

Connecticut Weekly AGRICULTURAL REPORT

Dannel P. Malloy, Governor
Steven K. Reviczky, Commissioner
Steve Jensen, Editor



Connecticut Department of Agriculture
January 10, 2018



“WE HAD A CHOICE OF EITHER GETTING OUT OF FARMING OR MAKING SOME HARD DECISIONS ON WHERE WE WERE HEADED”

By Steve Jensen, Office of Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky

After years of work and growth that made them the largest producer of snap beans in New England, Michele and Billy Collins were ready for their best season ever in 2011 at their Fair Weather Acres farm in Rocky Hill.

They had been averaging a harvest of about 2.5 million pounds of beans on 700 acres of fields, and were optimistic that they could do even better that season.

Hurricane Irene had different plans for them.

Their fields, (pictured above before and after the storm) which lie low along a curve in the Connecticut River, initially did not fare badly when Irene hit in late August.

But when all the rain that dumped up north made its way downriver and over the banks in the days that followed, the floodwaters devastated their crops and literally changed their lives.

“We were set to have our best year in 40 years,”

Michele said as she and her husband (at right) spoke to a crowd of about 450 at the annual Vegetable & Small Fruit Growers’ Conference, organized by UConn Extension and held this week at Maneley’s Conference Center in South Windsor. “Instead we lost 450 acres of string beans, 15 acres of vegetables and 30 acres

of pumpkins. It was a total loss – nothing was salvageable.”

The disaster made the Collins’ rethink their entire operation. About 75 percent of their business at the time was in wholesale sale of beans, supplying most of the large chain stores in New England.

With only a small staff, the couple with two young children was typically putting in 120 hours a week in summer and fall and about 70 in the off-seasons.

And despite their growth and success, the hurricane made them realize that near-stagnant wholesale prices may not be worth the effort, the risk associated with relying mainly on a single crop, and the drain on time with their family.

That was hammered home when they came across some bean sales receipts from three decades ago as they were cleaning out some old file cabinets.

“We were getting only about a dollar more on some of the boxes,” Michele said, while prices of land, fertilizer and insurance continued to skyrocket. “We found the margins just weren’t there anymore with wholesale. So we started to look at things really hard.”

When their long and difficult analysis was over, she said, it

(Continued on Page 3)



NORTHEAST EGGS/USDA

Per doz. Grade A and Grade A white in cartons to retailers (volume buyers)

XTRA LARGE	1.36	1.51
LARGE	1.30	1.44
MEDIUM	1.04	1.17

NEW ENGLAND SHELL EGGS

Per doz. Grade A brown in carton delivered store door. (Range)

XTRA LARGE	2.29	2.39
LARGE	2.28	2.38
MEDIUM	1.35	1.47
SMALL	.76	.86

LANCASTER, PA, LIVESTOCK SUMMARY

Avg. Dressing. Per cwt. Unless noted

	LOW	HIGH
SLAUGHTER COWS Avg. Dressing		
breakers 75-80% lean	55.00	59.50
boners 80-85% lean	53.50	57.50
lean 88-90% lean	48.00	53.50
SLAUGHTER STEERS		
Hi Ch/Prime 3-4	116.50	122.50
Choice 2-3	111.00	115.50
Select 1-2	103.50	111.00
SLAUGHTER HOLSTEINS		
Choice 2-3	82.00	84.00
Sel 1-2	73.00	81.00
SLAUGHTER HEIFERS		
Hi Ch/Prime 2-3	110.00	114.50
Choice 2-3	106.00	110.50
Select 1-2	100.00	105.00
CALVES - Graded bull		
No 1 120-130 lbs	90.00	90.00
No 1 96-120 lbs	120.00	135.00
No 1 84-94 lbs	100.00	130.00
SLAUGHTER LAMBS: Woolled & Shorn		
Markets: Choice 2-3		
90-110 lbs	160.00	185.00
110-130 lbs	135.00	167.00
130-150 lbs	130.00	140.00
150-200 lbs	120.00	122.00
SLAUGHTER EWES: Good 2-3		
120-160 lbs	80.00	100.00
160-200 lbs	70.00	94.00
200-300 lbs	75.00	82.00
SLAUGHTER KIDS: Sel 1		
20-40 lbs	120.00	137.00
40-60 lbs	135.00	155.00
60-80 lbs	160.00	185.00
80-100 lbs	170.00	195.00
SLAUGHTER NANNIES/DOES: Sel 1		
80-130 lbs	170.00	15.00
130-170 lbs	210.00	240.00
SLAUGHTER BUCKS/BILLIES: Sel 1		
80-100 lbs	210.00	225.00
100-150 lbs	245.00	265.00
150-250 lbs	275.00	325.00

HAY - LANCASTER, PA

December 18, 2017 Small squares, each.

