

Apple Commission still looks to Asia

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — A recent survey of Washington apple shippers shows they still view Asia as the best target for export growth while realizing that maintaining the traditional top markets of Mexico and Canada are critical, says Todd Fryhover, president of the Washington Apple Commission.

China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand all offer opportunities for growth as Washington continues to produce larger apple crops, Fryhover said the day after a Dec. 8 commission meeting in Yakima.

The survey also showed shippers still support the commission's strategic plan of targeting Asia, Fryhover said. Results of the survey were reviewed at the meeting.

"The biggest concern in the industry right now is that we're growing more fruit and domestic per capita consumption is growing at a pound over the last 10 years so it doesn't keep up," Fryhover said. "Everyone agrees we have to develop exports and at the same time increase domestic per capita consumption."

In 2012, Washington entered a new era of producing 120 million to 150 million, 40-pound boxes of fresh apples annually. The driver is big companies converting older, low-density orchards into new higher-density plantings and increasing yields.

In May, the commission decided to review its five-year-old export promotion strategic plan to stay competitive globally. The effort was to include a collective, anonymous sharing of production and export volumes of companies to examine sales trends. It also was to include a tree survey.

However, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service will do a tree and acreage survey next year and the commission will wait on that, Fryhover said.

Shipper volumes are still being accumulated but shipper marketing priorities were collected, he said.

They show China-Hong Kong, Mexico and India all ranking tops with shippers.

For years, Mexico has been the top market at about 10 million boxes. It bought a record 16 million boxes in 2014.

Canada typically buys about 6 million boxes. India was a 5 million-box market but fell in the last year because of port closures. China just opened to all varieties of U.S. apples in the spring of 2015 and while at the 1 million-box level is expected to grow significantly in coming years.

Strength of the U.S. dollar reducing buying power of foreign currencies and closure of Russia to Western produce have made exports more challenging.

Given that, Honeycrisp and other high-value apples are not seen as volume exports, but Red Delicious and Gala will remain the export focus, Fryhover said.

Organic apple exports could increase to Canada and niche markets like Singapore, he said.

The commission's federal Market Access Program funding has dropped 5.6 percent to \$4.8 million for 2017, leaving a \$282,000 shortfall to be made up by reserves or an increase in commission revenue from assessments on growers if more fruit is sold, Fryhover said.

Growers are assessed 3.5 cents per box of apples sold. The commission contributes \$1 million annually to the U.S. Apple Association and \$610,000 to the Northwest Horticultural Council. While those organizations are important, the commission may need to look for other options for funding them, Fryhover said.



Todd Fryhover

Ranchers seek exemption to electronic device livestock trucking rule change

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Cattle ranchers want an exemption to a livestock hauling rule change that they say will hinder their ability to transport animals long distances.

The new rule requires the use of hours-of-service electronic logging devices by drivers who are currently required only to prepare records of duty status.

The Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration's Electronic Logging Device rule goes into effect Dec. 18, 2017.

The final rule does not change federal hours-of-service requirements, said Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration spokesman Duane DeBruyne. Drivers required to maintain federal records of duty status must convert from paper logs to electronic logging devices.

Current rules place an 11-hour driving limit after a driver has been off-duty 10 hours and require 30-minute rest breaks every eight hours. A driver may not drive after 60-70 hours of consecutive duty in seven or eight days.

The new electronic device rule removes "discretionary wig-



Courtesy of Tim O'Byrne/Working Ranch magazine

The beef cattle industry wants an exemption to a new regulation that would require the use of electronic devices to monitor the hours a truck driver hauls cattle. The change would hurt animal health, biosecurity and increase costs, a consultant says.

gle room," said Tim O'Byrne, beef cattle consultant in Henderson, Nev.

"The device will log in whenever the truck starts, and that kicks off the hours of service clock, even if the driver just drives 20 minutes out of town to the sale barn to get in line early and climbs in the sleeper for a five-hour nap until the sale is over and he has a load ready for him," O'Byrne said.

"Our concern is that the

(electronic device) does not recognize the discretionary actions of the livestock driver as he performs his regular duty," he said.

Trucks would either need two drivers or a single driver would need to unload cattle during breaks, said Jess Peterson, spokesman for the U.S. Cattlemen's Association.

