

Fact Sheet

CCD-FS-17

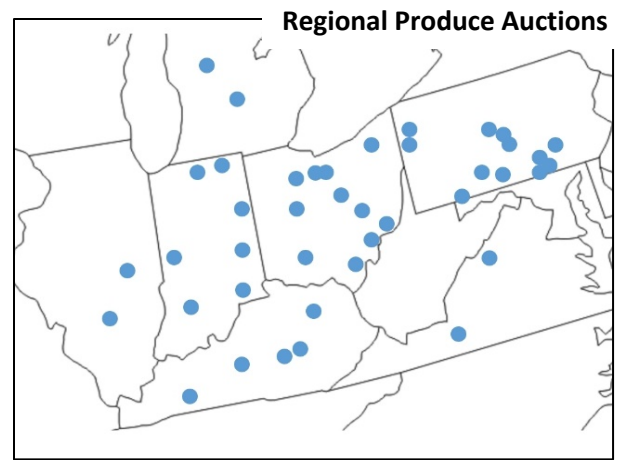
September 2020

# Three-Year Average Prices & Quantities at Kentucky Produce Auctions: 2017-2019



## Overview

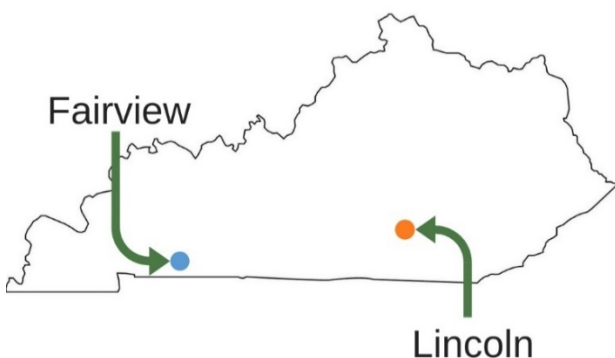
Produce Auctions are – as their name implies – auction-based market channels for produce and other specialty crops such as nursery crops and ornamentals. There are a number of these markets located throughout Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania and other states in the region. These auctions are highly diverse, with very different sizes, ownership structures, buyers, and sellers. Members of Amish and Mennonite communities manage many of these auctions. Some auctions emphasize certain products more than others. Some function as a place for large buyers to purchase specialty crops, while others offer products appealing to direct to market resellers. Variables such as units, varieties, quality, and credence attributes can vary widely as well. Nevertheless, some of these auctions grossed millions of dollars in sales in recent years and play an important role in the specialty crop market.



## Crops and Auctions

This report compares average volumes and prices for 17 crops from two major Kentucky produce auctions for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 seasons. While there are currently five produce auctions in Kentucky, we have selected the two largest auctions for analysis. They sell larger volumes and report more frequently. These two auctions offer relatively standardized products and are easier to compare. Still, as we have noted there is some variability in units and grades, and any considerable differences are noted beside each graph. We have provided individual auction averages as well as combined averages for each crop, when appropriate. Additionally, we have included a Unit Conversion Chart at the end of this publication to give our unit measurements a net weight value.

**Fairview Produce Auction (FPA)** Located in Christian County, the nearest cities are Hopkinsville and Russellville. FPA is 160 miles from Louisville, 70 miles from Nashville, and 50 miles from Bowling Green.



**Lincoln County Produce Auction (LCPA)**  
The nearest cities to LCPA are Danville and Berea. LCPA is located 50 miles from Lexington, 105 miles from Louisville, and 130 miles from Cincinnati.

There are three additional produce auctions in Kentucky which are located in Bath County, Casey County, and Hart County. Together, the five produce auctions record around 10 million dollars in sales.

### Crops & Units

Apples (1/2bu)
Asparagus (1/2bu)
Beans (1/2bu)
Beets (bunch)
Blueberries (pint)
Broccoli (lbs.)
Cabbage (each)
Canary Melon (each)
Cantaloupe (each)
Cucumbers (1/2bu)
Greens (1/2bu)
Peppers (bushel)
Pumpkins (each)
Strawberries (quart)
Sweet Corn (dozen)
Tomatoes (lbs.)
Watermelon (each)

\*The units chosen to report here are only based on most common reports and converted for ease of comparison. Market conditions elsewhere may call for selling in different units than the ones reported here. Data and unit conversions are available from the authors upon request.

## How to use this report

The data presented in this report can serve a wide range of parties.

**Producers** may find this information useful when considering:

- What to grow
- When to grow it (season extension, late planting, etc.)
- Grading and packing standards (including box size)
- Evaluate whether selling at an auction will fit their operation

**Auction Managers** might use this information for:

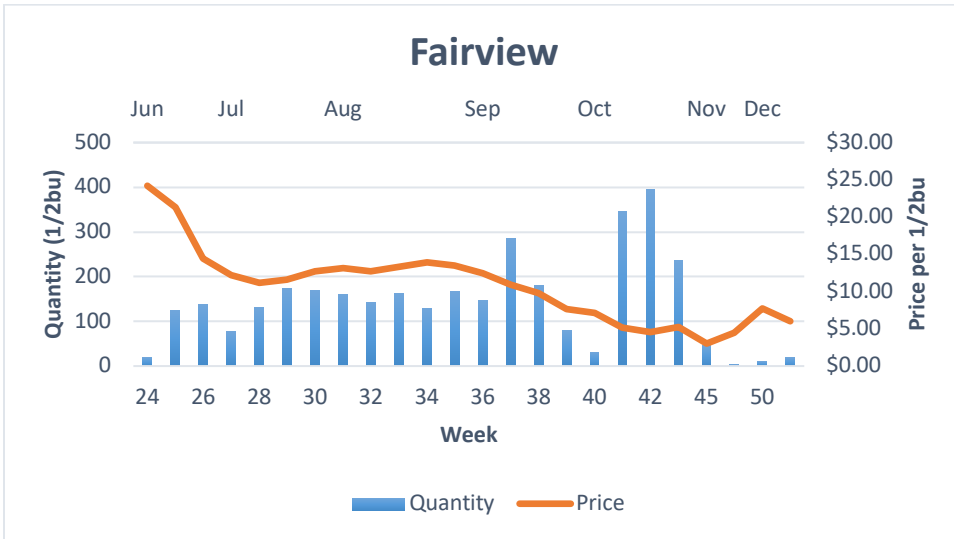
- Communicating with prospective growers about seasonal activity of various crops in KY
- The buyer sensitivity of price to quantity in KY auctions
- Degrees and benefits of various quality premiums for different crops
- Long term planning for leading auction grower suppliers

**Buyers** can use this information to see:

- Beginning, peak, and end of the season for Kentucky auctions products
- How auction prices compare to prices available from other outlets
- Timing for the best value for each product

We have selected **17 important crops for produce auctions**. The auctions may report more than this. You can view all the reports, including historical archives [on the CCD site](#).

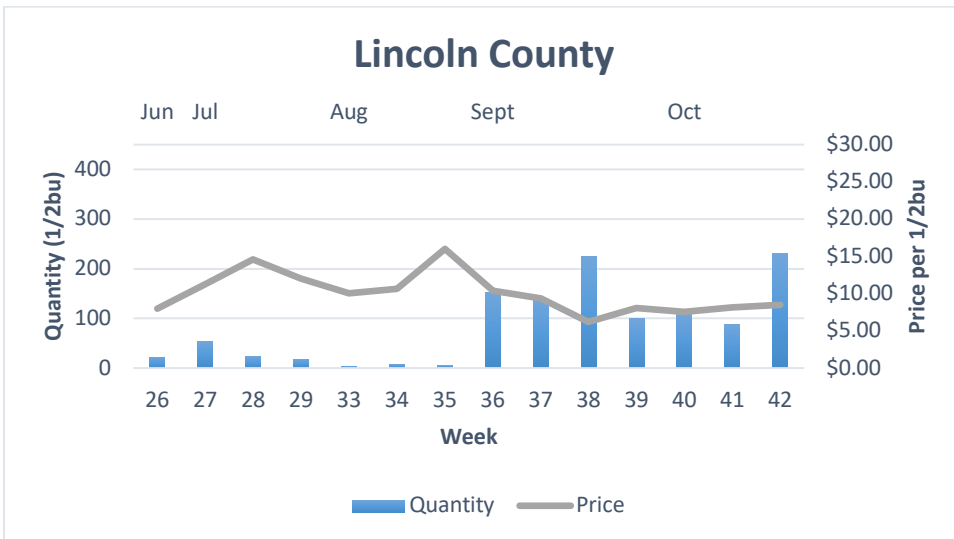
# Apples, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



Notes & Observations:

As we might expect, as supply increases price decreases across the course of the season.

It is interesting to note that there is only minimal rebound as supply decreases in the fall.

