From Your Commissioner

Some Of What We Grow In New Hampshire?

I have come to realize that most people think that the NH Department of Agriculture collects data on what is grown here. The fact is that we don't. Primarily, to the degree that is done at all, it is through voluntary reporting to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). There are a couple of exceptions to that statement. We can get a better handle on the volume of milk that is produced, but it is not something we regularly track. Hemp producers are licensed through the USDA, so the number of acres of hemp planted and harvested is known to them.

The interesting thing about the hemp numbers is that, in the 2021 report that NASS put out, the number of acres in NH is not reported. It seems that if there is only one farm producing a commodity in a state, NASS will not report on the acreage as that would make that one farm’s production public. There is no industrial hemp grown in Idaho and only one farm each in Alaska, Louisiana, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The report does provide that there are a total of 97 acres of industrial hemp being grown in those four states. In the 49 states that do grow industrial hemp, the total acreage is 54,152 acres, with 33,480 acres being harvested, with a value of 824 million dollars.

The problem with the following numbers, is they come only from farms who report. It would be nice if everyone reported their numbers, but that isn't ever going to happen on a voluntary basis. We have 306 farms reporting that they grow berries, fruit trees or grapes, which is the second smallest number of farms in New England (NE). Our 1703 acres is also the second lowest number of acres, only behind Rhode Island, in both categories. There are a couple of bright spots in this area. Our yield per acre for apples was just above the NE average and our farms received $11 per bushel more than the average. Our 83 acres of peaches produced 27 bushels per acre more than the average and brought a whopping $37 more per bushel, which was over 50% more than the average price.

When it comes to grapes, it was reported that there were 90 acres in production. Our yield per acre was 35% above the average. The value of the grapes produced was reported as being $385,000. We had 116 farms growing 124 acres of strawberries. Each of those acres produced an average of 5,800 pounds of berries or 500 pounds more than the NE average. Only Connecticut has a higher yield. Our farms averaged $3.30 per pound, 10 cents lower than the average.

NH did well in bean production last year, beating out the NE average by 300 pounds per acre. Our cabbage didn’t fare so well and was below average by 34%. Our cucumbers did well, producing more per acre than any state in NE. Garlic was another plant that thrived, producing almost a third more per acre than the average.
Our pea production beat the average as well, by more than a third. Our pumpkin production was not only 500 pounds per acre higher, but the price per pound was 20 cents higher than the average or nearly 58% more. Our tomatoes produced well. In fact, we grew more per acre than any other NE state and beat the average by over 50%. Our farmers also produced five bushels more corn than the average and got $15 more per bushel than the average.

I think that this snapshot of New Hampshire’s production, shows that we can compete in agriculture in the region and that consumers are willing to pay a bit more for home grown food. The loss of New Hampshire farmland continues to be a concern. While we can continue to produce more per acre, if we want to do a better job of feeding our population, we need to grow the number of acres in production.

Shawn N. Jasper-Commissioner