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Tim Hearden/Capital Press  
California Valencia oranges.

## Navel orange harvest wraps up early, making way for Valencias

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

EXETER, Calif. — The navel orange harvest in California is wrapping up early, giving the Valencia crop a unique opportunity to make gains in the marketplace in the next several weeks.

Navel orange growers are mostly finished with field work and are shipping the last of their season's oranges, putting a lid on a crop that came in even lighter than expected.

Going into the season, farms were expecting an 81 million-carton crop, down from 88 million cartons produced last season, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

A smaller crop was expected considering last season's big crop and drought-related water shortages during the bloom. But it turned out to be a steeper decline, although final figures aren't available yet, California Citrus Mutual vice president Bob Blakely said.

"The demand and prices were good all through the season," Blakely said. "When you have a small crop, demand tends to exceed supply and you see better prices. Growers really need to get their per-acre return back, because it costs them just as much to produce a small crop as it does a big crop."

Prices for mid-size navels, which make up the bulk of the crop, have risen to between \$15 and \$17 per 40-pound carton, up from \$10 to \$11 in December, Blakely said.

"All in all, our growers feel like they had a pretty good year, even with the smaller crop," he said. "We had good quality, high utilization and good prices most of the season, which equates to pretty good returns back to the grove. Most of them are going to feel like this season was a success."

Valencias have the market largely to themselves for the next several weeks, as other summer fruits have yet to come on line and imports of navels from the Southern Hemisphere have yet to pick up, Blakely said.

Valencia growers, too, are expecting a smaller crop. A NASS objective measurement report in March projected a 15.6-million-carton crop, down from 17.4 million cartons in 2016.

It would be the seventh straight production decline for Valencias, whose 30,000 bearing acres are down from 50,000 in 2006, according to NASS.

But growers are reporting good size on Valencias this summer, and the larger ones stay in the domestic market because export destinations tend to like the smaller ones, Blakely said.

Valencias are currently shipping for between \$14 and \$16 a carton, up from the \$10 to \$11 range that they typically bring at midsummer, he said.

"I think we're probably going to see some opportunity for pretty good Valencia movement domestically for a few weeks before we get really heavy volumes of Southern Hemisphere navels and the other summer fruit starts coming in," he said.

"Right now there's a bit of a gap that we don't usually have, and we're seeing some good demand for Valencias right now," he said.

## Workshop offers tips on preventing wolf-livestock conflicts

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

HAT CREEK, Calif. — A June 14 workshop will give ranchers updates on the state's wolf management plan and more tips on how to prevent conflicts between the predators and livestock.

Officials from the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and others will discuss wolves' return to California and how ranchers can prepare.

The 9 a.m. workshop at the Hat Creek Volunteer Fire Department Hall will include advice on what to do in the case of a depredation and how to use range riders to determine if wolves are in the area.

The event will also feature demonstrations of how to install fencing, flashing lights and other devices to protect livestock, said Paul Kjos, Shasta County's agriculture commissioner.

"There was a request from a number of producers who



A gray wolf in Siskiyou County in Northern California. An upcoming workshop will help prepare ranchers for dealing with wolves as they continue to move into the state.

Courtesy Calif. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

wanted a little more detail" about mitigation measures, Kjos said.

"A lot of folks are asking 'What do we do?'" he said. "This gives them ... some definite tools you can use to try to keep the separation between predators and livestock."

The county is joined in hosting the workshop by APHIS, Defenders of Wildlife,

the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Shasta County Cattlemen's Association, the Shasta County Farm Bureau and the Pacific Wolf Coalition.

The workshop is similar to a series of meetings held last year in Northeastern California to teach ranchers how to prevent depredation. The meetings sought to merge

ranchers' expertise about their livestock and land with science-based knowledge of wolf biology and behavior, organizers said.

State and federal protections make it illegal to kill or hunt wolves in California, even in the case of livestock depredation. Wolf advocates and state officials have been promoting nonlethal means of

warding off wolves, including using guard dogs, motion-sensor lights, brightly colored flags or range riders or providing supplemental feed to livestock to keep them away from grazing areas when wolves are known to be present.

