

Pecan pie lovers, rejoice. Oklahoma's pecan crop is starting to show signs of recuperation from the 2007 ice storm that destroyed or damaged thousands of trees in northeastern Oklahoma groves. "The trees south of the county are absolutely loaded," said Sue Gray, extension horticulturist at the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, 4116 E. 15th St. Statewide production this season is expected to exceed 25 million pounds, a welcome projection after numbers dropped from 30 million in 2007 to 8 million in 2008, according to U.S.

Department of Agriculture statistics. While the trees in a belt stretching from north of Tulsa in areas like Collinsville and Oologah to southeast Kansas are still waiting for a comeback of the crop, areas as far north as midtown Tulsa are seeing production that's much closer to the pre-ice storm norm, Gray said. That Oklahoma pecan production estimates are up is good for another reason, she said. Worldwide demand for the crop is growing. "There are purchasing reps from China in Missouri right now," she said. "It's a global crop. While there are farmers growing pecans everywhere from Arizona to Australia under irrigation, pecans grow very well under natural conditions and without irrigation in many parts of Oklahoma." "Oklahoma growers have a tremendous amount of product being spoken for by companies based overseas," said Bill Dodd, a member of the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association and president of Wolf Creek Pecan Ranch, an orchard of between 700 and 800 improved variety trees and roughly 100 native trees in production in Okmulgee near the Deep Fork River. "I got an e-mail just this morning from a buyer in Italy," Dodd said. "These companies are talking about buying the entire crop of an orchard, and they're approaching the growers directly rather than going through middlemen like they used to." The option to sell to international buyers is attractive to growers, thanks to regulations that govern domestic sales, he said. Concerns about the ability to move product is another line on the list of pros. Dodd's pecan grove lies just south of the belt of 2007 ice storm damage, and "many growers north of that line had tremendous rebuilding to do," he said. "A

huge number of trees were completely destroyed," he said. "Those that weren't were part of extensive grafting programs put in place in an effort to get them back into production as quickly as possible. Those growers are seeing some production four and five years later, which is better than no production at all, or having to start over from scratch and waiting 15 years for a decent crop." While Dodd predicts the volume of next year's pecan crop will exceed this year's, he said "it all depends on what Mother Nature will give to us." "It's farming, and if you have a bad spring, a bad fall and long droughts, all of that affects the quality and quantity of next year's crop," he said. While Oklahoma's pecan crop has turned heads overseas, news of the bounty hasn't been lost on the locals, either. That the pecan trees at Tulsa-area parks are just as productive as their cultivated counterparts has brought out Okie nut hunters in droves, said Frances Dodson, public relations coordinator with Tulsa County Parks. "There are hundreds of pecan trees at Haikey Creek Park (in Broken Arrow at 11327 S. Garnett Road)," Dodson said. "It's not unusual right now to see dozens of park-goers there with everything from buckets to rolling nut harvesters full of pecans. Local families have figured out that it's a fun thing to do with the kids." [Subscribe to Daily Headlines Sign up!](#) \* I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its [user agreement](#) and [privacy policy](#).