

Apple harvest could finish early

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Washington apple growers are into their second full month of their 2015 harvest with an eye on an early ending.

Typically, various varieties are picked from mid-August to mid-November, but this crop is 10 to 11 days ahead of last year, which was about a week ahead of normal, Scott McDougall, co-president of McDougall & Sons Inc., an apple grower and packer in Wenatchee, said.

“So we’re running 18 days ahead of what we would consider normal,” he said. “Our company should be done about the 25th of October. That’s record early.”

The benefit of an early ending is less exposure to crop-killing freezes, he said.

But the early crop also suffered from prolonged excessive heat in June disrupting normal apple growth.

Gala, the first main variety to be picked, was too small and oddly matured because of that heat, said the quality control manager of a Wenatchee warehouse who didn’t want to be identified.

“Some fruit was over mature and other not internally mature from heat at the wrong time of year (June) when it should have been growing,” he said.

Starch turned to sugar as it is suppose to but internal pressures didn’t hold up, he said. That reduces crispness.

Nevertheless, there are not any catastrophic quality issues industry-wide, said Mike Robinson, general manager of Double Diamond Fruit Co., Quincy.

“The difficult dance is bal-



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Fernando Florez, 73, clips stems off Honeycrisp apples as he picks them in a Custom Apple Packers Inc. orchard in Brewster, Wash., on Aug. 31. Stems are clipped to keep them from puncturing soft apple skin.

ancing maturity with color and size. It’s pretty much true across the board on all varieties,” said Keith Mathews, CEO and general manager of First Fruits Marketing of Washington, Yakima.

Because of heat and early harvest, a lot of growers strip-picked Gala instead of picking two to three times for color, Mathews said. The result is a lot of small, light-color, low-grade apples that are harder to market, he said.

“We will oversupply it and the price on those sizes and grades will be difficult to recover input costs from, not just Gala but small fruit in all varieties,” he said.

Growers with preferred sizes in the 80s should see very good prices, he said.

A couple recent holders of 2014 Red Delicious dumped a lot of it to the processing market and 2014 carryover

is low enough to help reset overall wholesale prices upward after the poor 2014 season, Mathews said.

“Premium 88s (size) have moved up significantly in price but prices are depressed on fancy 2.25-inch bags of just about anything. There’s too many and not enough customers,” he said.

Average asking prices of new crop Gala 80s extra fancy was \$26 to \$30.90 per 40-pound box on Sept. 8, according to USDA. It was \$18 to \$20.90 for smaller-sized 125s.

Old crop Red Delicious, 80s in size, was \$10 to \$13. It was \$9 per box last winter, well below break-even and a high of \$22 in 2012.

USDA reports show new 2015 crop Washington apple shipments began the week ending Aug. 1 with 41,578 boxes shipped. A total of 1.47 million boxes were shipped

the week ending Sept. 5 and 4.4 million of new crop, season-to-date. About 1.5 million boxes of 2014 apples remained as of Sept. 5.

McDougall said storability probably will be more challenging this year because of heat. He said color is improving now that nighttime temperatures are reaching the upper 40s and lower 50s.

His Gala picked short of estimate and, he said, he thinks the total industry crop will fall short of its Aug. 1, 125.2-million-box forecast.

Harvest labor has not been a problem for McDougall & Sons since it now has about 600 H-2A visa foreign guest-workers, he said.

“Labor is tight. I wouldn’t want to be doing this without H-2A,” Robinson said. “But I think most growers are doing a good job of getting fruit off when needed.”

Josephine County won’t enforce GMO ban while lawsuit is pending

Enforcement stayed until grower lawsuit resolved

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon’s Josephine County will not enforce its prohibition against genetically engineered crops while a farmer lawsuit against the ordinance is underway.

The county counsel, Wally Hicks, has notified the attorney for sugar beet growers Robert and Shelley Ann White that enforcement will be stayed as they seek to overturn the ban, which was passed by voters last year.

The couple contends that Oregon lawmakers pre-empted most local governments from regulating genetically modified organisms as part of a bill passed in 2013 and have requested a permanent injunction against Josephine County’s ban.

John DiLorenzo, attorney for the growers, said he agreed not to seek a temporary restraining order against the ordinance as long as the county consented to forgo enforcement.

“Both sides have to spend less time and less expense,” he said.

The situation would likely change if Josephine County does take action against biotech farmers before the lawsuit is resolved, he said.

“I could fire up again, but I take them at their word,” DiLorenzo said.

Biotech farmers were also

required to report their crops, location and “phase-out” plans to the county sheriff, according to the notice. That reporting requirement is also stayed under the recent agreement.

In their lawsuit, the Whites claim they were planning to cultivate sugar beets in a leased field but were prevented from doing so when the county announced the GMO ban would go into effect on Sept. 4.

Josephine County’s decision, however, has not convinced the couple to plant transgenic sugar beets because they don’t want to place themselves “in harm’s way,” DiLorenzo said.

Farmers who do have genetically engineered crops, however, don’t have to worry about enforcement actions, he said.

Capital Press was unable to reach Wally Hicks of Josephine County for comment as of press time.

Mary Middleton, who petitioned for the GMO ban, said the county is likely being cautious while the case is being litigated.

“It’s unfortunate that’s the route, because the will of the people is that it would be enforced,” she said.

Voters in Oregon’s Jackson County also passed a prohibition against GMOs, but that ordinance is not subject to the state seed pre-emption bill.

