
U.S. PEACH PRODUCTION HIGHER, APRICOT PRODUCTION LOWER

Peaches: The July 2004 forecast of U.S. peach production is 2.61 billion pounds, up 4 percent from 2003 and 3 percent above two years ago. Fourteen States forecast increases in production from last year, while 11 States expect declines and 4 States remain unchanged.

The Washington peach crop is forecast at 40.0 million pounds, up 3 percent from last year but down 13 percent from 2002. Mild spring conditions were favorable, but some growers report reduced output due to winter freeze damage to trees. Production in Oregon is forecast at 7.7 million pounds compared to 4.5 million pounds produced a year ago. Production is also up from 2003 in Idaho, and Utah.

The California Freestone crop is forecast at 780 million pounds, down 2 percent from the June 1 forecast and 6 percent below 2003. The Freestone bloom was late but, with a warm dry spring, the crop matured rapidly. Some middle to late season varieties had problems with incomplete pollination causing the fruit to stop growing too soon. Harvest was approximately 40 percent complete by July 1. Flavor is reported to be excellent.

The California Clingstone crop is forecast at 1.15 billion pounds, unchanged from the June 1 forecast but 7 percent above 2003. California experienced an adequate number of chilling hours benefitting the Clingstone crop. Overall, bloom is reported to be good on all varieties. Picking began in the Kingsburg area on June 9, ten days earlier than last year's starting date. Harvest gained momentum throughout June in Stanislaus, Yuba, and Sutter counties with Ceres Carson and Loadel the major varieties picked. Quality is reported to be very good.

Georgia's peach crop is forecast at 110 million pounds, up 10 percent from the June 1 forecast but unchanged from 2003. Rainfall during June was beneficial in helping improve fruit size. Rain, along with cloudy and humid conditions, hindered spraying schedules which caused concern about diseases. By the end of June, 40 percent of the expected production had been harvested, a few days behind last year's harvest.

The South Carolina peach crop is forecast at 140 million pounds, unchanged from the June 1 forecast but up 40 percent from last year. Weather conditions have been favorable for fruit development. Moisture was short in the spring but adequate for bloom. North Carolina's peach crop, forecast at 9.00 million pounds, is up 50 percent from last year but 10 percent below two years ago. Growing conditions have been more favorable than last year's conditions when spring frost damage reduced the crop.

In New Jersey, production is forecast at 70.0 million pounds, unchanged from 2003 but 13 percent above 2002. Crop conditions are rated good to excellent. Production in Pennsylvania is forecast at 54.0 million pounds, down 26 percent from last year and 10 percent below 2002. Pennsylvania peach producers anticipate harvesting a high quality peach crop. Production in New York is forecast at 11.0 million pounds, down 15 percent from 2003 but 10 percent above two years ago.

Michigan's peach crop is forecast at 43.0 million pounds, down 9 percent from 2003 but three times the size of the weather devastated 2002 crop. Warm temperatures during early spring put development 7 to 9 days ahead of schedule. Rainfall helped soil moisture and kept insect populations to a minimum. Strong winds and isolated hail storms damaged some orchards; however the impact was sporadic. Frost damage was reported in the southeast, heavily reducing some grower's crops.

Apricots: The final forecast for the 2004 U.S. apricot crop is 95,550 tons, down 2 percent from last season's production but 6 percent above 2002. California's 2004 apricot production is forecast at 90,000 tons, equal to the June forecast but 3 percent below last year's production. California's production represents 94 percent of the 2004 U.S. apricot crop. Weather during bloom was excellent with warm temperatures throughout the apricot producing areas of the State. Cool temperatures during harvest contributed to good fruit size. Harvest will be finished by mid-July. Washington's production, at 5,200 tons, is up 6 percent from both last year and 2002. Mild spring weather was favorable to the State's apricot crop.