



Commercial Truck Crops

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TRUCK CROP NEWS (as of March 1, 1944)

Conditions affecting truck crops were variable during the last half of February. The weather was generally favorable to growing crops, except in Florida, but moderate to heavy rains which fell in a number of States temporarily delayed planting and harvesting of crops in those areas. In Florida, however, precipitation has been unusually light and crops from central Florida southward are in need of additional moisture.

The weather pattern showed sufficient to excessive rainfall in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia, which hampered spring planting. In California, flood waters have necessitated some replanting of truck crops but the loss of planted acreage is not considered serious. In Texas, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, temperatures have averaged normal to above normal, and the combination of sufficient moisture and seasonal warmth has favored growing crops as well as planting operations.

Weather in Florida during the last half of February was for the most part unfavorable for truck crops. Rainfall has been negligible in the southern and central counties and a severe drought exists over most of this area. Temperatures have ranged considerably above normal. Crops on irrigated land are making fair progress but those on non-irrigated land are badly in need of rain. The unseasonably warm weather is causing rapid maturity of some crops and will probably shorten the season in the southern part of the state.

In Texas, truck crop progress was generally satisfactory, and ideal harvesting weather prevailed the second half of February. A short heat wave was experienced in all areas the latter part of February, with temperatures of 97 registered in the Rio Grande Valley. However, most hardy winter vegetables in Texas are in excellent condition, and are at their peak of quality and production. Considerable acreage of cabbage is being held for April and May harvest. Planting of spring crop vegetables made good progress during the past two weeks. The Lower Valley snap beans crop is all planted and in good condition. Plantings in early districts outside the Valley are started. A large acreage of tomatoes in the Lower Valley is making good progress and in the east Texas area there are sufficient plants for a large increase over last year. Planting of cantaloups, cucumbers, and water-melons is making excellent progress in all early areas. Early potato districts are practically through planting, but progress in some of the later areas is still being retarded because of wet fields.

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ARTICHOKES: Harvest in California should be fairly active in the coastal districts during March, with this crop rapidly approaching peak production. Frost has discolored some buds but with warm weather, this should clear and the crop come on quite rapidly.

ASPARAGUS: California harvest has made little headway during the past few weeks owing mainly to wet fields and cold weather. With warmer weather, the crop should come on quite rapidly. Most asparagus beds in South Carolina have received a liberal application of fertilizer and are in good condition. The unusual warm weather during the last 10 days has caused some shoots to break through the ground in the Blackville-Williston area. If the weather continues warm a few crates may be shipped by express next week but it will be the latter part of March before the main movement begins.

LIMA BEANS: The Florida winter lima bean crop has passed its peak. Production from this acreage has been very light and supplies during March will be limited. Most of the spring acreage in the Hawthorn section has been planted and many fields are already up to a good stand.

SNAP BEANS: In Florida, production from the winter snap bean acreage has passed its peak and shipments from this acreage will decline during March. Planting in the Pompano section, with the exception of a few large growers, was completed the last week in January. The unseasonably warm weather has advanced the maturity of the crop and will undoubtedly shorten the season. The crop is in fair condition and turning out a high percentage of ordinary quality, much of which is being left in the fields. In the Homestead area, which should now be at its peak, the crop has been disappointing. Foggy mornings have been favorable for the development of diseases and some sections in this area have suffered rather badly from rust and mold.

Planting of the Florida acreage for spring harvest has been heavy. In the Lake Okeechobee section, where the main acreage is located, planting has been under way since the last week in January. Beans which were in the ground at the time of the January frost are being picked and the volume from this section should become fairly heavy by the middle of March. Dry weather is affecting the crop and rain is badly needed. In the Florida central counties and in the McIntosh section, planting is about completed. Warm weather has caused early germination and much of the crop is up and growing.

The Texas Lower Valley crop is making good progress. Early plantings are blooming and should be in fair production by the latter part of March, but the main crop will not be available until early April. Early areas outside of the Lower Valley are well along with their plantings and conditions are favorable for crops to get a good start. Supplies from these areas should commence moving the latter part of April, with volume production by mid-May.

