

PALM BEACH POST

Sugar harvest hurt by cold weather, drought

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BELLE GLADE — Florida's annual sugar cane harvest ended Tuesday as two major producers completed their season. Crops were impacted by four below freezing events, as well as drought and a bout of unseasonal heavy rains.

Total production was more than 1.5 million tons of raw sugar, slightly below last year's.

Florida Crystals Corp. headquartered in West Palm Beach, produced 622,441 tons of sugar.

Clewiston-based U.S. Sugar Corp. ground its last cane at its mill on Tuesday and produced 617,000 tons of sugar.

"This is the second year that drought, freeze, and a lack of irrigation water have impacted the crop," said U.S. Sugar spokeswoman Judy Sanchez.

Last week, Gov. Charlie Crist announced a scaled-down \$533 million deal to buy 72,500 acres of U.S. Sugar's land for Everglades restoration.

The Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Belle Glade finished its harvest in late February, producing 300,811 tons of sugar.

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