

FLORIDA

Vegetable Report

ACREAGE-SPRING QUARTER (April, May, June, July)

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WEATHER: Dry conditions allowed planting and harvesting to progress on schedule for most of January and February. However, mostly cool temperatures during the two months slowed crop growth. Most vegetable and strawberry producers provided protection to crops when frosty temperatures arrived just before mid-January. Vegetable producers covered some plants with cloths and irrigated crops to minimize frost damage. Most acreage showed no significant damage although the cold singed a few acres. Around Quincy, fall crop tomato picking finished in early January and land preparations for the spring crop started after mid-month. In early February, substantial rains slowed planting and harvesting. In mid-February, a cold front swept the State and set record lows. Areas from the Panhandle down to the southern Peninsula experienced hard freezes and frosts. These cold temperatures damaged and destroyed a significant amount of the sweet corn acreage with producers replanting only part of the losses. Snap bean leaves turned brown in fields not protected from these cold conditions. This cold also harmed some tomatoes. However, cucumbers escaped significant damage with growers using freeze cloths and overhead sprinklers to save the crop. Cabbage in the Hastings areas was not affected by the cold. Northern Peninsula producers started land preparations for watermelon planting during February with setting starting in mid-March. Dry conditions during March allowed planting and harvesting to speed ahead. Cabbage cutting reached peak levels in early March as producers met the St. Patrick's Day demand. Strong winds tossed plants and wind borne sand bruised some fruit when storms passed over the southern Peninsula growing areas near the end of March. However, no significant damage was reported. The rains washed away some pesticides but fields dried quickly after the storms which help limit any increase in disease. Tomato transplanting for the spring crop harvest got underway around Quincy with the earlier cool temperatures causing no significant damage to the small plants. Quincy area growers expected tomato transplanting to continue through mid-April. Strawberry growers started to open fields to the U-Pick market as production in other states increased. Warmer temperatures arrived by early April which hindered strawberry fruit development. In early April, harvesting remained active in central and southern Peninsula areas as growers started to satisfy the mid-April holiday demand. Potato growers in the Hastings area continued to plant with some acreage double cropped following the cabbage harvest. Watermelon growers finished planting in some Panhandle areas. Tomato producers in the Palmetto-Ruskin area expected to start picking by mid-April.

This report reflects conditions as of April 1 and represents acreage for harvest during the spring months of April, May, June, and July. Estimated acreage by growing region is no longer available.

UNITED STATES

The prospective area for harvest of 14 selected fresh market vegetables and melons during the spring quarter is forecast at 285,100 acres up 1 percent from last year for comparable States. Acreage increases for cantaloupes, cabbage, carrots, celery, sweet corn and watermelons more than offset acreage decreases for snap beans, broccoli, cauliflower, head lettuce, bell peppers, and tomatoes. Honeydew melon and cucumber acreage are unchanged from a year ago.

SNAP BEANS: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 21,400 acres, down 4 percent from last year. Florida and Georgia's acreage decreased 4 percent and 3 percent, respectively, while New Jersey's acreage remains unchanged. Georgia snap beans are in fair to good condition. Soil moisture has been mostly adequate this spring and temperatures were close to normal. In New Jersey, current dry conditions and concern of a labor shortage may reduce actual plantings.

TOMATOES: Acreage for harvest is forecast at 28,300 acres, down 1 percent from 2005. Florida's acreage is set at 17,500 acres, equal to last spring's acreage. In California, wet and cool weather in February and early March interrupted planting and crop development.

WATERMELON: Acreage intended for harvest is forecast at 41,900 acres, up 4 percent from last year. The Florida plantings are expected to total 25,400 acres, down 2 percent from last year. California's growing conditions in the southern desert have been ideal for spring melons. No major problems have been reported. In Texas, producers have begun growing more seedless watermelons. Texas watermelons are showing high sugar content which is in demand.

BELL PEPPERS: Florida's area for harvest is forecast at 7,600 acres, down 3 percent from 2005

CUCUMBERS: Spring harvested acreage is forecast at 7,200 acres, unchanged from 2005. The Florida acreage is expected to total 6,000 acres, up 2 percent from a year ago.

CABBAGE: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 8,100 acres, up 5 percent from last year. Acreage is unchanged for Georgia and Texas, while Florida and New Jersey's acreage increased 11 percent and 20 percent, respectively. The Georgia crop is in fair to good condition. Soil moisture and temperatures have been favorable for the crop. In Texas, dry weather led to higher irrigation cost but has also increased production and improved quality. In addition, the dry conditions greatly reduced disease and pest problems.

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**VEGETABLES FOR FRESH MARKET, PROSPECTIVE ACREAGE FOR HARVEST, SPRING QUARTER
BY STATES, 2006 WITH COMPARISONS**

Selected crops and States	Usual harvest period	Spring acreage			2006 area for harvest as percent of 2005
		Harvested		For harvest 2006	
		2004	2005		
				<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent</i>
SNAP BEANS:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	11,400	11,500	11,000	96
Georgia	Apr-Jun	9,500	9,100	8,800	97
New Jersey	Jun-Aug	1,500	1,600	1,600	100
Total		22,400	22,200	21,400	96
CABBAGE:					
Florida	Apr-May	1,800	1,800	2,000	111
Georgia	Apr-Jun	4,500	4,000	4,000	100
New Jersey	May-Aug	1,000	1,000	1,200	120
Texas	Apr-Jun	900	900	900	100
Total		8,200	7,700	8,100	105
SWEET CORN:					
Florida	Apr-Jul	25,500	21,000	21,000	100
California	Apr-Jun	10,700	11,500	13,500	117
Total		36,200	32,500	34,500	106
CUCUMBERS:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	6,100	5,900	6,000	102
South Carolina	May-Aug	1,000	1,000	900	90
Texas	Apr-Jun	300	300	300	100
Total		7,400	7,200	7,200	100
BELL PEPPERS: ^{1/}					
Florida	Apr-Jul	7,300	7,800	7,600	97
TOMATOES:					
Florida	Apr-Jul	17,000	17,500	17,500	100
California	Apr-Jun	8,500	8,000	7,800	98
South Carolina	May-Aug	3,500	3,000	3,000	100
Total		29,000	28,500	28,300	99
WATERMELON:					
Florida	Apr-Jul	25,000	26,000	25,400	98
California	Apr-Jun	3,500	3,500	3,500	100
Texas	Apr-Jun	14,500	10,800	13,000	120
Total		43,000	40,300	41,900	104
TOTAL OF CROPS LISTED					
Florida		94,100	91,500	90,500	99
United States		153,500	146,200	149,000	102
TOTAL OF CROPS ESTIMATED					
United States ^{2/}		301,050	282,250	285,100	101

^{1/} Includes fresh market and processing.

^{2/} Total of crops listed plus broccoli, cantaloups, carrots, cauliflower, celery, head lettuce and honeydew melons.