

## FRESH-MARKET VEGETABLE OUTLOOK

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### Introduction

Fresh vegetable production and marketing continues to be a rapidly growing industry. This fast-paced industry is also plagued with several problems and risks at every stage of production and marketing. Farmers are faced with labor problems, pests, diseases, numerous restrictions and high cost of production to say the least. On the other hand, there are very limited market windows. The available regional and international opportunities are extremely competitive. This study is aimed at (a) analyzing various market trends and outlook, (b) review of the import and export trends and (c) analysis of production practices.

### U.S. Vegetable Production Trend

The United States vegetable industry experienced a 4.3% drop in harvested area in 2003 compared with 2002. There was a slight increase in the production of fresh vegetables and melon, processing and potatoes respectively. The others category in this study includes such vegetables as sweet potatoes, dry peas, lentils and mushrooms (Table 1).

**Table 1: U.S. Vegetable Industry Production Trend**

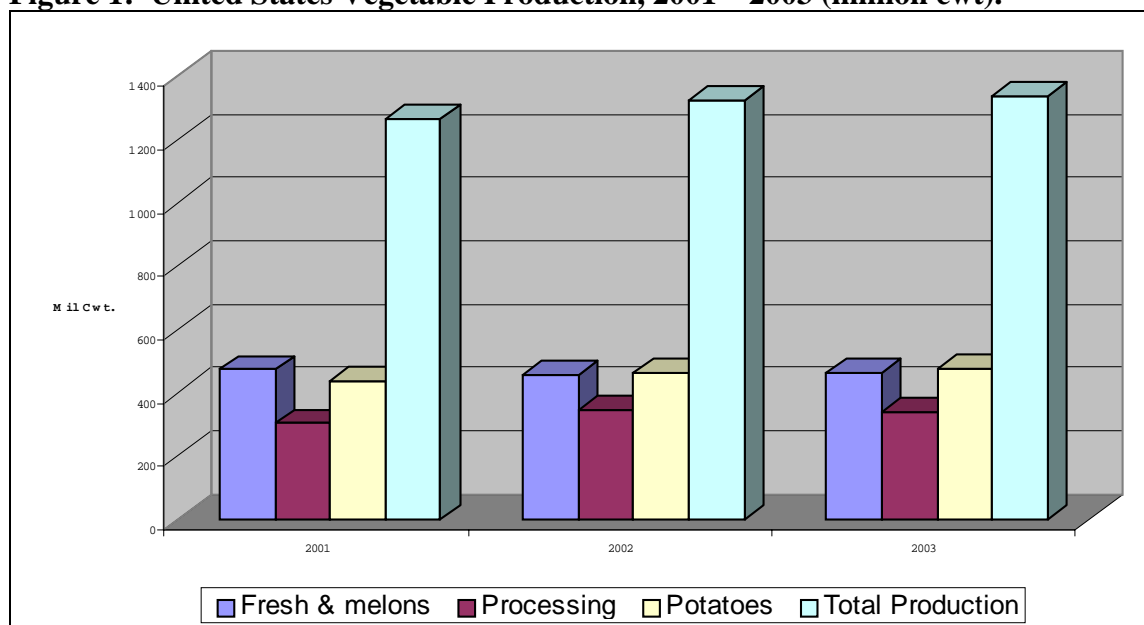
<b>Items</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Area harvested	1,000 ac	6,336	6,865	6,567
Fresh & Melon	1,000 ac	2,038	1,934	1,943
Processing	1,000 ac	1,334	1,349	1,340
Potatoes	1,000 ac	1,222	1,268	1,265
Dry beans	1,000 ac	1,249	1,727	1,400
Other	1,000 ac	494	587	620

Source: ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April 17

On the other hand, there was a 1% increase in total production from 1,322 to 1,335 million acres (Figure 1). Total production includes fresh vegetables and melon, processing, potatoes, dry beans and others, i.e. sweet potatoes, dry peas, lentils and mushrooms.

