

FLORIDA'S FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

Florida has approximately 9.25 million acres in commercial production on 47,500 commercial farms,¹ which produce food products not only for Floridians, but also for those from other states and countries. Florida has a substantial presence in agriculture production, given the high-value crops produced in our state, although the state ranks 18th in the U.S. on number of farms, and only 30th in total farmland.

Production of the world-famous Florida citrus crops and other fresh fruits and vegetables is given a major advantage by the state's favorable climate, which allows farmers to grow a great variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the year.

Florida TaxWatch examined Florida's storied orange industry in a 2012 report showing that Florida produced more oranges than any other state in the U.S., totaling more than 70 percent of the U.S. supply.² Florida's leading agricultural

crop, oranges provide nearly 18 percent of Florida's agriculture receipts, and the state exports millions of boxes of fresh oranges, as well as processing more than a hundred million boxes of oranges for domestic and international markets annually. For fresh-market production, Florida harvested 186,700 acres of land in 2012, producing more than \$1.1 billion in receipts. This issue of *Economic Commentary* focuses on other successful products of our agricultural industry: produce, which positions Florida as the second largest fruits, vegetables, and juices exporter in the nation, and whose farming and processing alone contributes \$7.65 billion to the Florida economy.³



Photo: FarmersMarketsFlorida.com

¹ 2013 Florida Agriculture by the Numbers. Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. November 2013

² Peeling Back the Florida Orange Industry. Florida TaxWatch. October 2012.

³ Economic Contributions of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Food Industries in Florida in 2012. University of Florida.

IMPROVING FLORIDA'S BALANCE OF TRADE

In 2012, Florida had more than \$4 billion in international agricultural exports, making it the 7th largest state exporter of agricultural products abroad. The main importers of Florida agricultural products include Canada (with more than \$960 million), the Netherlands, the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. Of those exports of Florida products, Florida fruits, vegetables and juices make up more than \$500 million, making this category second to fresh and frozen meat.⁴

FLORIDA CROPS LEAD THE WAY NATIONALLY

Florida is either the leading or the second-highest state in percent of U.S. receipts (see table) for many fruits and vegetables, yet Florida agriculture and its farming regions also benefit from crops which do not rank in the top two nationally, but are expanding in acreage and production.

One example is blueberries, a Florida industry made possible by agricultural research at the University of Florida. Ralph Sharpe is credited with starting the blueberry breeding program there in the 1950s, and now-retired Professor Paul Lyrene is credited with developing the varieties that now make Florida an important producer in the industry, holding patents on more than 30 varieties that are bred specifically for Florida.⁵

FLORIDA LEADING CASH RECEIPTS

CROP	PERCENTAGE NATIONALLY	NATIONAL RANKING
Oranges	69.9%	1
Grapefruit	66.2%	1
Bell Peppers	36.2%	2
Squash	33.5%	1
Snap Beans	28.7%	1
Tomatoes	25.3%	2
Tangerines	24.9%	2
Cucumbers	24.7%	1
Sweet Corn	23.3%	1
Watermelons	20.6%	1
Cabbage	17.6%	2
Strawberries	15.3%	2
Peanuts	12.8%	2

Source: 2013 Florida Agriculture by the Numbers. 2011 Data



Photo: James W. Olmstead, UF/IFAS

⁴ Florida Agricultural Overview and Statistics. USDA. National Agricultural Statistics Service.

⁵ Scientist Paul Lyrene Credited as Father of Important Blueberry Industry. Lakeland Ledger. May 27, 2013.

FLORIDA PRODUCE BENEFITS OTHER FLORIDA INDUSTRIES

Several industries, including manufacturing, benefit from the wide availability of fruits and vegetables in our state. The “Food and Kindred Products Manufacturing” industry had an economic output of \$1.79 billion in 2010 from fruit and vegetable canning, pickling, and drying. This amount represents 8.4 percent of Florida’s total “Food and Kindred Products Manufacturing” output.

In addition, the Florida transportation and distribution industries greatly benefit from the shipping of our produce to international markets.

CONCLUSION

Florida’s fruit and vegetable production is an important part of the Florida economy and helps provide fresh, healthy food to Floridians and others outside the state and the country. Exports of these products are important to Florida logistics companies and increase Florida’s already-positive balance of trade.

FLORIDA SUPPORTS LOCAL FARMS

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services actively promotes Florida’s agricultural products to the rest of the nation and the world. The Department operates 13 Farmers’ Markets around the state and also created the “Fresh From Florida” campaign, which focuses on building awareness on Florida’s fresh produce, seafood, and other products.

Some of the campaign efforts include featuring ads with recipes, participating in festivals by offering a taste of Florida’s food, and promoting “U-Pick” farms across Florida on their website.

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