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California Farm News

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California Field Office · P.O. Box 1258 · Sacramento, CA 95812 · (916) 498-5161 · www.nass.usda.gov/ca

Media Contact: Jack Rutz, 1-800-851-1127 · June 10, 2008

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 2008 California apricot crop forecast is 87.0 thousand tons, up 7 percent from the 2007 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 13.4 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 6.50 tons per acre. Nearly perfect weather during bloom raised hopes of record yields. A late frost in April dashed those expectations for some growers, while many others were unscathed. Some early harvested fruit had wind damage. Cool May weather promoted sizing and quality is anticipated to be very good. Harvest began on time in mid-May. After the sizeable crop last year, this year's large crop may be a challenge to market.

Cherries - The 2008 California sweet cherry crop forecast is 86.0 thousand tons, up 1 percent from the 2007 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 30.0 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 2.87 tons per acre. Spring weather has consisted of spotty light rain and cool temperatures for California's sweet cherry crop. Cherries started blooming in the month of March and harvest began in late April. Trees have a heavy set of fruit, which is expected to slow down crop maturity. There have been some reports of good fruit size by growers.

Peaches - The 2008 California Freestone peach crop forecast is 430 thousand tons, unchanged from the May forecast and 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 slightly slowed maturity. The crop is reported to be of excellent quality, with good sizes. Harvest continues with the Spring Snow, Spring Flame, Crimson Lady, and Crown Princess the major varieties picked. The 2008 California Clingstone peach crop forecast is 380 thousand tons, down 5 percent from the May forecast and 24 percent below the 2007 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 25.3 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 15.0 tons per acre. The Clingstone crop also experienced adequate chilling hours. Weather during the bloom period was favorable. However, unusually cold temperatures on April 19 and 20 have resulted in significant frost damage to the crop. The largest impact of the frost damage is in the northern growing areas, with some growers reporting 100 percent damage. There were also a large number of growers with loss in the Modesto area. However, fruit in the southern growing areas was not affected. Growers are waiting as long as possible before they start to thin to get a better idea of which fruit will drop and which will remain on the tree. Some blocks won't need to be thinned at all because their set is so light. Harvest of the crop will be slightly later this year due to the cooler temperatures.

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Pears, Bartlett - The 2008 California Bartlett pear crop forecast is 175 thousand tons, down 13 percent from the 2007 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 12.0 thousand, resulting in a yield of 14.6 tons per acre. The California Bartlett crop began blooming in March, but in mid-April, pear orchards experienced freezing temperatures. Mendocino County, one of California's top pear growing regions, experienced the worst freeze growers have seen in nearly a half century. Damaged pears were showing a lot of black centers or frozen cores. The Sacramento River district was not impacted as much by the freeze and is expected to produce a normal crop.

Prunes (Dried Plums) - The 2008 California prune crop forecast is 120 thousand dried tons, up 45 percent from the 2007 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 65.0 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 1.85 tons per acre. Spring weather has again damaged the California prune crop. Despite the damage, crop prospects were showing an improvement over the small 2007 crop. A cold snap during April caused several Sutter County growers to lose more than 25 percent of their orchards and some growers lost their entire crop. A few growers reported difficulty in finding enough bees to help with crop pollination. Prune growers will assess the crop again after the June drop.

Wheat - California's 2008 Durum wheat harvested acreage is estimated at 155 thousand acres. The yield is forecast to be 3.30 tons per acre, resulting in total production of 512 thousand tons. 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. California's wheat other than Durum harvested acreage is estimated at 320 thousand acres for 2008. The forecast yield is 2.25 tons per acre, bringing the total production to 720 thousand tons. The wheat growing season in California has been very dry. Imperial Valley growers started harvest a week ago, but harvest in the southern Sacramento Valley is still about a week away. Cool damp weather has been delaying harvest. Some of the dryland wheat continued to be harvested as hay or just lost for lack of water. Disease pressure has continued to be low this year. Just a few incidences of stripe rust have been reported.

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 11, 2008.

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