ALFALFA	Good	185.00	210.00
ALFALFA/GRASS	Supreme	300.00	355.00
	Premium	265.00	310.00
	Good	200.00	250.00
GRASS HAYS	Premium	250.00	310.00
	Good	175.00	240.00
STRAW		135.00	195.00

WHOLESALE FRUITS & VEGETABLESBoston Terminal and Wholesale Grower Prices
CONNECTICUT AND NEW ENGLAND GROWN

	LOW	HIGH
ALFALFA SPROUTS, 5 LBS	14.00	15.00
ALFALFA SPROUTS, 12-4 OZ	16.00	18.00
APPLE, CORTLAND, XFCY, 80	30.00	31.00
APPLE, CORTLAND, XFCY, 88	30.00	31.00
APPL, CRTLAND, FCY, 12-3LB	22.00	22.00
APPLE, GALA, US FANCY, 88	24.00	24.00
APPLE, GALA, US FANCY, 100	24.00	24.00
APPLE, GALA, US FANCY, 125	24.00	24.00
APPLE, GOLD DEL, FCY, 64	24.00	24.00
APPLE, GOLD DEL, FCY, 72	24.00	24.00
APPLE, GOLD DEL, #1, 12-3LB	24.00	24.00
APPL, HNYCRSP, XFCY, TRAY, 80	60.00	60.00
APPL, HNYCRSP, XFCY, TRAY, 88	60.00	60.00
APPLE, HNYCRSP, XFY, TRAY, 100	31.00	32.00
APPLE, HNYCRSP, FCY, TRAY, 80	31.00	32.00
APPLE, HNYCRSP, FCY, TRAY, 88	31.00	32.00
APPLE, HNYCRSP, FCY, TRAY, 72	31.00	32.00
APPLE, LADY, XFCY, 1/2BU, 2-1/8"	24.00	24.00
APPLE, MACOUN, XFCY, 72	30.00	30.00
APPLE, MACOUN, XFCY, 80	30.00	30.00
APPLE, MACOUN, XFCY, 88	30.00	30.00
APPLE, MACOUN, XFCY, 100	24.00	24.00
APPLE, MAC, XFCY, TRYPK 72	30.00	31.00
APPLE, MAC, XFCY, TRYPK 80	30.00	31.00
APPLE, MAC, XFCY, TRYPK 88	30.00	31.00
APPLE, MAC, XFCY, TRYPK 100	26.00	26.00
APPLE, MAC, USFCY, TRYPK 80	21.00	21.00
APPLE, MAC, USFCY, TRYPK 88	21.00	21.00
APPLE, MAC, USFCY, TRYPK 100	21.00	21.00
APPLE, RED DEL, FCY, 72	23.00	23.00
APPLE, RED DEL, FCY, 80	23.00	23.00
APPLE, RED DEL, FCY, 125	20.00	20.00
APPLE, RED DEL, #1, 12-3LB	24.00	24.00
BEAN SPROUTS, 10 LBS	6.00	7.00
BEAN SPROUTS, 12-12 OZ	12.00	15.00
BEET, CHIOGGA, 25 LB, M-L, LSE	14.00	15.00
BEETS, GOLD, 25 LB, M, LOOSE	14.00	14.00
BEETS, RED, 25 LB, M, LOOSE	7.00	7.00
BEETS, RED, 25 LB, M-L, LOOSE	14.00	14.00
BRUSSELS SPROUTS, 25 LB, CTN	40.00	40.00
CARROT, L, 25LB SACK, LOOSE	11.00	11.00
CIDER, 4- 1 GALLON	21.00	22.00
CIDER, 9-1/2 GALLON	22.50	25.00
CRNBRY, LATEHOWE, M, 24-120Z	28.00	28.00
ORNMNTL CORN, 3/BN, 20	40.00	50.00
ORNMNTL GOURD, 20 LBS	15.00	15.00
ORNMNTL GOURD, SHEL, 1/2BU	22.00	24.00
ORNMNTL GOURD, SHEL, BU	32.00	35.00
PARSNIP, M, 20LB FILM, LOOSE	22.00	23.00
PARSNIP, M, 20LB FILM, 18-1LB	23.00	24.00
PUMPKIN, PIE, M-L, BUSHEL	20.00	24.00
SQUASH, ACORN, L, 1-1/9	18.00	18.00
SQUASH, ACORN, M, 1-1/9	16.00	16.00
SQUASH, BUTTERNUT, M, 1-1/9	15.00	16.00
SQUASH, DELICATA, M, 1/2 BU	14.00	14.00
SQUASH, KABOCHA, M, 1-1/9	16.00	18.00
SQUASH, SPAGHETTI, M, 1-1/9	15.00	16.00
STRAW BALES, MINI, EACH	6.00	6.00
STRAW BALES, STD, EACH	8.00	10.00

