

The initial citrus crop forecast for the 2021-22 season was released Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which predicted fewer Florida oranges and grapefruits would be picked this citrus season.

The USDA forecast of 47.0 million boxes of Florida oranges for the 2021-22 season is down 11% from the 52.8 million boxes harvested last season.

The USDA also forecast 3.8 million boxes of Florida grapefruit, down 8% from 4.1 million boxes in 2020-21, and 900,000 boxes of specialty citrus (such as tangerines) in 2021-22, up 2% from 890,000 boxes in 2020-21.

This season's projected decreases are smaller than in the 2020-21 season. The peak of citrus production was 244 million boxes during the 1997-98 season.

"Today's forecast is a testament to the resilience of Florida's citrus growers, our state's dedication to our proud citrus industry, and our department's commitment to innovation in the face of ongoing challenges," Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried said.

"Citrus is Florida's signature crop, full of heart-healthy and immune-boosting vitamins and nutrients that consumers demand as we continue the fight against COVID-19," she said. "We remain committed to supporting our citrus producers with research, technology, and techniques to fight the spread of citrus greening."

In the upcoming 2022-23 state budget, Fried said she has requested \$15.6 million to support Florida citrus production, health and research.

In September the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) forecast that the state's Navel orange production would [fall by 14 percent](#) to 70 million cartons.