

# Pacific Northwest pear crop early, light

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — The Pacific Northwest pear crop looks to be early and light for the second year in a row, which should keep prices strong.

The 2016 crop is forecast at 18.7 million, 44-pound boxes, which is 2 percent greater than the 18.4 million-box crop of 2015 but 7 percent less than the 20.2 million-box average of the past five years.

The record is 21.6 million boxes packed in 2013.

The crop is light because of heavy blossom drop and fruitlet drop right after bloom mostly in d'Anjou pears in Wenatchee and Hood River, said Kevin Moffitt, president of The Pear Bureau Northwest in Portland, the fresh pear industry's promotional arm.

Hot weather during bloom in April caused the drop, said Jon Tall, a grower in Dryden and Cashmere in the Wenatchee Valley of Wash-



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Guillermo Sanchez thins Bartlett pears at Triple Tall Orchards near Dryden, Wash., on June 3. Jon Tall, co-owner, says heat during the April bloom resulted in a lighter crop, particularly in d'Anjou.

ington. Valley d'Anjou could be down 15 to 20 percent from last year, he said.

"We still have a solid crop. The fruit is sizing well already and that bodes well for the domestic market," Moffitt said. The crop forecast was made at the bureau's annual meeting at Portland's Embassy Suites Hotel on June 2.

Less tonnage should keep prices strong, Moffitt said.

As of June 1, U.S. No. 1 grade d'Anjou, size 80, from Washington were selling for \$30 to \$34.90 per box, according to USDA Market News. The price was \$26 to \$30.90 on Jan. 20 and \$22 to \$26 a year before that.

Smaller fruit often is ex-

ported. Larger fruit, a small crop, high prices and continuation of a strong dollar diminishing overseas buying power means exports probably will remain around 30 percent in the coming season versus the traditional norm of 36 percent, Moffitt said.

As of May 31, 4.6 million boxes of the 2015 crop had been exported, down 21.1 percent from a year earlier. Beside a strong dollar and strong prices, economic issues in some markets have contributed to the reduction, Moffitt said.

The top export market remains Mexico at 2.2 million boxes, down 19 percent. Canada is second at 1 million boxes, down 15 percent, and United Arab Emirates replaced China as the No. 3 market. UAE was at 258,000 boxes on May 31, down 23.8 percent. China was 124,322 boxes, down 46 percent.

U.S. fresh pears only gained access to China in

February 2013 after years of effort. The industry has high hopes for the market because of China's huge population and growing middle class.

China bought 185,000 boxes of PNW pears in 2013, 227,900 in 2014 and 230,207 in 2015.

Bright spots this season have been Saudi Arabia, up 53 percent at 110,888 boxes; Israel, up 10 percent at 43,669 boxes; and El Salvador, up 11 percent at 43,376 boxes.

The Pear Bureau renewed grower assessments at 38.5 cents per box for promotions, 3.1 cents for research and 3.3 cents for Pear Bureau administration and funding the Northwest Horticultural Council.

The bureau adopted a preliminary \$7.3 million domestic and foreign promotions budget, down \$1 million from a year ago because of a smaller crop. An \$8.3 million preliminary budget a year ago was based on a forecast

of 20.4 million boxes. That shrank over the season to 18.4 million largely because of too much cork, a decay brought on by calcium deficiency caused by too much heat early in the growing season.

Cork was most prevalent in d'Anjou in the Wenatchee Valley and Hood River, Moffitt said. Growers hope to avoid it this season.

Picking is expected to start with the Starkrimson variety in all districts.

Hood River is estimated to be first on July 28, followed by Medford on July 30, Wenatchee on Aug. 1 and Yakima on Aug. 3. Those dates are earlier than last year in Hood River, Medford and Wenatchee and the same for Yakima. They are about two weeks earlier than normal.

The Northwest grows 85 percent of the nation's pears and is 94 percent of exports. California is the remainder of production and exports.

## New NAWG CEO plans to help wheat industry gear up for Farm Bill discussions

Goule offers 'outside the box' thinking, farm leader says

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

The new CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers wants to make sure farmers have a strong voice in writing the 2018 Farm Bill.

