

2026 PISTACHIO CROP ESTIMATE

RELEASED ON AUG 2026



AGC NEWS

PACIFIC FARM
MANAGEMENT INC.



WEST HILLS

We are pleased to present our fourth annual Pistachio Production Estimate. The 2025 crop year provided a powerful validation of our rigorous data methodology. While early industry-wide pre season projections fluctuated wildly, our team's targeted on-the-ground intelligence proved remarkably accurate.

In our August 2025 report, we estimated an average yield of **3,075 pounds** per acre. The finalized actual yield reported by American Pistachio Growers (APG) came in at **3,030 pounds per acre**, resulting in a final actual harvest of **1.5765 billion pounds**. **This represents a variance of just 1.46%**, highlighting the exceptional precision and dedication of our field scouting staff.

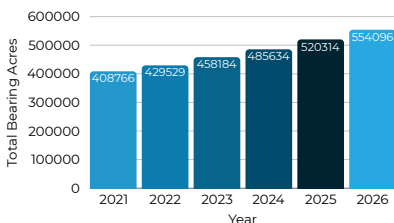
It is also critical to note that late-season rain events in September 2025 introduced high humidity and moisture right as harvesting operations were peaking. This forced several Central Valley growers to bypass or abandon specific orchard blocks due to immediate crop quality and staining concerns. Had these late fall rains not occurred, these fields would have been harvested, and our pre-harvest yield estimate of 3,075 pounds per acre would have been almost perfectly on the money.

This proven forecasting standard gives growers and processors a highly reliable foundation as we navigate a historically tight and volatile 2026 crop year.

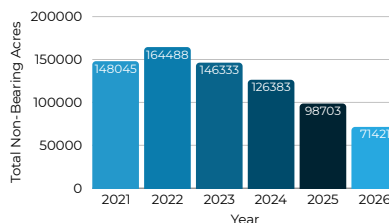
ACREAGE

Following the landmark 2025 season, California's pistachio footprint has officially surpassed another major milestone, with total industry area now exceeding 625,000 acres. In 2025, finalized data indicates that bearing acreage reached a record **520,314 acres**, marking the first time in industry history that California's bearing pistachio orchards crossed the half-million-acre threshold. Non-bearing acreage for 2025 was finalized at **98,703 acres**.

Bearing Pistachio Acreage in California



Non Bearing Pistachio Acreage in California



For the 2026 season, bearing acreage is projected to climb to **554,096 acres** as massive plantings from the turn of the decade transition into commercial production. Concurrently, non-bearing acreage is projected to drop to **71,421 acres**—continuing a steep, multi-year decline.

This dramatic constriction of the non-bearing pipeline is a direct reflection of a massive slowdown in new developments. While the industry averaged roughly 32,500 to 40,000 newly planted acres annually between 2018 and 2022, new plantings have sharply plummeted to just **5,000 to 10,000 acres per year** more recently. This cooling period is heavily driven by:

- ▶ **SGMA (Sustainable Groundwater Management Act) implementation**, which has severely restricted groundwater access in critical growing areas.
- ▶ **Substantial surface water limitations**, particularly south of Madera County where over 90% of the state's historical pistachio acreage resides.
- ▶ **The high cost of borrowing**, coupled with the financial reality that most farmers simply cannot afford to wait 6 to 8 years for new plantings to reach profitability.

LONG-TERM PRODUCTION OUTLOOK & PUMPING RESTRICTIONS

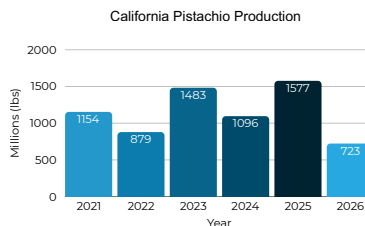
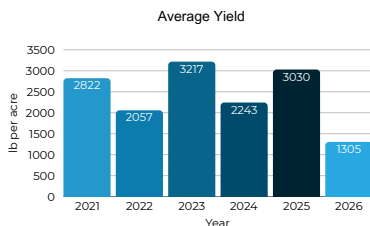
Looking ahead, California's pistachio production is projected to peak between **2027 and 2032** as the final wave of large non-bearing tracts come online and young bearing trees fully mature to their highest yield potential.

From that peak, total production is expected to stabilize and begin a steady decline, heavily restricted by SGMA pumping mandates. We are already seeing the early stages of this water-driven retreat; large tracts of pistachio plantings are actively being abandoned in the **Allensworth and Alpaugh** areas due to severe groundwater pumping restrictions. We estimate that 10-15% of pistachio acreage in California is planted in areas that are only dependent on groundwater with another 5% in severely restricted surface water districts.

PRODUCTION & YIELD

The record-shattering 2025 crop yielded **3,030 pounds per acre**, resulting in a final harvest of **1.5765 billion pounds**. In stark contrast, the 2026 season represents a massive “off-year” contraction. Based on extensive field scouting, winter dormancy evaluation, and post-bloom canopy analysis, our **official yield estimate for 2026 is 1,305 pounds per acre**.