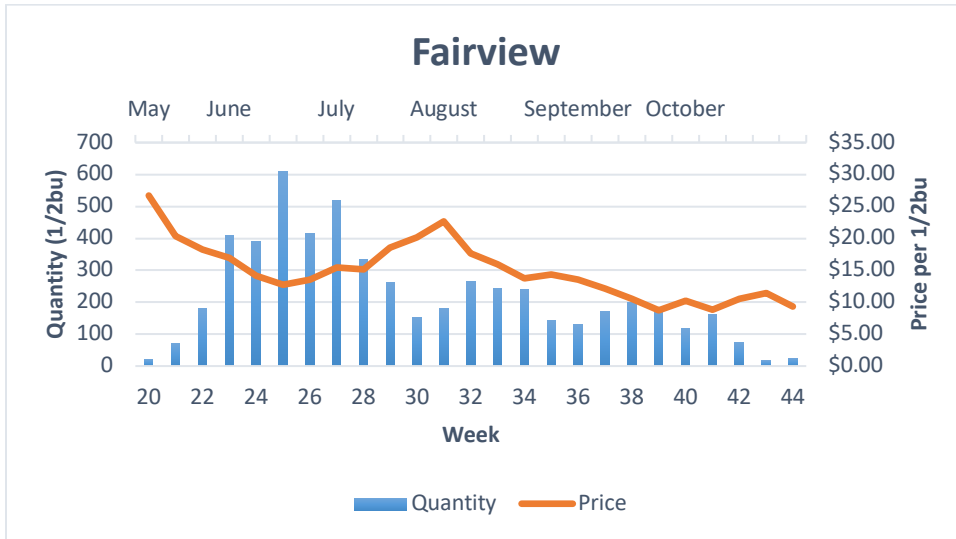


There are limited varieties of apples grown in Kentucky that are harvested prior to August, which may account for the slightly higher prices in August and September.

We do not know which varieties are specifically sold through the auctions, and some portion of the difference between the two markets could be due to varietal difference. Most of KY farm production goes to direct markets off the farm, leading to higher local prices than typically observed in wholesale fresh markets nationally.

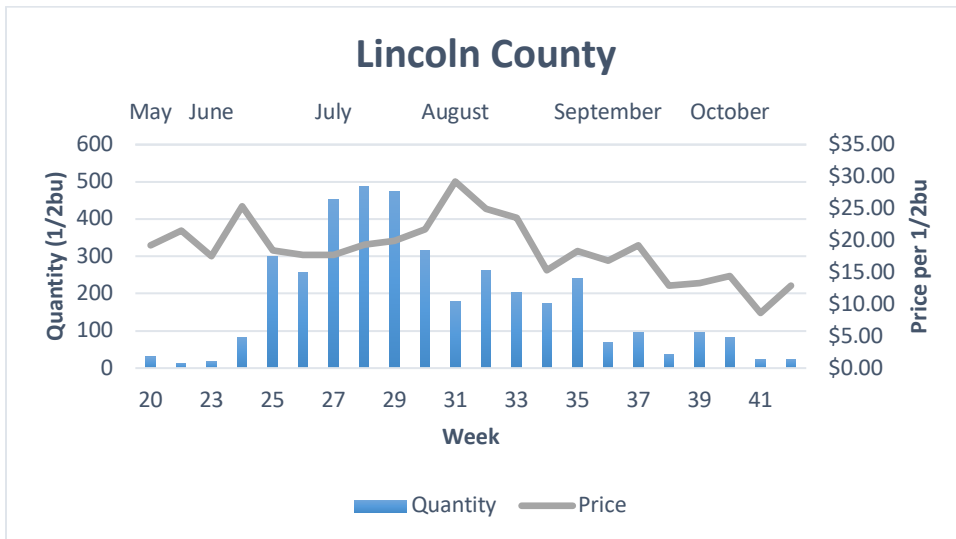


# Beans, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



## Notes & Observations:

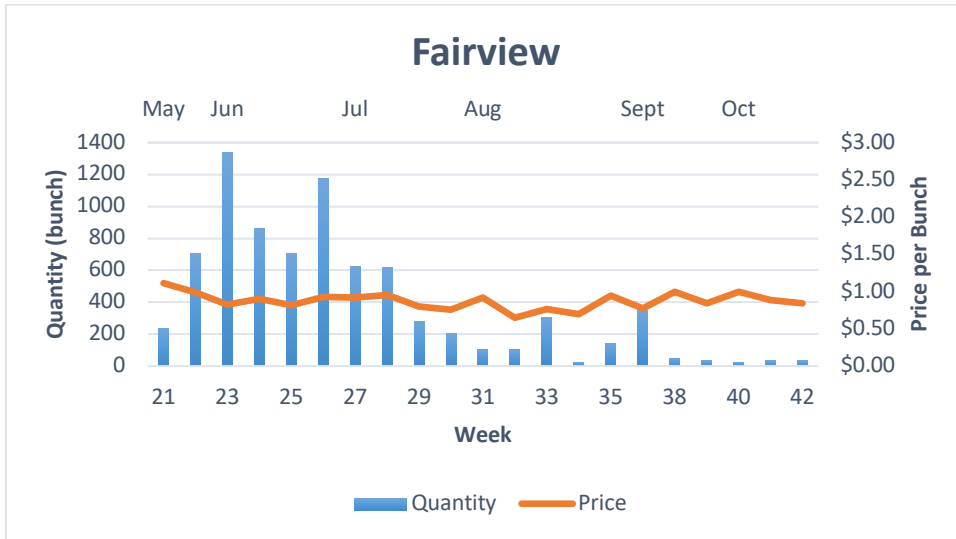
Overall the volumes and prices here are similar to the previous 3-year average auction report. There was a strong peak in supply at Fairview in June while the supply was relatively more constant at the Lincoln auction.



The dip in supply at Fairview in early August is intriguing, and given that this is a 3-year average, it may suggest an opportunity for growers. Early season green beans generally command higher prices than those later in the season.



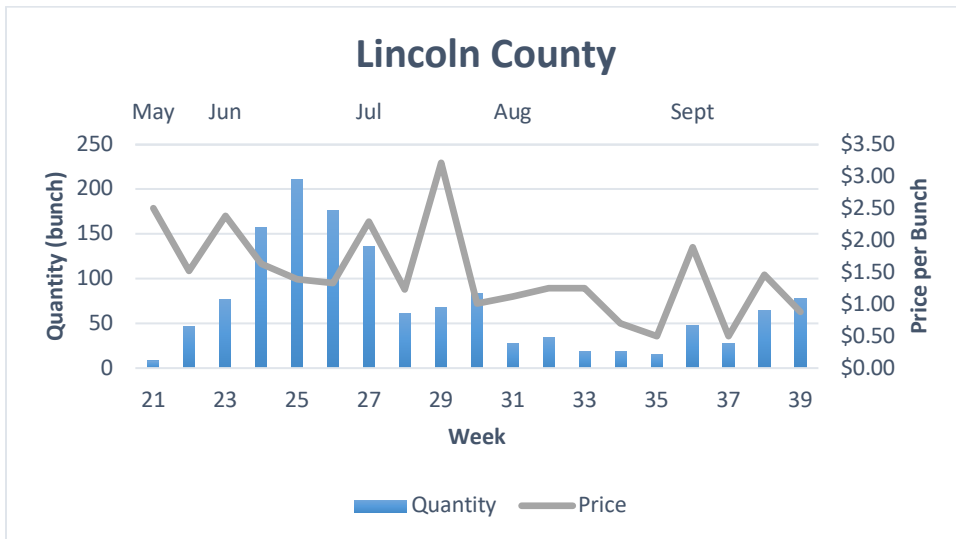
# Beets, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



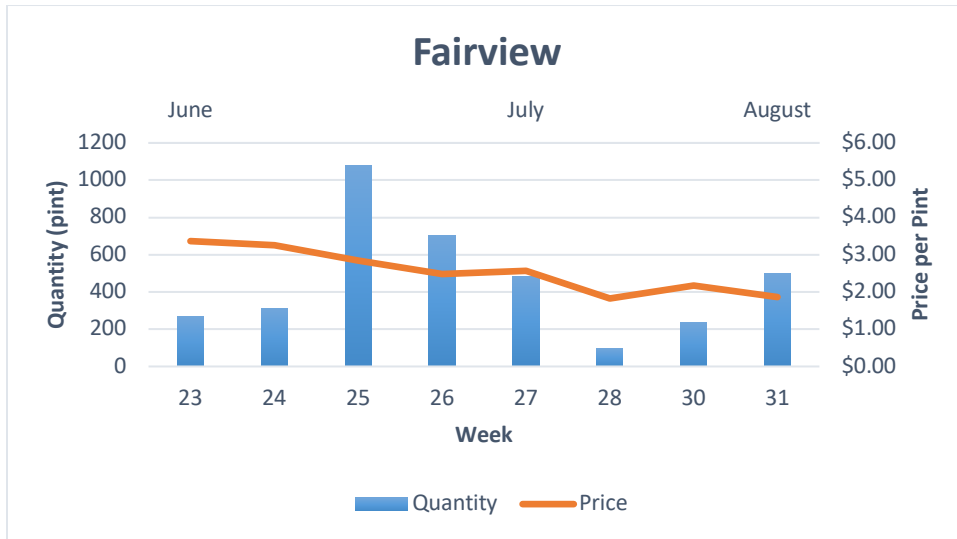
## Notes & Observations:

This is admittedly a minor crop for the auctions, but still bears some discussion. Fairview has a virtually non-existent fall crop, while Lincoln did have some supply into September.

