

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final citrus forecast of the 2016-17 has shown that the Florida industry continues to suffer, with both orange and grapefruit volumes falling significantly year-on-year.



The USDA this week estimated the state's growers had harvested 68.7 million boxes of oranges during the season, which would be a 16% drop on last campaign and a 29% decline on 2014-15.

Valencia orange production fell 22% year-on-year to 35.7 million boxes, while the non-Valencia saw a smaller reduction of 9% to 33 million boxes.

Grapefruit volumes also dropped 28% to 7.8 million boxes.

Bucking the trend, however, Florida tangerine and tangelo production rose 14% to 1.6 million boxes.

Despite the significant decline for orange volumes, the Florida Department of Citrus took an optimistic tone, noting that the forecast had increased 200,000 boxes from June.

"Ending the season on a positive note is a big deal because it shows there is still investment in Florida's signature crop. It takes quite serious effort to produce every single piece of fruit," executive director Shannon Shepp said.

"Every additional box shows promise for Florida Citrus."

The first crop forecast of the 2017-18 season takes place in October.

Florida was not the only U.S. state to see a year-on-year fall in orange production, with the

USDA forecast also showing the California crop fell 18% to 48 million boxes. The state experienced heavy rainfall over the winter months which affected production.

Total U.S. orange volumes fell from 142 million boxes last in 2015-16 to 118 million boxes this season.

National lemon production fell 9% to 20.7 million boxes, with California representing more than 90% of the total.

And like Florida, California's tangerine and tangelo production also rose year-on-year, growing 11% to 24 million boxes.

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