Chandler Goule will begin July 5 as the organization's top executive in Washington, D.C. He is moving over from his previous job as senior vice president of programs at the National Farmers Union.

Goule said both organizations are grassroots, farmer-driven organizations.

"Really the fact (NAWG) is controlled by family farmers and working with a commodity that is the third-largest in the United States and contributes significantly to domestic and international food security was very appealing," he told the Capital Press.

One policy difference is the NFU opposes the Trans-Pacific Partnership, saying the trade deal doesn't adequately address currency manipulation concerns and would result in uneven trading competition overseas, but NAWG supports it for the additional market access it offers to such countries as Vietnam and Japan.

"Once I move over there in July, my objective will be to work with Congress to get the trade agreement passed as fast as possible because it's what my membership and the board of directors want and it's their set policy," Goule said. "Trade is neither inherently good nor bad. We do need these additional foreign markets so we can do everything we can to ensure wheat is a profitable commodity."

Paterson, Wash., wheat farmer Nicole Berg was on the selection committee that chose Goule. She also serves on the



Courtesy of NAWG

Chandler Goule is the new CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers.

NAWG budget committee.

Goule's work with strategic planning and on three previous farm bills made him stand out, Berg said.

Goule has 16 years of agriculture policy experience.

The wheat industry will need "some out of the box thinking," Berg said.

"He's going to bring a new perspective to the industry that maybe they haven't had before," she said. "Change can be tough at times, but sometimes a new perspective and breath of fresh air is always good to take our industry to the next level."

"This next Farm Bill is going to have a lot less money in it," Goule said. "They need someone who knows how to navigate the legislative waters, build coalitions and leverage our influence to make sure to get the best farm safety net, the best risk management tools and the best conservation programs out there that will benefit wheat farmers across the United States."

Goule said he has an open door policy for NAWG members and their representatives. He said he plans to travel across the country to meet with wheat farmers.

"Wheat is produced differently in every state, even if they're neighbors," he said. "For the first year, I see it as a major learning curve for myself. I ask for everybody's patience, but I am a pretty fast learner."

## Infected psyllids, late blight reported in region

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

This season is shaping up to be another costly one for Northwest potato production, given the early confirmations of potato psyllids infected with the *Liberibacter* bacterium, which causes zebra chip disease, in Western Idaho and late blight in Walla Walla, Wash.

University of Idaho Extension entomologist Erik Wenninger announced June 2 that the first two psyllids captured by the state's extensive psyllid monitoring program both tested positive for *Liberibacter*. Zebra chip, which creates bands in tuber flesh that darken during frying, first surfaced in the Northwest in 2011.

The infected Idaho psyllids were trapped in separate fields in Canyon County and discovered during an analysis of sticky traps in late May. Not since 2012 have the first psyllid samples collected by the monitoring program tested positive, Wenninger said.

"It's interesting that 2012 was the year in which we found more zebra chip than during the following years, but we also found a lot more psyllids during 2012 than in the following years," Wenninger said.

Wenninger said a single psyllid was detected June 3 on a sticky trap collected from



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Potatoes grow near Shelley, Idaho. Potato growers in the state face an elevated risk of late blight, given ideal conditions for the fungal pathogen and the recent detection of infected plants in Walla Walla, Wash., and due to the recent detection in Western Idaho of potato psyllids infected with the bacterium that causes zebra chip disease.

Magic Valley earlier that week. The Magic Valley psyllid is still being tested.

Oregon State University Extension entomologist Silvia Rondon said her state's official psyllid scouting program has captured six psyllids, but her laboratory has tested 168 psyllids already this season, counting samples sent in by growers. No Oregon psyllids have tested positive yet for *Liberibacter*,

but Rondon estimates the arrival of psyllids in her state is about a week and a half ahead of last season.

Wenninger said the situation is "certainly notable and mildly concerning at this point." He said psyllid populations tend to build exponentially throughout the season, but the incidence of the bacterium is "patchy and hit-or-miss."

"We do know from exper-

iments we've done in the field here the earlier the plants are infected, the greater the incidence and severity of the disease," Wenninger said.

