



The Sacramento Bee  
*Life. Captured daily.*

[Search Archives](#) or

Site Search



Win Free Movie Tickets: [TicketClub](#)

[News Pages](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Politics](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [Travel](#) | [Women](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Homes](#) | [Cars](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Yellow](#) ?



Enhancing the Quality of People's Lives

X -

close



EMAIL THIS PAGE



PRINT THIS PAGE



NEWSLETTERS



MAKE MY HOMEPAGE

## El Dorado County: The growing is good

### Crops fruitful despite falling timber sales

**By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer**  
**Published 2:15 a.m. PDT Sunday, July 20, 2003**

Although the value of timber sales was the lowest in more than a decade, increases in sales of fruits and nuts helped sustain El Dorado County's agricultural economy during the past year.

Agricultural Commissioner Bill Snodgrass reported that the county's gross crop value in 2002 was \$48.2 million, a 2 percent decrease from 2001.

The decline was attributed primarily to an 8.5 percent decrease in timber sales. In 2002, timber accounted for 46 percent of the county's agricultural commodities.

But fruits and nuts, the second-largest category of agricultural products, recorded an 11 percent increase in sales.

The total impact of agriculture on El Dorado County's economy, including byproducts and tourism, was approximately \$391 million in 2002, an increase of 4 percent over the previous year. The wine industry alone contributed an estimated \$163 million, while the county's Apple Hill



Winery owner Greg Boeger drives through his vineyard in Placerville on Thursday and takes a closer look at the grapes.

**Sacramento Bee/Randall Benton**

region was about \$84 million, Snodgrass said.

He noted that the number of acres planted in wine grapes topped 2,000 last year, the largest number since the early 1900s.

Although production of apples and apple products declined slightly in 2002, sales were up 16 percent, increasing from \$5.7 million to nearly \$6.7 million.

The Christmas tree industry also saw almost a 3 percent increase in sales despite a 2 percent decline in production. Sales rose from \$3 million in 2001 to approximately \$3.1 million last year.

While timber remains El Dorado County's major agricultural product, the industry has experienced a significant decline in sales over the past decade. In 1993, Snodgrass said, timber sales totaled \$87 million, compared with \$21.7 million in 2002.

Although timber production in 2002 was up 50 percent over 2001, sales declined 8.5 percent.

Snodgrass said three factors are to blame for the industry's woes: more restrictions on timber harvesting on private and public lands, a continuing decline in prices for timber and competition from imports.

"Ninety percent of the timber we use in this country comes from foreign countries," he said.

The county's wine grape industry, however, continued to show steady growth, posting a 13.7 percent increase in production and an 8.4 percent increase in sales. Total sales rose from \$4.3 million in 2001 to nearly \$4.7 million last year.

Approximately 5,000 acres were planted in wine grapes in the early 1900s, but the number had dropped to 11 acres by 1967.

The revival began in 1972 with the arrival of Greg Boeger of Boeger Winery and Dick Bush of Madrona Vineyards.

Now, Snodgrass said, the county is home to approximately 150 grape growers with vineyards ranging in size from a half-acre to 100 acres.

Boeger, a member of the county Agricultural Commission, said the industry is growing at a healthy rate. "We're not planting faster than there is a demand for," he said, noting that prices last year remained stable and appear to be holding steady this year as well.

Snodgrass said the price of El Dorado County grapes dropped only 0.8 percent last year, while prices for grapes elsewhere in the state declined 30 percent to 40 percent.

Although he and other growers sell some of their grapes to wineries in Napa and Sonoma counties, Boeger said most of El Dorado County's grapes are processed locally.

He credited the relative stability of the local industry to cooperation among growers and wineries. The growers, Boeger said, don't demand the highest prices when prices are up, and when prices drop, the wineries try to pay more than the going rate.

"We're very fortunate that the quality of our wine is quite good," Boeger said. "The most important thing to have is a good reputation."

Among other sectors of agriculture, total sales of livestock increased by less than 1 percent. But sales of cattle and calves in 2002 were up 5.5 percent from the previous year, rising from \$2.9 million to \$3.1 million.

Sales of apiary products -- honey, beeswax, pollen and pollination services -- declined 6.2 percent, and the total value of hay and pasture dropped 1.5 percent.

The 2002 crop report was dedicated to El Dorado County Supervisor Carl Borelli, who died in April. Snodgrass said Borelli was a great friend of agriculture.

---

#### About the Writer

---

The Bee's Cathy Locke can be reached at (916) 608-7451 or [clocke@sacbee.com](mailto:clocke@sacbee.com).

**TheSacramentoBee** - Get the whole story every day - **SUBSCRIBE NOW!**



**Sacramento Bee/Randall Benton**



Greg Boeger pours samples for visitors Barb Prine, far left, her father-in-law, Doug Prine, and his niece, Anne Prine.

**Sacramento Bee/Randall Benton**



Boeger Winery's grapes are planted on the site of a vineyard that flourished in the 1890s.

**Photo courtesy of Boeger Vineyards**

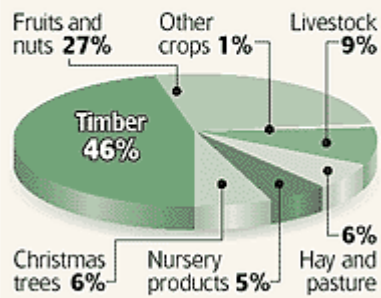


The county only had 11 acres of grapes in 1967 before Greg Boeger started his winery.

**Sacramento Bee/Randall Benton**

## Agricultural commodities

Here's a look at El Dorado County's crop report for 2002:



Source: El Dorado County Department of Agriculture

Sacramento Bee/Olivia Nguyen