Due to the shortage in acreage harvested, the slight increase in production had no impact on the total vegetable crop value (Table 2). Year 2002 was a much better year for the vegetable industry with a 4.2% increase in value compared with 2001. Fresh vegetables, melons and potatoes together contributed 59.2% and 20.6% of the total vegetable crop value respectively in 2003. According to ERS report (2003), watermelon is still the number one crop in the United States in terms of planted area, production and per capita consumption.

**Figure 1: United States Vegetable Production, 2001 – 2003 (million cwt).**



Source: ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April 17

### **U.S. Vegetable Crop Value Trend**

There was an increase in imported vegetable value in 2002 compared with 2001 (Table 3). There was no change in 2003 compared with 2002. Fresh vegetables and melons still command 56% of total import value while processing commands 21.7%. Others category include mushrooms, dry peas, lentils, sweet potatoes and vegetable seeds.

**Table 2: U.S. Vegetable Industry Crop Value Trend, 2001-2003**

Items	Unit	2001	2002	2003
Vegetable Crop value	\$ million	14,927	15,550	15,461
Fresh & melons	\$ million	8,967	9,282	9,150
Processing	\$ million	1,325	1,404	1,395
Potatoes	\$ million	3,058	3,151	3,200
Dry beans	\$ million	426	520	500
Others	\$ million	1,151	1,193	1,216

Source: ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April 17

### **U.S. Vegetables Import Trend**

The United States Vegetable Industry had a negative trade balance in 2003, with \$4.8 million import recorded (Table 3) compared with \$3.4 million export. Negative balances have been reported for the past three years. Fresh vegetables and melons represent 36.2% of U.S. export value compared with 25% of processing value.

**Table 3: U.S. Vegetable Industry, Import Trade, 2001-2003**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Imported Vegetables	\$ million	4,544	4,814	4,831
Fresh & melons	\$ million	2,592	2,614	2,725
Processing	\$ million	1,020	1,189	1,050
Potatoes	\$ million	523	575	630
Dry beans	\$ million	51	67	53
Others	\$ million	357	369	373

Source: ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April 17

### **U.S. Vegetables Export Trend**

The United States Imported more processed vegetables in 2001 through 2003 (Table 3) than it exported (Table 4). On the other hand, the U.S. exported more potatoes and dry beans during the same years than it imported. There was no difference in the value of imported and exported mushroom, dry peas, lentils, sweet potatoes and vegetable seeds.

**Table 4: U.S. Vegetable Industry, Export Trade, 2001-2003**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Exported Vegetables	\$ million	3,212	3,274	3,366
Fresh & melons	\$ million	1,183	1,204	1,220
Processing	\$ million	815	798	848
Potatoes	\$ million	700	723	710
Dry beans	\$ million	176	180	189
Others	\$ million	338	369	400

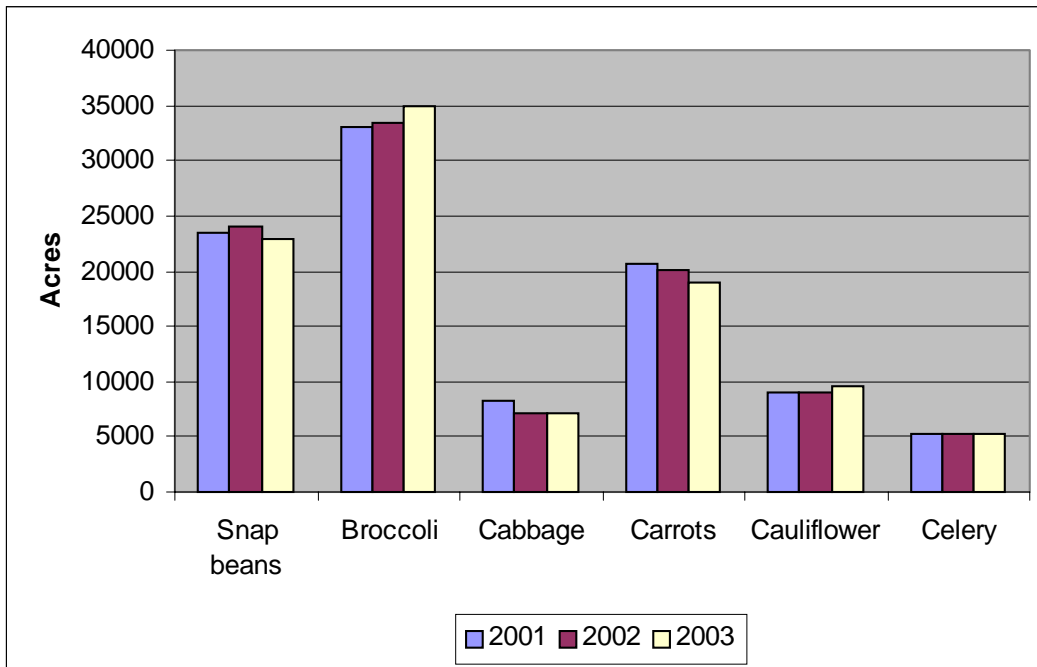
Source: ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April

