

# Introduction - Florida Greenhouse Vegetable Production Handbook, Vol 1<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The production of greenhouse vegetables has increased in Florida during the 1980s and 1990s. Area in Florida counties under greenhouse vegetable production in 2001 is shown in [Figure 1](#). A greater number of small operations exist in North Florida and fewer, but much larger operations exist in South Florida.

Greenhouse operations have been viewed by many as a means to diversify and improve farm income. These new growers are trying to take advantage of vegetable crop production which, in general, has higher return per

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2. G. J. Hochmuth, professor of Soil and Water Science, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. The Florida Greenhouse Vegetable Production Handbook is edited by George Hochmuth, professor of Soil and Water Science, and Bob Hochmuth, Extension agent IV, Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

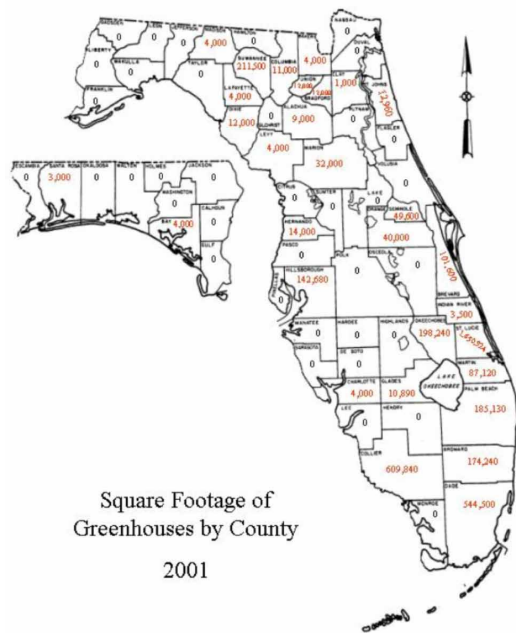


Figure 1. Greenhouse Vegetable Production in 2001.

unit area than agronomic crops. In addition, greenhouse vegetable growers have recently been able to benefit from the increased demand for specialty horticultural crops, a category which encompasses greenhouse vegetables (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Newly transplanted tomatoes

Greenhouse vegetable production is not easy nor should it be viewed as an easy solution to a particular individual's economic problems. The difficulties inherent in greenhouse vegetable production are reflected in the relatively few acres of greenhouse vegetables grown in the United States compared to field vegetables. In general, greenhouse vegetable production in the United States is located near urban areas to benefit from the larger market potential, near industrial power plants to take advantage of reduced

power and heating costs, or they are located in areas of the country with year-round abundant sunshine, such as Colorado or Arizona.

Greenhouse vegetables cannot usually compete directly on a price basis in the same markets with field-grown vegetables. Greenhouse vegetable production is much more expensive and more intensive and the crops must be marketed as specialty produce. Since greenhouse production is very costly and intensive, and the market for the specialty items is volatile, the prospective grower must be keenly aware of the special and exacting requirements of greenhouse vegetable production. This publication presents the special considerations that must be understood by all new or perspective greenhouse vegetable growers. Each point should be considered in light of one's own particular personality, capability, and financial status. Careful consideration of these factors will help prevent the perspective grower from making a regretful decision.

## More Information

For more information on greenhouse crop production, please visit our website at <http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu>.

For the other chapters in the Greenhouse Vegetable Production Handbook, see the documents listed below:

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Crop Production, HS769

Considerations for Managing Greenhouse Pests, HS770

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General Aspects of Plant Growth, HS784

Production Systems, HS785

Irrigation of Greenhouse Vegetables, HS786

Fertilizer Management for Greenhouse Vegetables, HS787

Production of Greenhouse Tomatoes, HS788

Generalized Sequence of Operations for Tomato Culture, HS789

Greenhouse Cucumber Production, HS790

Alternative Greenhouse Crops, HS791

Operational Considerations for Harvest, HS792

Enterprise Budget and Cash Flow for Greenhouse Tomato Production, HS793

Vegetable Disease Recognition and Control, HS797

Vegetable Insect Identification and Control, HS798