

# Chapter 1. Commercial Vegetable Production in Florida<sup>1</sup>

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Vegetable production remains a tremendous industry for Florida in terms of acreage and value. Including vegetables, melons, potatoes, and strawberries, production occurred on approximately 176,500 acres and generated \$1.93 billion in gross sales in 2022, which ranks second among all the states. Growing seasons are well defined by the peninsular geography, allowing Florida to serve as the main vegetable supplier during late fall, winter, and early spring months to the United States. Although more than 40 vegetable crops are commercially planted in the state, Florida ranks in the top three on production value of tomato, bell pepper, snap bean, squash, sweet corn, watermelon, cabbage, cucumber, and strawberry (Table 1).

The objective of this publication is to provide updated information on crop cultivars, pesticide labels, and certain practices for vegetable production in Florida. Suggested practices are guidelines for growers to plan farm activities and are always subject to review using the latest scientific data available.

## Web Links to Additional Information on Vegetable Production Topics

UF/IFAS Extension provides information through Ask IFAS/EDIS at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>. Below is a partial list of EDIS publications and other resources pertaining to vegetable production for further information beyond the *Vegetable Production Handbook of Florida*.

## Vegetable Crop Production

Complete *Vegetable Production Handbook*: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CV292>

“Introduction to Organic Crop Production”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CV118>

“Value Added Agriculture: Is It Right for Me?”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FE638>

FDACS/UF-IFAS Florida Farm to School Partnership: [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/farm\\_to\\_school](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/farm_to_school)

“Row Covers for Commercial Vegetable Culture in Florida”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CV201>

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## Fertility and Irrigation

“Commercial Vegetable Fertilization Principles”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CV009>

“Soil and Fertilizer Management for Vegetable Production in Florida”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CV101>

“Controlled-Release and Slow-Release Fertilizers as Nutrient Management Tools”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS1255>

“Cover Crop Benefits for South Florida Commercial Vegetable Producers”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ss461>

“Principles and Practices of Irrigation Management for Vegetables”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CV107>

“Drip Irrigation: the BMP Era—An Integrated Approach to Water and Fertilizer Management for Vegetables Grown with Plasticulture”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS172>

## Postharvest Quality and Handling Resources

UF/IFAS Postharvest Quality & Technology: <https://irrec.ifas.ufl.edu/postharvest/>

UF/IFAS EDIS on Postharvest and Handling: [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_postharvest](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_postharvest)

Postharvest Technology: <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu>

## Marketing and Regulatory Resources

Florida Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services (FDACS): <https://www.fdacs.gov/Divisions-Offices/Marketing-and-Development>

U.S. Grade Standards for Fruits and Vegetables: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/standards>

National Agricultural Statistics Service: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/fl/>

FoodData Central, formerly National Nutrient Database: <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/>

National Organic Program: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program>

## Food Safety Resources

“Food Safety on the Farm: Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices—an Overview”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FS135>

“The Food Safety Modernization Act and the FDA Facility Registration Program”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FS231>

UF/IFAS EDIS on Food Safety: [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/food\\_safety](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/food_safety)

CDC: Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/divisions-offices/about-dfwed.html>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA): <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/default.htm>

## Fumigation

“Maximizing the Efficacy of Soil Fumigant Applications for Raised-Bed Plasticulture Systems of Florida”: <https://doi.org/10.32473/edis-hs1169-2010>

## Pesticide Safety

“Minimizing Honey Bee Exposure to Pesticides”: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN1027>

UF/IFAS EDIS on Pesticide Safety and Handling: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/pesticide-safety>

## Pest Management

UF/IFAS EDIS on Florida Nematode Management: [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/nematode\\_management](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/nematode_management)

UF/IFAS EDIS on Pest Management: [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/pest\\_management](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/pest_management)

UF/IFAS EDIS on Weed Management: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topics/weed-management>

Table 1. Vegetable production acreage and value in Florida.

Crop	Planted Acres	Value (million US\$)	US Rank
Tomato	24,000	330.9	2
Strawberry	10,600	511.3	2
Bell pepper	11,000	262.0	2
Sweet corn	29,600	124.1	1
Potato	18,000	114.0	11
Snap bean	25,000	73.9	1
Watermelon	26,000	198.3	1
Squash	7,600	45.5	2
Cabbage	8,900	72.6	2
Cucumber	23,000	102.1	1
Source: Vegetables—2022 and 2024 summary, NASS, USDA.			