wayne County having the most growers reporting. PYO and retail pricing both showed price increases of $0.97/lb. and $1.91/lb., respectively. Pricing was widely distributed with ranges from a minimum of $2.00/lb. PYO to a maximum of $9.75/lb. retail (almost a ten-fold increase). No wholesale marketing of currants was reported for 2012. (Table 10)

Table 10: Comparison of 2006 and 2009 pricing for NYS currants, $/lb.

	Minimum		Average		Maximum	
	2009	**2012**	**2009**	**2012**	**2009**	**2012**
PYO	$ 1.95	$ 2.00	$ 3.97	$ 4.94	$ 8.99	$ 9.00
Wholesale	$ 1.00	--	$ 3.33	--	$ 6.66	--
Retail	$ 2.50	$ 4.67	$ 5.01	$ 6.92	$10.66	$ 9.75

Red currants averaged $4.11 and $6.46/lb. for PYO and retail marketing, respectively. Black currants averaged $4.96 and $7.93/lb. for PYO and retail, respectively. **Note**: Data for this crop was not collected in 2006.

Gooseberries

Nine growers from 8 different counties reported pricing for gooseberries again with Wayne County having the most growers reporting. Gooseberries also enjoyed a wide distribution in pricing with ranges from a minimum of $2.00/lb. wholesale and PYO to a maximum of $9.00/lb. retail. Both PYO and Retail prices enjoyed an increase over 2009 pricing; wholesale pricing fell. (Table 11). Sixty-three percent of growers indicated they used PYO marketing for their gooseberries; 50% marketed their gooseberries retail; 13 percent wholesaled their gooseberries. **Note:** Data for this crop was not collected in 2006.

Table 11: Comparison of 2006 and 2009 pricing for NYS gooseberries, $/lb.

	Minimum		Average		Maximum	
	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
PYO	$ 1.99	$ 2.00	$ 3.40	$ 4.17	$ 8.95	$ 8.99
Wholesale	$ 1.67	$ 2.00	$ 3.89	$ 2.00	$ 6.66	$ 2.00
Retail	$ 2.50	$ 4.00	$ 4.84	$ 6.29	$10.66	$ 9.00

Elderberries
Three growers from 3 counties (Jefferson, Oneida, and Onondaga) reported retail pricing for elderberries at an average of $2.00/lb. Pyo and $3.33/lb. retail. NO wholesale marketing of this crop was reported in 2012. Interest in commercial elderberry production continues to grow in NYS.

Table 12: Comparison of 2009 and 2012 pricing for NYS elderberries, $/lb.

	Minimum		Average		Maximum	
	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
PYO	$ 1.99	$ 2.00	$ 3.40	$ 2.00	$ 8.95	$ 2.00
Wholesale	$ 1.67	--	$ 3.89	--	$ 6.66	--
Retail	$ 2.50	$ 2.00	$ 4.84	$ 3.33	$10.66	$ 5.00

Honeyberries
One grower reported PYO and retail pricing for honeyberries at $3.99/lb. and $8.00/lb., respectively.

CONCLUSIONS
The typical commercial berry farm has about 3 acres of berries. Berries are grown throughout the state and they bring a very high price per pound. Data from this survey indicate that the berry industry is holding its own despite the 2009 economic downturn. PYO and retail sales demonstrated modest to substantial price increases across the board in 2012 as compared to 2009; wholesale pricing remained relatively stable or decreased slightly. This data suggests there is room for further growth in both acreage and pricing. A word of caution however – growers planning to expand berry crop acreage need to be aware of, and have a management plan in place for Spotted Wing Drosophila. Existing management strategies for this new invasive species are adequate at best; more research is needed to strengthen management strategies and reduce risk from this pest.

Considerable variation in berry pricing across all marketing venues continues since the inception of the statewide berry pricing survey in 2006. The reasons for this variation remain uncertain. It has been postulated in the past that farms in more urban areas are able to receive higher prices for their berry crops, thus resulting in the widespread pricing variation observed. This hypothesis has not been supported by information collected in the 2006, 2009 or 2012 pricing surveys. Conversely, farms in rural areas were demonstrated to receive among the highest prices, suggesting that attention to quality and marketing has a high value to all consumers, irrespective of location.

Growers with pricing considerably below the state average are advised to consider raising their prices. Data collected from all 3 survey years suggest that price increases are warranted so long as fruit quality is high. Pricing below the state average price/lb. makes it difficult for other producers to receive fair prices.

Many thanks to all the NYS Commercial berry growers who took the time to report their prices via our 2012 pricing survey. We hope this information is valuable to you as you set your prices for the 2013 season. Thank you!