

In this installment of the 'Agronometrics In Charts' series, Sarah Ilyas studies the progress of the Floridian Strawberry season. Each week the series looks at a different horticultural commodity, focusing on a specific origin or topic visualizing the market factors that are driving change.

The origins of the Florida Strawberry Festival trace back to 1930, a time in American history when fairs banded communities together to celebrate their harvests.

The 11-day event, which is scheduled to begin on March 3 this year, commemorates the bountiful harvest of strawberries in Eastern Hillsborough County.

Every year, the event draws in over 500,000 visitors to revel in the festival's headline entertainment, livestock shows, exhibits and cuisine.

More than 10,000 acres of strawberries are planted in the Plant City area. Hillsborough County hosts about 2,800 farms producing fruit and vegetables and is one of the largest agricultural counties in the U.S.

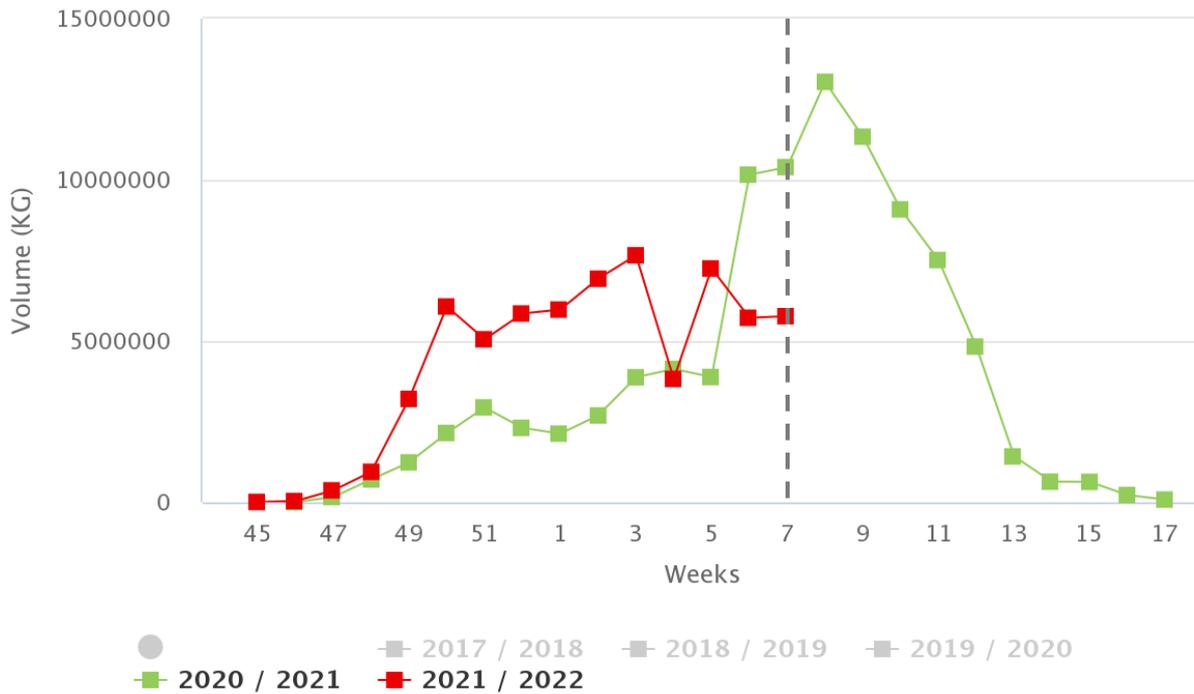
The recent cold spell in Florida did not render long-lasting damage to strawberry plants, therefore, production should be steady during the months of February and March, with peak production occurring in the beginning of March, just in time for the strawberry festival.

“Our strawberry supply will be as good or slightly better than last year, as long as the weather cooperates. If the weather in Florida gets too warm as the season progresses, that will bring an early end to the season as the berries will not be hardy enough to ship long distances.” says Jim Grabowski, director of marketing for Well-Pict Berries.

So far in this season, peak volumes were recorded in week 3, at 7.7 K tonnes, almost double the quantity recorded for the third week in the last season.

Week 7 saw the total imported volume recorded for week 7 in the vicinity of 5.8 K tonnes.

Strawberry Volumes by History in the US | From Florida



Source: USDA Market News via [Agronometrics](#). (Agronometrics users can view this chart with live updates [here](#))

An influx of Floridian strawberries arrives during the winter, covering the supply gap in volumes from California.

Strawberries from Florida are profitable in the markets owing to the fact that they give retailers the opportunity to promote a fresh berry program to consumers throughout the year.

