

Weather takes toll on Calif. olive oil

By Tim Hearnden, Capital Press

DAIRYVILLE – Despite some weather issues, olive oil producers in California hope to at least match last year’s mark of 3.5 million gallons, an industry expert says.

As the harvest of oil olives started about two weeks earlier than normal, growers anticipate “excellent” quality, said Patty Darragh, executive director of the California Olive Oil Council.

Last year’s production was a big jump from the roughly 2.5 million gallons turned out in 2012. But olives are an alternate-bearing fruit, and freezes, a wet spring and wind pressure may have hampered growth, Darragh said.

However, the drought that’s stymied production of many crops in California hasn’t affected oil olives as much, she said.

The Gerber-based Pacific Farms and Orchards, which produces Pacific Sun Olive Oil, anticipates a fairly light crop on the oil varieties because of poor chilling hours in the winter and warm weather during the bloom, general manager Brendon Flynn said.

Grower Larry Maben, who sells to the California Olive Ranch, said yield was down from his trees near Orland.

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