Compared to previous years, the prices were relatively stable at Fairview, but they were also slightly lower. Lincoln's prices were also slightly lower than in previous reports, but also more variable with a slight rebound for fall beets.



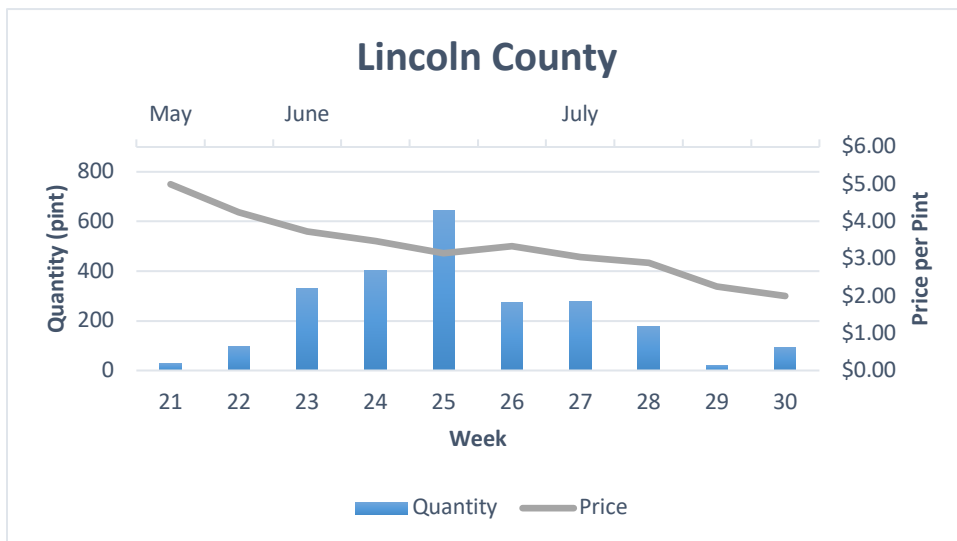
# Blueberries, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



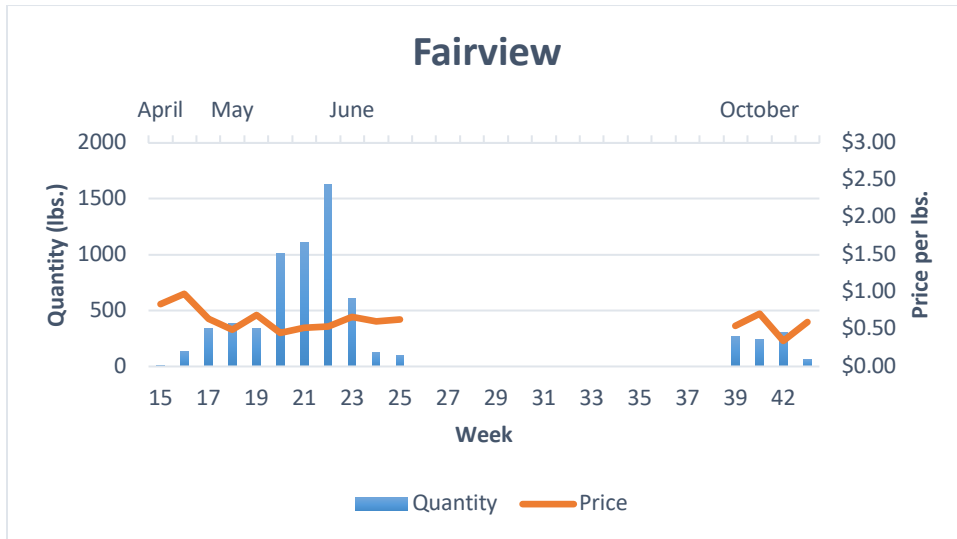
Notes & Observations:

Note the different timing of the peak seasons. This may be due to climatic effects, but is more likely a result of varietal differences between the growers for the two auctions.

Blueberries are a relatively short window crop, and the highest premium is clearly paid for early crops. Prices throughout the season have been generally higher than what is observed in fresh wholesale markets.

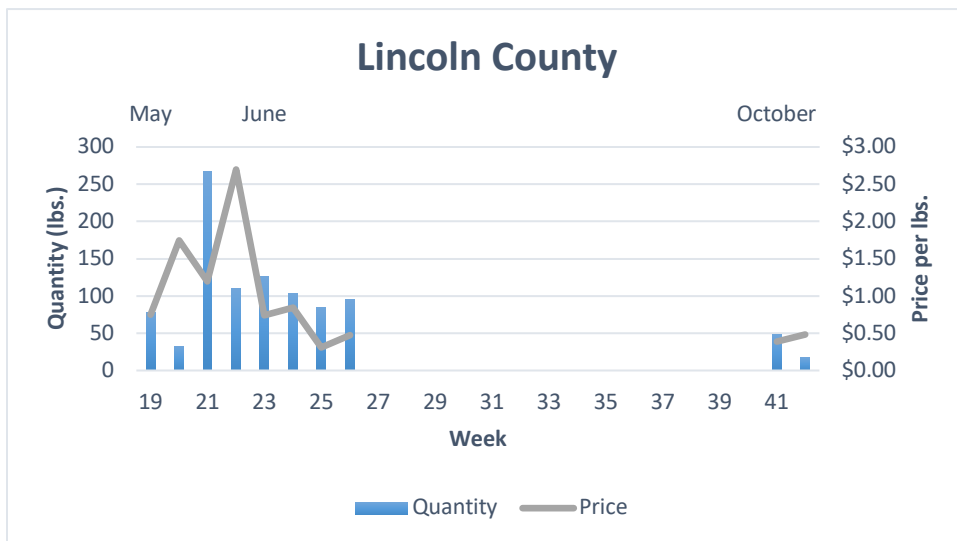


# Broccoli, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



#### Notes & Observations:

Over this 3-year period, there was generally a higher volume of spring broccoli available. Lincoln saw a considerable premium for spring broccoli while Fairview's prices were steady across the whole season



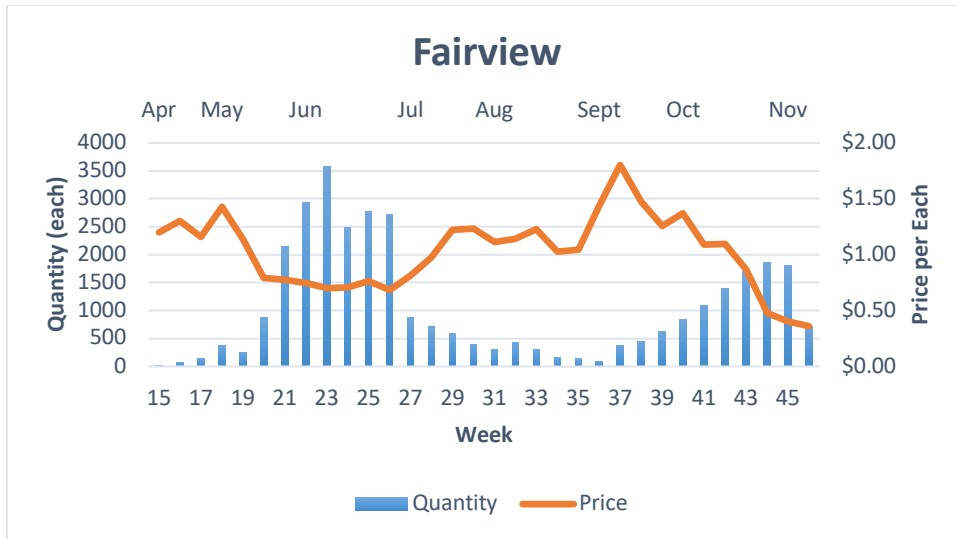
Broccoli is a challenging crop to standardize at auction as it is sold in many different units. We know that it is generally sold as either individual/boxed large crowns or as boxes of smaller crowns.

The packaging and grading is not standardized enough to make comparisons between these two categories of product.



