

1996 SOUTH CAROLINA FRUIT TREE SURVEY

SUMMARY

South Carolina's commercial apple and peach orchards and grape vineyards totaled 20,255 acres as of December 1, 1996. This was 43 percent below the comparable acreage reported in 1991. Peach acreage decreased 46 percent, apples 15 percent and grapes 7 percent. Peach acreage was by far the largest, accounting for 84 percent of the total fruit acreage. Peach acreage registered a 37 percent decline in the Upper State while the Ridge and Coastal Plains were both down 50 and 51 percent respectively from 1991.

Although South Carolina's apple acreage was down 15 percent from 1991, the total number of trees only registered a 4 percent decrease. This is due to the increased popularity of higher density plantings in recent years. Growers in Spartanburg County reported a 4 percent increase in tree numbers, but Oconee County was off 12 percent and all other counties showed a 2 percent decline. South Carolina accounts for less than one percent of the Nation's apple production; however, the State is recognized for early, fine quality fruit.

Overall, grape acreage continued the downward trend that began in the mid-seventies. All Muscadine types were down 11 percent but Bunch types showed some resurgence and were up 19 percent. The decline of the grape industry is further highlighted when looking at the age of the vines, where 75 percent of the vines are 9 years old or older.