



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign
Agricultural
Services

Risk
Management
Agency

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BULLETIN NO: MGR-17-004

TO: All Approved Insurance Providers
All Risk Management Agency Field Offices
All Other Interested Parties

FROM: Heather Manzano /s/ *Heather Manzano* 3/24/2017
Acting Administrator

SUBJECT: Claims Advisory - 2017 Freeze Damage in the Southeast, primarily
Georgia and South Carolina

BACKGROUND:

Severe freeze events in the Southeastern United States on March 15-16, 2017, have resulted in significant and varying crop damage, particularly for blueberry and peach growers in Georgia and South Carolina. Some reports indicate the freeze event may have damaged 80 percent of the blueberry crop in Southern Georgia and 85 to 90 percent of early and mid-season peach varieties in both states. Crops that advanced early, due to an unusually warm January and February, were damaged by the March freeze. Damaged perennial crops require producers to act quickly to spray recommended fungicides to help prevent infection; heavily prune to remove dead tissue and promote new, healthy growth; and take other recommended steps depending upon crop type and variety and frost protection.

ACTION:

Producers with insured crops impacted by the freeze should immediately contact their crop insurance agent to report their loss. Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) should begin appraising the impacted crop as soon as possible and releasing the acreage, as appropriate, so that producers can follow recommended good management practices to prevent disease and mitigate reduced production in the bushes or trees for future years. If producers elect to prune blueberry acreage by mowing to the ground, refer to the applicable Crop and Special Provisions statements.

For blueberry production with immature or mature fruit, refer to the appraisal methods outlined in section 5B of the Blueberry Loss Adjustment Standards Handbook. In accordance with section 10(d) of the Blueberry Crop Provisions, if the insured acreage has harvested or unharvested damaged blueberries and the percent of damaged blueberries exceeds that shown in the Special Provisions for that type, production to count for the damaged unit, or portion of a unit will be zero if no blueberries are harvested and sold from such acreage.

For peaches RMA authorizes AIPs to use, as applicable, the Immature Peach Appraisal Deviation found in Section 14 of the Peach Loss Adjustment Standards Handbook.

Any acreage of crops impacted by the freeze that the AIP determines will not produce harvestable fruit may be released with zero appraised production to count.

In order to ensure that AIPs are able to adequately assess the loss and in accordance with section 9 of the Blueberry Crop Provisions and Section 11 of the Peach Crop Provisions, insured producers must not sell or dispose of the damaged crop until AIPs have given written consent to do so.

DISPOSAL DATE:

December 31, 2017