



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



California Farm News

Cooperating with the California Department of Food and Agriculture

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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 2008 California almond production is 1.46 billion pounds, up 6 percent from last year's revised production of 1.38 billion pounds. Estimated bearing acreage for 2008 is 660 thousand. After a near perfect bloom, the 2008 California almond set looks strong. This year's bloom arrived three weeks later than normal and progressed quickly; it lasted only 10 days as opposed to the average three weeks. Overlapping bloom between varieties was outstanding this year, resulting in good cross-pollination, and there was an adequate supply of bees to pollinate the crop. The set of the Nonpareil variety is down slightly, but the set is up in other varieties.

Peaches - The 2008 California Freestone peach crop forecast is 430 thousand tons, unchanged from the 2007 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 36.0 thousand, resulting in a yield of 11.9 tons per acre. California experienced an adequate number of chilling hours, thus benefiting the Freestone crop. Weather during the bloom period was very accommodating, although cooler spring temperatures have slowed maturity slightly. The crop is reported to be of excellent quality, with good sizes. Harvest began the middle of April with the April Snow and the Snow Angel varieties. The 2008 California Clingstone peach crop forecast is 400 thousand tons, down 20 percent from the 2007 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 25.3 thousand, resulting in a yield of 15.8 tons per acre. The Clingstone crop also received an adequate number of chilling hours this year and weather during bloom was favorable. However, during April the crop suffered extensive frost damage. Growers are still assessing their crop damage. Fruit in the northern growing areas was hit the hardest by the frost, while fruit in the Modesto area suffered moderate damage, and fruit in southern areas was not affected.

Wheat - The 2008 winter wheat production forecast is 672 thousand tons, 17 percent above last year. Harvested acres are estimated at 320 thousand, resulting in a yield of 2.10 tons per acre. The 2008 Durum wheat production forecast is 465 thousand tons, up 118 percent from 2007. Harvested acres are estimated at 155 thousand, with a yield of 3.00 tons per acre. The wheat growing season in California has been very dry. Some of the dryland wheat has been harvested as hay or just lost for lack of water. However, warm weather has encouraged good growth and strong development of the irrigated crop. Disease pressure has been low this year, due in large part to the dry weather conditions. Just a few incidences of stripe rust have been reported. Durum wheat is progressing normally this season, with no quality or disease issues reported. Growers are hoping to see yields at levels equal to or better than normal. Harvest has begun in the Imperial Valley and should start in other areas within two weeks.

Production forecasts are released on a monthly basis and do not reflect final production estimates. The next production forecast will be issued June 10, 2008.

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