Introduction

The State of Georgia grows and markets more than 33 different vegetables which include watermelon, sweet corn, snap beans, onions, cucumbers, cabbage, collards, turnip greens, yellow squash, cantaloupe, tomato, southern peas, bell peppers, zucchini, mustard, lima beans, carrots, kale, eggplants, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, hot peppers, banana peppers, okra, pole beans, turnip roots, winter squash, green onions, spinach, English peas, Irish potatoes, broccoli and lettuce. Although production is spread all over the state, the large producers are concentrated down south. Overall, the Georgia vegetable industry is growing at an extremely fast pace and it is only a matter of time before it hits the million dollar mark or industry.

Crop Acreage and Farm Gate Value

The percentage acreage for each vegetable varies significantly (Fig. 1). In 2004, watermelon was ranked first in terms of acreage, equivalent to 15% of the total 192,381 planted acres (CAED 2004). Chronologically, the top ten ranking crops in terms of percent acreage were watermelon, sweet corn, snap beans, onions, cucumbers, cabbage, collards, turnip greens, yellow squash, and cantaloupe.

Figure 1: Georgia Vegetable Acreage by Crop: 2004

Chronologically, the top ten crops in terms of farm gate value were: onions, tomato, watermelon, bell peppers, cucumbers, sweet corn, yellow squash, cantaloupe, snap beans, and cabbage. Onions generated $108.7 millions equivalent to 14.7% of the total farm gate value of $725.3 million in 2004.

Peppers Planted, Harvested and Farm Gate Value:
Peppers are one of the most important crops produced in Georgia. It ranked 4th in the 2004 farm gate value and ranked 13th in terms of acreage. Planted and harvested areas have ranged between 4000 and 6000 acres for the past half a decade (Fig 2). The best farm gate value of slightly over $60 million was obtained in 2003 when pepper ranked 24th statewide.

Figure 2: Georgia Pepper Planted, Harvested Area and Farm Gate Value: 2000 - 2004

![Graph showing planted, harvested area, and farmgate value for peppers from 2000 to 2004.]


Tomato
Area planted and harvested has been consistently rising for over two decades now ranging from about 2800 acres from 1983 to 6000 acres in 2004 (Fig. 3). Yield started as low as 86 cwt per acre in 1983 and rose to 340 cwt per acre in 2003. The significant increase in yield can be attributed to several factors such as adopted new technologies, pest and disease control and the implementation of good agricultural practices (GAP).
According to the 2004 Farm Gate Value Report, tomato ranks 11\textsuperscript{th} in acreage among Georgia’s over three dozen vegetables. It ranks 2\textsuperscript{nd} in value, generating $102.6 million of the total 2004 farm gate value. Overall, tomatoes rank 18\textsuperscript{th} in 2004 Georgia Agricultural Commodity. According to Georgia Agricultural Statistics Service Report, farm gate value has increased from as low as $5 million in 1983 to $48.2 million in 2003 (Fig. 4).
Total production took off at 206,000 in 1983 to about 1.5 million cwt in 2003, thus a tremendous increase (Fig. 4).

Sweet Corn

The importance of sweet corn to the Georgia economy cannot be overemphasized. In the 2004 Georgia Agricultural Commodity Rankings, sweet corn ranked 28th, slightly behind bell pepper (24th), greens (25th), and cucumber (26th). Sweet corn ranked 2nd in vegetable acreage (28,400 acres) and 6th in farm gate value, generating over $48.5 million per year.

GASS started collecting sweet corn data in 1949. This analysis is focused from 1992 to 2004. Figure 5 reveals that area planted was as low as 15,000 acres in 1992 and as high as 28,000 acres in 2004. On the other hand area harvested followed a similar trend but slightly lesser than the former. Yield was at its peak in year 1999 as 180 cwt per acre was report. The lowest was in 1993 at 60 cwt per acre. Yields have been downward sloping since 1999 up to 2004 even though areas planted and harvested are both still on the rise (Fig.5).

Figure 5: Georgia Sweet Corn: Area Planted, Harvested and Yield: 1992-2004


Total production also shows significant increase since 1992 when only 1.1 million cwt. were produced to 2004 when production increased to over 3.6 million cwt. The peak production year was 1999 when 3.8 million cwt was produced. Production has been declining since then until in 2004 when there was a slight jump (Fig. 6).
Onions

According to the 2004 Georgia Agricultural Commodity Report, onion ranks 16th in overall farm gate value, generating over $108.7 million. It ranks 4th in acreage and 1st in vegetable value. It is a very important crop for Georgia.

Although GASS started collecting onion data as far back as 1939, this analysis will cover the time period 1989 to 2005. Just like the other vegetables, i.e. sweet corn, bell peppers etc., onion area planted and harvested were lower in the 1980s. There were few peak periods recorded in 1996, 1997, 1999 and 2004 when planted and harvested areas were about the same, i.e. 16,000 acres or slightly over respectively. However, area planted and harvested range to as low as 4,700 acres and to as high as 16,500 acres (Fig. 7).

Onion yield per acre has been very erratic. There were also few good years such as 1997, 2000 and 2004. The years with unfavorable yields were 1991, 1996 and 2002 when yields were in the low hundred cwt per acre (Fig. 7).
Onion production and prices have equally been unstable over the years. Good crop years were 1997, 2000 and 2004 when production exceeded 3 million cwt (Fig. 8). There were some few good years when price per cwt were or exceeded $30, such as 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998, 2002 and 2003 respectively (Fig. 8).
Selected Vegetable Prices

An analysis of selected Georgia vegetable prices show that onion and tomato have been criss-crossing ranging between $25 and $35 per cwt. Sweet corn and watermelon prices have been more or less consistent over these years (Fig. 9). Hopefully there is a difference in the profit margin, otherwise, growers would have quit growing these crops.

Figure 9: Georgia Selected Vegetables Prices: 1992-2004

Conclusion

Although production is spread all over the state, the large producers are concentrated down south. Overall, the Georgia vegetable industry is growing at an extremely fast pace and it is only a matter of time before it hits the million dollar mark or industry.

Chronologically, the top ten ranking crops in terms of percentage acreage were watermelon, sweet corn, snap beans, onions, cucumbers, cabbage, collards, turnip greens, yellow squash, and cantaloupe. On the other hand, the top ten crops in terms of farm gate value in descending order were: onions, tomato, watermelon, bell peppers, cucumbers, sweet corn, yellow squash, cantaloupe, snap beans, and cabbage.

Pepper ranks 4th in the 2004 farm gate value and ranked 13th in terms of acreage. Tomato yield started as low as 86 cwt per acre in 1983 to 340 cwt per acre in 2003. Sweet corn ranked 2nd in vegetable acreage (28,400 acres) and 6th in farm gate value, generating over $48.5 million. Onion yield per acre has been very erratic but there were also few good years such as 1997, 2000 and 2004. Onion unfavorable yields were obtained in 1991, 1996 and 2002 when yields were in the low hundred cwt per acre.
References
