

Posted on Mon, Oct. 03, 2005

AGRICULTURE

Citrus crop down 42%

Associated Press

ORLANDO - Stressed by three hurricanes that tore through the state's groves last year, Florida's citrus crop ended up being worth \$742.2 million, the least valuable since the 1985-1986 season.

The 2004-2005 citrus crop of 169.1 million boxes also was down 42 percent from the 291.8 million boxes produced the previous season, according to a recent report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The orange crop production of 149.6 million boxes was the lowest in 13 years, and the grapefruit crop of 12.8 million boxes was the smallest since the 1935-1936 season.

In most years, more grapefruit is processed into juice than sold fresh, but this year slightly more of the fruit went to the fresh market than was sold to juice processors because of the shortfall.

Production was down in all citrus-growing counties in Florida.

The Indian River district, where hurricanes Frances and Jeanne made landfall, was the hardest hit, down by three-quarters compared with the previous season.

Hendry County led the state in production with 29.6 million boxes of citrus, followed by Polk County (24.8 million boxes), Highlands County (21.3 million boxes), DeSoto County (13.6 million boxes) and Collier County (10.5 million boxes). Those five counties produced almost 60 percent of the state's citrus crop.