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# VEGETABLES

SPRING ACREAGE (April, May, June, July)

FLORIDA  
AGRICULTURE



April 5, 2005

## FLORIDA

**WEATHER:** Planting and harvesting progressed normally due to mostly dry and cool conditions during the first half of January 2005. Dry conditions for most of the month increased the danger for wild fires. A cold front swept over the State towards the end of the month which caused some vegetable producers to cover plants with freeze cloths or run overhead sprinklers for cold protection. Strawberry growers also ran overhead sprinklers to form ice caps on plants and berries as protection from the cold which saved some immature fruit and most plants. Abundant supplies of some vegetables, near the end of January, drove prices below the cost of production causing some growers to stop harvests.

Mostly clear, dry conditions persisted throughout February allowing planting and harvesting to proceed on schedule. Highbush blueberries started to bloom at the beginning of the month. Growers in the Quincy area started to lay plastic for tomato transplanting. Near the end of the month, potato digging increased around Hastings. The dry weather in February continued to increase the risk for wild fires in scattered areas across the Peninsula. Soil moisture supplies declined until significant rains near the end of the month helped replenish some soil moisture levels.

At the beginning of March, northern Peninsula and Panhandle growers prepared land for planting of watermelons as producers in the Quincy area transplanted tomatoes. Cabbage cutting neared the usual seasonal peak in mid-March as growers met the increased demand for the St. Patrick's Day holiday. Temperatures for most of the month were below normal with cooler conditions favoring disease development in some blueberries. Some strawberry growers opened fields for "U-Pic" during the last half of the month as the season neared the end. During late March, storms reduced the quality and yield prospects of some vegetables with most in fairly good condition at the end of the period. Heavy periods of precipitation and muddy fields towards the end of the month hindered some field preparation, planting and harvesting.

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 214,100 acres, down 5 percent from last year. Acreage decreases for snap beans, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, head lettuce, and tomatoes more than offset acreage increases for carrots, sweet corn, and bell peppers. Melon acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 79,100 acres, down 1 percent from last year. Watermelon acreage is up 3 percent from 2004. Cantaloup acreage is down 4 percent from a year ago. Honeydew melon acreage is down 13 percent. Asparagus acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 49,500 acres, down 6 percent from last year. Strawberry acreage for harvest is forecast at 43,700 acres, up 2 percent for comparable States in 2004.

**TOMATOES:** Acreage for harvest is forecast at 27,600 acres, down 1 percent from 2004. In California, continued rainfall and wet soil conditions slowed field activity throughout March leading to a decrease in harvested acres. No pest or disease problems have been reported thus far. Florida's weather has been cooler than normal, causing slower foliage and fruit development. However, most of the acreage is in good condition. Harvest is active in the southern Peninsula during March.

**SWEET CORN:** Intended acreage for harvest is forecast at 38,600 acres, up 4 percent from a year ago. Both California and Florida expect increased acreage for the spring season. The California crop is in good to excellent condition with no pest or disease problems reported. In Florida, cooler temperatures during most of March slowed stalk and ear development. Recent warmer weather has spurred development and most acreage is reported in good condition.

**WATERMELONS:** Acreage intended for harvest is forecast at 44,300 acres, up 3 percent from last year. California's melon crop is progressing slowly due to cool temperatures and cloudy skies and is expected to reach the market two weeks late. Demand is high for the new baby watermelons. Florida's harvest is expected to begin in April and continue into early July. Texas growers are concerned about fungal disease pressure carried over from last year's crop.

**BELL PEPPERS:** Acreage for harvest is forecast at 8,100 acres, up 7 percent from 2004. In Florida, favorable conditions early in the season allowed good growth and development. However, recent rainy weather may have caused damage to the crop. The extent of the damage is currently being assessed. Texas bell peppers are doing well but harvest was slowed by excessive rainfall early in the season.

