

# Summary: Florida's Agriculture

## The Importance of Florida Citrus

In the late 1800s, farming was the most important business in Florida. Farmers grew corn, sugar cane, and vegetables. They shipped cotton and tobacco to other states. Farmers also grew citrus fruit. This fruit could not be shipped to other states because it spoiled quickly.

Railroads were built in the late 1800s. Fast trains carried citrus fruit to new markets all over the nation. People everywhere loved Florida citrus. Farmers planted more trees so they could earn more money. New business people also came to Florida and planted even more fruit trees. The fast trains, new markets, and new investors caused a citrus boom.

Citrus growers grew rich during the citrus boom. In 1894–1895, Florida had some very cold weather. This was called the Great Freeze. Thousands of citrus trees died. Many farmers stopped growing citrus. Others moved south and planted trees where it was warmer. Scientists such as Lue Gim Gang developed citrus trees that could live in cold weather. By 1900, the citrus industry was booming again.

## Timber and Cattle Booms

The new railroads helped the timber and cattle businesses too. In the late 1800s, Florida had forests full of cedar, mangrove, cypress, and pine trees. People used the wood to make furniture, pencils, and charcoal. They also used sap from pine trees to make a chemical called turpentine. Floridians used the railroads to send timber to other states.

Floridians became rich by selling timber. But, they cut down most forests. This caused the timber boom to end. The boom also hurt the environment. Trees kept the soil from washing away in the rain. Now, the soil was washed into rivers and lakes. Waste from the production of turpentine caused water pollution.

Railroads also created a boom for cattle ranchers. They could ship the fattened cattle to northern cities by train.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**citrus** *noun*, a type of tree fruit such as oranges, grapefruits, lemons, and limes

**market** *noun*, a place where buyers and sellers exchange goods and services

**boom** *noun*, a time in which businesses grow very quickly

**pollution** *noun*, anything that makes water, air, or soil dirty



### After You Read

**REVIEW** Why did Florida have a citrus boom in the late 1800s? Circle three things that started the citrus boom.

**REVIEW** Why did the timber boom last for so short a time? What did Floridians do to cause the boom to end? Underline the sentence that tells the answer.