



## *South Carolina Department of Agriculture* Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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### **Freezing Temperatures Devastate South Carolina Farmers**

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – Last week, temperatures dipped to record lows and now South Carolina peach farmers face the worst crop damage they have seen in ten years. Strawberries and blueberries were among other crops damaged during the freeze.

Members of the South Carolina Peach Council and other industry representatives met Monday morning to discuss the severity of the damage to the peach crop, which was in early bloom due to an unseasonably warm winter. Farmers are hopeful to have ten to fifteen percent of their usual crop. Peach-lovers can still expect to see local peaches in July and August in limited quantities. Statewide, strawberries have experienced about a fifteen percent loss. Midland and Upstate blueberry farmers are reporting significant loss, similar to that of peaches. Information is still being gathered from blueberry farms in the lower part of the state.

“Peaches are a signature South Carolina crop, and this weather anomaly has devastated peach farmers,” said Hugh Weathers, SC Commissioner of Agriculture. “However, as South Carolina farmers have shown time and again, they are resilient and with the help of allied-industry partners, they will survive this devastating blow.”

The freeze will impact more than just the fruit. Peach farms are major economic drivers in rural communities and support over 1500 jobs statewide. Farmers are still assessing the damage and do not expect to know the total impact of the freeze for at least three weeks.

South Carolina is the largest peach producing state on the east coast and is second only to California nationally. The annual peach crop has a value of \$90 million with a \$300 million economic impact. For more information about peaches and other specialty crops, visit [agriculture.sc.gov](http://agriculture.sc.gov).

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