



Overview of Commercial Horticulture in Vermont
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Data compiled from the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture (1) and a National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) report (2) show that there were 506 vegetable in Vermont on 2,855 acres, 772 of which were irrigated, with farm gate sales of \$13.2 million in 2007. This is up from 422 farms in 2002 with sales of \$10.1 million, an increase of 18% in farm number and 30% in gross sales over five years. NOFA-VT reports 142 certified organic vegetable farms in 2010 with 1,143 acres in production (3). There were also 14.7 acres of certified organic greenhouses.

An unscientific survey of Vermont growers over a decade ago suggested that about two-thirds of vegetable sales were direct-to-consumer; however, the largest vegetable farms rely on wholesale to distributors and direct wholesale to stores both in and out of state, so the direct to consumer figure is probably closer to one third of all sales, since some of the largest farms did not participate in the survey. Direct market sales from all types of farms in Vermont went from \$9.6 million in 2002 involving 1,163 farms to \$22.9 million involving 1,474 farms in 2007, an increase of 139% in sales and 27% in farms involved in direct marketing.

Vermont farms selling fruits (and nuts are in the category) went from 325 in 2002 to 499 in 2007, with sales increasing from \$9.3 to \$15.9 million, an increase of 54% in farm number and 71% in gross sales over 5 years. This includes 344 farms selling berries on 705 acres. NASS reports \$6.2 million in sales for berry farms in 2010 (I calculate \$7.8 million using average reported yields and prices in 2010 assuming berry acreage is the same as 2007).

The Census reports 264 apple orchards in 2007, up from 243 in 2002 for a 9% increase in farm number while orchard acreage decreased from 3,418 to 3,241 acres during that time. NASS reported \$12 million in sales of Vermont apples from 2,800 bearing acres in 2010.

Vermont farms selling nursery, greenhouse and floriculture products went from 418 in 2002 to 437 in 2007, with sales increasing from \$22.8 million to \$24.8 million during that time (9% increase). In 2007, bedding plants were worth \$12 million - perhaps half these were produced on vegetable and berry farms for \$6 million. This data also includes 111 farms that sold greenhouse vegetables and herbs for \$4 million (\$3 million as greenhouse tomatoes) using 425,000 sq. ft. of greenhouses or almost 10 acres, and 57 farms selling cut flowers for \$1.1 million, 55 farms selling potted plants for \$1.3 million, again half of these may also be vegetable farms.

In total I estimate there are at least 700 diversified vegetable/berry/flower farms with sales of \$32 million from nearly 4,000 acres and over 10 acres of greenhouses/hoophouses. There is an additional \$20 million or so in ornamental sales from another 300 farms with 1.5 million sq. ft. or 34 acres of greenhouses. There are over 250 orchards with sales of \$12 million from over 3,200 acres. Christmas tree sales involve 318 farms with 3,600 acres and sales of \$3.5 million.

Thus the grand total for Vermont's horticultural industry is approximately 1,500 farms on 11,000 acres with sales approaching \$70 million.

Given the growing interest in local food and farming, the 2012 Census of Agriculture is likely to show continued growth in horticultural production and direct markets sales.

- (1) (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Vermont/st50_1_002_002.pdf)
- (2) (http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/New_England_includes/Publications/Special_Reports/eosmar11.pdf)
- (3) (<http://206.130.106.222/sites/default/files/December%202010%20Statistics.pdf>)