



South Carolina Department of Agriculture Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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SC Farmers Prepare for Wintery Weather

COLUMBIA, S.C. – As temperatures around South Carolina are predicted to drop into the twenties this week, farmers are preparing for another test from Mother Nature. Crops of particular concern include peaches, blueberries and strawberries.

Many factors will affect the amount of damage, if any, sustained by the crops. Some of those variables include: stage of bloom, wind, moisture and the length of time the temperature stays below freezing. Farmers will not be able to make an accurate assessment until the cold weather has moved through the area and temperatures rise.

“For now, all we can do is wait,” said Hugh Weathers, SC Commissioner of Agriculture. “These specialty crops are very important to our farm economy and we are all saying a prayer for the farmers ahead of the potential freeze.”

An unseasonably warm winter brought early bloom for some varieties of peaches and blueberries. Much like a homeowner cares for their plants during a freeze farmers will take preventative measures to help mitigate damage to their crops. Some may use frost blankets to cover susceptible plants, wind tunnels or water to create a barrier around the fruit.

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.

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