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## Commercial Horticulture: Florida Horticulture

Not too many states can claim a portion of the horticulture industry Florida has to offer. Florida's plant hardiness zones range from zone 8 in Tallahassee to zone 11 in Key West. Because of this diversity, Florida is able to produce and supply a multitude of diverse temperate, sub-tropical and tropical fresh fruits, and vegetables for domestic and export use.

With this article, I will illustrate several items of Florida's agriculture breakdown. I will first illustrate Florida's economical breakdown of its top agriculture crops and its farm number and size compared with the top three leading states. Then I will illustrate how Florida compares to the top three leading states in terms of net farm income. By focusing on specifically citrus, I will then illustrate Florida's rank with three other states, and then focus on only Florida citrus and the value of the top citrus varieties within the state. Finally, I will illustrate the leading citrus counties of citrus producing in Florida.

In Florida, there are six basic agricultural commodities with one exception as a non-horticulture crop: Citrus, Vegetables, Foliage, Livestock, and other crops. In terms of Florida's cash receipts of 2006, the economical breakdowns of the total agricultural commodities are as follows: Citrus 20.7%, Vegetables 22.5%, Foliage 11.5%, Field crops 11.5%, Livestock 18.7%, and other crops 19.4%.<sup>1</sup> Florida's total in cash receipts in 2006 for commodities of combined Citrus, Vegetables and Fruit, and Nuts claimed a value of \$5,669,269.00.<sup>2</sup> (Table 1) (Chart 1)

Historically, Florida's farm numbers were larger and sizes smaller. In 1998, Florida had 45,000 farms with the average farm size being 233 acres. In 2007, the number dropped to 40,000 farms.<sup>3</sup> Even though the number of farms decreased in number, the revenues have remained strong. For instance, of these 40,000 farms, 6,350 farms exceeded sales of over \$100,000.00/year. In comparison of the top three other states in terms of numbers of farms,

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<sup>1</sup> 2008 Florida Agriculture Statistics (2008). Florida Cash Receipts, 2006. p.11

<sup>2</sup> 2008 Florida Agriculture Statistics (2008). Florida's Cash Receipts – 2006. p.8

<sup>3</sup> 2008 Florida Agriculture Statistics (2008). Farms and Land in Farms. By year and by economic sales class. p.13

the top three states in order are: Texas 229,000, Missouri 104,500, and Iowa 88,400 farms.<sup>4</sup> Florida currently ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> among all states in the number of farms (Table 2) (Chart 2). Despite the fact of losing 5,000 farms, the average farm size has increased from 233.3 acres in 1998 to 250.0 acres in 2007.

On a national state level and in terms of total agriculture net farm income, the top three states in order are: California \$5,905,655,000.00, Texas \$4,866,322,000.00, and North Carolina \$3,702,198,000.00. Florida ranks 7<sup>th</sup> with \$2,340,426,000.00.<sup>5</sup>

Focusing in Florida, the three top horticulture crops groups are: 1) Citrus and vegetables, 2) Other fruits and nuts and 3) Citrus. In Florida, citrus is the most profitable crop of 2006-2007. Florida's citrus production is more than competitive with other states. For instance, in the 2006-07 production years, Florida ranks number one over California, Texas, and Arizona. Florida was the leader with 70% of the United States citrus production followed by California at 25% and Texas and Arizona at 5%.<sup>6</sup>

Florida's 2006 top citrus product group is the orange with \$1,204,949,000.00 in sales receipts. The grapefruit was second with \$172,149,000.00 and tangerine is third with \$58,502,000.00.<sup>7</sup>

Florida's three top citrus producing counties in 2006-2007 are Polk, Hendry, and Highlands County. Polk County is number one with 86,398 acres and 10,222,000 trees in production yielding 22,370,000 boxes followed by Hendry County with 79,726 acres and 12,280,000 trees in production and 21,414,000 boxes. Highlands County ranks third with 62,671 acres and 8253000 trees and 16,744,000 boxes.

Because of Florida's agriculture diversity, Florida is a proven leader and provider of many temperate, sub-tropical and tropical fruits, and vegetables for domestic and export markets. Florida can be proud to hold claim that the epicenter of the nation's citrus production industry in the United States is in Polk County Florida.