“Since Covid, we have seen an increase in interest in buying Florida grown. The ‘Fresh from Florida’ logo is so important on packaging, and it takes the guesswork out of finding out where the product is grown. It is on the front of the package and is easy to use.” says Sue Harrell, director of marketing with the Florida Strawberry Growers Association.

While harvesting usually begins in late November, Florida growers are able to amass substantial amounts of produce by early to mid-December before larger volumes start

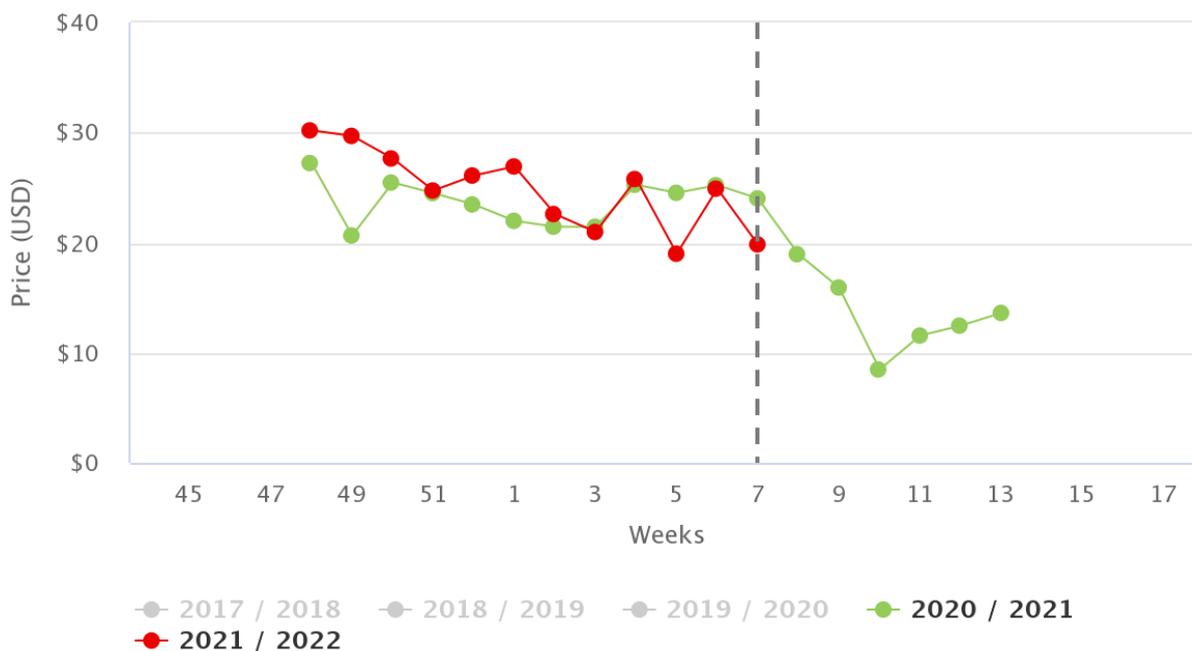
pouring in around Christmas.

Commercial shipments usually commence in late December and typically run until early April.

As made evident from the graph below, prices of around \$19.84 per package were recorded in Week 7, a 17 percent dip compared to week 7 for the former season.

Despite volumes almost doubling from week 50 to week 3, with prices even higher than the previous season.

Strawberry Prices by History (As Reported) in the US | From Florida



Source: USDA Market News via [Agronometrics](#). (Agronometrics users can view this chart with live updates [here](#))

Florida is the second largest strawberry-producing state. Most of the strawberries are

grown in Plant City, also known as the Winter Strawberry Capital of the World and the venue for the annual Strawberry Festival.

Some of the varieties that flourish in the Floridian climate are Camarosa, Chandler, Festival, Oso Grande and Selva.

In recent years, the industry has battled many challenges such as escalating production and labor costs. Hikes in material costs such as fertilizers and pesticides exacerbate the problem.

Despite all these impediments, Florida's tepid winters enable the state to be an optimal breeding ground for strawberries.

In our 'In Charts' series, we work to tell some of the stories that are moving the industry. Feel free to take a look at the other articles by [clicking here](#).

All pricing for domestic US produce represents the spot market at Shipping Point (i.e. packing house/climate controlled warehouse, etc.). For imported fruit, the pricing data represents the spot market at Port of Entry.

You can keep track of the markets daily through Agronometrics, a data visualization tool built to help the industry make sense of the huge amounts of data that professionals need to access to make informed decisions. If you found the information and the charts from this article useful, feel free to visit us at www.agronometrics.com where you can easily access these same graphs, or explore the other 21 commodities we currently track.