



F r e s h ALERT

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January 16, 2009

FLORIDA FREEZE

Florida growers are assessing damage from a blast of cold Artic air. The [National Weather Service](#) had issued a hard freeze warning for much of Florida during the early morning hours of Thursday. Freezing temperatures in Florida this time of year can have devastating impact on citrus, row crop vegetables, lettuce, tomatoes and strawberries.



Freezing temperatures can have a huge impact on citrus, row crop vegetables, lettuce, tomatoes and strawberries.

From Central Florida north, the freezing temperatures hit the lowest, which some had expected to be the worst in 20 years.. Jacksonville, in the north, dipped below 20 degrees. The Orlando area in Central Florida had overnight temperatures in the mid-to-upper-20s.. This could have a huge impact on Citrus, Strawberries and row crop vegetables, including Bell Peppers, Sweet Corn, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Green Beans, Squash and Tomatoes. This not only affects supplies, but also quality and shelf life. We could see a lot more misshapen vegetables and a lot more scarring.

Florida Strawberry growers are using sprinklers during the freezing temperatures, getting the plants and fruit wet. When that water freezes on the plant, the ice actually helps insulate the fruit and plant from colder temperatures. We are expecting to see some fruit loss. Of bigger concern is the blossom drop that will occur. Strawberry plant blossoms will die at these temperatures and will fall off the plant. Every blossom is a Strawberry. That is really going to have a huge impact on Strawberry production for Valentine's Day demand. This time of year, Florida supplies about 70 – 80% of North America's Strawberries. So what happens in Plant City will have a major impact.

The initial damage of the freeze will be pretty apparent. However, over the next two weeks, we will see even more loss. You see, as the stem to a fruit or vegetable is damaged by a freeze, it can take several days for that stem to simply wither and die, which causes the fruit or vegetable to die as well. This secondary loss won't be fully seen until early February. Please check with your salesperson for up-to-date information on how the freeze in Florida will impact produce supplies, quality and price. For more information on how the weather impacts produce, log on to www.freshpoint.com. Go to the [Weather Center](#) to see exactly how a freeze can affect fruits and vegetables.



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