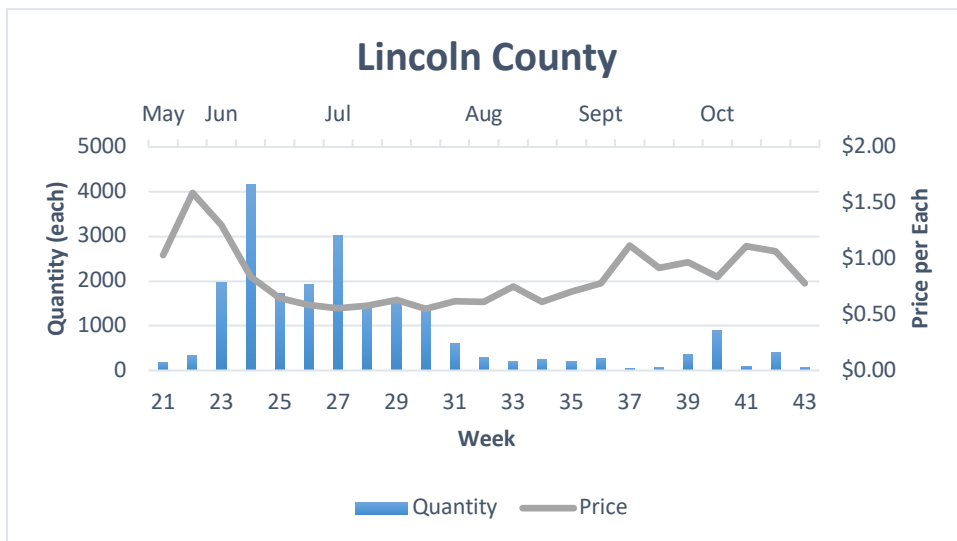


# Cabbage, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



## Notes & Observations:

As with broccoli, we observe distinct spring and fall seasons for cabbage at market. It is interesting to note that unlike broccoli, there is some cabbage at market every week from spring to late fall. Fairview generally had higher volumes of fall cabbage.

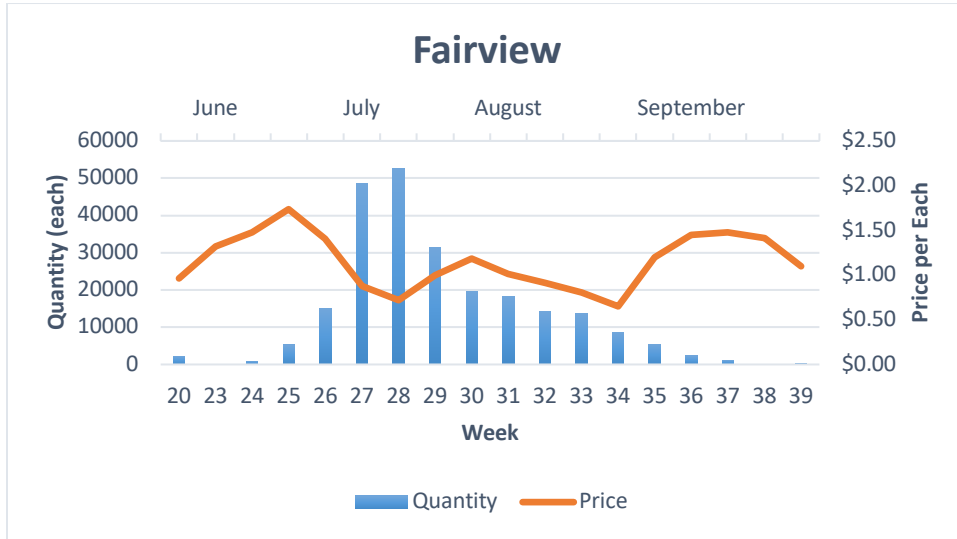


Prices during that time remain generally high, with considerably higher prices in September suggesting a potential opportunity to grow mid-summer and early fall cabbage.

There are also generally premiums for early product.

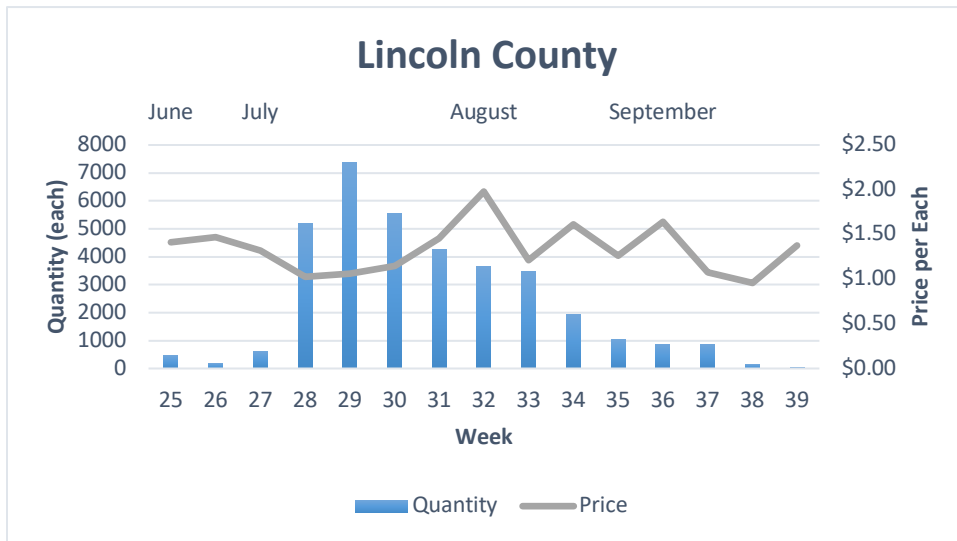


# Cantaloupe, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



Notes & Observations:

As in previous reports we see three “waves” of price premiums: early melons (late June), a premium after peak season (August) and then again in very late season (September) though that last peak was observed more at Fairview than Lincoln. KY has become a stronger melon sourcing region with declines in production in Indiana.

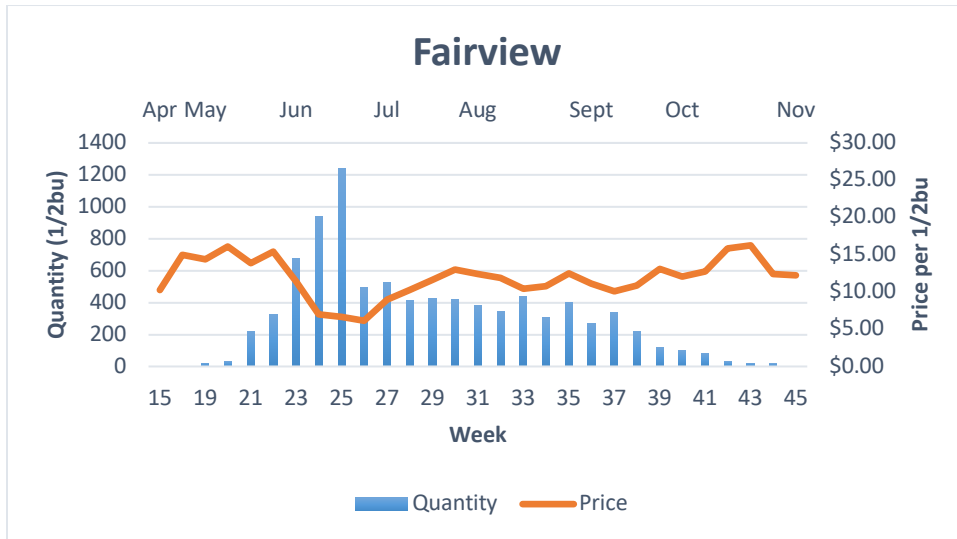


As we might expect, the lowest prices of the season coincide with the largest volumes sold.

Clear premiums are observed with larger melons and quality, but these are not reported consistently across the season. Grading signaling will benefit both growers and buyers.