With bearing acreage climbing to **554,096 acres**, this yield projects a **total 2026 crop production of 723 million pounds**—a sharp contraction of approximately 50.6% compared to the record 2025 harvest.



THE 2026 EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY

This massive downturn was not what we or the industry were expecting. On the contrary, going into this season, the stage was set for a potential back-to-back high-yield cycle reminiscent of the strong 2020 and 2021 production years.

The summer of 2025 was one of the most perfect growing seasons in recent memory. The region experienced an unusually stable summer completely free of severe heatwaves. This meant trees suffered virtually no heat-induced stress during the critical bud differentiation period. As orchards transitioned into dormancy, the buds looked exceptionally healthy, uniform, and plump, pointing to a potentially solid, high-volume crop for 2026.

While the baseline raw chill numbers looked low, our analysis of the protective Tule fog canopy indicated that we actually had adequate chill—or at the very least, dormancy was not nearly as weak as the standard model suggested. Everything was tracking beautifully for a strong crop up until a catastrophic spring weather anomaly turned the season on its head.

THE 2026 FORECAST CHALLENGE: BLOOM ASYNCHRONY & BLANKING

The major disruption came during bloom when a severe heatwave struck. This sudden temperature spike completely threw off pollination dynamics:

- ▶ **Asynchronous Bloom:** The heat broke the natural bloom synchronization of the trees. Rather than waking up in harmony, male trees began releasing pollen well before the females were open and receptive.
- ▶ **Critically Shortened Pollen Viability:** Under normal weather patterns, pollen remains viable for a stable 5 to 10-day period. The extreme, sudden heat compressed this critical pollination window down to a mere 2 to 3 days in many orchards, severely limiting the percentage of flowers successfully fertilized.

This poor pollination is directly translating into significant **issues with nut fill**. While the outer shells formed, scouting teams are observing high percentages of empty shells. We expect to see **substantially higher blank percentages at processing this season**, resulting in sporadic yields that will vary wildly from block to block. This widespread blanking introduces a much higher margin of volatility into early estimates. The daily March temperature in Fresno exceeded the average for April, a very rare occurrence.

CROP PROGRESS & WEATHER

The 2026 crop progress was accelerated by hot spring conditions, with bloom tracking nearly a week ahead of normal historical averages. Unlike the stable, moderate spring conditions of 2025, the 2026 bloom period was highly irregular.

The defining weather anomaly of the season remains the **March 2026 heatwave**. The sudden transition from winter weather to summer-like heat during pollination severely impacted male-to-female bloom synchronization, causing a significant percentage of blank nuts and irregular sizing.

THE TULE FOG ANOMALIES OF WINTER 2025/2026

While the standard chill portion model calculated a highly restrictive **810 chill hours** (using the rigid sub-threshold), our field observations indicate that the physical dormancy conditions in the orchards were much healthier than this raw number implies.

The 2025/2026 winter season brought a massive, unrelenting blanket of Tule fog across November and December. During this period, Fresno recorded **16 consecutive days where the ambient temperature never exceeded 50 degrees**. In the history of Central Valley climate records, only two other winters have ever produced a longer stretch of consecutive, sub-socked-in days.

This persistent fog layer acted as a natural protective canopy, shielding orchards from direct sunlight and preventing the wood from warming during the day. In pistachio physiology, under complete, high-humidity cloud cover, effective chill accumulation continues at slightly higher ambient temperatures.

- ▶ **The Adjustment:** If we adjust the chill accumulation threshold to a more realistic to account for this prolonged, dense fog cover, the effective chill hours experienced by the trees **increases by roughly 300 hours, bringing the seasonal total to a much healthier 1,110 hours**.

This explains why, despite a seemingly “low” official chill count, tree canopy emergence remained relatively uniform across most blocks before the devastating March heatwave struck.

Water availability for 2026 has been mixed. While surface reservoir storage entered the spring at 118% of average, the lack of late winter snowpack prompted the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to finalize State Water Project allocations at a modest 45%. Ground pumping under strict SGMA allocations remains the primary, albeit highly expensive, lifeline for Southern Central Valley orchards.

VARIETAL VULNERABILITY: KERMAN VARIETY BLANKING

Scouting and field testing have revealed that blanking is particularly high in the Kerman variety this season. Although Kerman initially appeared to set a much better visual crop than the newer Lost Hills and Golden Hills varieties, the final blank percentage is tracking significantly higher in the Kerman variety.

Some Kerman fields scouted in early July showed blanking levels as high as 50%. This serves as a critical warning for growers: a heavy visual “hang” in Kerman blocks this season may be highly deceptive, masking a lack of internal kernel development that will only materialize once the crop hits the processors.

The primary underlying biological drivers for this steep production drop and quality risk include:

- ▶ **Alternate Bearing Biology:** Following the heavy load of the 2025 crop, trees naturally entered 2026 with depleted carbohydrate reserves.
- ▶ **Insufficient Winter Chill:** The 2025/2026 winter accumulated 810 chill hours (and 62.4 chill portions), marking a tight, restrictive dormancy period although the fog layer assisted in keeping temperatures from being excessive during the winter compared to other low chill winter hours.

