

Chapter 1.

Introduction

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Florida ranks second among the states in fresh market vegetable production on the basis of area under cultivation (9.4%) and production (9.0%), and in value (15.8%) of the crops grown (Table 1). In 2005, vegetables harvested from 217,400 acres had a farm value exceeding 1.8 billion dollars.

A more detailed analysis of the national importance of Florida production of specific vegetables indicates that Florida ranks first in fresh-market value of snap bean, cucumber, sweet corn, and tomato. Florida ranks second in fresh market value of sweet pepper, and strawberry and third in watermelon.

More than 40 different crops are grown commercially in Florida with 7 of these exceeding \$100 million in value. Harvest occurs in late fall, winter and spring when at times the only available United States supply is from Florida.

On the basis of value, in 2005 tomato production accounted for over 40% of the state's total. Other major vegetable crops with a lesser proportion of the 2005 crop value were pepper (11.5%), strawberry (10.6%), snap bean (7.6%), watermelon (6.8%), potato (6.1%), sweet corn (5.8%), cucumber (4.0%), and squash (2.6%).

Table 1. Leading fresh market vegetable producing states, 2005.

| Rank | Harvested acreage | | Production | | Value | |
|------|-------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|
| | State | Percent of total | State | Percent of total | State | Percent of total |
| 1 | California | 43.8 | California | 48.5 | California | 46.5 |
| 2 | Florida | 9.4 | Florida | 9.0 | Florida | 15.8 |
| 3 | Georgia | 7.2 | Arizona | 8.8 | Arizona | 8.8 |
| 4 | Arizona | 7.1 | Georgia | 4.9 | Georgia | 4.8 |
| 5 | New York | 4.0 | Texas | 3.5 | Texas | 3.6 |

Source: Vegetables, USDA Ag Statistics 2005.