

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 June. The latest survey, which was conducted during the last week of May and the first week of June, includes the following commodities:

Apricots - The 2006 California apricot crop forecast is 37.0 thousand tons, down 51 percent from the 2005 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 13.8 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 2.68 tons per acre. An unseasonably warm winter initially threatened chilling requirements, and then freezing temperatures in mid-February damaged some early blooming orchards. In some locales, bloom was extended over a long period as the mild winter temperatures forced some orchards to bud early. The weak and staggered bloom was further impacted by rain and hail storms. There were a few reports of disease problems, but the primary detrimental factor on the crop was the minimal chilling. The thin crop was sizing out exceptionally well, but this could be the lightest crop ever in California. Harvest began about a week later than normal. Acreage of the Patterson variety continued to be pulled.

Cherries - The 2006 California sweet cherry crop forecast is 45.0 thousand tons, down 15 percent from the 2005 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 28.0 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 1.61 tons per acre. A very wet and early spring during the critical blooming period for California's sweet cherry crop took a toll on the crop before the season had a chance to begin. During the month of March, cherry blossoms were hit with excessive rains, resulting in ineffective pollination. This, combined with the lack of chilling hours and an extreme freeze in February, created undesirable conditions for setting a crop. The result was delayed crop production and reduced volume in most cherry varieties. Unseasonable rain arrived again in late May, threatening more damage to the already challenged 2006 crop. Harvesting began at the beginning of May with the Brooks variety in Kern County.

Peaches - The 2006 California Freestone peach crop forecast is 380 thousand tons, up 3 percent from the May forecast, but down 1 percent from the 2005 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 36.0 thousand, resulting in a yield of 10.6 tons per acre. Wet and cool weather during spring delayed progression of California's Freestone peach crop. Fruit set in the early varieties was reported to be fairly normal. However, set in the mid to late season varieties was reported to be lighter and inconsistent. Harvest gained momentum during June with Crimson Lady, Crown Princess, Spring Snow, and Spring Treat the major varieties harvested. The 2006 California Clingstone peach crop forecast is 380 thousand tons, down 5 percent from the May forecast and down 21 percent from the 2005 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 26.3 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 14.4 tons per acre. Rain during March and April, along with below average temperatures, has California growers concerned about their 2006 Clingstone peach crop. Warmer temperatures toward the latter part of April helped fruit growth. Set in Yuba and Sutter counties was reported to be down from last year, while the set in the Modesto area was reported to be normal. The early variety fruit reportedly has the best fruit set, while the late and extra late varieties appear to have the lightest sets. Harvest is expected to begin around June 25.

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Pears, Bartlett - The 2006 California Bartlett pear crop forecast is 195 thousand tons, up 19 percent from the 2005 crop. The Bartlett bloom period was lengthened particularly in the Sacramento River and Mendocino areas due to rain and cool temperatures. This could cause a decrease in production in these areas. The Lake County area was reported to have an excellent crop; bloom in this area occurred after the spring rains and cool temperatures. Harvest in the Sacramento River growing area will begin around the middle of July.

Prunes (Dried Plums) - The 2006 California prune crop forecast is 145 thousand dried tons, up 61 percent from the 2005 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 67.0 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 2.16 tons per acre. The 2006 prune crop experienced an unseasonably rainy period during bloom. A small set occurred statewide, as several growers reported loss of fruit due to the rainy weather conditions that disrupted bee pollination. As a result, fruit development is approximately two weeks behind schedule. Despite the weather-related challenges, the crop is expected to rebound significantly from the small 2005 and 2004 crops. Production during those years was set back by excessive heat during bloom.

Wheat - California's 2006 Durum wheat harvested acreage is estimated at 60.0 thousand acres. The yield is forecast to be 3.00 tons per acre, resulting in total production of 180 thousand tons. The Durum wheat harvest is nearly complete. Yields are reported to be very good. The cooler growing season allowed for good grain fill, but the protein content was reported as slightly low. California's Wheat other than Durum harvested acreage is estimated at 220 thousand acres for 2006. The forecast yield is 2.10 tons per acre, bringing the total production to 462 thousand tons. Wheat harvesting has begun in some parts of the State. Stripe rust problems were reported, particularly in the Central Valley. The two main winter wheat varieties, Summit and Blanca Grande, were hit hard by rust infestation. Some wheat blotch was also reported. The harvest was running slightly behind normal due to wet conditions in the spring.

Production forecasts are released on a monthly basis and do not reflect final production estimates. Late summer and fall harvests may change these estimates considerably. The next production forecast will be issued July 12, 2006.

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