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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 2009 California apricot crop forecast is 66.0 thousand tons, down 14 percent from the 2008 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 10.7 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 6.17 tons per acre. Despite frosts and water shortages, the production of California apricots is expected to be fairly normal, though down from the high production of recent years. Overall, bloom was reported to be good. Fruit set and quality are reported to be good. Harvest began in mid-May. The sensitivity of apricots to weather, economics, market demand and foreign competition continues to drive many apricot growers to pull trees to put in more profitable crops.

Cherries - The 2009 California sweet cherry crop forecast is 75.0 thousand tons, down 13 percent from the 2008 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 27.0 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 2.78 tons per acre. Spring weather generated occasional rain and cool temperatures for California's sweet cherry crop. Storms early in the month produced some damage to Brooks and Burlat varieties. Brooks and Bing cherry harvests continued.

Peaches - The 2009 California Freestone peach crop forecast is 370 thousand tons, unchanged from the May forecast, but down 13 percent from the 2008 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 28.0 thousand, resulting in a yield of 13.2 tons per acre. California experienced an adequate number of chilling hours, thus benefiting the Freestone crop. Freezing temperatures hit California in early March, resulting in frost damage in some areas. Frost damage, along with a decrease in the bearing acres, has resulted in an estimated lower production for the 2009 crop. Harvest continued during May with Spring Flame, Super Rich and Snow Angel the major varieties harvested. Demand is reported to be good. The 2009 California Clingstone peach crop forecast is 440 thousand tons, up 2 percent from the May forecast and 3 percent above the 2008 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 24.6 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 17.9 tons per acre. California experienced a more than adequate number of chilling hours, thus benefitting the Clingstone crop. Full bloom, on a statewide basis, was declared on March 15, five days later than the 2008 full bloom timing. The 2009 bloom looked good to very good in all areas of the state. Freezing temperatures hit California in early March, resulting in slight frost damage in some areas. Following a series of rainstorms in early March, growers had good weather for pruning, spraying and tree planting activities. By the end of April, the fruit was starting to differentiate in size. The crop set appeared lighter than the growers' initial expectations following bloom. However, growers are expecting a normal crop level. Growers are busy thinning their crop.

Pears, Bartlett - The 2009 California Bartlett pear crop forecast is 190 thousand tons, down 3 percent from the 2008 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 10.0 thousand, resulting in a yield of 19.0 tons per acre. The California Bartletts began blooming in March. In late-April, pear orchards in the north coast experienced excellent bloom. In mid-May, Bartlett pears were developing in the Sacramento Valley. The weather has been generally good for growing conditions with no extreme hot temperatures. There were minimal amounts of frost reported in growing regions.

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Dried Plums (Prunes - The 2009 California prune crop forecast is 170 thousand dried tons, up 32 percent from the 2008 crop. Bearing acreage is estimated at 64.0 thousand acres, resulting in a yield of 2.66 tons per acre. The 2009 dried plum crop has experienced ideal weather conditions. Bloom was reported to be excellent, and growers have been busy thinning fruit due to the large set. The crop is reported to be of excellent quality, with good sizes.

Wheat - California's 2009 Durum wheat harvested acreage is estimated at 135 thousand acres. The yield is forecast to be 3.00 tons per acre, resulting in total production of 405 thousand tons. Durum wheat is progressing normally this season with no major quality or disease issues reported. A few incidences of stripe rust were reported late in the growing season, but caused little or no effect on yields. Some frost damage was reported, but its effect will not be known until more Durum has been harvested. So far the harvest is underway in the Imperial Valley, but cooler weather in the San Joaquin Valley postponed the maturity of the crop and its harvest for a couple of more weeks. California's wheat other than Durum harvested acreage is estimated at 280 thousand acres for 2009. The forecast yield is 2.25 tons per acre, bringing the total production to 630 thousand tons. The wheat growing season in California has been very dry. Imperial Valley growers have already started harvesting, but the southern Sacramento Valley is still a few weeks away as cool weather has delayed harvest. Some dryland wheat is expected to be harvested as hay or just lost from lack of available water. Disease pressure has been low this year, due in large part to the dry weather conditions. Few incidences of stripe rust have been reported late in the season.

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 10, 2009.

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