BEETS: All Texas areas have ample supplies of good quality beets and sufficient acreage to furnish tonnage for active shipments during March and April. Shipments the last half of February showed a little gain over previous periods, but harvesting was not quite so active the last few days. Conditions continued favorable in all areas. In South Carolina, indications point to some decrease in the acreage of spring beets. Some of the early plantings, which were just coming up, were damaged by the freeze during the first part of February. This acreage now has been replanted and is up to a good stand. Warm weather the last 10 days has greatly improved this crop.

BROCCOLI: During the early part of February California broccoli markets were quite slow and some acreage was not completely harvested. The situation has now improved and broccoli movement should continue during the early part of March. In Arizona movement of solid carlots of broccoli from the Salt River Valley is expected to continue at a light rate during the next two weeks. Harvest of late plantings should get under way late in March. The spring acreage is small, and most of it will move in mixed cars. A rather large proportion of present supplies is being shipped in mixed cars.

CABBAGE: California supplies of cabbage are becoming more plentiful in the southern districts of the state. There is very little demand for the crop and growers are having difficulty finding an outlet for the present production. Should supplies from the Southern States become lighter, the California situation will probably improve. In Arizona, harvest is now limited to small mid-season plantings. Late plantings in the Salt River and Yuma Valleys will supply movement during April and May. Shipments during March will be mostly in mixed cars. Supplies in the Salt River Valley were reduced by cold temperatures during January and early February.

Shipments of Texas cabbage showed a material gain the past two weeks over previous 2-week periods this season, but supplies were far in excess of market demands. All areas were heavy in production and quality was greatly improved. The Coastal Bend section was about ten days late coming into heavy production, but supplies are now plentiful and will continue so during March and early April. The acreage which is being held for harvest during April and May is in splendid condition. Dry, warm weather in Florida is affecting the quality of the winter cabbage crop. That part of the crop which is on irrigated land is still in good condition but that on the unirrigated land is badly in need of rain. Many plantings from poor seed are now producing seed stalks and inferior quality. Some of these fields will be a total loss while only light cuttings are being made from others. Available supplies will continue heavy during March.

The Louisiana cabbage crop has responded rapidly to the warmer weather despite excessive rain. However, some fields have not been cultivated properly and some "seeders" are expected to develop. Shipments of the main spring crop are expected to get under way from an increased acreage about March and continue into early May. Excessive rains in Mississippi during last half of February were unfavorable for the cabbage crop and delayed completion of transplanting to fields. Part of the crop will be later than usual. In Alabama, the crop is in fairly good condition. Fall plants are moving. Later plantings are making fair progress and will begin to move about April 5. Earlier set plants in South Carolina were slightly damaged by the February freeze and were slow in getting started. The crop has responded rapidly to present favorable weather, however and is generally in good condition. Present indications are for a moderate decrease in the planted acreage. In Tennessee cabbage plants are ready to go to the fields but practically none had been set prior to March 1. Growers indicate March 4 as the date setting should start, but comments indicate that it will be at least a week later before transplanting will be general.

CANTALOUPS: California Imperial Valley growers will start removing covers from the early planted acreage this month. A sizeable planting of late acreage is being made and will continue as soon as fields are sufficiently dried to permit planting. Some early melons have been planted in the San Joaquin Valley. However, the bulk of the acreage will not go into the ground until April.

CARROTS: Harvest of the Imperial Valley crop in California was delayed by wet weather and the inability of growers to get into the fields during the latter part of February. Shipments will become fairly heavy during the month of March. In Arizona, light solid carlot movement of carrots from the Salt River and

CARROTS, Cont'D: Yuma Valleys will continue during March. Late plantings should be available for harvest in April and May. Carrot movement is expected to continue in light volume until most of the lettuce is harvested. A rather small proportion of shipments to date has been "topped" carrots.