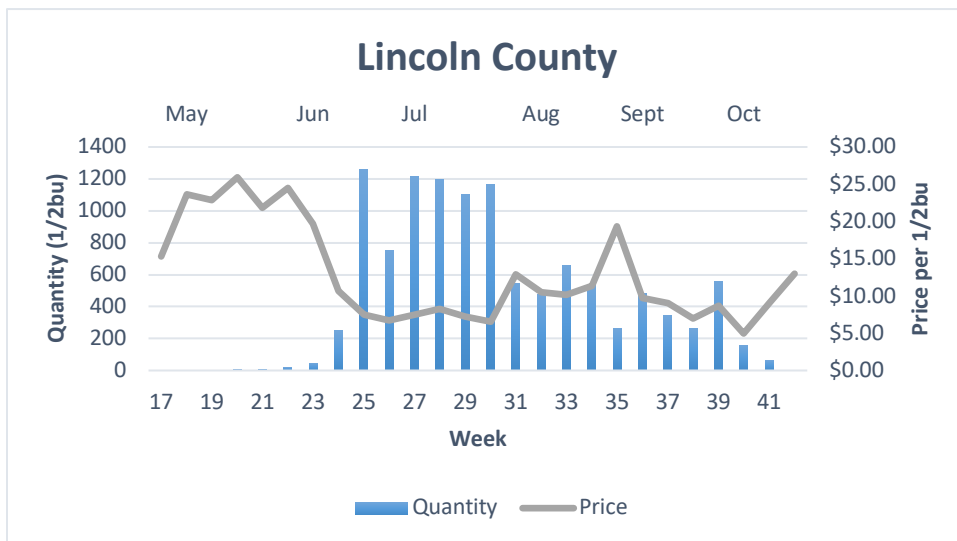


# Cucumbers, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



#### Notes & Observations:

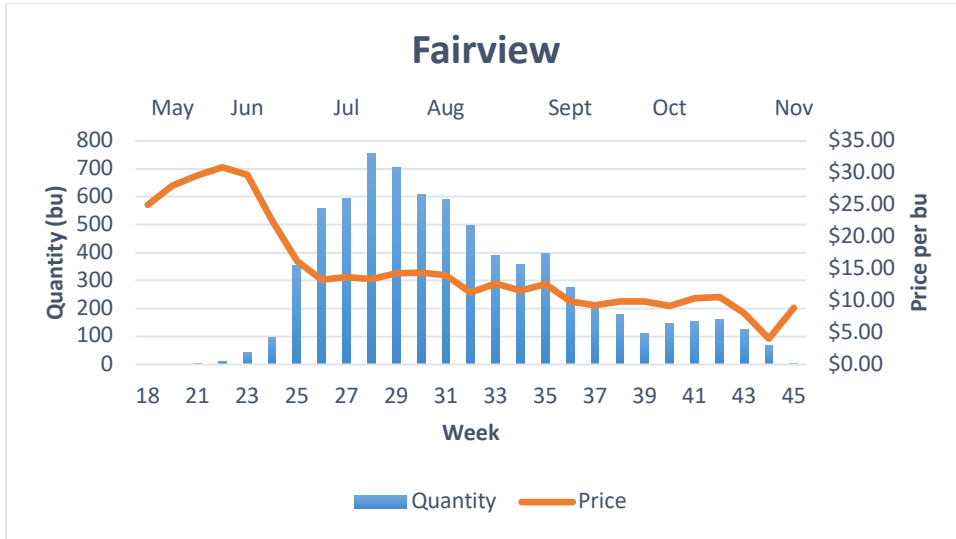
The relationship between price and supply is fairly typical. The increase in price after peak season suggests that there may be opportunities for growers to add July plantings for a late summer and fall harvest.



Overall, Fairview's prices were slightly more stable than in previous reports with lower early premiums, but also higher peak-season prices. Lincoln's prices were very similar to those in previous reports. Both markets saw considerably more volume of product sold than in previous reports.

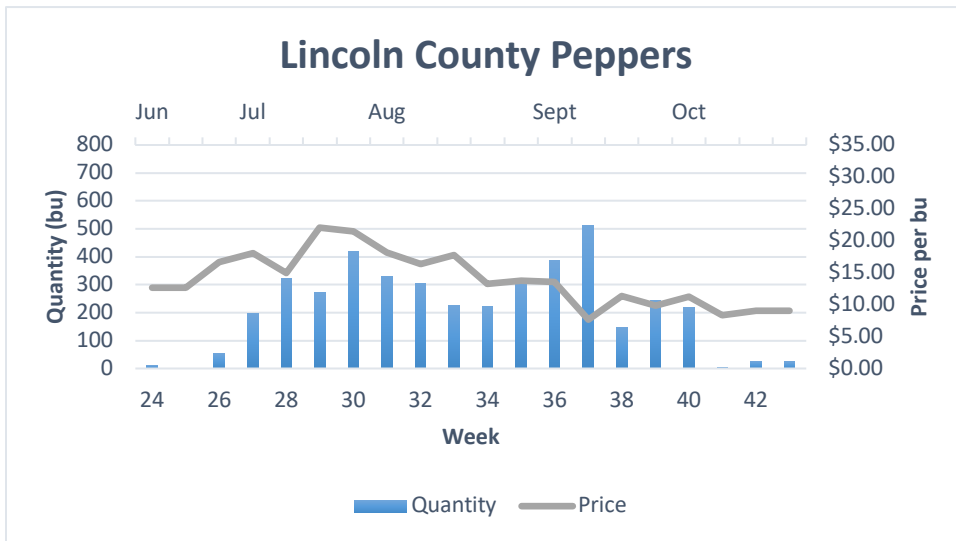


# Peppers, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



## Notes & Observations:

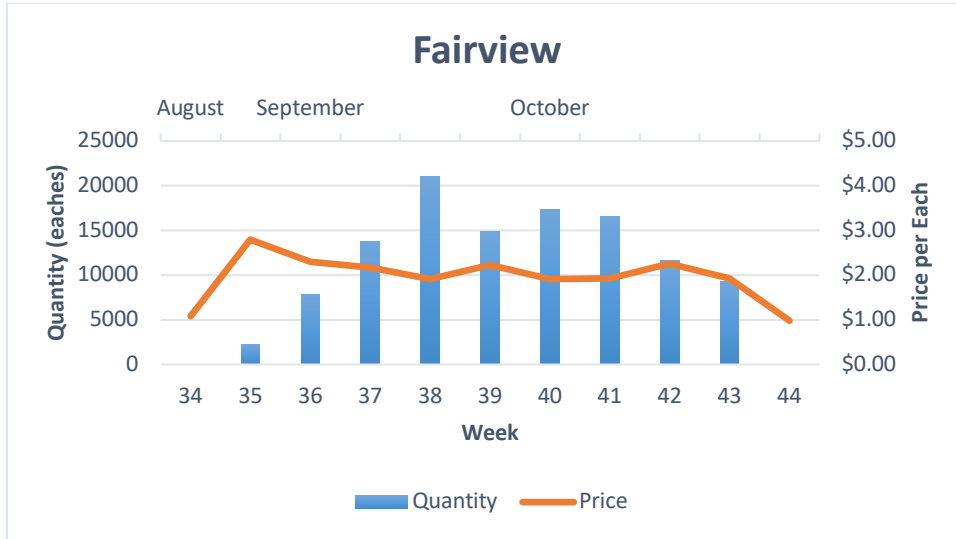
Very early peppers clearly command a much higher price, but after that initial premium, the price for peppers declines sharply and then gradually decreases as the season progresses. Over this three year period, that trend was stronger at Fairview than at Lincoln.



Even in the fall market with dropping supplies, the price stagnates or drops. This suggests that demand for fall peppers is low.

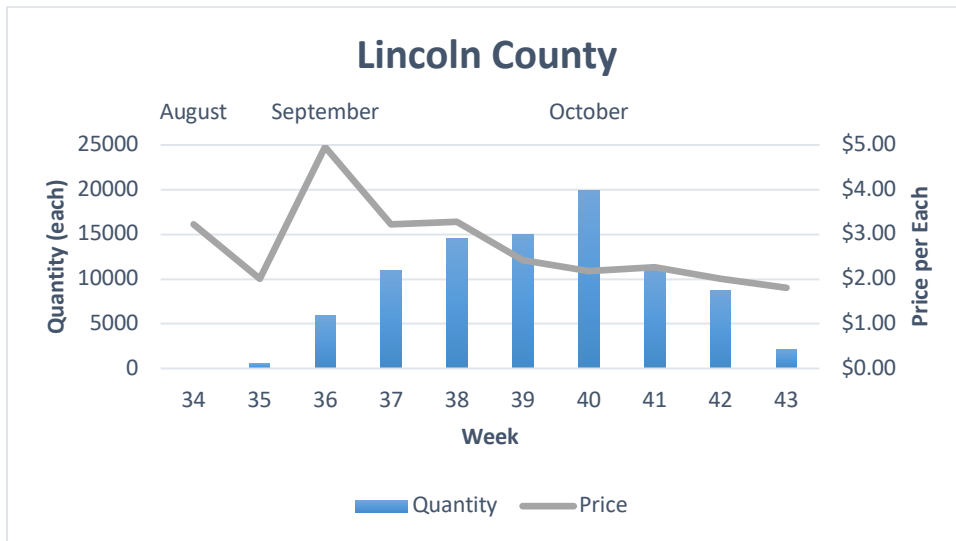


# Pumpkins, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)

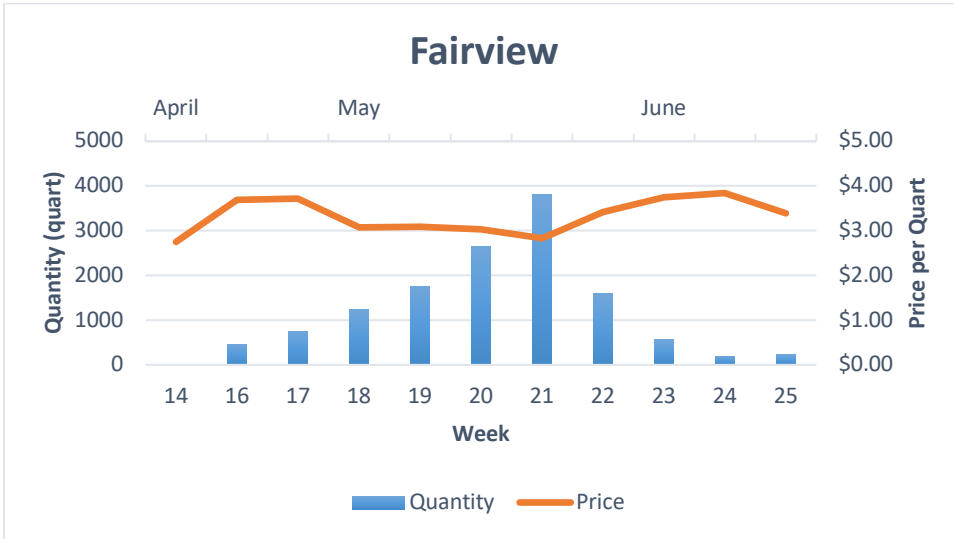


## Notes & Observations:

Pumpkin prices overall have been stable over the past three years in KY auctions across the entire production season. Price differences weekly tend to reflect differences in sizes that are not captured here.

