



Cherryfield Foods workers harvest cranberries in October.

KATY YEATTS | CHERRYFIELD FOODS

# Cranberry crash

## Down East harvest good, but prices low for wet-harvested fruit

BY JOHANNA S. BILLINGS  
BDN STAFF

Although this year's cranberry harvest was good, prices were unusually low, making for a "depressing" market, according to a cranberry specialist with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

"The price was ... horrendous for water-harvested berries," said Charles Armstrong, who works with the extension.

He said about 84 percent of all cranberries in Maine are wet harvested, which involves flooding the bog and collecting the ripe berries when they float to the surface.

Armstrong said the "break-even point" for wet harvesting requires getting about 35 to 40 cents per pound for the berries. This year, however, the price dipped to between 12 and 20 cents a pound.

In contrast, at \$1.50 to \$2.50 per pound, prices were good for dry harvested berries, which are picked by hand or raked mechanically.

But only about 16 percent of Maine's crop is dry harvested because the market for fresh whole cranberries is relatively small compared to the market for processed cranberries, which are wet harvested for making juice and cranberry sauce.

"The majority of the fruit is further processed," said David Bell, spokesman for Cherryfield Foods, which owns about 100 of the 200 total acres devoted to cranberry farming in Maine. About 85 percent of those 200 acres are located in Washington County.

Although Cherryfield Foods harvested



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After running frost protection (sprinkler irrigation) for five hours during the night, a small layer of ice forms. Cranberry crops can be protected down to 22 degrees without damage. As water applied to the plant cools, heat is released to prevent the plant from freezing. If a film of water is maintained by continuous application, the plant tissue remains above freezing even if a small layer of ice forms.

all of its fields, some growers preferred to cut their losses and not harvest this year because of the low prices, Armstrong said.

"This was the first season I'd ever seen it that bad," he said. "It ends up costing more to harvest."

Armstrong said about five of the ap-

proximately 30 cranberry growers in Maine declined to harvest a total of about 25 acres.

The biggest costs in cranberry farming are associated with trucking and processing the fruit, he said. Fuel and manpower

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# Maine jobless rate falls in November

## Decrease in unemployment primarily linked to fewer residents seeking jobs

BY DARREN FISHELL  
BDN STAFF

PORTLAND — Maine's unemployment rate dipped slightly in November, down to an estimated 4.3 percent from 5.6 percent one year ago.

The latest estimate is down one-tenth of a percentage point from October. The year-over-year dip comes primarily from a de-

crease in the estimated number of Maine residents in the workforce, which means people who are either employed or actively seeking jobs.

The number of people in the labor force in October dropped about 13,611 from one year earlier, and the number of those with jobs decreased by about 4,034.

With that drop in the labor

force estimate, the ratio of people with jobs to the total population fell to its lowest level in four years, to 59.5 percent, according to the Maine Department of Labor.

In a news release about the latest unemployment estimate, the department said that ratio is likely to trend lower still in coming years as baby boomers begin to retire.

Maine's jobless rate of 4.3 percent in October was higher than New Hampshire (3.3 percent) and Vermont (3.7 percent), and lower than Massachusetts (4.6 percent), Connecticut (5.1 percent) and Rhode Island (5.3 percent).

Maine's rate also was lower than the national average in October, of 5 percent. That national rate is down from 5.7 percent one year ago.



## Heating season increases CO risk

BY RUSS VAN ARSDALE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NORTHEAST CONTACT

During the past week, the Maine Emergency Management Agency issued two safety tips, each involving carbon monoxide detectors.

As colder weather sets in, Maine emergency management officials want consumers to be sure they have an early warning system in case of a buildup of carbon monoxide. Any heating appliance can release carbon monoxide. If it reaches dangerous levels, our human senses will not detect this colorless, odorless and tasteless gas.

Placement of the detectors is key. They should be in a central location outside each sleeping area of your home. If bedrooms are widely spaced, each area should have a carbon monoxide detector.

The agency also urges prompt action when the detectors sound an alarm. Maine Emergency Management Agency advises getting quickly to a place where there's plenty of fresh air — probably outdoors — and staying there until emergency personnel say it's safe to return.

Having emergency phone numbers near the phone also is critical, in case someone in your home is in trouble.

False alarms used to be common in older carbon monoxide detectors. As technology has improved, they've become less of a problem. It's important to know

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## Show you're thankful for your workers

This is the season to give thanks. If you are an employer, here are five ways you can show appreciation for your employees at Thanksgiving and all year long.

### Say 'thank you'

It sounds obvious but a simple "thank you" goes a long way in making your employees feel appreciated, and that is good for business.

According to results from the 2013 Glassdoor Employee Appreciation Survey, the majority of employees (68 percent) reported that their boss shows them enough appreciation, while 53 percent of those surveyed said they would stay longer at their companies if they felt more appreciation from their boss.

Employees who feel appreciated are more motivated. Eighty-one percent of employees said their boss showing appreciation for their work motivates them to work harder.

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