

## Tulare likely to remain top ag county with \$8B in receipts

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Thanks to these girls, Tulare County will likely retain the top position as the most productive farm county in the U.S. Row crop land in western Tulare County pulled a vanishing act in 2014, said Marilyn Kinoshita, ag commissioner.

“We saw 250,000 acres in the county go out of production this past year,” she said. The lack of water is to blame.

Despite that, Tulare County is likely to retain the title as most productive farm county in the nation in 2014 with the annual crop report released this week showing a 9.1-percent increase in value over 2013. Last year's crop reached a value of more than \$8 billion.

In 2013, Tulare County's farm production was worth \$7.8 billion.

Even as land was idled, farmers planted 25,000 acres of permanent plantings in 2014, including nearly 9,000 acres of new tangerine trees. Nut trees — almonds, walnuts and pistachios — made up the rest with some 16,000 acres of new trees.

Almonds saw a sizable increase in value based on the average price increasing from \$6,000 a ton in 2013 to \$8000 ton in 2014.

Milk led the way to the record high values in 2014 to \$2.53 billion, some half a billion dollars more than 2013. The higher number came largely from an increase in the price of milk in a trend that has reversed big time in 2015. Dairy men got an average of \$22 per hundredweight for their milk in 2014 compared to \$18.40 per hundredweight in

2013.

Those same dairymen that were smiling in 2014 are not so happy now, as they are said to be getting under \$15 per hundredweight this year.

Up in 2014 were sales of livestock, pushed higher by cattle sales as ranchers culled their herds due the drought.

Grape acreage declined by 1,700 acres while tangerines hit the sweet spot, becoming the No. 2 citrus crop with 23,140 acres, outpacing Valencia acreage at 16,300.

Pistachios were up more than \$1,000 a ton, while the price of walnuts fell about \$1,000 per ton.

Cotton acres in Tulare County fell to 14,000 in 2014, and have dropped to just under 10,000 acres in 2015 as reported by the state's pink bollworm survey. Across California, cotton is no longer king.

Olives had an off-year in 2014 with county plantings down to 11,700 acres and production of 1.5 tons per acre, compared to 4.7 tons per acre the year before.

With a value of more than \$8 billion, the county will have to wait a few weeks to see if, like last year, the numbers beat out Fresno and Kern counties. Both have larger Westside acreage, hurt by a lack of water and far fewer milk cows. Fresno's crop was valued at \$6.4 billion in 2014 and Kern County was \$6.7 billion, making it No. 2 in the rankings. Both report soon.

Tulare County would not mind keeping the bragging rights.

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