

# Performance of Georgia Vegetable Industry

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Vegetable production is big business in Georgia. In 2004, vegetable farm gate value was \$725.3 million. The state of Georgia has maintained its tradition of producing several varieties of vegetables destined for local, regional and international fresh markets.

In 2004 watermelon, sweet corn, snap beans and onions were ranked first, second, third and fourth in terms of acreage whereas onions, tomato, watermelon and bell peppers were ranked first, second, third and fourth in terms of farm gate value respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1: Georgia Top 10 Vegetable Acreage and Farm Gate Value Ranking, 2004**

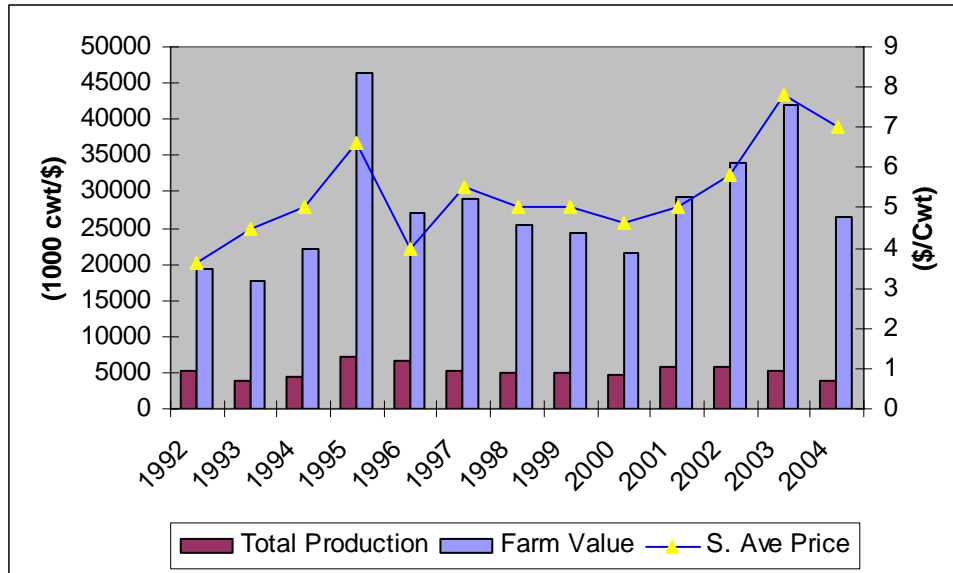
| <b>Acreage Ranking</b> | <b>Crop</b>   | <b>Total Acres</b> | <b>Farm Gate Ranking</b> | <b>Crop</b>   | <b>Total Value</b> |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>1</b>               | Watermelon    | 29,450             | <b>1</b>                 | Onions        | \$108,651,263      |
| <b>2</b>               | Sweet Corn    | 28,400             | <b>2</b>                 | Tomato        | \$102,643,463      |
| <b>3</b>               | Snap Beans    | 21,195             | <b>3</b>                 | Watermelon    | \$85,462,196       |
| <b>4</b>               | Onions        | 17,435             | <b>4</b>                 | Bell Peppers  | \$60,182,192       |
| <b>5</b>               | Cucumbers     | 13,467             | <b>5</b>                 | Cucumbers     | \$50,470,867       |
| <b>6</b>               | Cabbage       | 11,091             | <b>6</b>                 | Sweet Corn    | \$48,507,198       |
| <b>7</b>               | Collards      | 8,189              | <b>7</b>                 | Yellow Squash | \$30,448,613       |
| <b>8</b>               | Turnip Greens | 7,232              | <b>8</b>                 | Cantaloupe    | \$28,742,666       |
| <b>9</b>               | Yellow Squash | 6,937              | <b>9</b>                 | Snap Beans    | \$28,081,458       |
| <b>10</b>              | Cantaloupe    | 6,854              | <b>10</b>                | Cabbage       | \$27,559,145       |

Source: 2004 Georgia Farm Gate Vegetable Survey, SR 05-03, July 2005.

Chronologically, the ten dominant crops in terms of acreage were watermelon, sweet corn, snap beans, greens (turnip, collards and kale), onions, cucumber, squash, tomato, cabbage, and cantaloupe in 2004. However, planted acreage does not necessarily translate to superiority in farm gate value as shown in Table 1.

Production trend for watermelon reveals a decline from 1992 when over 5.2 million cwt was produced to 3.8 million cwt in 2004. The peak production was recorded in 1995 when over 7.0 million cwt was produced (Fig. 1). On the other hand, prices have fluctuated.