All Texas irrigated areas have large supplies of good quality carrots and crops in the dry-land Coastal Bend section - for late spring harvest - are in good condition. Many fields that were harvested the last few days in February were being entirely cleaned at considerable sacrifice of tonnage to have the land for other crops. Your carrots are in good condition. A few fields were weedy, but they are being cared for and promise good quality production. Sufficient acreage is now growing to provide active movement through June with light supplies during July.

CAULIFLOWER: Rains brought on the California cauliflower crop in the coastal districts quite rapidly and harvest during the early part of March will continue fairly heavy. The bulk of the production will originate in the Santa Maria Guadalupe area.

CELERY: The carrot movement from Florida through February is approximately 5 percent behind last year's movement for the same period. While the general condition of the celery crop is good, the dry weather is affecting it and present indications are for slightly lower yields than were expected. Planting of the spring crop is nearly completed in most areas, with the Zellwood section probably being the last to finish. In California, the Chula Vista section of San Diego County is now furnishing the bulk of the celery available. In the coastal areas of Guadalupe and the Salt as Valley harvest is well along. A small daily volume is moving out of the Delta section from a late planting which was made there last fall.

CUCUMBERS: The movement of cucumbers from Florida is negligible. Spring plantings in the central and southern counties were off to a good start but dry weather is now retarding growth. Planting is now going on in the north Florida sections. In Texas, considerable acreage of cucumbers is planted in the earliest districts, mainly in the Riviera and Sandia sections, and planting is starting in other areas. A material increase is expected in all areas. Most districts have good moisture conditions and the weather has been favorable for crops to get a good start. With continued good weather there should be some production starting about April 15, with liberal supplies by the latter part of that month.

EGGPLANT: The Florida winter eggplant acreage in the Pompano section has failed to come into satisfactory production. Yields from this acreage have been very light owing to the failure of the plants to set fruit. A very limited volume is now moving from Pompano and Ft. Myers. Transplanting of the Florida spring crop has been completed in most of the central counties and is under way in the McIntosh section.

ESCAROLE: The Florida escarole season in the Manatee, Sanford and Winter Garden sections is nearly over. The warm weather during February caused most of the late plantings in these sections to go to seed. Supplies during the remainder of the season will come mostly from the plantings on the muckland in the Everglades, and at Weirsdale and Zellwood.

LETTUCE: Late plantings in the Arizona Yuma Valley are now coming into full production, and supplies from that area are expected to reach a peak between February 10 and 15. Some late fields at Phoenix are also ready for harvest. Movement from Phoenix should be in good volume by March 15, with peak harvest expected between March 20 and 25. Local rains late in February were favorable for lettuce in the Salt River Valley, giving promise of excellent quality and favorable yields.

LETTUCE, Cont'd. In the Imperial Valley of California, harvest has been delayed by rains and wet fields, but with clearing weather should reach a few days of heavy shipment early this month. Some production has been lost by delayed harvest. Rains brought about rapid growth which caused considerable bursting and poor quality lettuce in the older fields. Production during late March will come mainly from the late planted acreage and quality should improve.

The Boston lettuce season in Florida is practically over in the Sanford and Manatee sections. Lettuce around McIntosh is now being cut with heaviest movement expected during the first two weeks in March. Iceberg lettuce in Sanford and Manatee sections is nearly finished. The Everglades is now the main producing section, but the acreage remaining for harvest in this sections is small. Plantings in the Wairsdale and Florahome sections are making fair progress but it will be the latter part of March or the first of April before any of this acreage will be ready for harvest.

The early spring lettuce crop in South Carolina, has shown marked improvement during the past 10 days. Weather was favorable for growth and the crop is now off to a good start. Acreage planted is about the same as in 1943. If weather continues favorable the crop should start to move to market the latter part of March. In North Carolina it has been impossible to transplant lettuce since the first week in February, but farmers in the Wilmington area will finish this job as soon as possible. Plants in the fields are in excellent condition and with continued favorable weather good yields should be realized. Harvest should begin April 15 to 25, and acreage is about the same as a year ago.

