

Cherry season almost in full bloom

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

Here's some cheery news for cherry lovers: After a slow start, it's shaping up to be a good season.

"It's just getting going," said Jim Culbertson, executive manager of the Lodi-based California Cherry Advisory Board. "The season is five to six days late. That may not seem like much, but it makes a big impact, particularly on holiday sales."

Memorial Day weekend is big for cherry sales. The Bings – California's favorite sweet cherry – should start rolling in by May 25, just in time for holiday celebrations.

Currently in farmers markets and stores are the early season varieties: Brook, Burlat, Tulare and Coral. They'll be followed by the yellow-and-red Rainiers and dark red Bings.

"The real volume comes in after Memorial Day," Culbertson said. "But the entire season is only six to eight weeks long."

California, which represents about one-third of the nation's sweet cherry crop, will produce about 162 million pounds of cherries this season, with Bings representing about 45 percent. Oregon and Washington are the other major sweet cherry-producing states. Michigan grows tart or sour cherries.

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