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VEGETABLES

SPRING ACREAGE (April, May, June, July)

**FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE**



April 6, 2004

FLORIDA

WEATHER: Dry, cool conditions persisted during most of January 2004. At the beginning of the month, strawberry producers around Plant City kept nighttime surveillance as temperatures plunged to near freezing levels due to an Arctic cold air mass covering the State. Moderate frost on the ground was reported on several mornings in northern locations and to a lesser degree in central locations, especially near the end of the month. Tomato picking was virtually finished in the Palmetto-Ruskin region by mid-month as Miami-Dade County producers increased harvesting. Tomato picking in the Immokalee area was steady throughout most of the month. Potato producers started planting in the Hastings area about mid-month. However, a lack of contracts for chipping potatoes limited the planting of processing types. Significant rains fell in most areas during the last week of the month with some vegetable planting and harvesting curtailed for a few days.

Mostly cool temperatures prevailed during February. Significant rains fell over most Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities with abundant rains near the end of the month slowing land preparations for watermelon planting. The ground was too dry to dig fence post holes in Union County early in the month. Southern Peninsula producers dug potatoes for most of the month with rain delaying some potato planting and cabbage cutting around Hastings early in the month. Vegetable harvesting was active with snap beans, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, radishes, squash and tomatoes available. Significant rains

during the last week curtailed some planting and harvesting over the southern Peninsula.

Dry conditions during the first half of March gave way to spotty showers during the last two weeks. Most temperatures for the month averaged above normal with northern areas recording some temperatures near freezing during the first part and again at the end of the month. The warmer temperatures brought out the blooms on northern ornamental and non-citrus fruit trees. Most potato planting was finished around Hastings by early March. Cabbage cutting around Hastings and in other areas, and potato digging in southern areas increased as growers met the mid-March holiday demand. Vegetable growers got planting and harvesting back on schedule as soils dried from the late February downpour. with snap beans, celery, sweet corn, eggplant, escarole, endive, lettuce, peppers, squash, strawberries and tomatoes available throughout the month. Tomato planting was active around Quincy and blueberries reached full bloom in Jackson County by mid-month. Dry soils prevented some planting in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula in mid-March.

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 10 selected fresh market vegetables plus cantaloups, watermelons and honeydew melons, during the spring quarter, is forecast at 306,100 acres, up 4 percent from last year. Acreage increased for all forecasted vegetables except for celery which remains unchanged and sweet corn which decreased 3 percent. Melon acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 83,700 acres, up 7 percent from last year. Cantaloup acreage is up 13 percent from a year ago. Watermelon acreage is up 5 percent from 2003. Honeydew melon acreage is down 7 percent. Asparagus acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 53,500 acres, down 20 percent from last year.

SNAP BEANS: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 23,600 acres, up 13 percent from last year. Georgia snap beans are in good to fair condition with the crop in need of rain. New Jersey snap beans were planted on schedule and recent mild temperatures have benefitted the crop.

CABBAGE: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 7,900 acres, up 11 percent from last year. In Georgia, the crop is in good condition. Growing conditions for the early cabbage crop in New Jersey are normal. Texas growers are having a very good season. Planting is ongoing and harvest recently began in some areas. Crop quality is excellent.

SWEET CORN: Intended acreage for harvest is forecast at 37,200 acres, down 3 percent from a year ago. The California crop is doing very well despite the grocery worker strike in the Los Angeles area which delayed planting in the Imperial Valley.

CUCUMBERS: Spring harvested acreage is forecast at 8,500 acres, up 6 percent from 2003. In Texas, conditions have been favorable this season and growers expect a good crop.

BELL PEPPERS: Acreage for harvest is forecast at 7,600 acres, up 1 percent from 2003. Texas bell pepper acreage is down due to competition from Mexico.

TOMATOES: Acreage for harvest is forecast at 27,900 acres, up 4 percent from 2003. In California, rainfall and wet soil conditions slowed field activity in early March but by the middle of the month, work had increased to a more normal pace. No pest or disease problems have been reported thus far.

WATERMELONS: Acreage intended for harvest is forecast at 45,100 acres, up 5 percent from last year. California's melon crop is progressing well with no major problems reported. Texas weather conditions have been excellent.

**VEGETABLES FOR FRESH MARKET, PROSPECTIVE ACREAGE FOR HARVEST, SPRING QUARTER
BY STATES, 2004 WITH COMPARISONS**

Selected crops and States	Usual harvest period	Spring acreage			2004 area for harvest as percent of 2003
		Harvested		For harvest 2004	
		2002	2003		
		<i>Acres</i>		<i>Percent</i>	
SNAP BEANS:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	12,500	11,000	12,600	115
Georgia	Apr-Jun	9,500	8,500	9,500	118
New Jersey	Jun-Jul	1,500	1,400	1,500	107
Total		23,500	20,900	23,600	113
CABBAGE:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	2,000	1,800	1,800	100
Georgia	Apr-Jun	3,400	3,600	3,600	100
New Jersey	May-Aug	1,100	1,000	1,000	100
Texas	Apr-Jun	600	700	1,500	214
Total		7,100	7,100	7,900	111
SWEET CORN:					
Florida	Apr-Jul	27,500	26,000	25,500	98
California	Apr-Jun	11,300	12,300	11,700	95
Total		38,800	38,300	37,200	97
CUCUMBERS:					
Florida	Apr-Jun	5,500	6,500	6,500	100
South Carolina	May-Aug	1,200	1,200	1,000	83
Texas	Apr-Jun	400	300	1,000	333
Total		7,100	8,000	8,500	106
BELL PEPPERS: ^{1/}					
Florida	Apr-Jul	7,000	7,000	7,300	104
Texas	Apr-Jun	500	500	300	60
Total		7,500	7,500	7,600	101
TOMATOES:					
Florida	Apr-Jul	17,000	16,900	16,400	97
California	Apr-Jun	7,200	6,600	7,500	114
South Carolina	May-Aug	3,100	3,300	4,000	121
Total		27,300	26,800	27,900	104
WATERMELON:					
Florida	Apr-Jul	23,000	24,000	25,000	104
Arizona ^{2/}	May-Jul	5,100	--	--	--
California	Apr-Jun	2,800	3,100	3,100	100
Texas	Apr-Jun	17,000	16,000	17,000	106
Total		47,900	43,100	45,100	105
TOTAL OF CROPS LISTED					
Florida		94,500	93,200	95,100	102
United States		159,200	151,700	157,800	104
TOTAL OF CROPS ESTIMATED					
United States ^{3/}		298,100	294,500	306,100	104

^{1/} Includes fresh market and processing.

^{2/} Seasonal estimate discontinued. Estimate to be published in January 2005 annual.

^{3/} Total of crops listed plus broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cantaloups, and honeydew melons.