ONIONS: Condition of the south Texas onion crop is somewhat varied. Raymondville crops show the most advanced growth, but a number of the older fields were showing blight infestation the last few days in February. Plants were not seriously affected, however, and favorable weather in late February, when temperatures were in the 90's, is expected to bring about some improvement. With normal development during March there may be a light harvest in the Raymondville area the latter part of the month, but most crops there will not come into production until early April. Present prospects are for good quality onions, but adverse conditions in some years have affected these crops the last two weeks of the season. Laredo crops are still late, with a few exceptions. Many fields have plants that appear to need four to six weeks more growing time. Weeding and cultivating is badly needed, and some crops in the lower end (Zapata County) of the district are showing evidence of blight. Practically all areas of the district had plants with heavy tip burn. Unless crops show a material improvement, the tonnage for April harvest will be much lighter than usual. During the 1943 season harvest got started April 4 and about 93 percent of the crop moved during April.

Winter Garden crops, most of which are in smaller acreage blocks, are making good progress and have shown an improvement over earlier prospects. Eagle Pass crops have made outstanding progress; there is very little evidence of the lateness in getting plants to the fields in this section. In the Coastal Bend section, dry weather prevailed during most of February. Early crops continued to improve and these plantings are being given excellent care. But many of the late fields are still grassy and development has been slow. A few of the worst fields are being plowed up and the land put into other crops. About one-third of the Coastal Bend acreage is expected to furnish production about the same time harvest of the Laredo crop starts. Occasional fields in the Coastal Bend district are showing blight infestation, but recent weather is checking this condition. Early crops in the Wilson Karnes district continue to make good progress. Late plantings in this section are still making root growth and may begin to make better top growth with warmer weather. Thrips were evident in a number of sections, but plants were not showing effects of insects and most crops are far enough advanced to escape serious damage by thrips.

ONIONS; Cont'd. Planting of the north Texas crop is active, although a few sections are still too wet for active field work. The area will complete transplanting much later than usual, but weather has not damaged crops that have been planted. If they escape damage in March there is no reason for production to be much later than usual. During the 1943 season practically all districts were cut back by freezes March 4-5. All north Texas onion areas have a splendid moisture supply.

The California early onion crop has made good progress in most areas. Rains have been beneficial in the onion areas. Growers have their fields under good cultivation and crop prospects are now excellent. In the late onion areas acreage is still being planted. The rains were quite beneficial to the young plantings and have brought about good stands in most districts.

GREEN PEAS: Harvest in the Imperial Valley of California has again been delayed this time by the rains. Shipments will again reach fair proportions as soon as growers are able to pick their fields. The Imperial deal, however, should be pretty much out of the way by March 10. Spring pea plantings in other areas of California have done well during February. Most of the late plantings are up to good stands and the rains were quite beneficial to the early planted acreage. During March some peas will be available from the coastal plantings in Orange, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara Counties but will be used for most part in local markets. Toward the end of the month, picking should start in the Delano section and a fairly active rail movement may be expected out of California during April and May.

Movement of peas from Florida continues light. Plantings in the Everglades which were made during the latter part of December and the first half of January have reached their peak, and this deal should be practically over by the middle of March. Scattered plantings over the central part of the state, mainly around Plant City, are coming into production, and harvest should begin around McIntosh during the first week in March. In Mississippi, acreage of green peas will be below that intended because of the unfavorable planting conditions during the second half of February. Acreage will be smaller than last year.

GREEN PEPPERS: Florida winter acreage in the Pompano area is now at peak production. Plants are yielding heavily, but the fruit is mostly of poor to fair quality, with a high percentage of small sizes. Growers have culled heavier than usual. Peppers are now moving from points along the lower East Coast as far north as Ft. Pierce. A light volume is coming from the fall plantings in the Ft. Myers and Winter Garden sections. The spring crop in the central counties has been transplanted to the fields and, although in need of rain, is making fair progress.