Complicating matters for spud growers, late blight — the fungal disease responsible for the Irish potato famine that began in 1845 — has surfaced in Walla Walla, and conditions are also prime for the disease in Idaho, said Jeff Miller, a late blight expert with Rupert, Idaho-based Miller Research. Miller said the strain is still being tested, but the strain that caused widespread infections in the region last season was US-23, which is sensitive to the chemical mefenoxam. Miller advises growers in Idaho who didn't apply mefenoxam in-furrow or at the onset of tuber development to implement a weekly fungicide program for late blight beginning at row closure, which is already occurring in Western Idaho.

Miller warns growers that fungicides with an additive to help them stick to foliage and withstand moisture, such as Bravo Weatherstick or Manzate Prostick, are not compatible with insecticides that may be needed for psyllid control, as they impede the plant's ability to absorb them. He also warns growers to test out spray tank mixtures that may include fungicides, insecticides and fertilizer prior to application.

## USDA streamlines producer crop acreage reporting

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

USDA agencies will share crop acreage reports under a new initiative aimed at saving farmers and ranchers time.

Announced Tuesday, the initiative will electronically share common acreage information between USDA's Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency and includes RMA-approved private insurance agents and companies.

The focus is on efficiency and reducing the time produc-

ers must spend in an office providing duplicate crop-acreage information, said Jeremy Nalder, ag program specialist at the FSA's Idaho state office.

Typically, producers will report acreage to FSA first, then go to RMA or their insurance provider and provide the same information, which must be manually entered in the insurer's system, he said.

Now they can go to either office and provide that information once, he said.

"If you file your report at one location, the data that's important to both FSA and

RMA will be securely and electronically shared with the other location," FSA Administrator Val Dolcini said in a press release on Tuesday.

"This will avoid redundant and duplicative reporting, and we expect this to save farmers and ranchers time," he said.

Producers will still have to go to both offices to check the accuracy of the information, possibly provide additional information and to sign papers, but they won't be spending as much time in the process, Nalder said.

The agencies aren't yet able to transmit information on all crops, but they're working on it. Crops not yet in the system include pulses, potatoes, tree fruit, nuts and berries, he said.

However, more than 93 percent of all annually reported acreage is eligible for the common data reporting, which should greatly improve efficiencies and reduce mistakes that can affect insurance premiums and claims, USDA stated.

USDA has been working on streamlining the crop-reporting process since 2009 in

response to producers' concerns with having to provide the same basic information for multiple locations.

In 2013, the agency consolidated the deadlines for acreage reporting to 15 dates — down from FSA's previous 17 and RMA's 54, USDA stated.

In Idaho, those deadlines are down to four — Nov. 15 for grass, pasture and forage; Dec. 15 for fall-seeded small grains; Jan. 15 for fruit trees; and July 15 for spring-seeded crops, Nalder said.

In addition to the streamlining efforts, producers can now access their FSA farm information from their home computer.

"You can see your field boundaries, images of your farm, conservation status, operator and owner information and much more," Dolcini said.

The new customer self-service portal, known as FSAFarm+, gives farmers and ranchers online access to securely view, print or export their personal farm data. To enroll in the online service, producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for details.

Presented by AMMO, a program of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

# WHEAT COLLEGE

June 29, 2016, 9 am to 3 pm

Registration opens at 8:30 am at the Wilke Farm (39440 St. Rte. 2 East). Lunch and additional instruction will be held at the Davenport Memorial Hall (511 Park Street).

### Life in the Soil

presented by Dr. Elaine Ingham, OSU Plant Protection Center

In cooperation with Washington State University, outdoor instruction will include:

- Soil food web and nutrient cycles
- Improving soil biology
- Winter pea & canola rotations
- Wireworm treatment update
- Current wheat issues in Washington State

First 100 RSVPs to the event will receive a FREE, 2.5 gallon container of RoundUp, sponsored by Wilbur-Ellis, Helena Chemical and AgLink. Random prize drawings will be held throughout the day, sponsored by Syngenta.

Do not need to be a WAWG member to attend.  
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