"It'll be a greater cost to get your cattle shipped," Peterson said. "It makes distance an issue."

"It doesn't matter if you're hauling a load of potato chips and you run into the end of your hours of service and you just park in the rest stop or Wal-Mart parking lot," O'Byrne said. "With livestock, it's completely different. They didn't give any thought whatsoever to live animals."

The infrastructure doesn't exist that allows truckers to stop and unload cattle after reaching driving limits.

Online
<http://actag.us/>

Even if it did, O'Byrne said, it would increase biosecurity risks.

"The whole idea is to get the cattle on the truck and get them expeditiously delivered to the final destination, all in one go," he said. "If it takes 18 to 20 hours to do that, it's far better for the cattle to have that happen."

The American Cattle Transporters Advisory Group and American Trucking Association's agricultural division will speak with the motor carrier administration to express concerns and seek possible solutions.

The oil industry has exemptions for off-the-clock waiting time that could be put to use for livestock, O'Byrne said.

The change in presidential administration could also provide an opportunity, Peterson said.

"(President-elect Donald Trump) has an opportunity to get this done right, and we look forward to working with him to do the right thing here," Peterson said.

Mechanization company interested in helping with robotic picker

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — One of the largest manufacturers of labor-saving mobile agricultural machines in the Pacific Northwest says he may want to work with the developer of a robotic apple picker.

"I'd like to talk to them about potentially teaming up with them, being part of it instead of competing," said J.J. Dagorret, owner of Automated Ag Systems of Moses Lake.

High-density plantings producing 80 to 90 bins per acre is a lot of fruit and bin movement is a challenge, Dagorret said. One of his 23-mph forward and reverse, air-suspension, \$74,500 to \$88,000 Bin Bandits can move 500 to 600 bins per day, what normally takes three to five tractors, he said.

Dagorret was at the Washington State Tree Fruit Association annual meeting in Wenatchee, where Dan Steere, CEO of Abundant Robotics, Hayward, Calif., spoke about

his goal of having a robotic apple picker commercially available by the fall of 2018.

Automated Ag produces two models of Bin Bandits. It also produces the self-propelled \$60,000 Bandit Xpress platforms to replace ladders for workers picking apples and pruning, blossom thinning and tying tree limbs.

Automated Ag has sold 500 to 600 machines worldwide since 2013, with 80 percent being the Bandit Xpress, Dagorret said. He also produces

a machine to assist solely with ground-level apple harvest, a hedger for automated pruning and a hand-held mechanical blossom thinner.

"The key is simplicity and powder-coated," he said.

Bandit Xpress was chosen as one of the Top 10 innovative new machines at the World Ag Expo in Tulare, Calif., in 2014. Dagorret's new Melon Wrangler, which is used for harvesting melons, pumpkins, tomatoes, cucumbers, egg plant,

bell peppers and squash, is in the Top 10 for 2017.

Automated Ag is moving from a 35,000- to a 60,000-square-foot facility in Moses Lake. The larger facility will allow a 24-person assembly crew to finish six machines per day, Dagorret said.

Bandit Xpress has sold mostly in Washington, Oregon and California but also in New Zealand, Australia, South America and South Africa, he said.



W235 and W100 Series Windrowers



Cutting canola at the right time and creating consistently even windrows are key to a profitable canola harvest. That's why John Deere has three windrower options to help you do exactly that.

The W235 Windrowers are designed to meet your demanding productivity requirements. Integrated AutoTrac™ enables faster cutting speeds while maintaining crop and cut quality. Built around 6-cylinder, 6.8L John Deere engines, the 235-hp W235 Windrowers have the power to get through tall, heavy canola stands.

The 110-hp W110 and the 148-hp W150 Windrowers offer you versatile and efficient cutting. With interchangeable draper and auger heads, you get a draper machine that can be used in hay applications as well.

In addition to a full line of commercial hay tools, your John Deere dealer delivers trained service technicians and a second-to-none parts network, so when it's time to cut, you and your equipment will be ready. That's **PERFORMANCE THAT PAYS**. See your local John Deere dealer to learn more.

JohnDeere.com/Windrowers