MIDDLESEX LIVESTOCK AUCTION

Middlefield, CT - January 1, 2018

	LOW	HIGH
Bob Calves:		
45-60 lbs.	28.00	35.00
61-75 lbs.	66.00	70.00
76-90 lbs.	72.50	75.00
91-105 lbs.	80.00	82.50
106 lbs. & up	85.00	92.50
Farm Calves	100.00	105.00
Starter Calves	22.00	25.00
Veal Calves	120.00	170.00
Feeder Heifers	90.00	110.00
Beef Heifers	68.00	85.00
Feeder Steers	90.00	140.00
Beef Steers	90.00	97.00
Feeder Bulls	80.00	140.00
Beef Bulls	79.00	82.00
Replacement Cows	n/a	n/a
Replacement Heifers	n/a	n/a
Boars	n/a	n/a
Sows	n/a	n/a
Butcher Hogs	n/a	n/a
Feeder Pigs each	n/a	n/a
Sheep each	145.00	172.50
Lambs each	150.00	290.00
Goats each	125.00	380.00
Kid Goats each	165.00	200.00
Canners	up to	61.00
Cutters	62.00	65.00
Utility Grade Cows	66.00	71.00
Rabbits each	4.00	25.00
Chickens each	8.00	20.00
Ducks each	10.00	19.00

Auction will held Martin Luther King Day,
Monday, January 15**NEW HOLLAND, PA FEEDER PIG**December 19, 2017. All pigs weighed upon arrival.
Sold by cwt.

US #1-2		
16-17 lbs	260.00	275.00
20-30 lbs	275.00	310.00
36-39 lbs	198.00	240.00
40-49 lbs	156.00	212.00
51-58 lbs	145.00	188.00
64 lbs	140.00	140.00
71-79 lbs	88.00	134.00
82-84 lbs	70.00	150.00
96-98 lbs	76.00	85.00
103-129 lbs	70.00	85.00
US #2		
19-28 lbs	255.00	285.00
32-39 lbs	130.00	140.00
40-48 lbs	139.00	180.00
50-58 lbs	139.00	185.00
63 lbs	160.00	160.00
83 lbs	95.00	102.00
110-123 lbs	77.00	94.00
US #2-3		
31-44 lbs	170.00	230.00
69 lbs	80.00	80.00
AS IS (no US Grade)		
11-45 lbs	75.00	170.00
55-79 lbs	98.00	102.00
51-111 lbs	69.00	148.00

(Continued from Page 1)

came down to two options for the former dairy farm that has been in Billy's family for more than a century.

"We had a choice of either getting out of farming altogether or making some hard decisions on where we were headed," Michele said. "And for us downsizing and diversifying so all our eggs weren't in one basket was the way to go. Change was the only way we were going to be able to stay in farming."

The need to diversify and the myriad changes they made in the following seasons were the focus of their conference presentation, called "*Finding Your Sweet Spot.*"

About 75 acres of their bean fields were turned over to the production of about 150 varieties of vegetables, fruit and herbs that are sold retail at the farm, allowing them to set their own prices.

They added three new greenhouses for hydroponic tomato production and growing flowers and bedding plants, concentrating on making their offerings an alternative to the products being sold at the big-box stores all around them.

In their case, that meant creating specialty planters, as opposed to the common six-pack plastic starters and items in 4-inch pots.

"You can get a 4-inch geranium anywhere," Michele said. "So you really need to set yourself apart by having something different than what everybody else has."

The farm also began carrying its own beef, as well as local ice cream, chicken, eggs and dozens of other products grown or made in New England. Another step forward was starting a 16-week CSA, which began with about 120 customers six years ago and now enlists about 525 in summer and 275 in the fall.

"Everything we offer we grow ourselves," except for a few fruit items bought from local farms, Michele said, noting the benefit of the farmer's risk being shared with their CSA customers.

FOR SALE

1-R. Blumenthal & Donahue is now Connecticut's first independent NATIONWIDE Agri-Business Insurance Agency. Christmas tree growers, beekeepers, sheep breeders, organic farmers and all others, call us for all your insurance needs. 800-554-8049 or www.bludon.com

2-R. Farm, homeowner and commercial insurance—we do it all. Call Blumenthal & Donahue 800-554-8049 or www.bludon.com

3-R. Gallagher electric fencing for farms, horses, deer control, gardens, & beehives. Sonpal's Power Fence 860-491-2290.

4-R. Packaging for egg sales. New egg cartons, flats, egg cases, 30 doz and 15 doz. Polinsky Farm 860-376-2227.

5-R. Nationwide Agribusiness Insurance Program, endorsed by the CT Farm Bureau, save up to 23% on your farm insurance and get better protection. References available from satisfied farmers. Call Marci today at 203-444-6553.

