

Final citrus report shows Florida production rebound

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Florida's 2007-2008 orange crop finished at 169.7 million boxes, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's final citrus report of the season. The crop represents a 32 percent increase from the 2006-2007 season.

"This was a pretty good rebound year for the Florida citrus industry coming off the hurricanes," says Mike Sparks, executive vice president and chief executive officer of Florida Citrus Mutual, Lakeland, in a news release. "Prices to growers were reasonable and that's important. We need higher prices to offset the increased production costs associated with pest and disease management and energy prices.

"The recent rains bode well for next season, however, the industry is facing many challenges right now, most prominently a disease called citrus greening which has the potential to devastate our crop. We will continue to fight it through research and best management practices as we head into next season."

The 169.7 million boxes are made up of 83.5 million boxes of early-mids and Navels and 86.2 million boxes of valencias.

Florida orange production declined from 230 million boxes to 129 million boxes between the 2001-2002 season and the 2006-2007 season. This reduction was due in large part to the effects of hurricanes, development and pests and diseases such as citrus canker and greening.

The USDA issues its first estimate in October and then revises it each month through the end of the citrus season in July.

In today's final report, Florida grapefruit increased from 26.5 million boxes to 26.6 million boxes. Tangelos remained unchanged at 1.5 million boxes as did tangerines at 5.5 million boxes.

The complete USDA crop forecast is available from the Florida Agriculture Statistics Service online at http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Publications/Citrus/cfp.htm.

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