## **Production Trend**

Production areas for snap beans and carrots during spring-season fresh market, decreased in 2003 compared with the previous year whereas there was an increase in broccoli planted acreage (Figure 2). Cabbage, cauliflower and celery remained unchanged. Winter-season fresh market snap beans acreage was approximately 50% less than spring-season for years 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively.

A similar trend was observed with broccoli, sweet corn, bell pepper, and tomatoes. Production acreage for carrots and head lettuce were significantly higher in the winter-season than in the spring-season (ERS, USDA, 2003).

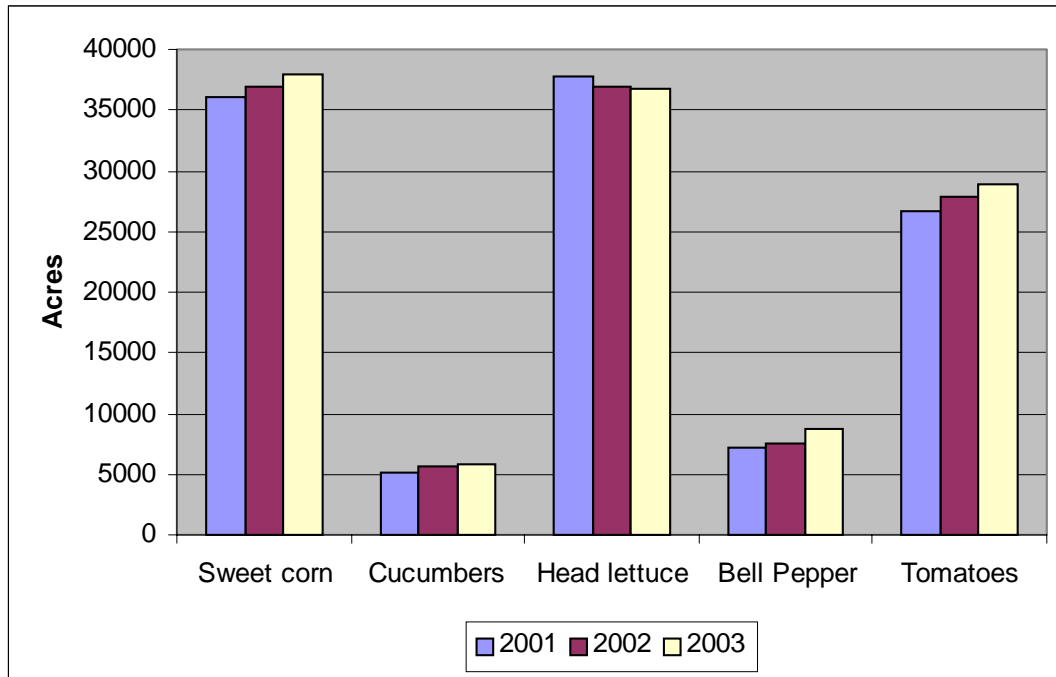
**Figure 2: Spring-Season Fresh-Market Vegetable Area, 2001-2003**



Source: NASS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April

Sweet corn, bell pepper and tomatoes reported increased acreage during 2003 spring-season fresh market production whereas cucumbers and head lettuce remained the same (Figure 3). For the three years in Figure 3, sweet corn and tomatoes maintained a slight but consistent increase while cucumbers, head lettuce and bell peppers showed no change.

