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California

Early pumpkin crop remains plentiful through Halloween

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

ANDERSON, Calif. — Pumpkin growers in California are making the most of an early but plentiful crop, as the popular seasonal vegetable has remained available right up to Halloween.

Bishop's Pumpkin Farm in Wheatland, Calif., saw a better-than-average crop this year, co-owner Wayne Bishop said. A summer of mostly mild afternoon temperatures helped the pumpkins develop, he said.

"In the Sacramento Valley, it can get too hot for pumpkins, but we didn't have much of that this year," Bishop said. "It was a fairly moderate summer."

Hawes Farms in Anderson still had plenty of pumpkins left as of Oct. 23, and owner Greg Hawes expected customers to be able to pick them from his patch right up until Halloween, he said.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Nathaniel Toews, a first-grader at Antelope Elementary School in Red Bluff, Calif., walks through a field at Hawes Farms in Anderson, Calif., with a pumpkin he just picked on Oct. 23. Producers say mild summer temperatures led to a fairly abundant pumpkin crop.

"The kids are still coming out" to enjoy the farm's corn maze and other attractions, Hawes said. "Last year we lost some (pumpkins) with the rain ... so I think it's a little bit better than last year."

For many growers, the harvest started earlier this year

than in previous years but the overall volume of pumpkins remains steady, the California Farm Bureau Federation reported. Early-season pumpkins were good sized, but fields harvested later in the season are producing smaller crops, the CFBF notes.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Kevin Davies operates a tractor with a sweeper that picks up almonds as a bankout driver follows during this season's harvest in an orchard in Gerber, Calif. Almond industry leaders are pushing for passage of a drought relief bill this year.

Almond producers seek passage of drought bill

Industry continues efforts to tell its story on water use

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

MODESTO, Calif. — Almond producers have called on U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and two members of the House Agriculture Committee to push for passage of a compromise drought relief bill this year.

Vilsack met here with almond growers, hullers and shippers during a recent two-day swing through the San Joaquin Valley.

During their discussion, almond industry leaders urged Vilsack and Reps. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, and Jeff Denham, R-Modesto, to work together to merge competing House and Senate drought-response bills before Congress adjourns for the year, said Kelly Covello, president of the Almond Hullers and Processors Association.

House Republicans passed legislation this summer that would require certain minimum levels of pumping from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta for valley farms unless it can be shown there was no alternative for saving imperiled fish but to hold

the water back. A bill by U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, both D-Calif., would maintain environmental protections while funding long-term projects such as desalination, water recycling and storage. Lawmakers have been working this month to try to merge the two bills.

While the secretary made no policy promises other than to continue monetary drought aid, industry professionals came away pleased with the discussions and more confident that their voices are being heard in Washington, D.C., Covello said.

"Obviously we were stressing the impacts of the drought ... and the need for getting federal legislation accomplished," she said. "That was definitely a lot of the conversation."

Vilsack told the Capital Press in an email he "appreciated the opportunity to hear from a number of producers" and outline steps the USDA has already taken to help drought-affected producers, including additional Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding to help producers be efficient with water use.

He said a new USDA regional climate hub at University of California-Davis is focusing on specialty crop production in drought conditions.

"And I want to reassure producers that the support

and help is going to continue as long as we're looking at drought," Vilsack said.

The meeting with Vilsack was only the latest effort at outreach by the increasingly image-conscious almond industry, which has sought in recent months to push back against criticisms that almond groves use too much water and that California's massive crop places too much stress on honeybee populations.

The House bill by Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford, came as some farm groups and politicians have responded to water shutoffs and cutbacks in the San Joaquin Valley by urging state and federal leaders to temporarily relax environmental regulations to send more water south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

Recently a group of Republican lawmakers led by House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield, sent a letter to President Barack Obama and Gov. Jerry Brown urging them to capture more rain water this winter if El Nino's big storms come to fruition.

While Vilsack's visit on Oct. 12-13 didn't yield promises of more water, Covello said industry leaders were heartened when Vilsack explained to an audience that it takes more water to make a cell phone than to grow an almond.

App trains farmworkers in proper hand-washing

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — A new mobile device application instructs farmworkers on how to wash their hands well enough to avoid contamination of lettuce and other produce.

The California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement — created by growers after a devastating E. coli outbreak — has launched the app in English and Spanish on iTunes for iPhone and iPad.

The training app takes



Courtesy of California LGMA

A farmworker is shown washing his hands on a mobile device application announced by the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

about five minutes to complete and includes step-by-step directions, clear cap-

tions, photographs, video footage and exercises to reinforce concepts, explained Scott Horsfall, the marketing agreement's president and chief executive officer.

"With a work force that is constantly changing, this is very foundational and very important," LGMA spokeswoman April Ward said. "Any time a crew might have new employees show up, this is a great orientation tool to use. ... It even involves a quiz at the end to make sure they were actually following along and understand what it was saying."

Experts have been stressing the importance of thorough hand-washing and other basic hygiene and cleanliness as elements of the 2011 Food Safety Modernization Act are being phased in nationwide.

At workshops earlier this year, University of California-Berkeley food safety expert Jennifer Sowerwine led growers and handlers through hand-washing exercises, urging them to sing their "ABCs" or "Happy Birthday" to themselves to signify how long they should wash.

While such things as hand-washing may seem elementary, industry insiders say remembering them are key to preventing the kind of outbreak that occurred in 2006, when more than 200 people were sickened by tainted spinach.



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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Meetings: Oregon Farm Bureau Luncheon (by invitation) 503-399-1701

Training: CORE training - Details to be announced - no registration required. 2 to 4 credit hours 10:00am to 3:00pm

First Aid, CPR & AED: Text 541-967-7173 for reservations (Ltd. Availability) 1:30-2:30pm

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Meetings: Pennington Seed Growers Breakfast (by invitation).

Rabo AgriFinance Luncheon (by invitation).

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Training: CORE training - No registration required - 2 to 4 credit hours (Repeat of Tuesday)

- 10:00am - Noon • Paul Jepson, OSU - Principles of IPM; The Role of Pesticides
- 1:00pm - 2:00pm • Michael Odenthal, ODA - ODA Updates. This class will make pesticide users aware of changes and updates to Oregon's laws, rules and regulations relating to pesticides and pesticide use. The discussion will cover licensing changes, as well as upcoming changes to pesticide product labels. The presentations will also discuss new regulations and changes from the federal level that could impact you.
- 2:00pm - 3:00pm • Michael Odenthal, ODA - Lessons Learned 2015 - Discussion of enforcement cases related to agriculture and forestry cases and lessons we can learn from them. Special emphasis on drift cases and coexistence.

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