

Washington

Ranchers raise \$14K for Beef Counts

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Washington ranchers recently raised \$14,000 to provide beef for families in need.

The Grant County Cattlemen donated a 550-pound yearling steer during the Toppenish Livestock Commission fall roundup sale Oct. 11.

Ranchers bid on the animal and donated it again, a total of 28 times, said Bridget Coon, director of digital strategies for the Washington Beef Commission.

The money goes to the Beef Counts effort through Second Harvest in Spokane and Food Lifeline in Seattle. The effort supplies meat year-round to local food banks.

The food banks use the money to order beef at a wholesale price from the Agri Beef Co. plant in Toppenish. It in turn ships the meat to the food banks, which give it to

those in need, Coon said.

Research shows that customers feel good about products and brands that give back to their community, Coon said.

"This is something that directly helps neighbors and makes consumers feel good about their beef purchases," she said.

The industry aims to raise \$100,000 for Beef Counts this year. The Toppenish donations put the effort within \$314 of that goal.

Coon expects to pass the goal by the end of the year with fundraisers in Kittitas County.

The 1 millionth serving under the program will be served in Yakima the first week of December.

Beef Counts and Second Harvest will offer mobile food banks that week in Yakima, Toppenish and Ellensburg.

Apples remain top Washington state crop

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Agricultural production in Washington state set a record of \$10.7 billion in 2015 with apples leading the way for the 11th straight year, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service's Northwest regional office in Olympia.

Total agricultural production was up 5 percent from the previous high of \$10.2 billion in 2014. Values excluded government payments.

Much of the increase was in apples, which gained 26.6 percent at \$2.39 billion in 2015 up from \$1.89 billion in 2014, NASS said.

"It's no accident the apple industry continues to make such a contribution to the state's agriculture. It leads the world in innovation," said Desmond O'Rourke, retired Washington State University agricultural economist in Pullman.

Apple prices were strong in the 2015-2016 sales season



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Red Delicious apples are packed at Valicoff Fruit Co., in Wapato, Wash., on Oct. 12. Apples hit a new record farmgate value of \$2.4 billion in Washington in 2015, making it the state's top crop.

because the crop, while fourth largest in history, was still smaller than crops in 2014 and 2012.

Apples represented 22 percent of the state's total agricultural value in 2015 compared with 19 percent in 2014.

The industry has invested heavily in superior new apple varieties, new technology in orchards, storage and packing that "delivers outstanding prod-

uct 12 months a year," O'Rourke said.

Packing and marketing initiatives woo retailers and consumers as the industry raises the bar among world competitors, he said.

Beyond apples the other top four commodities listed by NASS held the same positions as in 2014.

Milk remained second at

\$1.14 billion. However, this was down 30 percent from 2014 and the lowest total since 2010. Cattle and calves, valued at \$858 million, were third, a 6.5 percent increase.

Potatoes increased slightly to \$772 million and remained fourth. Wheat rounded out the top five with a value of \$600 million while down 16 percent.

All hay was sixth at \$499 million, down 29 percent. All cherries were seventh at \$477 million, down 12 percent. Eggs were eighth at \$331 million, up 87 percent. All grapes were ninth at \$296 million, down 1.7 percent.

Hops were 10th at \$280 million, up 34.4 percent.

Record high production values were set for apples, cattle and calves, eggs and hops while milk, wheat, hay, cherries and grapes all declined.

Generally, Washington agriculture is "very healthy," O'Rourke said, particularly on the crop side because of natural advantages in soil, climate and irrigation.

Tree fruit trade groups' merger effort slows

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — Efforts have slowed to combine two trade organizations that handle foreign market issues for the Washington tree fruit industry.

The Northwest Horticultural Council and Northwest Fruit Exporters, both in Yakima, have been considering closer operations for two years.

"I'd hoped to report we are well on our way, but we hit a roadblock over the summer," Chris Schlect, president of NHC, reported at a Washington Apple Commission meeting in Ellensburg, Oct. 20.

The plan is for NFE to come "under the umbrella" of NHC, but keep its own revenue stream, Schlect said.

NHC is ready to make it happen but Mike Saunders, chairman of the NFE board, has concerns, Schlect said, adding he had hoped to have

the effort finished before he retires at the end of March.

Later, Schlect said the intent is better coordination of NFE and NHC and having a clearer voice at the federal level. He said having NFE remain a separate legal entity with its own board contracting with NHC for management would maintain NFE's trade certificate allowing shippers to share export information.

Contacted later, Saunders, co-owner of Apple King in Yakima, said he personally sees no advantage to joining, that NFE and NHC already coordinate well and that federal agencies know, or can figure out, which one to contact.

NFE has attorneys checking to make sure it can keep its trade certificate if it is managed by NHC, which is involved in lobbying, Saunders said.

The U.S. Justice Department is concerned about organizations setting prices on product for domestic consumption, but NFE doesn't do that, Schlect said.

The trade certificate allows two or more shippers to give NFE information on timing and volumes of shipment of cherries to Japan so that NFE can coordinate efficient Japanese inspections for the benefit of all, Schlect said. The shippers don't necessarily know what each other is doing, he said.

Another reason for separation is that NHC and NFE are funded differently, Saunders said. NHC is funded by donations from groups such as the Apple Commission, while NFE receives grower assessments, he said.

"Basically, we've been asked to look into this and we are," Saunders said. "We need to make sure our board and whole membership are up to speed on this."

NHC was incorporated in 1947 to assist in handling problems common in the Northwest tree fruit industry. It focuses on national and international policy issues impacting growers and shippers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

NFE was established as a nonprofit corporation in 1985 to manage export market preparation procedures for fresh sweet cherries bound for Japan. In 1992, its role was expanded to include the export of apples to Mexico, China and Japan.

In March 2014, at the initiative of the Apple Commission, apple market access regarding China, Japan, Vietnam, India, Australia, South Africa, Egypt and Israel were switched from NFE to NHC.

NFE continued handling apple market access to Mexico and protocols or work plans for export of apples to foreign countries.



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- Small Grain Breeding Program Updates - MONDAY MORNING: Limagrains Cereal Seeds, Syngenta, University of Idaho, Washington State University, Oregon State University, WestBred, Highland Specialty Grains
- WSU Extension Cereal Variety Testing Program and Oregon Elite Yield Trial updates and results, Ryan Higginbotham and Mike Flowers
- WSDA Seed Lab Advisory Meeting
- WSCIA General Membership Meeting

SPEAKERS

- Dr. Drew Lyon, WSU Weed Scientist, will present on management of noxious weeds.
- Dr. Randy Fortenbery, WSU Wheat & Small Grains Economist, will speak on the value of wheat in Washington
- Dr. Camille Steber, from the USDA-ARS Wheat Genetics, Quality, Physiology and Disease Research Unit will present on the science of falling numbers.

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