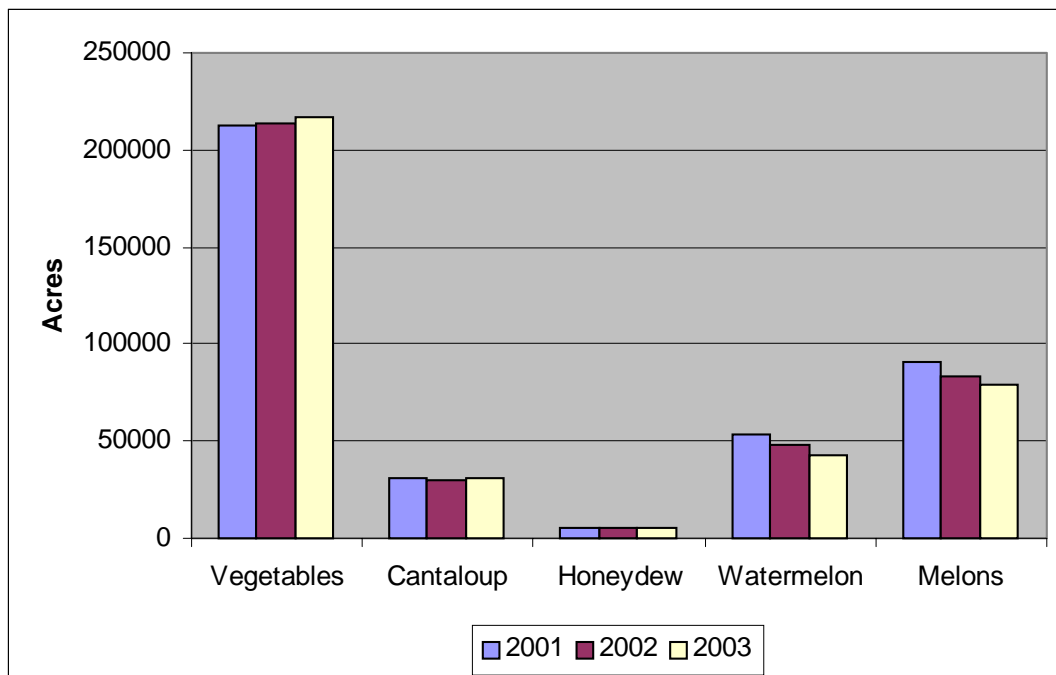
**Figure 3: Spring-Season Fresh-Market Vegetable Area, 2001-2003**



Source: ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April

Fresh vegetables include asparagus and onions. There was no change in spring-season vegetables, cantaloupe and honeydew acreage in 2003 (Figure 4). Watermelon and melon acreage decreased in the same period. Cantaloupe, honeydew and watermelon production were lower than 50,000 acres overall.

**Figure 4: Spring-Season Fresh-Market Vegetable Area, 2001-2003**



Source: ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296/April

## **Conclusion**

There was a 1% increase in total U.S. production from 1,322 to 1,335 million acres. Due to the shortage in acreage harvested, the slight increase in production had no impact on the total vegetable crop value. The United States Imported more processed vegetables in 2001 through 2003 than it exported. Fresh vegetables and melons still command 56% of total import value while processing commands 21.7%. Winter-season fresh market snap beans acreage was approximately 50% less than spring-season for years 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively.

## **REFERENCE**

1. ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-295, February 25
2. ERS, USDA (2003) Vegetables and Melons Outlook/VGS-296, April 17.