



- Advertisement -

**Florida springs into agriculture**

---

By

Seth Mendelson

April 12, 2023

For decades now - possibly all the way back to the end of the Second World War - Florida has been in a push-pull situation between those who are eager for continued population growth and all that comes with it and those who still want to focus on the state's outstanding winter weather and its agricultural prowess.

Those favoring population growth have been the winners over the decades. In 1960, the U.S. Census Bureau reported about five million people living in the Sunshine State. Just 60 years later, the bureau says that more than 22.5 million people live in the state, now the third largest in the country and its fastest-growing, and many experts predict that by 2030, just seven years away, more than 25 million people will live in Florida.

Making matters more sticky is the fact that urban sprawl is starting to impact the interior parts of the state, specifically around the booming Orlando and Jacksonville areas and in the northern parts of Florida, including the panhandle region. Whereas much of the population growth in the past was limited to such major cities as Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Jacksonville on the Atlantic Ocean and Tampa/St. Petersburg on the Gulf of Mexico, today the interior parts of the state are seeing huge increases in population.

Much of the land now being turned into residential communities and commercial buildings was recently farmland and few people see this trend changing anytime soon, particularly as the prices of the land increases and more farmers see an opportunity to cash in on their property.

But agriculture is big business in Florida and many in the state government and from the farming community are working on solutions to keep the state's farmers working and producing a wide range of products, from the state's world famous oranges to everything from strawberries, broccoli, sweet corn, tomatoes, asparagus, to cabbage and other crops.

For now, and hopefully for the future, Florida, thanks to its tropical climate in the southern half of the state and its sub-tropical climate in the northern half of the state, is gaining sales and market share in the produce world. According to The Economic Research Service, (ERS), part of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, receipts from Florida agricultural products in 2019 totaled about \$7.8 billion. This is up 7 percent from the previous year's total of \$7.3 billion. Some officials estimate that total reaching \$10 billion in just a few years.

Vegetables and melons make up about \$1.3 billion, or 17 percent, of that total, while the citrus crop accounts for about \$1.1 billion, or nearly 15 percent of the total.

According to the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, more than 47,000 farms and ranches, utilizing 9.7 million acres of land, operate in the state. The average farm size is 204 acres, a

---

number that has been relatively consistent over the last two decades.

The department states that Florida accounts for 51 percent of production value of oranges in the country, 64 percent of fresh tomatoes, 45 percent of fresh Bell peppers, 33 percent of grapefruit, 27 percent of watermelons and 24 percent of fresh sweet corn.

The state is first in the nation in the production value of oranges, sugarcane, fresh market tomatoes and watermelon. It is second in the production value of strawberries, third in cabbage, grapefruit and fresh market corn and fourth in peanuts.

What may be the best news for the state is the fact that more and more farmers from other parts of the country realize the need to grow domestic crops in Florida during the winter months, knowing full well that warm weather locations in the U.S. are limited to just several parts of the country. Companies from as far away as New Jersey, Michigan and even from Canada are opening up or expanding their Florida operations or developing partnerships with Florida-based farming businesses.

This is all done to ensure that their retail clients and the consumer from around North America have a steady supply of fresh high-quality produce from a source located within the northern hemisphere.

[Print](#)