

Apple commission plans to boost overseas promotions

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — The Washington Apple Commission is looking at reallocating export promotional dollars and increasing Washington apple brand identity overseas by encouraging more shippers to use the Washington apple logo.

It's an effort to meet increased international competition brought on by more production in Europe, elsewhere in the U.S. and in other countries and Russia's ban on Western produce. The ban, begun on Aug. 7, 2014, was in retaliation for Western sanctions on Russia for its aggression in Ukraine.

"I was in Asia two weeks ago and saw Canadian apples in markets there for the first time in 15 years," Todd Fryhover, commission president, said at a commission meeting in Wenatchee on March 14.

"The French are upping their game. South Africa is there (in Asia) again. It's really competitive out there," Fryhover said.

"We've had good years and now things are evolving within the industry and internationally so Red Delicious and Gala are struggling," he said.

By reducing promotional funding for Central America, Thailand, Malaysia/Singapore, Taiwan, the Middle East and Colombia/Peru to 2012 levels, the commission can save

\$700,000 to be reallocated elsewhere, Fryhover told commissioners.

That would reduce the funding to \$187,000 to \$387,000 per country annually versus the current level of \$260,000 to \$550,000. The commission's Foreign Trade Committee will consider the reallocations at its May 18 meeting in advance of the next commission budget meeting on May 25.

The commission is budgeted to spend \$7.6 million this year on export promotions with \$5.1 million of that coming from the federal Market Access Program — known by the acronym MAP — and \$2.5 million from grower assessments.

More than \$1 million each

is budgeted on promotions in Mexico and India. China/Hong Kong, Vietnam and Indonesia follow as top targets with between \$550,000 and \$875,000 each.

Fryhover said he's concerned about the future of MAP funding and that the commission has funding that can be used to keep promotions at the \$7.6 million level for the next couple of years.

The Russian embargo has shifted European apple exports to Asia and the Middle East, increasing competition there for China, the U.S., Chile and New Zealand.

The commission slashed its promotions in Russia from more than \$300,000 before the embargo to \$11,000, and Fry-

hover is recommending eliminating that.

Washington exports to Russia peaked at 921,558, 40-pound boxes in 2007 and was 598,028 boxes in 2013. It has been zero since the embargo.

The commission passed a motion supporting use of the Washington apple logo on all varieties shipped into all markets. About 70 percent of shippers already use the logo on price look-up stickers on apples being exported but it would be good to have everyone doing it to build the Washington brand, Fryhover said.

Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers in Wenatchee and Yakima Fresh and Sage Fruit Co. in Yakima are moving to-

ward using the logo, he said.

Fryhover also displayed conceptual Point of Sale materials of the logo surrounded by the individual logos of 23 marketers. It's a way of including everyone in promotions, he said.

Commissioner Frank Davis, vice president of business development of Domex Superfresh Growers in Yakima, said the industry needs to build its international identity if it's going to get to 60 million boxes in exports.

In 2014, the Washington industry exported a record 50.6 million boxes, which represented 35.5 percent of the year's record crop. Normally, exports are 30 million to 35 million boxes.

Wheat variety list adds 15 new options

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Fifteen new varieties have been added to the annual list that ranks wheat quality for growers and seed dealers.

Usually five or six varieties are added each year, said Doug Engle, manager of the USDA Western Wheat Quality Laboratory in Pullman, Wash.

The laboratory, the Idaho and Oregon wheat commissions and the Washington Grain Commission distribute the Preferred Wheat Varieties brochure.

The brochure assigns a ranking to each wheat variety — most desirable, desirable, acceptable and least desirable.

Of the 107 varieties listed, 52 received a most-desirable ranking.

Overall quality is the deciding factor, industry officials say.

"If you're looking at choices of varieties, and you have a couple that have comparable agronomics, comparable yields, choose the one with the better quality," said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington commission. "That will just increase the overall quality of the crop."

Mike Pumphrey, a spring wheat breeder at Washington State University, said the brochure is also a good guideline for breeders.

