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THE NUT BOOM

California's cyclical almond, walnut and pistachio industries keep growing despite price lull

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

LOS MOLINOS, Calif. — For nearly a decade, the sky has been the limit for California tree nut growers. As growing demand pushed prices upward, the number of acres devoted to almonds, walnuts and pistachios rocketed, leading to record production and billions of dollars of profits for growers, processors and exporters.

Until last year. A price slide in the midst of last season's record walnut harvest marked the first signs of vulnerability. Prices dropped from an average of \$1.85 a pound in 2013 to about 81 cents last year, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Meanwhile, almond prices have fallen by 30 percent in the past year, from an average of \$4 a pound in 2013 to \$2.84 in 2015.

At the same time, the initial prices quoted to pistachio growers are about half the average of \$3.57 a pound they received in 2014.

The sobering news accompanies record harvests for all three nut crops.

But third-generation walnut grower Bruce Lindauer isn't worried about his farm's long-term viability. He has seen plenty of ups and downs.

"I'm in it for the long haul," said the owner of Lindauer Farm Management Inc. "If you're a smart grower, when it's over \$2 a pound you sock some away, and when it's like this you stop spending."

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Bruce Lindauer

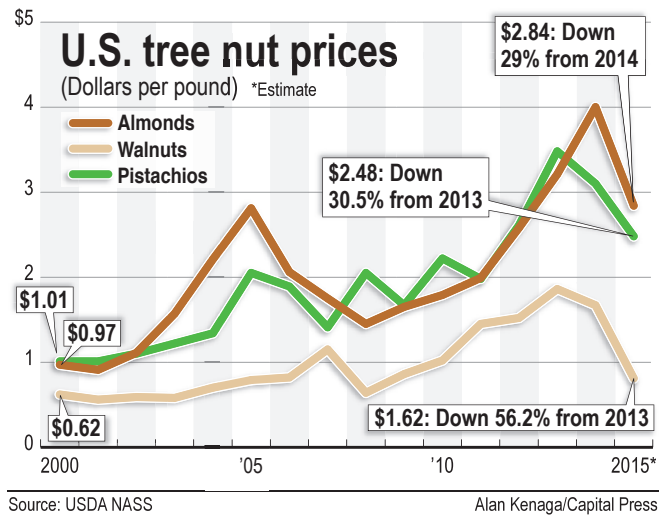
"If you're a smart grower, when it's over \$2 a pound you sock some away, and when it's like this you stop spending."

Courtesy of American Pistachio Growers
Pistachios are harvested in an orchard in Fresno County, Calif. This year's pistachio crop has bounced back after unfavorable weather during last year's blossom led to an inordinate number of "blanks", or empty shells, during the 2015 harvest.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Howard walnuts are swept up during harvest in an orchard owned by Lindauer Farm Management near Los Molinos, Calif. A big walnut crop was expected this year as the industry continued efforts to boost domestic demand for the nuts.



If there's a ceiling on how many nuts California can produce and still maintain profitability, growers remain convinced they haven't yet reached it.

Presidential campaigns differ on government's helpfulness

Surrogates field farm questions

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

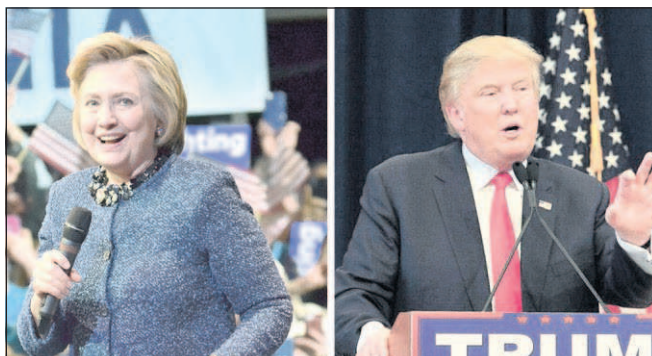
A farm forum in Washington, D.C., featuring surrogates for presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Donald

ELECTION 2016

Trump Wednesday highlighted the campaigns' differing views on promoting a healthy agricultural economy.

Trump's campaign co-chairman Sam Clovis said federal agencies need to be restrained, particularly in the West. He said the new Waters of the U.S. rule "may be the poster child of overreach."

Clinton supporter Kathleen Merrigan, former deputy agriculture secretary in the Obama administration, said government needs to communicate better. She said concerns about WOTUS are overblown. "In most cases, these are worries that are bo-



Courtesy of Zachary Moskow, wikipedia.org; www.donaldjtrump.com
Clinton, left, at an event in Philadelphia on April 20. Trump at a rally in Pella, Iowa, on Jan. 23.

geyman worries," she said

On the morning of the third and final Clinton-Trump debate, the Farm Foundation hosted a two-hour session at the National Press Club featuring Clovis, an economics professor at Morningside College in Iowa, and Merrigan, director of sustainability at

George Washington University.

Clovis repeatedly turned to regulations during his opening remarks and a question-and-answer session that followed.

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Owyhee Reservoir irrigators finally get full allotment

By **SEAN ELLIS**
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — A full water allotment for the first time in four years has made a huge difference for farmers in Oregon and Idaho who depend on the Owyhee Reservoir to irrigate their crops.

They received only a third of their full 4 acre-foot allotment in 2014 and 2015 and as a result drastically altered their crop rotations and left a lot of ground fallow to save what water they did receive for their onions, the area's main cash crop.

The reservoir provides irrigation water for 1,800 farms and 118,000 acres of ground in Eastern Oregon and part of southwestern Idaho.

"It meant a lot to have a full allotment this year," said Owyhee Irrigation District Manager Jay Chamberlin. "It was good to see growers get back to more normal planting."

During the drought years, when water was sparse, a lot of farmers moved their onion acres to areas where they had access to well water or

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