

California Crop Production Report

Released: May 12, 2003

The California Agricultural Statistics Service today released the crop production forecast for May. The latest survey, which was conducted during the last week of April and the first week of May, includes the following commodities:

Almonds - The initial forecast for the 2003 California almond production is 920 million pounds. This is down 15% from last year's revised record production of 1,085 million pounds. Estimated bearing acreage for 2003 is 530,000. The almond crop got off to an uneven start this year. Weather conditions during the bloom were less than ideal due to continued instances of rain and cool temperatures. Despite the weather-related problems, the sets for most almond varieties are generally reported to be in good condition. However, the Nonpareil variety has displayed one of the weakest blooms in years, with spotty and uneven sets throughout the State. In addition, numerous orchards displayed early petal fall, which normally signals a weaker bloom. Crop progress appears to be near normal despite the cool, wet weather this spring.

Peaches - The 2003 Freestone peach crop is forecast at 385,000 tons, down 3% from the 2002 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 39,000 acres resulting in a yield of 9.87 tons per acre. The 2003 Clingstone peach crop forecast is 570,000 tons, up 1% from the previous year. Bearing acreage is estimated at 32,100 with a yield of 17.80 tons per acre. California peach growers experienced fewer than adequate chilling hours during the winter. Set looks good in early Freestone varieties, while set in middle-to-late season varieties is down slightly from last season. Harvest of Freestone peaches began during the first week of April. For the Clingstone peaches, set is reported to be lighter in the Modesto area than in the northern area of the State. Clingstone growers reported some hail damage in the southern Modesto area. Harvest is expected to begin around the middle of June.

Wheat - The 2003 Winter wheat production forecast is 735.0 thousand tons, up 9% from last year. Harvested acres are estimated at 350,000 with a yield of 2.1 tons per acre. Rainfall levels have been optimal for the rapid growth and development of wheat plantings. However, wet field conditions have also been favorable for the quick and early spread of stripe rust on several wheat varieties, prompting many growers to spray to protect their crop. Durum wheat 2003 production is forecast to be 256.5 thousand tons, down 5% from 2002. Harvested acres are estimated at 95,000 with a yield of 2.7 tons per acre. Crop condition was mainly good. Imperial Valley harvest should begin on a very limited basis by early May. Cool temperatures were slowing crop development in the Imperial and San Joaquin valleys. Wheat stripe rust has also affected the Durum variety. No other major pests or diseases were reported.

Avocados - The 2002-03 avocado crop production forecast is 187,000 tons, down 6% from the previous year. Bearing acreage is estimated at 58,000 acres with a yield of 3.22 tons per acre. Generally favorable weather conditions greeted the beginning of the avocado harvest in late 2002. However, windstorms struck Southern California in early January, blowing several million pounds of avocados off of their trees, though about half of the fallen fruit was expected to be salvageable. In San Diego County, the presence of Mexican fruit flies led to the establishment of a large quarantine zone in the fall of 2002, enclosing more than 8,000 acres of avocados. Growers in the outer parts of the zone were cleared for harvesting in mid-February, but for those in the core of the quarantine area, harvesting has been delayed until the summer.

The next production report will be issued on June 11, 2003.

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