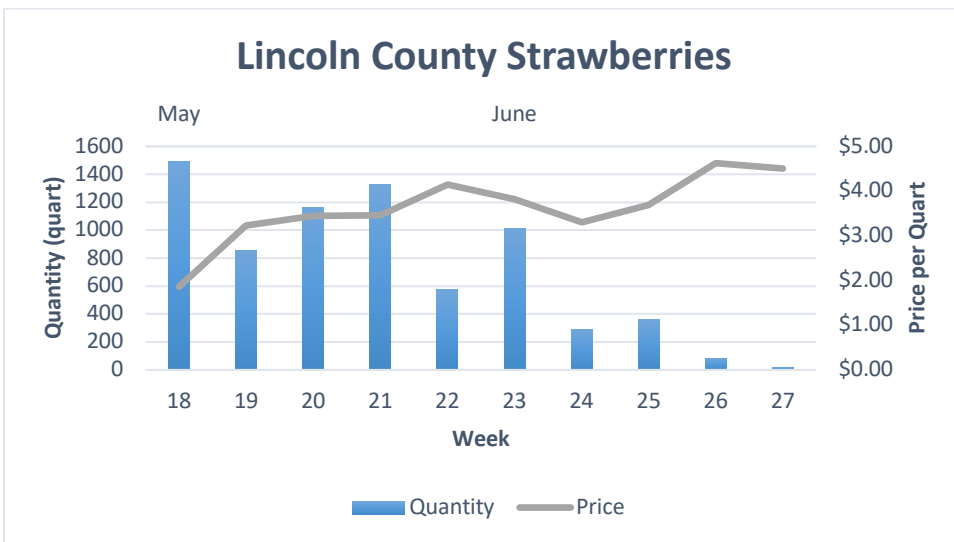


# Strawberries, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



## Notes & Observations:

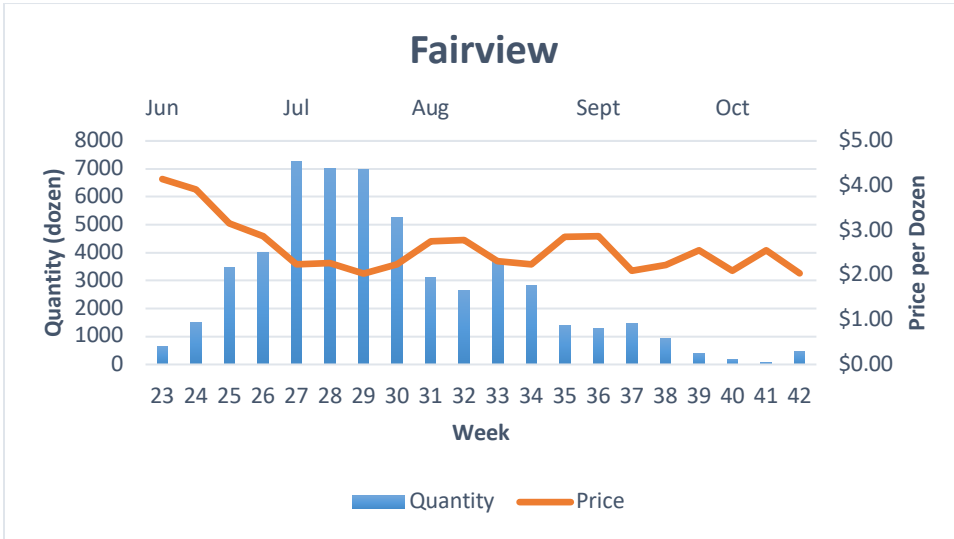
This is the shortest window of any crop analyzed in this report. There appears to be only a minimal premium for earliness, but prices continue to rise as the short season advances and supply dwindles. Late May/early June production peaks still command relatively strong prices at the auctions. As with much fruit, weekly prices vary widely with the quality of the fruit and packaging.



The price per unit (quart) is much closer to retail prices than the other commodities in this report. This may reflect the value placed on local strawberries, the relatively high costs of producing them, and the short window of production.



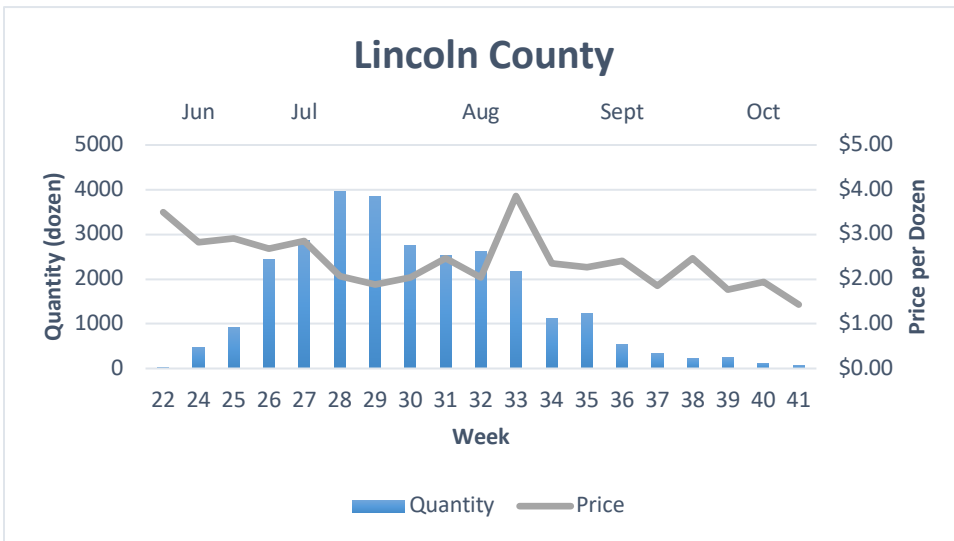
# Sweet Corn, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



Notes & Observations:

Sweet corn comes into the market relatively quickly with quantity going from 0 to 6000 dozen in a matter of three weeks.

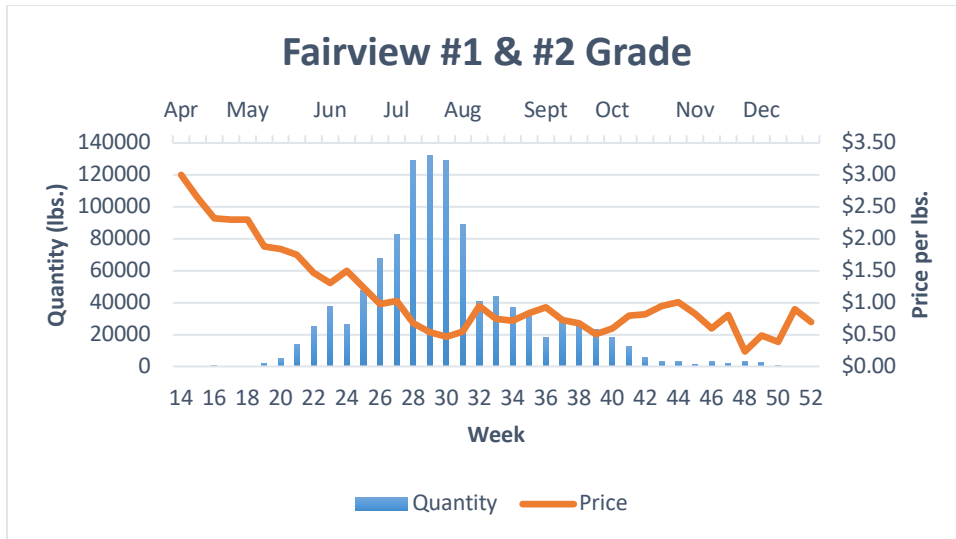
There is a major premium for earliness, but the price drops quickly once product becomes available.



Price remains fairly stable from late summer on even as supply tapers off considerably.

