

California Crop Production Report

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The latest survey, which was conducted during the last week of March and the first week of April, includes the following commodities:

Navel Oranges - The 2003-04 Navel orange forecast is 78.0 million cartons, unchanged from the January 2004 forecast, but down 5% from last season. Recently, heavy demand prompted some shippers to pick under wet conditions, leading to some problems with rind breakdown and staining. Overall, however, the weather has been fairly mild, which helped maintain a generally good crop condition.

Valencia Oranges - The 2003-04 Valencia orange forecast is 30.0 million cartons, down from the January 2004 forecast of 38.0 million cartons, and down 27% from last season. Harvesting of the Valencia crop was well underway, with currently no major problems reported. Acreage pullouts, however, continued in both the Central Valley and southern areas. Overall quality of the harvested crop was good in both districts.

Grapefruit - The 2003-04 grapefruit forecast is 10.8 million cartons, up 4% from the January 2004 forecast, but down 4% from last season. The Rio Red variety grapefruit harvest continued in the desert area. Exterior color was fair, while the shape was normal with occasional sheep nose fruit. Texture was smooth in all sizes. Interior quality was good with nice red color. Flavor and eating quality were excellent. The Pummelo variety harvest was completed in the Central Valley by April 1.

Lemons - The 2003-04 lemon forecast is 46.0 million cartons, unchanged from the January 2004 forecast, but down 4% from last season. Good quality and higher demand in both the domestic and export markets were reflected in an upward trend in prices over the past few weeks. The harvest season was essentially complete in the Desert region and was winding down in the Central Valley. Harvest was progressing well in the South Coastal Area with excellent quality reported.

Tangerines - The 2003-04 tangerine forecast is 4.80 million cartons, down 4% from both the January 2004 forecast and last season's estimate. The season was progressing well with no major problems to date. The desert crop was winding down. Overall quality of fruit was reported to be very good to excellent. Color was excellent, shape was normal and eating quality and flavor were very good.

Strawberries - The 2004 strawberry production is expected to be a record 18.9 million cwt., up 3% from last year. Harvested acreage is estimated at 33,200, with a resulting yield of 570 cwt. per acre. Acreage was reported to be up in all major growing districts this year. Cooler temperatures got the season off to a slower start than last year, but relatively warmer temperatures in March helped strengthen strawberry plants. Many fields in the Oxnard District in Southern California sustained fruit damage during the beginning of February as powerful winds roared through the area, but disruption to the harvest cycle was minimal. Little fruit was lost due to storms that passed through the growing regions. Growing conditions then turned ideal as mild temperatures prevailed. Production and shipping returned to a traditional pace when compared to last year. Early season berries were reported to have good size, color and quality.

Production forecasts are released monthly and do not reflect final production estimates. The next production forecast will be issued May 12, 2004.

California Agricultural Statistics Service
P.O. Box 1258
Sacramento, CA 95812
Phone: (916) 498-5161
Fax: (916) 498-5186
E-mail: nass-ca@nass.usda.gov