"I want my line to be on there with a desirable or most-desirable quality, so that the industry sees we're doing our best to maintain the market share based on quality and production factors," he said.

Farmers and seed managers pay attention to the brochure, Engle said.

Varieties don't move up or down on the list, he said. The brochure uses all cumulative information on a variety.

Every three years, Engle polls the three state wheat organizations and removes varieties that don't have significant acreage to make room for the new ones.

Pumphrey said growers see the long-term need to maintain a high-quality product.

"I often am surprised how much they value quality, considering it's something they're not overtly paid for any given crop year," he said. "There's been many times I've heard a farmer say,



New varieties

Following are the new wheat varieties added to the Preferred Wheat Varieties brochure:

- LCS Drive
- UI Sparrow
- Norwest Duet
- SY Assure
- WB1604
- WB1529
- ARS-Pritchett
- LCS Evina
- LCS Jet
- Tekoa
- WB6341
- Ryan
- SY Steelhead
- LCS Luna
- LCS Iron

"Yeah, but I don't like the quality of that line." That's a tall order, when someone might be looking past bottom-line economics in one given year to say, "I don't like the quality of that line and what it might do to us long-term."

A new category was added this year: Unacceptable Except Customer-Specific Uses, or UCS, for varieties that might perform well in a specific product, but should be segregated from general commercial channels, according to the brochure.

"If a mill wants to source that wheat, more power to them," Engle said. "There's a home for everything if you just look hard enough."

WestBred soft white spring wheat WB-1035CL+, Arizona Plant Breeders hard white spring wheat BR7030 and three hard red winter wheats, Residence and Estica from Cebeco and Symphony from Tanio Tech, have the UCS ranking.

Stories from OSU professors help children explore nature

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Two Oregon State University associate professors won a national science writing award for their collaboration on a children's book set in Eastern Oregon.

The book, "Ricky's Atlas, Mapping a Land on Fire," is the second by stream ecologist and author Judith Li and Peg Herring, communications director for OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences and who illustrated the book. In February, they received one of five awards for outstanding science writing from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Subaru of America Inc.

The pair's first collaboration was "Ellie's Log: Exploring the Forest Where the Great Tree Fell," published in 2013. Oregon State University Press published both books.

As the titles suggest, both books center on the adventures of friends Ricky and Ellie. "Ricky's Atlas" finds the youngsters learning about the impact of wildfire on the dry forest of Eastern Oregon. While visiting the ranch of Ricky's uncle, a lightning storm touches off a fire and the children later explore the burned area, handle fossils and visit a fire lookout tower.



OSU stream ecologist Judith Li has written a pair of children's books that use a story format to introduce elementary-age students to old growth timber and rangeland wildfire ecological issues. Two more books are in the pipeline, one set at the Oregon Coast and another in a city.

Ricky plots their explorations and findings with maps and field notes. In "Ellie's Log," the pair study the aftermath of a huge tree falling to the forest floor during a winter storm.

Li, who is retired from teaching but still does some research at OSU, said "Ricky's Atlas" is drawn in large part from her years of field work in Eastern Oregon's John Day River Basin. "Ellie's Log" began as an initiative prompted by the National Science Foundation and grew from research conducted at OSU's H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest. It also marked the start of Li's collaboration with Herring, who has a background in fisheries biology and is a long-

time science writer at OSU. Li learned to her surprise that Herring also is an artist, and that led to the line drawings and watercolors that illustrate the books.

"I didn't realize she was such an amazing artist," Li said. "We discovered we had two little friends in our lives, Ricky and Ellie, who I invented and she illustrated."

The stories are intended for upper elementary school students, but are not dumbed down, Herring said.

"These are fun books and they're meant to delight children, but they're also accurate," she said. "The science in these books is matched by established scientific benchmarks.



Photos courtesy of Oregon State University
Peg Herring, communications director for OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences, illustrated a pair of children's books in collaboration with Judith Li, an OSU stream ecologist.

The level of precision is appropriate for a 10-year-old, but it's accurate as well."

