The 1999 California contracted processing tomato production is forecast at 11.0 million tons from 327,000 harvested acres, up 24 and 18 percent, respectively, from 1998. The yield is forecast to be 33.64 tons per acre. A late spring with cool temperatures delayed the maturity of the processing tomato crop, which is 1-2 weeks behind normal. However, good yields and quality have the harvest off to a fine start. Color and solids have been reported as above normal in several areas. Due to the slow maturing crop, the success of 1999's production is more dependant than normal on warm, dry fall weather. As of August 21, the inspection total was 4,726,770 tons, up 34 percent from the 3,526,522 tons for this same time frame a year ago. This is somewhat misleading as last season's crop was smaller, late, and ravaged by the effects of El Nino.

The August 15 survey asked for expected tons to be processed and total acres required to achieve that tonnage. Planted acres were based on a May 19 enumeration of all processors.

This early processing forecast was funded by the California League of Food Processors in cooperation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The USDA forecast for U.S. processing tomato production will be issued on September 9.