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For Immediate Release:

USDA's '07-'08 Orange Crop Estimate Increases Slightly

LAKELAND, Fla. (April 9, 2008) – Florida's 2007-2008 orange crop estimate increased slightly to 168.5 million boxes, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) which today released a revised citrus forecast.

The USDA had previously pegged the orange crop at 167 million boxes.

“This remains a good sized crop for the Florida citrus industry,” said Michael W. Sparks, executive vice president/CEO of Florida Citrus Mutual. “We are concerned with the Valencia prices growers are currently receiving and we’re hoping the pricing rebounds in the coming months. Right now growers need higher prices to offset increased production costs related to pest and disease as well as the sharp spike in energy prices.”

The USDA said the 1.5 million box increase is comprised entirely of early and mid-season varieties. The 167 million boxes are made up of 80.5 million boxes of Early-Mids, 3.0 million boxes of Navels and 85 million boxes of Valencias.

The Florida citrus industry saw a decline in orange production from 230 million boxes to 129 million boxes during the five-year period between the 2001-2002 season and the 2006-2007 season. This reduction was due in large part to the effects of hurricanes, development and pests and diseases such as citrus canker and greening.

A 168.5 million box orange crop would represent about a 31 percent increase from the 2006-2007 season. The USDA issues its initial estimate in October and then revises it each month through the end of the citrus season in July.

In today's revised estimate, Florida grapefruit remained unchanged at 24.5 million boxes. Tangelos also remained unchanged at 1.5 million boxes and tangerines remained unchanged at 4.8 million boxes.

The complete USDA crop forecast is available from the Florida Agriculture Statistics Service online at http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Publications/Citrus/cfp.htm

Founded in 1948 and currently representing nearly 8,000 grower members, Florida Citrus Mutual is the state's largest citrus growers' organization. For more information, please visit www.flcitrusmutual.com.

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