COMMERCIAL EARLY IRISH POTATOES: The Texas Lower Valley (Early Spring) crop made good growth during February. A few fields had scattered plants showing blight, but growers have been dusting practically all fields and weather the latter part of February was favorable in helping to check any further development. A few crops may be ready for harvest the latter part of March, but production in volume is not expected until the early part of April. Planting of commercial crops in early areas of the Late Spring sections of the State is well along and conditions are favorable for crops to get a good start. Some of the mid-season (East and Northeast Texas) areas are still too wet to plant but most sections have some acreage which will furnish production around the middle of May, with harvest in these areas continuing through June. Early sections of the group plan an increase in acreage, but reports indicate a reduction in the later areas.

COMMERCIAL EARLY IRISH POTATOES, Cont'd: Harvesting of the Ft. Myers, Florida crop has been completed. Digging is now general in the Homestead section. Yields are very light and sizes are small. Most of this crop will be moved during March. In the Hastings section, planting has been completed and most of the crop is up to a good stand. The early plantings are well advanced and making excellent progress. Some fields have reached the blooming stage and with favorable growing conditions during March, excellent yields should be realized. Planting has also been completed in the LaCrosse section. Conditions have been favorable up to this time, but rain is needed. A sizeable acreage is being planted on the muck in the Zellwood section. Planting started February 20 and will be finished by the first week in March. In Kern County, California, planting is practically complete, but a few late areas will continue seeding for another ten days. In the southern districts, planting will again become active when fields dry sufficiently. The acreage of early potatoes in California will show a marked increase this year over last. It is quite likely there will be a fair April movement from the early plantings in Kern County.

Planting of the Louisiana commercial early potato crop has been very irregular and probably averages two to three weeks later than usual. This is expected to result in delayed and staggered marketings. Recent heavy rains further delayed completion of planting and some acreage remains to be planted. Wet soils and recent high temperatures have caused some "seed rot" of earlier plantings. Irish potato plantings in Mississippi will average later than usual this year because of excessive rains during the past two weeks, which delayed soil preparation. In Baldwin County, Alabama, planting is practically completed and is rapidly nearing completion in other commercial counties. Early plantings are up to a fair stand. Rain hindered planting operations for a day or two about the middle of February, but on the whole conditions are favorable. Rainy weather in North Carolina during February has delayed potato planting, and some seed is rotting in the ground. This will necessitate replanting in some areas.

SHALLOTS: In Louisiana, wet soils and warm weather have been unfavorable for best development of shallots. The crop continues to be later than usual and the recent warm weather is expected to cause some "seeders".

SPINACH: In Texas, good quality spinach will be available in volume during March from the Eagle Pass and Winter Garden districts. Supplies from the irrigated districts will continue plentiful through April. In Arkansas, a light harvest of spinach has been in progress since mid-February, although the bulk of the fall planted acreage was severely damaged by winter freezes. Probably 25 to 50 percent of the fall-sown acreage was killed and stands are thin on most of the remaining fields. Excessive moisture in February was unfavorable for spinach growth and may prevent replanting of the winter-killed acreage. Quality of spinach now being harvested is poor and practically all of it is being canned. In Pennsylvania, condition of wintered-over spinach in the Bucks-Philadelphia area was lowered because of lack of snow protection. Some fields have started to green and winter planted spinach has started to sprout.

SQUASH: A good volume of Florida squash is now coming from the acreage along the lower East Coast. Pompano, Homestead, and Ft. Pierce are the principal shipping points at this time. A large acreage has been planted in the central counties and a substantial increase in acreage is being made in the McIntosh section.

STRAWBERRIES: The Florida strawberry deal in the Plant City area is at the peak. Dry, warm weather has reduced production, and rain is needed badly. The Louisiana strawberry crop responded rapidly to the two weeks of warm weather and generally is in good condition. Plants are now in heavy bloom with small

