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Florida's losses are Texas' gains

United Press International
PHARR — Texas citrus growers are reaping bigger profits from the woes of Florida fruit crops heavily damaged by harsh winter freezes.

Initial damage estimates showed early winter bouts of icy weather in Florida may have destroyed up to 25 percent of the state's citrus crop — as much as \$385 million in lost profits from orange juice sales alone.

Florida growers say the ex-

tensive freeze may make it impossible for them to return to full production this year. But Texas growers in the Rio Grande Valley — one of the nation's top three citrus producing areas — were luckier than their Florida counterparts.

Although temperatures dipped below freezing several times in early January, the cold weather apparently did no damage to Texas' 70,000 acres of oranges, grapefruits, limes, lemons and tangerines.

"It had been a good season up until Christmas when the outlook was somewhat gloomy because of prices and overabundance of supplies," said Les Whitlock, manager of the Texas Valley Citrus Committee, a regulatory arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"But now with the Florida

freeze and the decrease in supplies, it is looking the other way — it looks bright for us."

Ed Boler, whose Boler Farms in Pharr has been producing and marketing citrus fruit for almost 40 years, was even more optimistic about the outlook for Texas crops.

"I'd say it's the best crop we've had in five years," Boler said. "Our quality is excellent, juice and sugar content is real good. There's not a thing but a bright future for us now."

"It (the citrus market) would have been very depressed if the freeze in Florida had not come. There would have been more fruit in the United States than could have been consumed."

Whitlock said Florida's problems already are causing an increase in the price Texas growers are receiving for their fruit. He said grapefruit prices were up about 40 percent and oranges were selling for about 20 percent more than before the freeze. He said the higher selling prices were coupled with much higher production.

"In production volume, it's up probably 64 percent on grapefruit and about 40 percent on oranges," Whitlock said. "We had a freeze here ourselves in '78-'79, so for the last three years we've been down. Then we went through a hurricane last season when we still were recovering from the freeze. We're now just returning to pre-freeze levels as far as production is concerned."

Whitlock said Texas is second behind Florida in grapefruit production and third behind Florida and California in the production of oranges. He said

Texas supplies about 18 percent of the nation's fresh grapefruit and about 6 percent of the nation's fresh oranges.

Freezing weather can totally destroy entire groves of trees and Boler said there's nothing growers can do to prevent extremely cold temperatures from taking a heavy toll.

"Overall, the Valley is equipped to protect its crops — nothing compares Florida's (protection measures)," Boler said. "The bigger interest in Florida cause it's controlled by companies that control acreages, where here in the valley it's owned by many people."

"If it were to be severer say 14, 16, 18, 20 degrees quite a few hours — there's very little that can be done."

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United Press International
NEW YORK — Some of those in the liquor business are finding sweet ways to expand their market share, if not counter the inroads made by wine at cocktail time.

Young adult guzzlers and the growing proportion of women tipplers — what the industry calls "entry level drinkers" — is their target, interviews indicate.

Examples: — Leaders in the cordials trade are pushing schnapps jazzed up with flavors and whiskey-based liqueurs, which they say sell big at college campus hangouts and ski lodges.

— Schenley is circumspect but notes cocktails and mixed drinks now "often vie with choices that cover the entire spectrum of the beverage industry." And that, it says, includes soft drinks.

"There's no question that

wine is enjoying increasing popularity," confirms Marvin Shanken, a knowledgeable observer of the industry. "And a certain amount of that is coming from the distilled spirits drinkers and has been for five years."

In "Impact," a trade research publication Shanken puts out, he notes the American wine market grew at an annual average of 5.9 percent from 1970 to 1980 compared with 1.6 percent for distilled spirits. Wine shipments passed distilled spirits shipments for the first time, reaching more than 200 million cases compared to less than 191 million for spirits.

Shanken and others say there's no way the big distillers are about to tackle wine head on. For one thing, they have wineries of their own, or they distribute the grape or import it.

"The wine drinker goes back and forth between Perrier and some other soft drink. The majority of pre-dinner wine drinkers, I don't think ever were martini drinkers or sour drinkers. The majority are young and not spirits drinkers in the first place," Seagrams Haimon said.

"Myers rum and orange juice has become one of the hottest drinks on campus," says Haimon. "They have a desire for something with taste. Vodka has no taste. They want a taste to come through — for example, rum and Coke."

But there are lots of young, dedicated hard liquor drinkers. "There are particular brands to which they're turned on," says Shanken. "Jack Daniels, for example."

Haimon also says the affluence of even the entry level drinker heightens prospects for a premium mixable dark rum with the advantages of color and taste over vodka and gin.

"When I went to college, if I had \$1.25 for a pitcher of beer, that was a lot of money," he said. "Today it is conspicuous consumption. We have the mini-

Different tastes explored

Distillers sweeten market

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num wage — a couple of bucks in the jeans at the end of the week."

Cordials sales also are up from about 4 million cases in 1964 to over 13 million in 1980, says Patricia Wiley, DeKuyper's marketing director.

DeKuyper's big push at the moment is schnapps although she says other cordials do well among young adult drinkers, particularly women.

"Youngsters of drinking age are taking it away from having to be a clear liquid used as a shot. Schnapps has become a contemporary word for what liqueurs used to be. There's no real similarity to the original 60 proof."

Heublein has produced an 85 proof peppermint schnapps called "Steel." As for DeKuyper, under the aegis of National Brands, Wiley says, "We've come out with a 100 proof peppermint we're calling silver schnapps. It has a silver label."

While Silver is a label, Heublein's Steel is a proprietary brand. "We want people to go to a bar and ask for it by the brand name, not just for schnapps," says Billie Brown of Heublein.

wooing the youth market matter of attracting people tastes they like, Wiley says. People today are impatient. They were raised on soft drinks. They also mentioned a chocolate candy roll, the jelly bean and sweettasting red mouthwash.

"What they want is instant gratification."


These prospective customers have yet to establish brand preferences, Wiley says. "We're doing in the industry allowing the mouth mint flavor translating them to other vorts."

"The blue-jeaned, dressed set wants a quality of sensation. They are attracted cause of the refreshing to cooling to the tongue, warm to the stomach."

Along this line, Heublein offers a Canadian whiskey liqueur, Yukon Jack, which Brown says young drinkers for.

Or they take peppermint schnapps as a shot with beer practice Wiley of DeKuyper is big in Denver ski-land, the best of both worlds — touch of sour with a touch sweet."

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