

Apple issues continue in Mexico, China

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Apple shippers are working to keep their market to Mexico open and it likely will be another month or two before they're able to sell all varieties in China.

Mexico continues to consider allegations of apple dumping against Washington apple exporters which could lead to duties or even closure of the market.

A claim from the Chihuahua apple growers association, UNIFRUT, was filed in the Mexican federal register Dec. 4, alleging U.S. shippers, mostly from Washington, sold apples in Mexico in 2013 at less than fair value, damaging Chihuahua growers.

That's unlikely because 2013 was such a profitable year, said Fred Scarlett, manager of Northwest Fruit Exporters, a nonprofit corporation in Yakima managing

export procedures of apples and cherries.

About 50 Washington apple exporters responded to a Mexican Ministry of Economy questionnaire by a Feb. 13 deadline and 12 were chosen for further review to determine if they would be assessed a duty, said Todd Fryhoyer, president of the Washington Apple Commission in Wenatchee.

Those not selected might be assessed a weighted average of the 12 if there are duties, he said.

Economia is gathering information from the 12 and lesser amounts from others, Scarlett said.

April or May was thought to be the earliest date of a preliminary determination but that now appears to be pushed back to July or early August because of the size and scope of the case, Scarlett said.

Preliminary duties could occur at that time with a final determination and any final duties established in about December, he said.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Kevin Vazquez packs trays of Red Delicious apples into boxes for shipment to Mexico at Olympic Fruit, Moxee, Wash., in December. The industry continues to work to prevent anti-dumping duties in Mexico.

Mexico is Washington's No. 1 apple export market, usually good for 10 million boxes or more of apples annually. The peak was 13.6 million in 2012. Fryhoyer has said he

would like to see 14 million or more this season to help continuing sales of Washington's record crop last fall.

Season-to-date shipments are 6.7 million boxes as of

March 30, up slightly from last year, Scarlett said.

Meanwhile, full varietal access into China is "signed and ready to go," but the reciprocal part of Chinese apple access

into the U.S. is waiting at the Office of Management and Budget and has to be posted in the Federal Register for a 30-day comment period before final action, Fryhoyer said.

Washington apple shippers are eager for full access to China, which is expected to be a bigger help after the fall 2015 crop than before, he said.

An agreement for reciprocal apple trade between the two countries was announced Jan. 26.

Red and Golden Delicious apples from Washington, Oregon and Idaho were allowed into China in 1993. They were banned from August 2012 to Oct. 31, 2014, after disease was found in some shipments.

As of March 15, 600,000 boxes of Washington Reds have been shipped directly to China. The combined China-Hong Kong market peaked at 3 million boxes in 2010-2011. Fryhoyer and other industry officials are hopeful it will become a major market of 10 million boxes in a few years.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Manuel Lujano wedges scion wood for a new tree between the bark and cambium of a cut tree trunk. The yellow paint bucket in background is for sealant.

Tree grafters stay busy

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

DESERT AIRE, Wash. — It's a small army of workers over there nicely cast in orchard sunlight as you whip by northward on Highway 243.

You turn around, go back and pull in on Orchard Drive. Half-a-dozen chainsaws buzz like bees. Cutters quickly lop off main stems of young trees.

Of the 30-plus workers who follow, some pull the cut stems from trellis wire. Others use sharp knives to form wedges on one end of 5-inch chunks of scion wood. The scion, cut from a desired variety, has been kept fresh in buckets of water. The workers jam the wedge ends between the bark and cambium of the freshly cut tree trunks.

Next in the work chain are those who wrap the new unions in tape, applying pressure so the scion wood makes good contact with the cambium layer of the trunk and will grow.

Adeline Sanchez is one of many waxers. She dabs gray wax at the top of the unions to

keep moisture out.

It looks like the easiest task. "It is," she says, "except in the morning when it's cold and the wax is hard."

Gloria Ochoa follows Sanchez with a brush and bucket, painting the unions with yellow sealant.

In time, the sealant, wax and tape decompose and the scion grows into new trees. Grafting is a means of switching varieties without buying whole new trees.

The crew works fast. It's a 16-acre block owned by Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers of Wenatchee. The job will be done in three days or less, says Manuel Lujano, 19, whose father, Jose Lujano, 60, owns 3rd Generation Grafting of Yakima. Lujano's other son, Fernando, 35, also is involved in the operation.

"We started as a little family business and have grown," Manuel Lujano says. "We do about 150 acres each spring throughout Central Washington."

The company is seasonal with the spring work and then bud grafting in August and September.

Friends, family pay tribute to Jack Jones

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

EAST WENATCHEE, Wash. — A leader in northern Columbia Basin agriculture, Jack Edwin Jones, was honored by family and friends at a memorial service.

Jones, 73, Wenatchee, died March 13 from an extended illness. The March 27 memorial service was held at Eastmont Baptist Church in East Wenatchee, followed by a reception at Pybus Public Market in Wenatchee.