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<sup>4</sup> 2008 Florida Agriculture Statistics (2008). Leading States. Number of farms – 2007. p.13

<sup>5</sup> 2008 Florida Agriculture Statistics (2008). Leading States in Net Farm Income, 2006. p.15

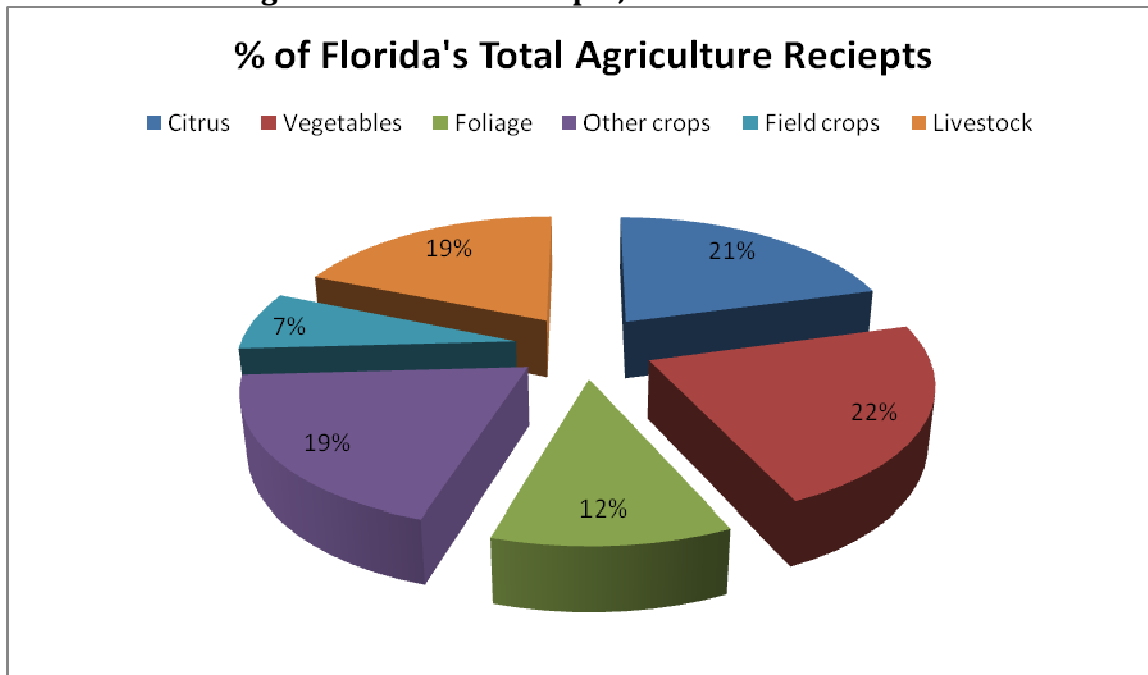
<sup>6</sup> 2008 Florida Agriculture Statistics (2008). 2006-07 Season Citrus Highlights. U.S and Florida Production. p. 17

<sup>7</sup> 2008 Florida Agriculture Statistics (2008). Florida Leading Cash Receipts by Commodity, 2006. p.11

**Table 1. Commodity of Florida and % Cash receipts**

| Commodity   | % Cash receipts |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Citrus      | 20.7%           |
| Vegetables  | 22.5%           |
| Foliage     | 11.5%           |
| Other crops | 19.4%           |
| Field crops | 7.2%            |
| Livestock   | 18.7%           |

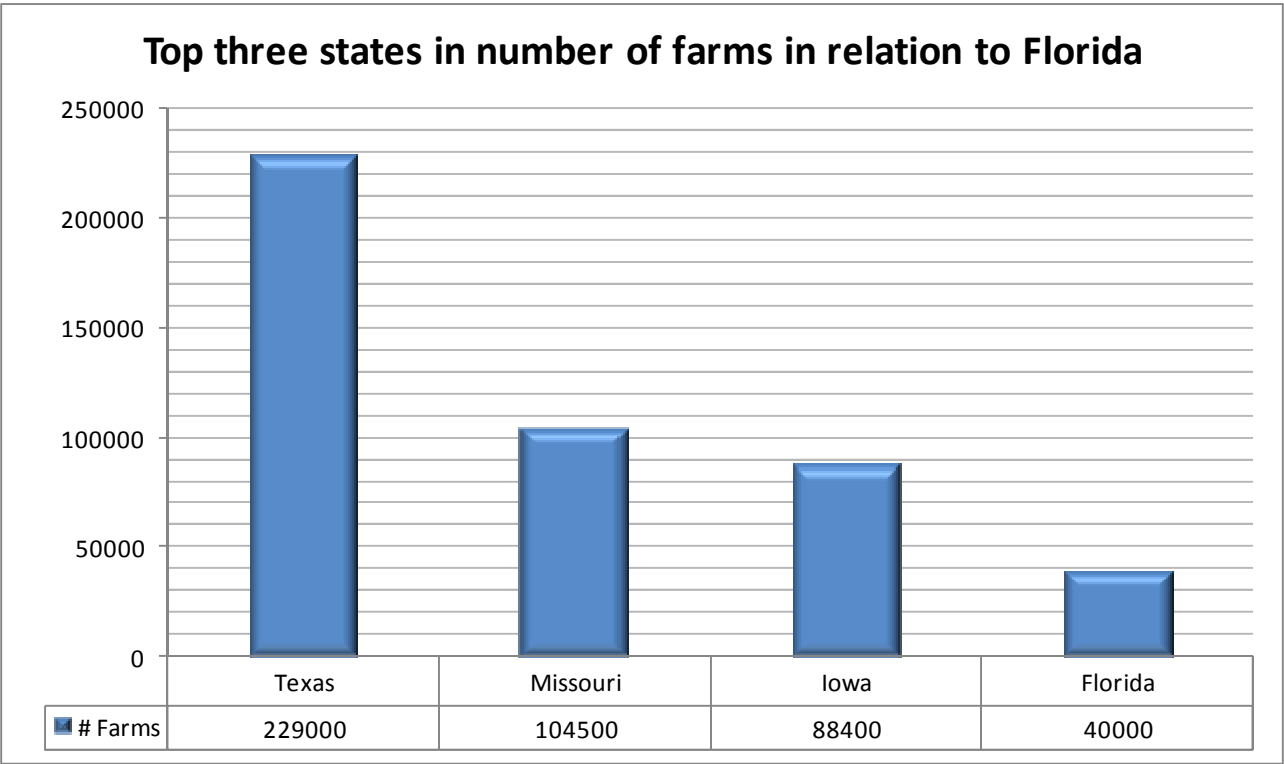
**Chart 1. Florida Agriculture Cash Receipts, 2006**



