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VEGETABLES

SPRING ACREAGE (April, May, June, July)



FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE

April 8, 2002

FLORIDA

WEATHER: Temperatures dipped to freezing and near freezing levels over the western Panhandle, northern and central Peninsula, and some southern Peninsula localities during the second week of January. Vegetable producers irrigated crops as needed for cold protection. The cold weather lightly singed some lettuce and burned some leaves of young sweet corn in the Everglades. Gusty winds accompanying the cold temperatures blew sand across central and southern Peninsula vegetable fields causing some reduction in quality. Strawberry production dipped slightly in mid-to-late January when producers lost mature fruit from plants that were iced for protection from the earlier cold. Most vegetable acreage recovered well when temperatures soared to record or near record highs during the last half of January. Vegetable harvesting remained active throughout most of the month. Frequent showers over the western Panhandle and northern Peninsula eased dry soil conditions throughout the month. Widespread, soaking rains fell in nearly all areas except for a few southern Peninsula localities around mid-January. Soggy fields delayed the picking of some vegetables around Immokalee after the mid-month showers but boosted the growth of most vegetables. Potato digging increased in southern Peninsula areas during late January.

Dry, warm weather persisted throughout most of February with the danger of wildfires increasing across the northern and central Peninsula and in a few western Panhandle localities. Peaches, other low chill cultivars of fruit trees and azaleas were blooming in northern areas by mid-month. Northern growers laid plastic for the planting of watermelons. The mostly clear conditions allowed vegetable planting and harvesting to proceed at the usual pace. Some southern and southeastern coastal localities received significant rainfall around mid-month with West Palm Beach recording almost six inches of rain, and Ft. Lauderdale and Ft. Pierce reporting around two inches from these

showers. A storm system from the Gulf of Mexico brought at least two days of soaking rains to most areas near the end of the month with precipitation amounts ranging from a third inch to almost five inches. These rains delayed fieldwork and reduced the quality of some vegetables in the affected areas. The rains eased the threat of wildfires in most localities. Cold weather arrived at the end of the month bringing frost and freezes to the western Panhandle and some northern and central Peninsula localities.

Cold, rainy weather during early March brought hard freezes to some northern areas and dumped from five to nine inches of rain over some Big Bend localities. The freezing temperatures killed some early watermelon transplants, singed some cole crops and damaged the tops of potatoes in the Hastings area with older plants suffering the most harm. Temperatures warmed by mid month. Mostly light showers kept the danger of wildfires high during the month, especially over central Peninsula areas. Vegetable planting and harvesting continued at a normal pace for most of the month. Temperatures again plunged during late month bringing lows in the 30s to some Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities and lows in the 40s to many central Peninsula areas. This cold caused no significant damage to tomatoes around Quincy but killed some very young watermelon transplants with producers replanting as needed. Temperatures remained mostly normal during the last week of the month when daily afternoon storms returned to some Peninsula localities.

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 11 selected fresh market vegetables during the spring quarter is forecast at 220,100 acres, down 1 percent from last year for comparable commodities. Acreage decreases for broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, and head lettuce more than offset acreage increases for snap beans, sweet corn, bell peppers, and tomatoes. Melon acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 84,300 acres, down 4 percent from last year. Cantaloup, honeydews, and watermelon were down 4, 3, and 5 percent, respectively.

SNAP BEANS: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 24,000 acres, up 2 percent from last year. Florida growers are harvesting the winter acreage and will soon start on the spring crop. No major problems have been reported. Land preparation for spring planting in Georgia was active during the month.

CABBAGE: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 10,600 acres, down 5 percent from last year. Florida's short cold weather periods have not harmed the crop. Georgia growers prepared land for spring planting during March. New Jersey's mild winter and cold spring were favorable for the early cabbage crop. Texas weather conditions have fluctuated greatly this spring. Cabbage in the San Antonio Winter Garden area is showing signs of freeze damage that occurred during the end of February and the beginning of March. Rainfall over some areas of central Texas has varied from 81 hundredths of an inch to over one and one-half inches. South Texas has had continued cool, dry weather with windy conditions causing some farmers to stop planting.

SWEET CORN: Intended acreage for harvest is forecast at 37,000 acres, up 1 percent from last year's acreage. The California southern desert area had colder than normal temperatures which will delay harvest this spring. However, due to ideal growing conditions in central California, the sweet corn planted for spring harvest is doing very well. A large amount of the spring harvest in central California is scheduled to occur on time in June. No pest or disease problems were reported in the central or southern areas. In Florida, cold temperatures in early January shortened some supplies of the winter crop. Most acreage escaped damage from the cold temperatures during March.