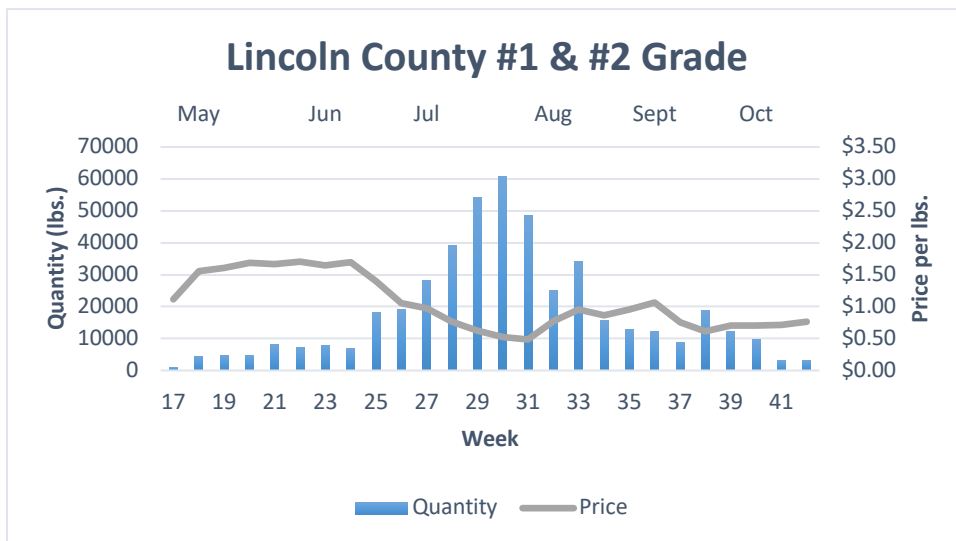


# Tomatoes, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



#### Notes & Observations:

We universally see a very large premium for early tomatoes. A few weeks earlier delivery can be a difference of 2-3 times the low prices at peak. Grading also makes a substantial difference in prices, especially #1 vs #2 grade, not always designated in the price reports, but certainly worth indicating by growers to buyers seeking higher grade product. #1 and #2 grade tomatoes are clean, mature, well developed, fairly smooth, and not overripe or soft.



Mid-season, in sync with supply the price sharply declines below \$1 / pound.

At Fairview the price remains fairly low for the rest of the season even declining through November. Lincoln's fall season does not extend as long, and they see low, relatively stable prices through the end of October.

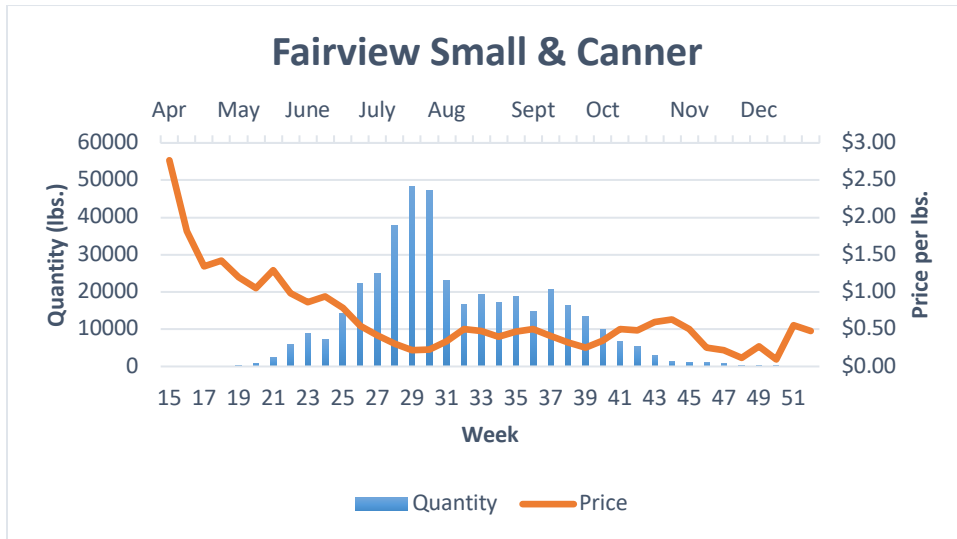


#### Comparison of 3-yr Avg. Seasonal Tomato Prices (\$/lb.)

Type	Fairview	Lincoln
#1 & #2	\$1.10	\$1.05
Sm & Can.	\$0.65	\$0.57
Heirloom	\$1.46	n/a



# Tomatoes, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)

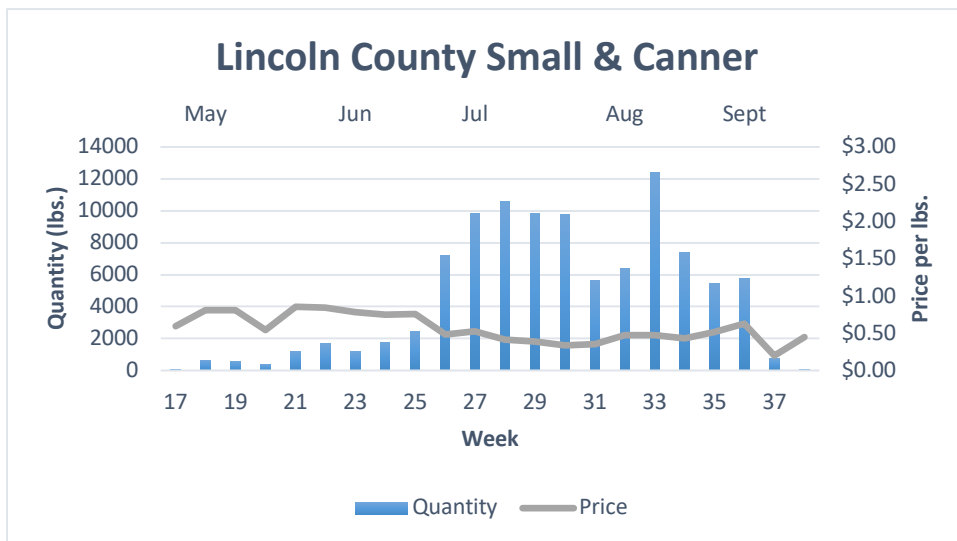


## Notes & Observations:

We universally see a very large premium for early tomatoes. A few weeks earlier delivery can be a difference of 2-3 times the low prices at peak. Grading also makes a substantial difference in prices, especially in the #1 vs #2 grade noted above, but not always designated in the price reports. Canner tomatoes are, as the name implies, sold to be canned; while "small" is a size designation which has a maximum diameter of 2.28 inches.

Mid-season, in sync with supply the price sharply declines below \$1 / pound.

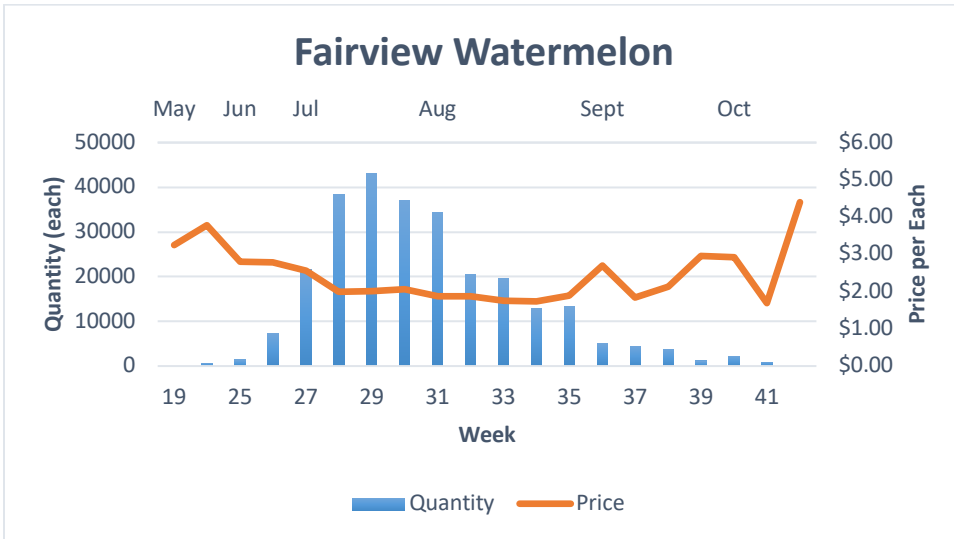
Similar to the #1 and #2 grade tomatoes, the price at Fairview remains fairly low for the rest of the season even declining through November. Lincoln's fall season does not extend as long, and they see low, relatively stable prices through the end of September.



