2007 Ag Census: How does Horticulture Stack Up?

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The 2007 Census of Agriculture counted 47,763 farms in Florida, a net increase of 3,682 since the last census in 2002. These new farms tend to have more diversified production, fewer acres, lower sales, and operators who also work off-farm. Ninety percent of Florida's farms are family operations and approximately 32,000 farms have 50 acres or less.

This publication was developed to highlight trends in horticulture production in Florida as shown by the 2007 Census of Agriculture. According to the report the number of farms harvesting vegetables for sale has decreased from 1,507 to 1,493, but the number of acres harvested has increased by 46,423 during the five-year census period. Vegetable growers have also expanded their selection. The number of farms harvesting potatoes showed an increase from 106 farms to 181, tomatoes increased from 218 farms to 339, lettuce increased form 41 farms to 75, and the number of farms growing the elusive “other vegetables” was up from 65 farms to 123.

The number of farms with non-citrus fruit trees and berries showed an increase from 2,610 farms to 3,243. The number of farms increased in several fruit categories including apples, avocados, bananas, figs, grapes, peaches, pears, and plums. Blackberries, dewberries and blueberries all saw significant gains in the number of growers and acres in production. Blueberries, for example, increased form 343 farms to 566 with a corresponding acreage increase from 1,646 to 3,357. Pecans showed an overall increase of 263 farms and 6741 acres.

Nursery, greenhouse, and floriculture operations accounted for over $900 million in sales, but the number of farms decreased from 2,523 in 2002 to 1,952 farms in 2007. Foliage plants accounted for the second largest value of sales in the category at $465 million. The total amount of production under glass or other protection decreased sharply by 12 percentage points.
As postage and printing budgets are cut, it is reassuring to know that 55% of our clientele have internet access, up from 51% in 2002. For the first time in 2007, the census also looked at high-speed internet access. Of those producers accessing the Internet, 65% reported having a high-speed connection.

In addition to looking at farm numbers, operator demographics and economic aspects of farming, the Census of Agriculture delves into numerous other areas, including organic, value-added, and specialty production, all of which are on the rise. The market value of agricultural products sold by Florida farmers hit $7.8 billion in 2007, the highest recorded level in the state's history. For more information visit: http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/.