**Fresno County: Number One Ag Producer**

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By Dale Yurong

05/22/2007 (KFSN) -- It is a title Fresno County does not want to give up, the nation's top agricultural producer. The newly released 2006 Fresno County crop and livestock report showed a 4% increase from last year to $4.8 billion.

Jerry Prieto, Fresno County Ag Commissioner, says "I'm pleased to announce that Fresno County remains the #1 agricultural county in the state and the nation."

Almond growers are among the area's movers and shakers. With a $25 million increase in production, almonds are inching closer to grapes as Fresno County's top crop. "Almonds have gone up because the acreage has gone up mainly" says Prieto.

More almonds, more bees to pollinate local crops, apiary and pollination services saw an 85% increase. But beekeepers continue to lose entire hives due to a mysterious disorder.

Poultry production saw an impressive $109 million increase. Among Fresno County's top five crops, poultry is in the fourth spot behind tomatoes but ahead of cattle.

Russell Efrid, Fresno County Farm Bureau, says "to have Fresno once again the top county in the nation is something we're very proud of."

One troubling trend though shows more growers are abandoning the once mighty cotton crop.

Fresno County easily out-paced Tulare County for the nation's top spot. Tulare County, the nation's number two, saw a drop in its dairy industry due to plunging milk prices last year.

Ag commissioner Jerry Prieto was pleasantly surprised by the total. It marked the fourth straight year the county topped the $4 billion mark.

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