

A new bumper crop in Santa Cruz County

Agriculture 1990

1994 crop report shows
boom in raspberry sales;
strawberry harvest sags

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While strawberries from the fertile fields of the Pajaro Valley have been the leading crop in Santa Cruz County in recent years, another fruit, the raspberry, has shown dramatic increases in production, according to the annual county crop report.

Strawberries brought local growers \$93.6 million in 1994, down from the pre-

vious year's total of \$104.5 million, according to the report prepared by county Agricultural Commissioner Dave Moeller.

But raspberries brought county farmers almost \$24 million last year, up more than \$5 million from 1993.

"Raspberries are a crop that a small grower can plant on just a few acres without having to have all the capital and acreage it takes to grow strawberries," Moeller said. "They provide a real opportunity to small growers with limited resources."

A decade ago, Moeller said, there were only 284 acres planted with raspberries in

See **CROPS**, Page 4B

Santa Cruz sees big raspberry crop

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Strawberry sales down
\$10 million, report says

■ CROPS

from Page 1B

Santa Cruz County. The yield to farmers that year, 1984, was \$7.2 million. Now, he said, there are more than 1,100 acres of raspberries grown in the county.

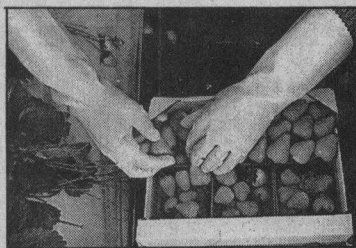
During that same decade, strawberry acreage rose from 2,089 to 3,109, with yields per acre also rising most years. In 1984 the berries brought the county's farmers \$47.2 million, about half of what strawberry growers garnered last year.

Moeller blamed part of the slump in strawberry revenues on the fact that some of the 1994 harvest was from plants that had been planted — and already harvested — in 1993. He explained that the yield per acre drops after the maximum harvest of the plants' first year in production.

He said next year's crop reports from Santa Cruz and Monterey counties should be interesting because they'll reflect the millions of dollars of damage growers experienced as a result of the March floods along the Pajaro and Salinas rivers.

Iceberg lettuce was Santa Cruz County's second-biggest crop in 1994, with a value of \$24.5 million, up more than \$2 million from 1993.

The 1994 figures show raspberries were next, followed by roses, with a gross yield of \$18.6 mil-



MERCURY NEWS FILE PHOTOGRAPH

HERE'S THE PICK:

The top 10 crops in Santa Cruz County last year, according to growers' gross income.

- Strawberries
- Iceberg lettuce
- Raspberries
- Roses
- Apples
- Leaf lettuce
- Field flowers
- Brussels sprouts
- Landscaping plants
- Cauliflower

lion, down slightly from the year before. Apples, once the staple of Pajaro Valley agriculture, were fifth, with a value of \$8.7 million, down almost \$1 million from 1993.