

Florida orange volumes forecast up by 76% in 2018-19

The Florida Citrus Mutual is expecting a 76% year-on-year rise in orange volumes during the 2018-19 season to 79 million boxes.

Last year's season was heavily affected by Hurricane Irma, while volumes have been in decline over the last decade due to the impacts of citrus greening disease.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's estimate (USDA) pegged early and mid-season varieties at 34 million boxes and Valencias at 45 million boxes.

"It's been a very difficult year for growers no doubt and it's good to hear production for this season is expected to be up," said Michael W. Sparks, CEO of Florida Citrus Mutual.

"Growers continue to show resilience and a commitment to replant and get the industry back on its feet."

Despite the increase, Sparks said the industry still has a long way to go before it can support infrastructure and generate the income necessary to keep growers in business.

He hopes that the 2018-19 campaign will be a new start for growers.

Hurricane Irma moved through the center of the state in mid-September last year, hitting its major citrus producing regions with up to 120 mph winds.

Last season Florida produced 45 million boxes of oranges.

The USDA's estimate for the 2018-19 Florida grapefruit crop is 6.7 million boxes, while the specialty citrus crop should be close to 1.2 million boxes.

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