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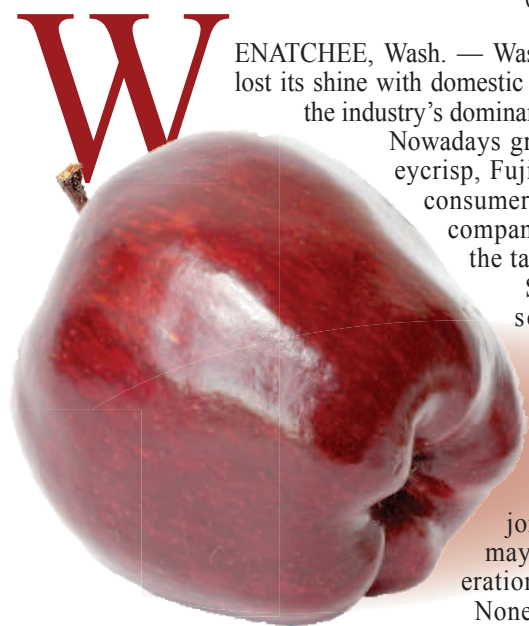
Red Delicious apples on tray ready for packing at Olympic Fruit, Moxee, Wash., Dec. 11. Washington tree fruit companies still pack more Reds than any other variety.

Dan Wheat/Capital Press

AT 80 YEARS AND COUNTING, STILL TOO MANY REDS

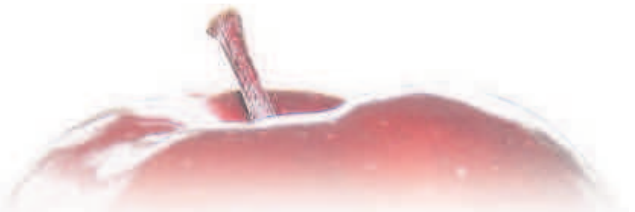
Though the variety is popular overseas, growers say the industry's future lies in other types of apples

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press



WENATCHEE, Wash. — Washington's iconic Red Delicious apple lost its shine with domestic consumers decades ago but it remains the industry's dominant variety after 80 years. Nowadays growers and marketers focus on Honeycrisp, Fuji, Gala and newer varieties to please consumers. Most of the state's major apple companies promote their own varieties as the tastiest, juiciest and crunchiest. Some in the industry would like to see Reds go away altogether. That was true 15 to 20 years ago, when growers and consumers had their fill of too many Reds. It may be true again now with oversupply from the record 2014 crop, low prices and buzz that a major Red producer in the Yakima region may want to sell. A co-owner of that operation has denied it. Nonetheless, Red Delicious is still preferred overseas and bought by enough domestic consumers to hang on as Washington's No. 1 apple variety in volume. "Eighty years is not that remarkable" if you recall that people had simple choices during most of that era, says Desmond O'Rourke, an agricultural economist in Pullman, Wash. "You had a few standard products. The Sunkist orange. A Chiquita banana. If you bought an apple, you bought Reds."

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Washington Red Delicious vs. other apple varieties in 2014

The peak percentage of Reds was in 1981 at 32.4 million boxes or 72.3 percent of the total crop. The volume peak was in 1994 at 61.4 million boxes, 60.9 percent of the crop.

(Millions of 40-pound boxes)			
Variety	2013	2014*	Percent change
Red Delicious	34.5	44.9	30.1
Gala	24.5	31.5	28.6
Fuji	14.6	18.8	28.8
Granny Smith	15.8	17.2	8.9
Golden Delicious	8.9	12.6	41.6
Honeycrisp	4.5	6.5	44.4
Cripps Pink	4	4	NC
Braeburn	1.9	2.6	36.8
Jonagold	0.9	1	11.1
Cameo	0.5	0.6	20
Other	4.8	6	25
Total	115.2	145.9	26.7

*Estimate as of March 1. 2013 numbers are final.

Source: Washington State Tree Fruit Association

Capital Press graphic

Eastern Oregon water situation getting worse

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — The water supply situation for farmers who depend on the Owyhee Irrigation District has gone from bad to worse.

The roughly 170 farmers who showed up for the district's annual water supply report March 17 were told they could tentatively expect to receive 1.3 acre-feet of water this year.

That's well below their normal 4 acre-foot allotment and even less than the 1.7 they received in 2014, which was one of the worst water supply years in the project's 80-year history. "It's worse than I thought," Nyssa farmer Curt Sisson said following the meeting.

Sisson and other farmers in the region left a lot more ground than normal idle last year and planted more crops that use less water. "We'll have to do that again," Sisson said.

The OID supplies water for 1,800 farms and 120,000 acres of irrigated land in Eastern Oregon and part of Southwestern Idaho. Despite sharply reducing last year's allotment, the system still ran dry in August, two months earlier than normal.

There were 182,000 acre-feet of available water stored in the Owyhee reservoir as of March 17, about 40,000 acre-feet more than this time last year, said OID Manager Jay Chamberlin.

However, there is virtually no snow left in the Owyhee basin and reservoir in-flow levels are bleak, he added.

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INSIDE
Droughts declared in two Oregon counties
See Page 7

Port traffic improves, but backlog of problems remains

Loss of major shipping line at Portland sends containers to Seattle, Tacoma

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

Cargo movement at most West Coast container ports has improved since a tentative contract was reached between longshoremen and terminal operators a month ago, but there are still problems and shipping lines are boosting rates to cover losses from slowdowns.

It will be another two months or more before container flows are normal, said Peter Friedmann, executive director of the Agriculture Transportation Coalition in Washington, D.C. Clearing congestion has

"The challenge now seems to be the amount they can get on vessels because of terminal congestion."

Mike Hajny, vice president of Wesco International

been slowed by Hanjin Shipping's withdrawal from the Port of Portland, shifting some 80 percent of its exports to the ports of Tacoma and Seattle, Friedmann said. Ongoing labor disputes at the Port of Oakland have been an even greater problem, closing that port for most of four days the second week of March, he said.

Importers are upset at being charged late fees on cargo that sits because of conges-

tion, he said. U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez remains engaged in seeking solutions, he said.

International Longshore Warehouse Union leaders will caucus March 30 and are expected to recommend that 13,600 rank-and-file members ratify the contract, Friedmann said.

Hanjin quit Portland March 9 because it was taking too long to load and unload ships. A company hauling Or-

egon agricultural exports to the ports of Tacoma and Seattle is overwhelmed, Friedmann said.

ILWU members staged a work slowdown at West Coast container ports, reducing traffic by about 50 percent for several months before the Feb. 20 tentative agreement was announced, he said. The situation is better now, but it's hard to say how much better, he said.

"It's not where it needs to be for Northwest agricultural exports to establish credibility with customers and regain lost customers," he said.

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Associated Press file photo Terminal 18 at the Port of Seattle is shown in this file photo.

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