

Citrus acreage down, but value and consumption up

By Tom Karst

(Nov. 5) U.S. citrus acreage declined 7% in 2006 but overall U.S. fruit crop value and per capita consumption of fruit was up, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual fruit and tree nut yearbook.

The report, released Oct. 30, said bearing acreage dropped 7% for citrus and almost 1% for major noncitrus crops between 2005 and 2006. However, bearing acreage was up 2% for miscellaneous noncitrus crops and 1% higher for tree nuts.

Meanwhile, per capita fresh fruit consumption in 2006 was rated at 100.9 pounds, 1% above the previous year. The USDA said noncitrus fruit consumption averaged 79.3 pounds per person in 2006, 2% above 2005 and the third-highest on record. Citrus per capita consumption declined because of smaller crops, the USDA said.

The value of the 2006 U.S. fruit and tree nuts crops reached \$16.7 billion, 2% above 2005 and the highest on record.

ACREAGE DECLINE

The 7% drop in citrus acreage was highlighted by the loss of acreage in Florida, but California growers also cut acreage, the agency said.

California growers have removed valencia orange trees due to weak demand for the fruit, the report said.

Most of the grapefruit acreage loss in the U.S. occurred in Florida, with only slight reductions in citrus acreage noted in California and Arizona and unchanged acreage in Texas.

Tangerine acreage also declined 5%, as clementine gains in California failed to counter losses in Florida, the USDA said.

NONCITRUS ACREAGE

Among noncitrus fruit crops, bearing acreage fell for apples, peaches, pears, tart cherries, plums/prunes, apricots, figs, Hawaiian pineapples, and kiwifruit. Increased acreage was noted for sweet cherries, avocados, bananas, dates, and Hawaiian papaya. The number of bearing acres remained relatively unchanged for grapes, nectarines, and cranberries, the USDA said.

PRODUCTION AND PRICES

Total fruit production in 2006 declined 4% from 2005, totaling 30.2 million tons, the smallest quantity produced since 1991. While citrus production was up 1% in 2006, it was still at

historically low levels. Noncitrus production fell 8% in 2006 from 2005, with 16.9 million tons produced, the USDA said.

Smaller volumes of peach, grape, tart cherry, apricot, fig, Hawaiian pineapple, avocado, nectarine, kiwifruit, and papayas were noted.

Strong demand for citrus both in the fresh and processing markets drove crop value up 19% to \$2.7 billion, a record high.

The USDA said the index of prices received by fruit and tree nut growers rose by 19% in 2006, while retail prices rose 6% in 2006.

[E-mail Tom Karst](#)

© 2007 Vance Publishing Corp