## Comparison of 3-yr Avg. Seasonal Tomato Prices (\$/lb.)

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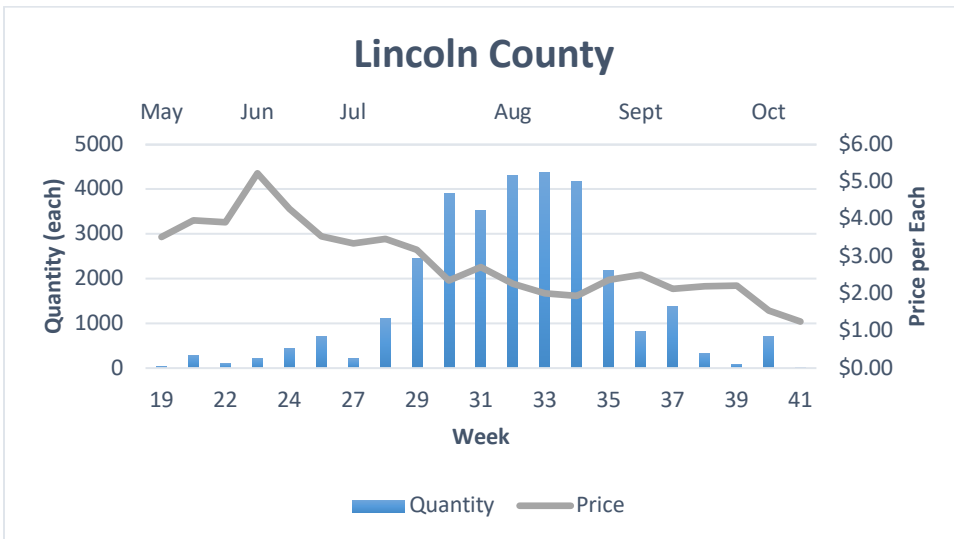
# Watermelon, Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



Notes & Observations:

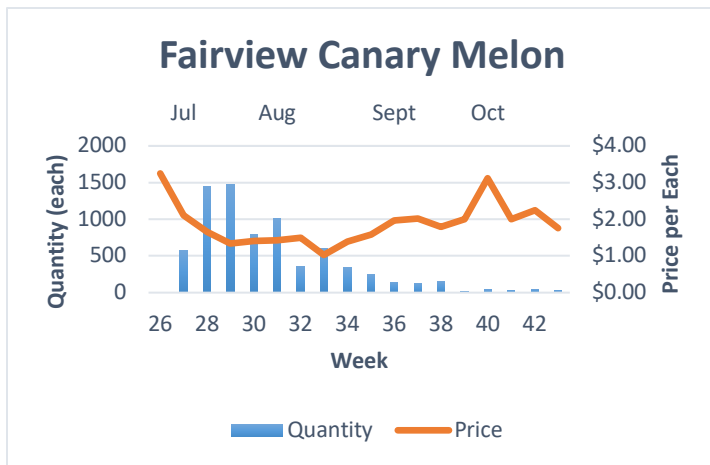
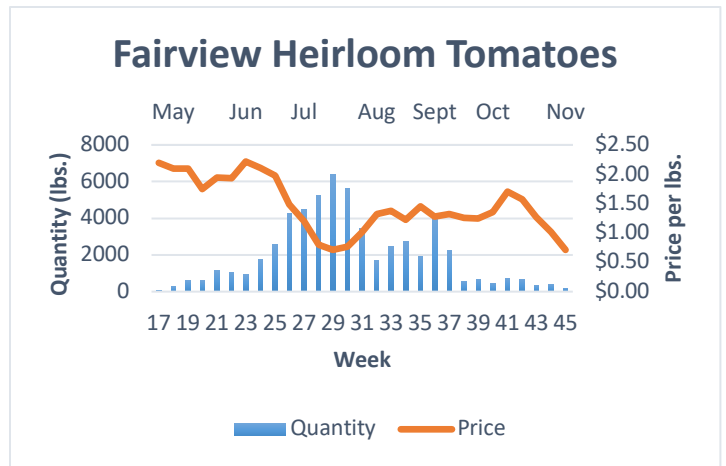
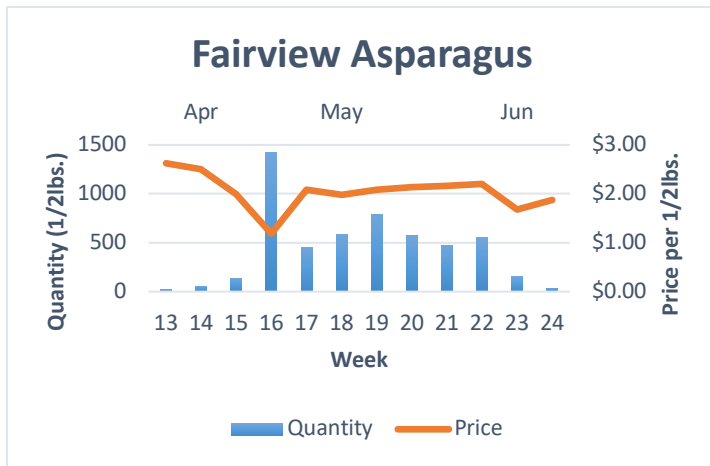
There is a premium for early watermelons in both auctions. Prices drop initially as supply comes into the market, and then slowly decreases across the peak season.

At Fairview, there was a rebound when supply shrank, but in Lincoln prices continued to decline until the end of the season. One other notable observation was a slight uptick in price in September at both auctions, which coincided with a considerably diminished supply.



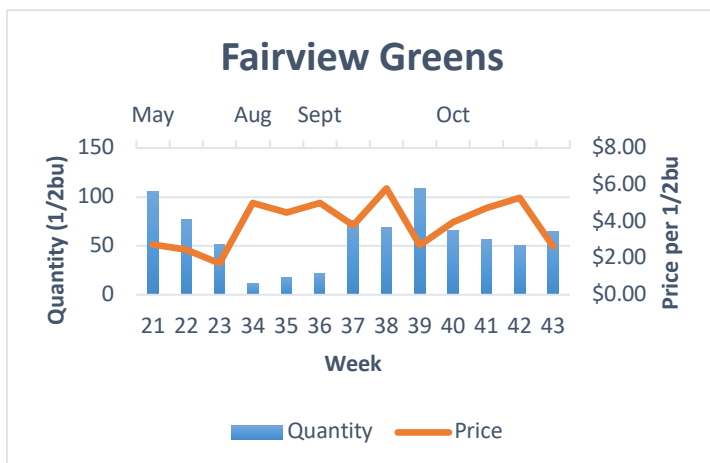
# Crops with Minimal Data

Weekly Average Prices & Quantities (2017-2019)



#### Notes & Observations:

These data were limited, and are included here for informational purposes only. Growers may find this information useful, but it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from any of these graphs.



# Unit Conversion Chart

<i>Product</i>	<i>Retail Volume</i>	<i>Net Weight (lbs.)</i>
<i>Apples</i>	Bushel	42 to 48 lbs.
	½ Bushel	21 to 24 lbs.
<i>Asparagus</i>	Bushel	24 lbs.
	½ Bushel	12 lbs.
<i>Beans</i>	Bushel	28 to 30 lbs.
	½ Bushel	14 to 15 lbs.
<i>Beets</i>	Bunch	2 lbs.
<i>Blueberries</i>	Pint	0.75 to 1 lbs.
<i>Broccoli</i>	Head	1 to 1 ½ lbs.
<i>Cabbage</i>	Head	2 to 6 lbs.
<i>Canary Melon</i>	Each	2 to 7 lbs.
<i>Cantaloupe</i>	Each	1 to 4 lbs.
<i>Cucumbers</i>	Bushel	48 to 50 lbs.
	½ Bushel	24 to 25 lbs.
<i>Greens</i>	Bushel	18 to 20 lbs.
	½ Bushel	9 to 10 lbs.
<i>Peppers</i>	Bushel	25 to 30 lbs.
	½ Bushel	12.5 to 15 lbs.
<i>Pumpkins</i>	Each	15 to 40 lbs.
<i>Strawberries</i>	Quart	1.25 to 1.5 lbs.
<i>Sweet Corn</i>	Dozen	6 to 8 lbs.
<i>Tomatoes</i>	Bushel	53 lbs.
<i>Watermelon</i>	Each	22 to 26 lbs.

## Thanks for reading!

These averages are summaries of the rich and complicated archive of price data collected by the Center for Crop Diversification. Additional crops, specific market prices, and alternative unit prices can be viewed in the weekly price reports on the site. Since its start in 2004, the CCD's price reporting system has changed and expanded to include Center partners working in Illinois, Tennessee and West Virginia.

### Check out all the other specialty crop resources from the CCD including:

- [Farmers Market & Produce Auction Price Reports](#) (16 years archived reports)
- [Budgets for over 20 crops](#)
- [Crop & Marketing Profiles](#)
- [Video & Recorded webinars](#)
- [Tons of FREE publications, tools, and other resources](#)

We are always looking for feedback, so give us a shout on [facebook](#) or by emailing [brett.wolff@uky.edu](mailto:brett.wolff@uky.edu).

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Available: [www.uky.edu/ccd/pricereports/KYPA/KYPA3yravg-19](http://www.uky.edu/ccd/pricereports/KYPA/KYPA3yravg-19)

