Grower pushes premium sweet corn

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

EPHRATA, Wash. — "Quincy sweet corn" is what people ask for in northcentral Washington state.

But the buzz may be changing to "Kallstrom sweet corn" as more people taste what Ephrata grower Mark Kallstrom calls the "Cadillac of corn."

It's so sweet and holds its sweetness longer than most corn that Kallstrom says a customer at the Issaquah farmers' market in Western Washington has told him he sucks the juice from the cob after eating the kernels.

"It's a premium corn and our advantage over grocery stores is that we offer it fresh every day. The quality is up there. When we run out, people cry. I'm not exaggerating," says Kallstrom, 61, who staggers the planting of 100 acres so he has ripe fresh corn daily from the Fourth of July to mid-October.

Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Mark and Uriah Kallstrom, father and son, enjoy a taste of their sweet corn fresh in the field south of Ephrata, Wash., on July 28. They are in their seventh year of fresh market sales.

Employees sell it from his flat bed trucks and wagons at roadside locations in Ephrata, Moses Lake, Quincy and Wenatchee. They're hard to miss with large yellow signs that say "Corn" and have a large letter "K" for Kallstrom.

It's $8 per dozen and $20 per box of 40 ears, which is higher than the price of other sweet corn in stores. Kallstrom says he charges more for his high quality. The variety is SH2 and it's non-GMO, which seems to be a seller, he says. In his seventh year of production, he's hopeful of a bright future.

He also sells it wholesale to other produce stands and grocery stores in north-central Washington and sells it directly at farmers' markets in Issaquah, Ellensburg, Wenatchee, Leavenworth, Moses Lake and Moscow, Idaho.

"We live, eat, smell and drink corn. I love it!" Kallstrom says with a big smile.

It's a family affair. His wife, Elaine, and their son, Uriah, 22, are heavily involved. Some of their older children were involved until other occupations beckoned.

Young people from their church, Faith Community Church in Quincy, hire on to sort corn by hand and school teachers find sales jobs a good fit.

Kallstrom and his son start the day early using a specialty combine for the least damage to ears in harvesting the day's need.

Kallstrom's father, Glenn, was a dairyman who moved from Port Orchard to Ephrata in 1969. The family sold their Ephrata dairy in 2007 and focused on potatoes, wheat, alfalfa, corn silage, grain corn and earlage.

In 2008, they raised 300 acres of sweet corn for frozen processing because canners were short.

"The next year, the canners had more than they needed, so I decided to raise it myself," Kallstrom said. "We planted 35 acres and hired a crew to pick it by hand."

Albany cold storage plant completes expansion

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

ALBANY, Ore. — Sno-Temp Cold Storage opened a new warehouse in July, marking the company's eighth expansion since it began business in Albany in 1974.

The company, founded in Eugene, Ore., in 1957 and with its headquarters still there, now has a total of 725,000 square feet of food storage space between its two facilities.

SnoTemp freezes and stores bulk vegetables and ingredients for repackers such as NORPAC Foods Inc., the farmers' cooperative, and for other customers ranging from craft breweries to ice cream and dessert makers. The company has the capability to store food at temperatures ranging from minus-20 degrees to 70 degrees.

The new warehouse includes 8,500 square feet of processing space that gives customers room for value-added work such as repacking, wet packing and fresh fruit handling. In a news release, company CEO Jason Lafferty said that including processing space with the warehouse gives SnoTemp "distinct logistical and economic efficiencies that are critical to sustaining success in today's market."

The company expanded its Albany plant by 100,000 square feet just six years ago, and has doubled the combined employment at its Albany and Eugene facilities during that time.

The expansion illustrates the economic vitality of Oregon's food processing sector, which grew even during the depth of the recession. A labor trends report issued by the state Employment Department in 2014 showed that Oregon's manufacturing sector lost nearly 16 percent of its jobs from 2007 to 2012. But food manufacturing jobs increased nearly 8 percent during that same period.

SnoTemp is a third-generation family business.

On-line: www.SnoTemp.com

Cattle on feed, placements, marketing and other disappearances, June

(Feedlots with 1,000-head capacity or more)

Item	(1,000 head) 2015	2016	Percent change
Placed on feed, June	1,481	1,525	3
Fed cattle marketed, June	1,747	1,912	9
Other disappearance, June*	69	61	-12
Item	**(1,000 head) 2015**	**2016**	**Percent change**
On feed July 1	10,236	10,356	1

*Includes death loss, movement from feedlots to pasture, and shipments to other feedlots for further feeding.

Source: USDA NASS Capital Press graphic

June cattle placements lower than expected

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The number of cattle going into feedlots in June, up 3 percent year over year, surprised industry analysts, who forecast an average increase of 6 percent based on an increased supply of feeder cattle and relatively lower prices for those cattle.

Nonetheless, the 1.53 million cattle placed is a good number for June, and the number on feed is going to continue to grow, said John Nalivka, owner of Sterling Marketing in Vale, Ore.

"There's going to be a relatively large supply of cattle in the second half of the year and into next year," he said.

Nalivka was not one of the analysts looking for higher placements, forecasting only a 1 percent increase year over year in June. May placements were up 10 percent year over year, and good pasture and range conditions have producers hanging on to cattle a little longer, he said.

Producers are also likely not excited over prices, which are half what they were two years ago, he said.

On the flip side, while feeder cattle prices have declined, they're still not low enough to give feedlots a healthy margin despite low feed costs. The feedlot industry lost about $3.2 billion last year, basically 12 straight months of red ink, he said.

"Some feedlots never really have gotten back into black ink," he said.

Relative to the market out front, they're still paying too much for feeder cattle. At about $143 per hundredweight, feeder prices are about $10 per hundredweight too high. Those prices have to continue to come down to get things in balance, he said.

"I'm not totally negative; I'm just saying we need to raise the caution flag," he said.

Last year's increased calf crop, up 4 percent, is going to end up in feedlots at some point. And total meat supply is increasing in the face of somewhat questionable beef demand, he said.

Beef production is expected to be up 4 percent to 5 percent this year on top of a 1 percent to 2 percent increase on last year's record pork production and a 3 percent to 4 percent increase in poultry production, he said.

USDA's cattle on feed report showed marketing of fed cattle was up 9 percent in June to 1.91 million and total cattle on feed numbers stood at 10.4 million on July 1, an increase of 1 percent year over year.

The report also showed signs that herd rebuilding could be slowing.

The number of heifers in the feedlot mix was up 5 percent year over year at 3.49 million head. The increase follows a 4 percent year-over-year jump in the number of heifers in feedlots on April 1, according to National Agricultural Statistics Service.

"It's a total turnaround from where we've been with heifers. We've gone from rebuilding and breeding to putting them on feed," Nalivka said.

Heifer slaughter was up 4.8 percent in June year over year. Beef cow slaughter was up 20.5 percent in June and is up nearly 8 percent year to date, NASS reported.

"I think we're putting the brakes on this growth," Nalivka said.