- ▶ **March 2026 Heatwave:** The extreme heat during bloom damaged pollen viability and shattered normal male-to-female synchronization.

MARKET CONDITIONS & PRICING

The pistachio market is transitioning from an era of heavy supply into a highly competitive, demand-driven environment.

Current Movement & Market Momentum

Market conditions have been on fire over the past 18 months, partially fueled by the global “Dubai Chocolate” viral craze, which has significantly boosted the culinary and consumer profile of pistachio paste and kernels. Propelled by this trend, **global consumption is rising at an impressive rate over 10% annually.**

The 2025 crop year kicked off on September 1, 2025, with a carryover of **114 million pounds**. Combined with the finalized record harvest of 1.5765 billion pounds, the total marketable crop supply for the season reached **1.71 billion pounds**.

Despite this historic volume, outstanding shipment performance has quickly moved the crop. As of July 1, 2026, total marketable inventory stands at only 323 million pounds.

- ▶ **Domestic Market:** Shipments have been somewhat underperforming, tracking at a modest 3% increase compared to the 2024 crop year.
- ▶ **Export Markets:** Shipments are heavily driving the demand curve, posting an outstanding 25% increase to clean out inventories in key global regions.

With only two shipping months remaining in the crop year, we expect the carryover heading into the 2026 harvest to be extremely minimal, settling around **150 million pounds**.

Global Competitor Disarray

Compounding the tight supply is the ongoing decline of California’s primary global competitor, Iran. The Iranian pistachio industry is currently in disarray; their older orchards are showing severe wear, and regional water crises continue to limit capacity, causing Iranian production to steadily decline year after year. This is also aside from the current war in the region which will likely hinder its exports due to blockades.

2026 Financial Realities & Rising Input Costs

Due to the severely light 2026 California crop, we expect average returns to the grower to skyrocket to a record **\$3.35 per pound**—reflecting a **34% to 35% increase** in unit value compared to 2025’s \$2.50.

While a price of \$3.35 per pound sounds like a victory on paper, **it is not a win for the farming community.** Because the crop volume is down by over 50% (778 million lbs vs 1.5765 billion lbs), total gross grower revenues will actually drop from **\$3.94 billion down to \$2.42 billion**—a severe **38.6% contraction** in total gross receipts.

Making matters worse, growers faced a brutal surge in operational input costs. Due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, global supply chains ruptured, driving **fertilizer and fuel prices up by 20% for growers** just as the active growing season got underway in early March.

A Cautionary Lesson from the Almond Market (2014/15)

While a projected \$3.35 return represents a massive recovery on paper, the industry must heed the hard lessons of the California almond market in 2014/15. During that cycle, almond prices rose steadily to over \$4.00 per pound, which forced global buyers and food manufacturers to actively seek cheaper alternative ingredients and substitutes. This demand destruction created roughly **8 years of depressed prices under \$2.50** before the market finally recovered this past year. Pricing a tight crop too aggressively risks driving away long-term industrial buyers.



Reflecting the true value returned to the ranch, final grower prices have been adjusted to incorporate all processing and marketing bonuses:

- **2021–2022:** Returns remained highly resilient, posting **\$2.52 per pound** and **\$2.20 per pound** during the turn-of-the-decade market.
- **2023:** With the massive 2023 crop, baseline cash prices fell, but total actual grower returns stabilized at **\$2.00 per pound** once marketing bonuses were fully distributed.
- **2024:** Pricing rebounded to a solid **\$2.40 per pound** as marketing groups capitalized on strong global shipments.
- **2025:** Driven by outstanding export demand and the elite quality of the harvested crop, the final payout for the historic 2025 crop reached \$2.50 per pound with possibilities of achieving \$2.60 per pound.
- **2026 Value Forecast:** Due to the severe supply shortage, 2026 pricing is projected to skyrocket to a record **\$3.35 per pound** to the grower.

Important Pricing Note: The projected **\$3.35 per pound** return for 2026 is strictly an estimate based on current supply-and-demand dynamics. At the time of this writing, **no processor has officially released its price sheets.**

CONTRIBUTORS



The Ag Center News is California's dedicated source for agriculture industry news, market analysis, and grower resources. We connect farmers, ranchers, and industry professionals with timely reporting on crop trends, pricing forecasts, and the companies and services shaping California agriculture. From pistachios to the broader farming community, our mission is to keep growers informed with accurate, actionable information that helps them make smart decisions and stay ahead in an ever-changing market.



Pacific Farm Management provides personnel, labor, and management for clients across the state. Pacific Farm Management also provides pistachio growers with marking, planting, select varietal budding, grafting, and pruning services.



West Hills Farm Services serves growers in the West side of Fresno, Madera, Merced, and Kings counties with full crop management, spraying, topping, and harvesting for pistachio growers.