The legislature exempted Jackson County from its pre-emption statute because the ordinance was already on the ballot when the state law was passed.

Attracting talent next step in S. Idaho food success, experts say

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Southern Idaho has been on a winning streak in attracting new food processors and encouraging existing agribusinesses to expand, netting \$1 billion in capital investments and creating 5,000 new jobs since coming out of the recession.

But the challenge now is attracting young millennials — people ages 18 to 34 — to fill those jobs and keep the momentum going.

It’s not just a Southern Idaho issue, it’s a national

dilemma, said Jan Rogers, outgoing executive director of Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization. Millennials are a different generation, with different needs, desires and motivations than baby boomers and Generation Xers, she said.

Attracting and keeping that new talent was the focus of SIEDO’s 2015 Annual Summit, held Sept. 10 at the College of Southern Idaho.

Southern Idaho has plenty of jobs but, like the rest of the country, attracting talent from the “millennial tsunami” coming into the work force is challenging tradi-

tional work cultures, Rogers said.

U.S. millennials number 83.1 million, more than a quarter of the population, with 53.5 million in the workplace representing about one-third of U.S. workers, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

The millennial generation is characterized as determined, entitled and empowered. It represents people who value quality of place and want to make a difference in the world, Rogers said.

Southern Idaho — with its beautiful landscapes and ro-

bust food production — has a lot to offer in those regards, but “we’re not talking to them in their language,” she said.

They are technologically advanced compared to boomers and far more engaged in social media. They want adventure, challenge, a voice in the workplace and to be able to advance quickly, she said.

Jeff Sayer, director of Idaho Department of Labor, said advancing individuals is one of the missions in Gov. Butch Otter’s Accelerate Idaho plan for economic growth.

“We need to advance the

earning capabilities of every citizen ... get skill sets in their hands,” he said.

In engineering a talent pipeline, particular attention needs to be given to what comes out of Idaho’s education system, he said.

A Department of Labor analysis shows Idaho’s economy is on track to produce 109,000 new jobs in the next 10 years but expects only 108,000 people to relocate to the state in that same period — and most of them will be over 65 years old, he said.

“The issue of talent is significant,” he said.

In the foreseeable future, states are going to stop recruiting industry and start recruiting talent. Idaho is currently short 95,000 workers, and states much bigger than Idaho are going to start recruiting Idaho talent, he said.

It’ll be a “war for talent,” he said.

Every conversation state officials have with prospective new companies to Idaho isn’t about incentives or taxes; it’s about talent, he said.

“We’re already having a hard time finding talent. We need to be proactive,” he said.

Minimum hazelnut prices second-highest on record

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Oregon’s hazelnut growers didn’t expect a repeat of last year, when a disastrous freeze in Turkey brought record prices as candy, spread and snack makers chased replacement supplies.

But this season’s initial minimum price of \$1.22 a pound for field-run hazelnuts, announced by the Hazelnut Growers Bargaining Association, is the second highest on record.

The starting price packers were willing to pay last year was \$1.70 a pound, thanks to the freeze that decimated the world’s leading nut producing region, and the price jacked up to \$1.81 by season’s end.

Oregon produces only 5 percent of the world supply, but is nonetheless the second-leading production area and was ready when buyers came calling.

Bargaining association President Doug Olsen said the 2015 starting price is fair, considering the circumstances.

“Everybody knew the price was going to come down,” Olsen said in a news release. “Last year’s was an anomaly.”

Turkey expects a good crop this year, while currency devaluations there and in China — a major buyer of Oregon hazelnuts — make American products

more expensive by comparison.

In addition, an oversupply of walnuts gives end users another nut option, according to the bargaining association’s news release.

Oregon growers are projected to produce about 39,000 tons of hazelnuts this year.

Willamette Valley growers have been adding 3,000 to 5,000 acres per year for several years running. In some cases, farmers have replaced grass seed or row crops with hazelnut orchards.



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press File

Hazelnuts drop from husks in the fall and are raked into windrows and swept up by harvesters. A record price in 2014, when this harvest photo was taken, made each nut worth an estimated 1.3 cents.

Celebrating 75 Years Conserving the Idaho Way

LOW INTEREST LOANS
FOR IDAHO SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION

Sprinkler Irrigation, No-Till Drills, Fences
Livestock Feeding Operations
Solar Stock Water Pump Systems

2.5%-3.5%
Terms 7-15 Years
Up to \$200,000

IDAHO
CONSERVATION
LOAN
PROGRAM

swc.idaho.gov | 208-332-1790

ROP-32521#17

Revenue Coverage for Sound Risk Management

With thin profit margins, it's more important than ever to have the right crop insurance coverage.

See your Rain and Hail agent to help ensure that you have the right protection to fit your risk management needs.

Call the agent with the blue sign or the Northwest Division at 1.800.967.8088

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employee.

www.RainHail.com

ROP-38-2-4/#14

HALT
DRIFT REDUCTION AGENT

- Increases droplet retention
- Does not alter spray viscosity
- Helps prevent droplet bounce
- Not susceptible to pump shear
- Greatly reduces drift-able fines
- Increases pesticide effectiveness
- Non-petroleum crop based ingredients

CONTROL
DRIFT

NO NEED TO PREMIX WITH PESTICIDE

Typical use rate 16-24oz/100g

“Another product that really works!”

(800)440-3503
info@agsprayinc.com

AGSPRAY
AGRICULTURAL SOLUTIONS

38-4/#4