CUCUMBERS: Spring harvested acreage is forecast at 4,900 acres, down 6 percent from 2001. In Florida, growers are starting to harvest the spring crop. No major problems have been reported. Texas cucumbers are off to a slow start with a later harvest expected due to late snow and cool weather in the west and lack of rain in some areas of south Texas.

BELL PEPPERS: Acreage for harvest is forecast at 7,500 acres, up 4 percent from 2001. In Florida, cold temperatures in early January and March, combined with soaking mid-January rains slowed plant growth and fruit maturation. Most planting for the spring crop remained on schedule. In south Texas, rainfall is needed. The San Antonio Winter Garden area shows signs of freeze damage that occurred during the end of February and the first week of March.

TOMATOES: Acreage for harvest is forecast at 28,300 acres, up 4 percent from 2001. In California, cold weather in February and March slowed crop development. Wet conditions in January slowed field preparation for fresh market tomatoes in the San Joaquin Valley. Transplanting started in late February and should continue through early April. No pest or disease problems have been reported. Florida tomato growing areas were affected by cold temperatures in early January and March. Mid-January soaking rains slowed plant growth and fruit maturation.

WATERMELONS: Acreage intended for harvest is forecast at 48,200 acres, down 5 percent from last year. Arizona's spring harvest was generally unaffected by the winter's several cold snaps throughout the State because many producers use plastic coverings over the young plants during the early planting months. The California crop experienced unusually cool temperatures which slowed the growth of melons. In Florida, cold temperatures in March caused some replanting of northern Peninsula acreage. In Texas, melons in the San Antonio Winter Garden area showed signs of freeze damage that occurred during the end of February and the beginning of March. Rainfall over some areas of central Texas has varied from 81 hundredths of an inch to over one and one-half inches. Rain is needed in south Texas.

Vegetables for fresh market, prospective acreage for harvest, spring quarter
by States, 2002 with comparisons

Selected crops and States	Usual harvest period	Spring acreage			2002 area for harvest as percent of 2001
		Harvested		For harvest 2002	
		2000	2001		
		Acres			Percent
SNAP BEANS:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	15,000	13,000	13,000	100
Georgia	Apr-Jun	8,200	9,000	9,500	106
New Jersey	Jun-Jul	1,300	1,500	1,500	100
Total		24,500	23,500	24,000	102
CABBAGE:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	4,000	5,000	5,500	110
Georgia	Apr-Jun	3,800	4,200	3,400	81
New Jersey	May-Aug	900	1,000	1,100	110
Texas	Apr-Jun	600	1,000	600	60
Total		9,300	11,200	10,600	95
SWEET CORN:					
Florida ^{2/}	Apr-Jul	25,800	25,600	26,000	102
California	Apr-Jun	11,000	11,000	11,000	100
Total		36,800	36,600	37,000	101
CUCUMBERS:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	4,300	3,800	3,500	92
South Carolina	May-Aug	900	1,100	1,000	91
Texas	Apr-Jun	400	300	400	133
Total		5,600	5,200	4,900	94
EGGPLANT:					
Florida ^{1/}	Apr-Jun	500	400	--	--
ESCAROLE/ENDIVE:					
Florida ^{1/ 3/}	Apr-Jun	300	--	--	--
New Jersey ^{1/ 3/}	May-Aug	400	--	--	--
Total		700	700	--	--
BELL PEPPERS: ^{2/}					
Florida	Apr-Jul	6,600	6,800	7,000	103
Texas	Apr-Jun	500	400	500	125
Total		7,100	7,200	7,500	104
TOMATOES:					
Florida	Apr-Jul	12,200	16,500	17,000	103
California	Apr-Jun	7,000	7,500	8,300	111
South Carolina	May-Jul	3,400	3,200	3,000	94
Total		22,600	27,200	28,300	104
WATERMELON:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	27,000	24,000	23,000	96
Arizona	May-Jul	6,100	5,500	5,000	91
California	Apr-Jun	3,000	3,000	3,200	107
Texas	Apr-Jun	22,000	18,000	17,000	94
Total		58,100	50,500	48,200	95
TOTAL OF CROPS LISTED					
Florida		95,700	95,100	95,000	99
United States		165,200	162,500	160,500	99
TOTAL OF CROPS ESTIMATED					
United States ^{4/}		309,900	312,200	304,400	98

^{1/} Seasonal estimate discontinued in 2002.

^{2/} Includes fresh market and processing.

^{3/} 2001 State data not published to avoid disclosure.

^{4/} Total of crops listed plus broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, head lettuce, cantaloups, and honeydew melons.