Even with the success of their CSA and many others around the state, she sees that section of their business already morphing.

"People now not only want fresh local food, they want you to prepare it for them, pack it for them and deliver it to them," she said. "I think all of us are going to have to start looking at doing things differently in marketing CSAs."

Perhaps the biggest step in the farm's transformation was the couple's decision, after much research that took them to farms in several other states, to start an annual fall festival a few years ago that features a wide array of family activities and entertainment including a 4-acre corn maze.

Run from mid-September to late October on a parcel in Cromwell not far from their farm that is highly visible from Interstate 91, the festival and maze drew more than 35,000 visitors last season.

The Collins' bring in an enormous amount of their own 30-acre pumpkin crop to the festival every year, and offer attractions like a pedal go-cart tractor track (kid and adult size tractors available), a farm animal exhibition, a children's jumping pillow and a 2-foot deep grain corn pit with a playscape plunked in the middle.

"By far, people will pay for entertainment before they will pay for your produce," Michele said at the conference, drawing chuckles from the audience. "It's insane but it's true, so might as well go along with it."

Like farming, however, the festival doesn't come without risks and other problems. The jumping platform demands a high insurance premium due to the possibility of injuries, which are not uncommon.

Last fall, things got a little tense on a busy day when they temporarily ran out of pumpkins, which are included in the admission price.

A truck was sent down the road to get some more pumpkins from the farm, and when it returned to the festival, Michele said, "it was mauled" by the crowd.

(Continued on Page 4)

111. Large flashing highway arrow sign, one cylinder, diesel. \$1,200.00. Army truck, diesel. \$3,000.00. D-8 CAT bulldozer. \$6,000.00. 1,000 gallon water tank, stainless. \$1,100.00. Dump hoist. \$600.00. 203-598-0807.

112-R. Hay for sale from fertilized fields. \$4.50 per bale. 203-453-9865.

WANTED

110-R. Livestock wanted: Dairy cattle, heifers of any age, beef cows, bulls, steers, feeder cattle, veal, groups of sheep and goats. RyanM01@comcast.net or 860-655-0958. If no answer, leave message. All calls returned.

MISCELLANEOUS

6-R. Farm/Land specializing in land, farms, and all types of Real Estate. Established Broker with a lifetime of agricultural experience and 40 years of finance. Representing both Buyers and Sellers. Call Clint Charter of Wallace-Tetreault Realty (860) 644-5667.

(Continued from page 3)

"We had to back people up off the truck to unload it," she recalled. "I was thinking – you're fighting over a gourd."

The evolution of their farm prompted by Hurricane Irene has spread the Collins' risk and produced "a little less praying for rain," as their dependence on crops has decreased.

But the goals of reducing their workload, hamper-

-ed by employee issues that affect almost all farms, and spending more time with family remain somewhat elusive.

Michele says that means she and Billy simply have to continue to innovate and adapt their operation to try to achieve the balance they seek.

"There's no resting on your laurels," she said. "We're in a constant state of transition and change."



Above: A bean harvester at Fair Weather Acres in Rocky Hill.

Above right: The Collins family in a promotional photo taken several years ago.

Below: The audience at the annual Vegetable & Small Fruit Growers' Conference listens to a presentation on grape-growing by Shelton farmer Jamie Jones.

Below right: The conference also featured a trade show, including displays by the CT Dept. of Agriculture at right of photo.



Advertising Rates: Fifteen or fewer words: \$3.75 per insertion. More than 15 words: 25 cents per word per insertion. Ads must be related to agriculture in Connecticut and are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Payment must be received by noon on Friday before publication the following Wednesday. Make check or money order payable to the Connecticut Dept. of Agriculture, and mail copy and remittance to the department at 450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 701, Hartford, CT 06103. For more information contact Jane.Murdock@ct.gov or call 860-713-2588.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, 450 Columbus Blvd. Suite 701, Hartford CT 06103.

Print subscriptions expire Dec. 31, 2017.

VOL. XCVIII, No. 2 January 10, 2018

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
www.CTGrown.gov 860-713-2500

Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky
steven.reviczky@ct.gov 860-713-2501

Agricultural Development
and Resource Preservation Linda Piotrowicz
linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov 860-713-2503

Regional Market Linda Piotrowicz
linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov 860-566-3699

Regulatory Services Dr. Bruce Sherman
bruce.sherman@ct.gov 860-713-2504

State Veterinarian Dr. Mary J. Lis
mary.lis@ct.gov 860-713-2505

Aquaculture David Carey
david.carey@ct.gov 203-874-2855

Agricultural Report Editor Steve Jensen
steve.jensen@ct.gov 860-713-2519