Jones was co-owner of Jones Produce, a fruit and vegetable company with family roots dating back to the 1950s, and was founder and owner of Jones of Washington, a winery and vineyard he started in 2001. Both companies are in Quincy, 30 miles southeast of Wenatchee.

"He was very familiar with risk and when he made a mistake, he didn't let it get him down. He would always move on," said Mike Scott, former vice president of Jones Fruit & Produce.

"He was willing to experiment for awhile, but he wanted to move on into large production of whatever it was. He had lots of Red Delicious, lots of asparagus, onions and potatoes. In each of those enterprises, he was big enough for any one person," Scott said.

Jones was among the first in the Quincy area to grow asparagus, red d'Anjou pears, blueberries and wine grapes, Scott said.

"The people throughout all of Jack's companies will be committed to continuing Jack's legacy. He was just, fair and tried to treat people right," said Glen Goodman, business associate of the Jones Group of Companies.

Jones was born in Twin Falls, Idaho, in 1941. His family moved to Quincy in 1954 as one of many families making new farms from sagebrush lands due to the arrival of irrigation water from the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project.

The family grew potatoes east of George and operated a potato packing shed in Winchester, east of Quincy.

Jones married Patricia Flanagan in 1969 and joined his father-in-law, Sid Flanagan, a state legislator, in farming. They grew

sugar beets and forages for

their feedlot. Jones eventually bought the business from Flanagan and then re-joined his brothers, Mike and Larry, to form Jones Produce in 1983.

They raised potatoes, beans, peas, corn, onions, alfalfa and other crops. Jones became interested in tree fruit in the early 1980s, planting an apple orchard and expanding into cherries and pears. He developed relationships with Orondo Fruit, Washington Cherry Growers and Domex Super Fresh Growers.

Enjoying challenges, Jones designed and planted his first wine grape vineyards on the Wahluke Slope



Jack Jones

in 1997. He started his winery in 2001.

Jones of Washington now offers more than 15 varieties, sold in 14 states. The company was named Washington Winery of the Year by Wine Press Northwest in 2012.

In 2008, Jones of Washington and Shaw Vineyards established a grape crushing plant near in Mattawa. J&S Crushing is now one of the region's larger grape processors.

Jones' son, Greg, manages the family's vineyards. His son, Jeff, manages other crops for Jones Produce. His daughter, Megan, works in marketing at Jones of Washington and his daughter, Maureen, works in special events.

His brother, Mike, continues as president of Jones Produce.

Outside factors keep wheat prices low despite lower supply

Northwest acres post increase; nation down 3 percent

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The USDA's forecast for wheat acreage and supplies is smaller than the industry expected, but it will take a major problem with this year's crop to push prices higher, analysts say.

The USDA prospective plantings report calls for less wheat than the industry expected, said Henry Kornegay, president of Jackson Commodities in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

The average trade guess for all wheat was roughly 55.612 million acres, and USDA reported 55.367 million acres, Kornegay said, with 12.97 million spring wheat acres instead of the 13.24 million acres anticipated.

The U.S. estimate is down roughly 3 percent from 56.822 million in 2014.

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Northwest regional field office in Olympia, North

west wheat acres are up 3 percent from the previous year.

Idaho wheat producers expect to plant 1.33 million acres of wheat, up 4.4 percent from 1.27 million acres in 2014. Oregon wheat producers anticipate planting 850,000 acres, up 2.4 percent from 830,000 acres in 2014. Washington wheat farmers are expected to plant 2.38 million acres, up 2.6 percent from 2.32 million acres in 2014.

Even though a report of fewer wheat acres than expected usually means prices go up, Kornegay believes short-term speculators and larger than expected corn stocks and acreage kept prices down. Wheat prices ranged from \$6 per bushel to \$6.51 per bushel on the Portland market, according to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, down 18.5 cents from the day before.

"Wheat's getting hammered right now," agreed Dan Steiner, grain merchandiser for Pendleton Grain Growers and Morrow County Grain Growers in Oregon. Wheat stocks were also lower than the market anticipated, he said.

Steiner said a strong U.S. dollar and a struggling world economy, including metals

and energy prices, are factors in the lower wheat prices. He believes soft wheat prices will range from \$6.40 to \$6.50 per bushel through early harvest.

"There's a lot of things to actually like about the wheat market, but we're going to need some good things to happen for any of that to translate into higher prices," he said.

There's very little 2014 wheat left, particularly in the PNW, Steiner said. The region's 2015 wheat crop has pockets of good-looking wheat, he said, but the vast majority is "totally overwhelming."

"We're going to have to work hard to get an average crop," he said. "It's certainly doable, but we're not going to have a bumper crop. Not in the PNW, anyhow."

Dry conditions in the southern Plains will keep the market supported against any further downward movement until further into the growing season, Kornegay said.

"Either we end up with an issue as far as the dryness of the crop condition goes, or we get timely rains, in which case we'll break and probably go to new lows," he said.

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