**SNAP BEANS:** Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 22,100 acres, down 1 percent from last year. Florida and New Jersey acreage increased 1 percent and 13 percent, respectively, while Georgia's acreage decreased 6 percent. Florida growers are harvesting the winter acreage and will soon start on the spring crop. No major problems have been reported. Georgia snap beans are in good to fair condition with favorable conditions reported for this season. New Jersey growers, although intending to plant more snap beans this year because of good prices, are concerned over rising fuel and labor costs.

**CUCUMBERS:** Spring harvested acreage is forecast at 7,200 acres, down 3 percent from 2004. Florida's acreage is forecast at 5,900 acres, 3 percent below last year. Planting was on schedule until recent rains interrupted field work. Acreage in South Carolina and Texas is unchanged from last year. Texas growers report favorable growing conditions for this year's spring crop.

**CABBAGE:** Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 7,700 acres, down 6 percent from last year. Acreage is unchanged for Florida, New Jersey, and Texas while Georgia's acreage decreased 11 percent. Florida's harvest is active with no major problems reported. The Georgia crop is in good condition. Soil moisture and temperatures have been favorable for the crop this season. Growing conditions have been favorable for the early cabbage crop in New Jersey. Texas growers report wet and muddy field conditions which have slowed harvest.

**VEGETABLES FOR FRESH MARKET, PROSPECTIVE ACREAGE FOR HARVEST, SPRING QUARTER  
BY STATES, 2005 WITH COMPARISONS**

Selected crops and States	Usual harvest period	Spring acreage			2005 area for harvest as percent of 2004
		Harvested		For harvest 2005	
		2003	2004		
		<i>Acres</i>		<i>Percent</i>	
<b>SNAP BEANS:</b>					
Florida	Apr-Jun	11,000	11,400	11,500	101
Georgia	Apr-Jun	8,500	9,500	8,900	94
New Jersey	Jun-Aug	1,400	1,500	1,700	113
Total		20,900	22,400	22,100	99
<b>CABBAGE:</b>					
Florida	Apr-Jun	1,800	1,800	1,800	100
Georgia	Apr-Jun	4,400	4,500	4,000	89
New Jersey	May-Aug	1,000	1,000	1,000	100
Texas	Apr-Jun	700	900	900	100
Total		7,900	8,200	7,700	94
<b>SWEET CORN:</b>					
Florida	Apr-Jun	26,000	25,500	26,000	102
California	Apr-Jun	12,300	11,700	12,600	108
Total		38,300	37,200	38,600	104
<b>CUCUMBERS:</b>					
Florida	Apr-Jun	6,500	6,100	5,900	97
South Carolina	May-Aug	1,200	1,000	1,000	100
Texas	Apr-Jun	300	300	300	100
Total		8,000	7,400	7,200	97
<b>BELL PEPPERS: <sup>1/</sup></b>					
Florida	Apr-Jul	7,000	7,300	7,800	107
Texas	Apr-Jun	500	300	300	100
Total		7,500	7,600	8,100	107
<b>TOMATOES:</b>					
Florida	Apr-Jul	16,900	17,000	17,500	103
California	Apr-Jun	6,800	7,500	7,000	93
South Carolina	May-Aug	3,300	3,500	3,100	89
Total		27,000	28,000	27,600	99
<b>WATERMELON:</b>					
Florida	Apr-Jul	24,000	25,000	26,000	104
California	Apr-Jun	3,000	3,500	3,300	94
Texas	Apr-Jun	16,000	14,500	15,000	103
Total		43,000	43,000	44,300	103
<b>TOTAL OF CROPS LISTED</b>					
Florida		93,200	94,100	96,500	103
United States		152,600	153,800	155,600	101
<b>TOTAL OF CROPS ESTIMATED</b>					
United States <sup>2/</sup>		291,200	305,200	293,200	96

<sup>1/</sup> Includes fresh market and processing.

<sup>2/</sup> Total of crops listed plus broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cantaloups, and honeydew melons.