**Fig. 1: Georgia Watermelon Production, Farm Value And Season Average Price, 1992-2004**



Source: Official Georgia Estimates – Watermelons.  
Data compiled by Georgia Agricultural Statistics Service

from \$3.65/cwt in 1992 to \$7.0/cwt in 2004. The peak price was \$7.8/cwt in 2003. Farm gate value has also been erratic from \$19.2 million in 1992 to \$26.6 million in 2004 with the peak of \$46.5 million in 1995 (Fig. 1).

At the national level, several Georgia grown vegetables were ranked high in 2004. For instance, although onions rank first in the state of Georgia (Table 1), it ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> nationwide (Table 2). Other Georgia grown vegetables that ranked high were cucumbers, snap beans, sweet corn, squash, bell pepper etc. (Table 2).

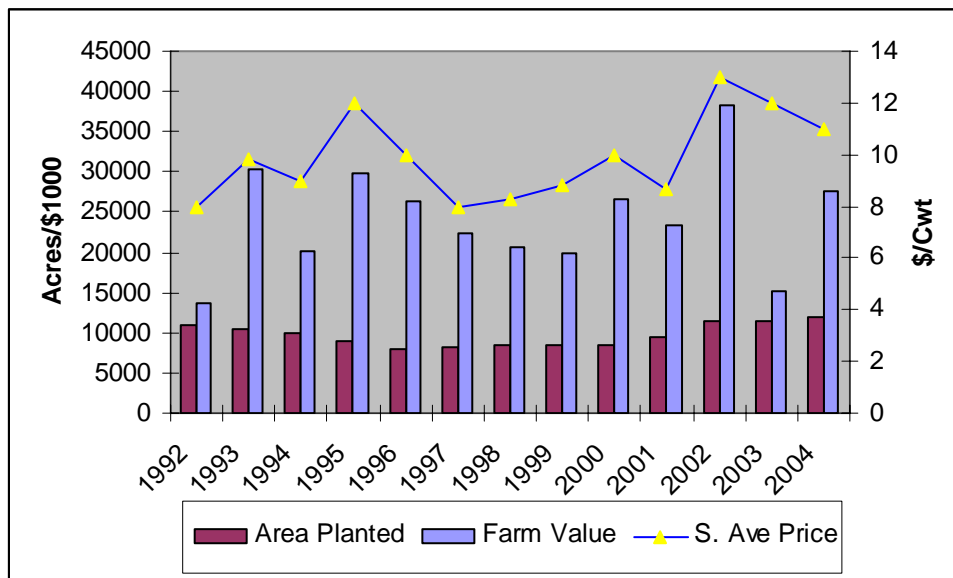
**Table 2: National Ranking of Selected Georgia Vegetables: 2004**

| U.S. Ranking | Georgia Vegetables Produced | Quantity     |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 2            | Cucumber                    | 1.96 mil cwt |
| 2            | Snap Beans                  | 901 th cwt   |
| 2            | Onion, spring               | 3.77 mil cwt |
| 3            | Sweet Corn, fresh           | 3,645 th cwt |
| 3            | Squash, fresh               | 1,150 th cwt |
| 4            | Bell Peppers                | 663 th cwt   |
| 4            | Cantaloupes                 | 990 th cwt   |
| 4            | Watermelons                 | 3,795 th cwt |
| 5            | Cabbage                     | 2.5 mil cwt  |
| 7            | Tomatoes, fresh             | 986 th cwt   |

Source: Georgia Agricultural Facts, 2004.

Although cabbage ranks 5<sup>th</sup> nationwide, acreage planted is also on the decline. In 1992, 11,000 acres were planted compared to 12,000 acres in 2004. Farm gate value was as low as \$13.7 million in 1992 to a high of \$27.5 million in 2004 with the peak of \$38.4 million in 2002 (Fig 2.).

**Fig 2: Georgia Cabbage, Area Planted, Farm Value And Seasonal Average Price, 1992-2004**



Source: Official Georgia Estimates – Watermelons.  
Data compiled by Georgia Agricultural Statistics Service

Georgia and Florida have the same fall harvest period from October to December. While Florida increased cabbage production by 10% in 2005 compared to 2004, Georgia instead decreased her production by 2%.

**Conclusion**

Since harvest periods are different between states, it is important for every state to try to target its market window. While New Jersey and Texas are harvesting cabbage from September to November, Georgia and Florida are harvesting from October to December thus leaving a very small market window to maneuver. Once that window is missed, it becomes problematic to both the grower and the market.