

California Farm News



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CALIFORNIA CROP PRODUCTION REPORT

SACRAMENTO -- The USDA-NASS, California Field Office today released the crop production forecast for May. The latest survey, conducted during the last week of April and the first week of May, included the following commodities:

Almonds - The initial forecast for the 2006 California almond production is 1.02 billion pounds, up 11 percent from last year's revised production of 915 million pounds. Estimated bearing acreage for 2006 is 580 thousand. A low accumulation of chilling hours led to an early bloom in most California almond orchards. Wet and cool weather prevailed over the following months and some early almond varieties were hit by frost. Despite these negative factors, the 2006 almond set appeared strong. In general, the set was good in the Central Valley and the southern most producing counties were uniformly heavy in set. The northern most producing counties were set a bit lighter, likely due to frost effects. The popular Nonpareil variety set well and was looking very good.

Peaches - The 2006 California Freestone peach crop forecast is 370 thousand tons, down 4 percent from the 2005 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 36.0 thousand, resulting in a yield of 10.3 tons per acre. Wet and cool weather during the spring delayed progression of California's Freestone peach crop. Set in the early varieties was reported as fairly normal. Set in the mid-to-late season varieties, however, was reported as light and inconsistent due to the frost that occurred earlier in the year. Harvest began with the Earlitreat variety during the last week of April, about ten days later than last year. The 2006 California Clingstone peach crop forecast is 400 thousand tons, down 17 percent from the 2005 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 26.3 thousand, resulting in a yield of 15.2 tons per acre. Rain during March and April along with below average temperatures have California growers concerned about their 2006 Clingstone peach crop. Warmer temperatures toward the latter part of April, however, helped fruit growth. The early variety fruit reportedly had the best fruit set, while the Late and Extra Late varieties appeared to have the lightest sets. Harvest is expected to begin 10 to 14 days later than last year, due primarily to the cool spring temperatures.

Wheat - The 2006 winter wheat production forecast is 396 thousand tons, 39 percent below last year. Harvested acres are estimated at 220 thousand, resulting in a yield of 1.80 tons per acre. The 2006 Durum wheat production forecast is 171 thousand tons, down 13 percent from 2005. Harvested acres are estimated at 60.0 thousand, with a yield of 2.85 tons per acre. The cool and wet conditions that California experienced during the spring provided favorable conditions for stripe rust infestation in wheat fields, prompting growers to spray fields to prevent infection. Other issues facing the 2006 crop were lodging and standing water in some fields, as well as freeze injury in the Central Valley during the early spring. The expected decrease in acreage from 2005 is due to poor wheat prices, disease, and damage from inclement weather.

Production forecasts are released on a monthly basis and do not reflect final production estimates. The next production forecast will be issued June 9, 2006.

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