**Table 2. Leading States in number of farms and sizes**

| State    | Number of farms | Average size of farm acres |
|----------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Texas    | 229,000         | 566                        |
| Missouri | 104,500         | 287                        |
| Iowa     | 88,400          | 356                        |
| Florida  | 40,000          | 250                        |

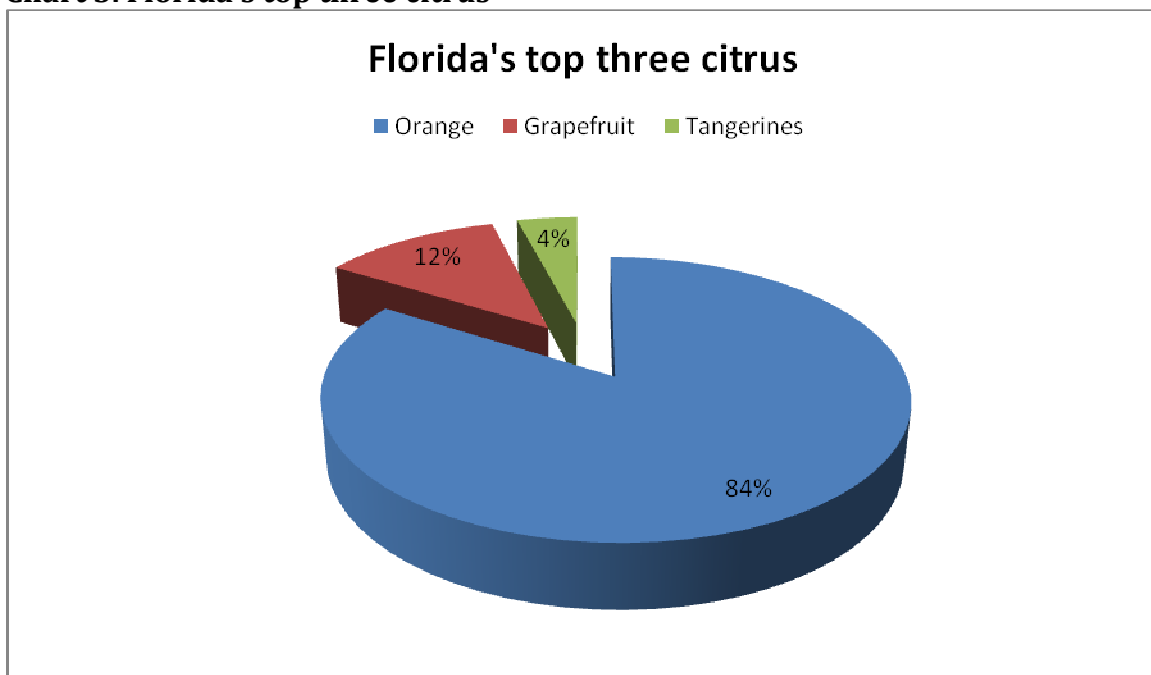
**Chart 2. Top three states in number of farms in relation to Florida**



**Table 3. Florida's Top three citrus and receipts**

| <b>Commodity</b> | <b>Florida receipts<br/>1,000 Dollars</b> |
|------------------|---|
| Oranges          | 1,204,949                                 |
| Grapefruit       | 172,149                                   |
| Tangerines       | 58,502                                    |

**Chart 3. Florida's top three citrus**



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