STRAWBERRIES: berries forming rapidly. Although field work has lagged, fairly good yields are expected if weather is favorable from now on. If the present favorable weather continues carlot shipments should start about March 18. Weather in Alabama has been favorable since the first of the year, and the crop is in better condition than indicated earlier in the season. The acreage is substantially less than last year, and in the northern area stands are poor because of dry weather last fall. In North Carolina many fields of berries were neglected and allowed to go to grass last summer resulting in a sharp reduction in prospective acreage for this year. Weather has been conducive to good growth in fields where cultivation has been adequate. Farmers are expecting light yields from about one-third of the acreage because of inadequate cultivation and consequent grassy fields. Movement should begin the latter part of April. In Tennessee the extreme drought during the summer and fall last year was very hard on strawberries. Very little new acreage was set in 1943. Old beds have not put out many plants. Condition March 1 is reported about 10 points below last year. Acreage is indicated as about 15 percent below last year. Heavy rainfall during February with temperature well above normal has promoted early development of plants. In Arkansas, drought last summer killed many old and new beds, particularly those not well cultivated. Strawberries in the Ozark area generally are in better condition than in the White County area. Stands are thin, but the unusually heavy rainfall during February has caused a general revival and those plants which pulled through seem to be in good shape. Because of the thin stands, the berries should develop good size. There is a strong demand for plants and some growers may dig their beds for plants.

TOMATOES: Florida winter acreage in Dade, Broward and Collier counties is now coming into production. Volume has been light but a good movement is in prospect for March, with the peak coming during the latter part of the month. Dry weather is affecting the crop and sizes will run small. Quality at this time is very good. The spring crop in the Indian River and Manatee sections is making good progress. In the central counties, transplanting is under way and all of the seeded acreage is up and making good progress. Early Spring crops in the Texas Lower Valley section made splendid progress the last half of February. Plants are above average size and in a few scattered fields there were some plants ready to start forming blooms. First blooms, however, seldom succeed in holding, but the condition of the crop is such that with continued good growing weather the early part of March an early harvest may be expected from considerable acreage. Present prospects point to fairly liberal supplies around the middle of April. Early districts of the Late Spring tomato counties have most of their acreage planted and plants are making good growth. Seed beds in the important East Texas district are in good condition and most growers are ready to set the plants to the cold frames the early part of March. Plants are available for a large increase in acreage in all Late Spring districts of the State.

Harvest continues in the California Imperial Valley and production is steadily increasing. Harvest, however, is still confined to the early producing areas. The heavy movement out of the Imperial Valley will not occur until the late areas come into production the latter part of April and during May. Plantings of the summer crop have been made in the southern coastal districts, but the bulk of the crop in the San Joaquin Valley is still in seedbeds and will not be set to the fields before April. In Mississippi, tomato plants are in cold frames, and transplanting to fields will probably begin the latter half of March. Most Tennessee tomato seeds have been sown in hot beds. Some are up with good stands reported. However, some indicate that excessive rain and cloudy weather during the past few days were not favorable for the plants. Rain has also hindered the preparation of cold frames for transplantings.

WATERMELONS: Most of the Florida acreage around Leesburg is up and growing. In the Gainesville district planting is nearing completion and some of the acreage is now up to a stand. The warm weather has encouraged earlier planting and these plantings have received no set back. If the weather continues favorable, an earlier-than-usual season can be expected. In the earliest Texas districts considerable acreage of watermelons is planted, with some fields up to a good stand and making a little growth. Conditions are favorable for continued active planting the early part of March. All early sections plan a large increase in acreage. With continued good growing weather, production will be available in large volume much earlier than usual. Present indications in South Carolina point to a substantial increase in the early summer watermelon acreage in the commercial producing counties of Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell and Hampton. Fields are being fertilized and planting is expected to start the latter part of March. About the only limiting factor is the scarcity and high price of seed, especially Cannon Ball seed, a variety which is in large demand.

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Rains were general throughout California during the latter part of February. With snow at low levels in the mountains during this period, daily temperatures have continued cool. Some frosts have occurred, but with little crop damage resulting. Loss of planted acreage by flood water has not been serious although considerable acreage recently planted in the southern districts will have to be replanted because of poor stands. In the desert areas, rains have again delayed harvesting operations but these districts will be active again as soon as fields dry sufficiently. Throughout the state most fields were well cultivated prior to the rains, and growers will resume operations as soon as the fields dry. Aside from holding back harvesting and planting, crops in most areas were benefited by the rains.

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