

State's Fruit Areas

four major areas produce most of California's fruit and nut crops

S. W. Shear

Practically all of California's commercial fruit acreage may be classed in one of two types of farming—fruit and mixed farming; or fruit, mixed farming and vegetable crops.

The San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento Valley with their adjacent fruit-growing counties in the Sierra Nevada foothills are the chief fruit and mixed farming areas.

The principal areas in which vegetables as well as fruits and mixed farming are important are the central coastal counties west of the coastal range and the southern California counties south of the Tehachapi mountains, including the desert valleys of Imperial, Coachella, and Borega.

San Joaquin Valley

The San Joaquin Valley—Stanislaus south through Kern counties—is the largest farming and fruit-growing region in the state. However fruit and nuts are relatively not so important in the agricultural economy of that area as they are in the less diversified agriculture of southern California.

Of all farm crops harvested in the San Joaquin Valley, fruit and nuts account for about 30% of the sales value, less than 20% of all cropland harvested, almost 20% of the irrigated acreage and approximately 20% of the total value of all farm products.

The San Joaquin Valley accounts for nearly 45% of the state acreage in orchards and vineyards and an even greater proportion of the fruit produced. Over 95% of the fruit acreage is irrigated, and almost four-fifths of this is in fruits with yields per acre much higher than the state average for all fruits.

Of the state acreage of the heavier yielding fruits, the San Joaquin Valley accounts for over three fourths of the grapes, nearly two thirds of the peaches, and about 15% of the citrus. It grows about 25% of the state acreage of deciduous tree fruits as a group and of almonds and walnuts; over 90% of the figs and nectarines; about 50% of the plums; over 40% of the olives; and, about 35% of the cherries. In recent years, its acreage of apricots has dropped rapidly to less than 15% of the 1950

state total. Apples, prunes, and pears are of very little commercial importance in this valley.

About 20% of the state orange acreage—nearly all of the citrus outside of southern California—is grown on the east side of the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley. About 75% of its orange acreage—almost all in Tulare, Fresno, and Kern counties—is in navels.

Sacramento Valley

The Sacramento Valley and adjacent Sierra Nevada foothills have less fruit and nut acreage than any of the other three major farming regions of the state. However, these crops are almost as important to the agricultural economy of this area as they are to the San Joaquin Valley and to the Central Coastal counties. Their sales value has accounted for about 30% of total receipts of all harvested crops, nearly 20% of the sales value of all farm products, about 10% of the total harvested acreage and 15% of the irrigated cropland.

The Sacramento Valley and adjacent Sierra Nevada foothills have about 10% of the state acreage of fruit and nuts but produce a somewhat smaller part of the crop. Over-all yields per acre are less than the state average, chiefly because of the large proportion of lower yielding kinds of fruit grown. This region grows about 30% of the state acreage of nuts—mostly almonds—of which it accounts for about 50% of the state total. It grows over 40% of the state acreage of olives and about 25% of the deciduous tree fruit acreage—nearly 25% of the prune, slightly over 25% of the peach, over 40% of the plum, and nearly 50% of the pear acreage.

The plum acreage has been decreasing in this region, chiefly because the yield per acre in the foothills is considerably below that in the San Joaquin Valley where the acreage has been increasing.

Yields of Bartlett pears and peaches in the Sacramento Valley average about the same as for the state as a whole.

With prune yields the highest in the state, the proportion of the state acreage in these counties has been increasing, particularly in Colusa.

The small acreage of navel oranges

grown in the thermal belt in Butte and Glenn counties is best known because it produces the earliest oranges shipped from the state.

Central Coast

The Central Coastal counties west of the coastal range have considerably more fruit and nut acreage than the Sacramento Valley, but these crops account for only about the same part of the agricultural income and crop acreage of both of these regions. The gross farm sales value of fruit and nuts accounts for about 30% of the value of all harvested crops in this area, and considerably less than 20% of the value of all farm products. These crops constitute slightly over 20% of the harvested acreage of all crops and almost 25% of the irrigated acreage.

Fruit and nut yields per acre are below the state average, chiefly because a larger proportion of the acreage is not irrigated; consequently it produces a smaller percentage of the state fruit crop than its percentage of the state fruit acreage. Most of the fruit in this region is grown in six counties just south of San Francisco Bay and three counties north of the bay. No citrus is grown commercially here. This area accounts for much of the state acreage of deciduous fruits and nuts: about 25% of the almonds and walnuts; 10% of all grapes, or 30% of the wine varieties which are the only kind grown in this region; and about 45% of the deciduous tree fruit acreage, a larger proportion than any one of the other three regions of the state.

Among the tree fruits, the central coastal counties stand in first place: in apples, with nearly 80% of the state acreage; in prunes, with about 75% of the acreage; in apricots with about 65%; in late varieties of pears, with about 65%; in Bartletts with 40%; and, in cherries with 45% of the state acreage.

Southern California

The fruit and nut industry constitutes a more important part of the agricultural economy south of the Tehachapi mountains than of any of the four major regions in the state. Fruit and nuts account for over 45% of the value of all harvested crops, and over 25% of the total value of all farm products. About 25% of its harvested cropland and nearly 30% of the irrigated acreage are in these crops. Over 25% of the state acreage of fruit and nuts is in this area.

Southern California's over-all yields per acre average higher—for the fruits grown there—than any of the other regions of the state. Practically all of the

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AREAS

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orchards are irrigated and nearly all of the vineyard area. About 65% of the acreage of fruits and nuts is in citrus which yields about 25% more per acre than the state average for noncitrus fruit. About 30% of the state walnut acreage is in this region, slightly over one eighth

of the grape acreage, and less than 5% of the acreage of all other tree fruits, of which it produces small quantities of olives, peaches, and apricots.

Of the subtropical fruits, all of the state's commercial acreage of dates, avocados, and persimmons and about 85% of the citrus acreage are south of the Tehachapi mountains.

Climatic requirements restrict date growing to the desert valleys, which also produce most of the state's earliest fresh table grape shipments and 40% of the grapefruit crop. The rest of the grapefruit is nearly all grown in the interior

valleys of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.

Commercial production of avocados and lemons is practically confined to southern California, largely in the coastal valley areas in San Diego, Orange, and Los Angeles counties.

About 60% of the navel oranges of the state and more than 90% of the Valencias are grown in the south.

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The comparative percentages for fruit and nut acreages are for 1950 and gross farm sales values are for 1949, based on the latest United States Census of Agriculture.

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