Range riders go out several times a week looking for tracks, scat or other signs of wolves or other wildlife that could harm cattle. The idea is that a human presence can divert wolves away from cattle or move cattle away from wolves if possible, riders have said.

The latest workshop comes as California finalized its wolf management plan in December, guiding conservation and management efforts as a wolf population takes hold. The month marked the five-year anniversary of the arrival of OR-7, the first known gray wolf in California in 87 years. OR-7 now lives in Oregon.

The all-day workshop at Hat Creek is free and includes lunch, but an RSVP is required. Call (530) 224-4949.

## California has best cherry harvest in years

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

California growers are wrapping up perhaps their best and largest sweet cherry harvest ever as Washington's harvest gets underway.

"This is by far one of the best crops in history on all fronts. Quality is awesome and as of today we're almost 8.3 million boxes," Chris Zanobini, executive director of the California Cherry Advisory Board in Sacramento, said.

The crop will end up at nearly 9 million, 18-pound boxes, possibly surpassing the 8.7 million box record crop of 2008, he said. It was 5.1 million boxes last year after losing about 3 million boxes to rain.

California's cherry industry has had many disappointments in recent years. Rain or heat signifi-

cantly reduced crops several seasons. Inadequate winter chill led to poor fruit set in 2014 and a crop of just 2.7 million boxes. And 2005 and 2006 were at 3 million boxes or less.

Roger Pepperl, marketing director of Stemilt Growers, Wenatchee, Wash., said California's weather has been "impeccable" and its cherry crop the "best ever."

Stemilt is a large cherry producer, packer and marketer in Washington and operates in California through its company, Chinchiole Stemilt California, in Stockton.

"It's diminished volume now, but it's been super high quality in color and sugar. Consumers are turned on and the table is set for a great Washington deal," Pepperl said.

The Pacific Northwest crop is forecast at 22.7 million boxes with

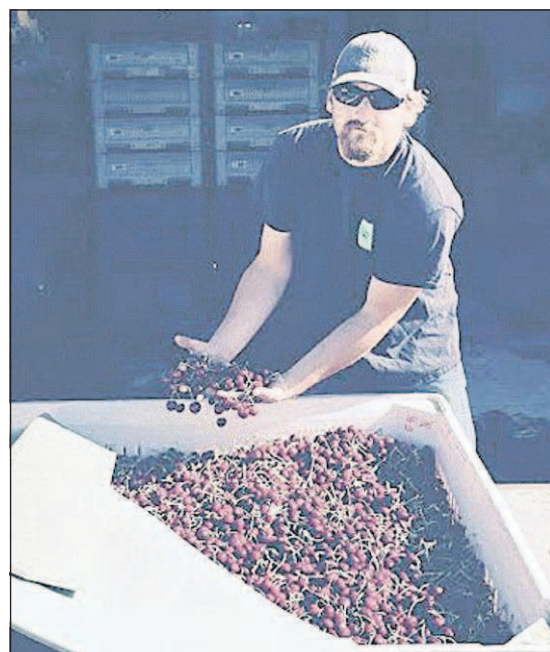
Washington harvesting 81 percent of that. The Northwest counts by 22-pound boxes and California by 18-pound boxes.

Washington harvest began with the Chelan variety at Doebler Orchard near Mattawa on June 6. The day before, John Doebler was removing Extenday reflective fabric between rows used to hasten ripening and was placing picker bins.

"We probably have eight or nine days on Chelans. Volume looks decent. It's a nice crop," Doebler said.

Stemilt would start packing the fruit in Wenatchee on June 7, he said.

Never short of pickers in the beginning, his biggest worry was the weather and a 70 percent chance of rain showers on June 8. He has already called in a helicopter once to dry the crop.



Courtesy of John Doebler

Ryan Doebler shows the first cherries of the 2017 season picked in Washington state, at Mattawa on June 6. They are following on the heels of a California harvest that is the best in years.

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