The protagonists record their field notes in journals and make maps, practices that match the work of adult scientists and that Li and Herring hope encourage children to get outside and take note of what they see. Instead of a glossary, the books use margin notes and illustrations to help young readers better understand the text.

"The story is fiction but the information is related to the science of the landscape," Li said.

The books have received positive reception from teachers, parents and young readers, she said.

Domestic interest growing in PNW hard red spring wheat

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

More domestic millers are considering a blend of Pacific Northwest-grown hard red spring wheat with wheat from elsewhere in the nation to boost the protein content, said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission.

Hard red spring wheat typically has more protein than other varieties — usually 13 to 16 percent — which corresponds with more gluten content that increases its dough handling and water absorption characteristics, according to the North Dakota Wheat Commission. Most of that variety is grown in the Dakotas, Montana and Minnesota.

"They're actually requesting our high gluten-strength wheats now to blend up their lower-quality wheats," Dana Herron, a grain commission



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File
Board member Dana Herron stands by the Washington Grain Commission building. He and other commissioners discussed the increasing interest among domestic millers in the region's hard red spring wheat.

member, said of millers. He said PNW farmers have long emphasized quality in growing red wheats.

Michael Pumphrey, spring wheat breeder at Washington State University, said he works to maintain lines with desirable milling and baking qualities, as well as yield.

Herron praised Pumphrey for his breeding efforts.

"Our customers understand they can depend on the wheat that comes out of the Pacific Northwest, because we don't produce wheat of low quality," he said.

About 10 percent of Washington's wheat crop is hard red spring wheat and 10 percent is hard red winter wheat, Squires said. Eighty percent of the crop is soft white wheat, most of which is exported to customers in Asia.

Some milling companies in the PNW are having difficulty getting hard red spring wheat from elsewhere, Squires said. They want samples of PNW-produced wheat to determine logistics, in-

cluding transportation costs.

Mills typically want to buy from the closest source, Herron said.

"More wheats that have high gluten are being used domestically and not exported," he said. "The quality of our wheat is starting to really rise to the top — even domestic people are noticing."

Winter and spring hard red wheats are also bringing higher prices. At Portland this week, hard red winter wheat with 13 percent protein was bringing \$5.6650-5.9150 a bushel while soft white wheat was bringing \$4.5075-4.6575 a bushel.

Squires isn't certain how much red spring wheat could be shipped as a result of the millers' inquiries, but the commission will provide more information.

"If there's an opportunity, we need to take advantage of it," he said.

Stock watering rights bill moving through legislature with ease

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — An immigration-related bill that some Idaho farm groups worried could have a chilling effect on much of the state's agricultural workforce has struggled to gain traction in the Idaho Legislature.

A House joint memorial that asks Congress to ensure that foreign food products imported into the United States meet the same food safety standards that domestic farmers and food processors must meet is also struggling.

But a bill that would cod-

ify in state law a landmark Idaho Supreme Court decision on who owns in-stream stock watering rights on federal land is sailing through the Legislature with little opposition.

That bill passed the Senate by a 34-0 vote and has been sent to the House. If passed by that body and signed into law by the governor, it could benefit thousands of ranchers in Idaho who own cattle that graze on federal land.

Idaho's top court ruled in 2007 that the U.S. Bureau of Land Management can't own in-stream stock watering rights because the agency

doesn't own cattle and therefore can't put the water to beneficial use.

Senate Bill 1111 would allow thousands of Idaho ranchers to potentially file for those rights.

The immigration bill stalled after facing opposition from some farm groups that worried it could discourage some of the industry's foreign-born labor force to look to other states for employment.

The bill sought to prevent so-called sanctuary cities from being established in Idaho by allowing the state to withhold funding from

them if they were. Sanctuary cities are municipalities that discourage cooperation with federal immigration agencies.

After meeting with ag groups opposed to the bill, its sponsor, Rep. Greg Chaney, R-Caldwell, rewrote it and dropped provisions that farm groups believe would have required law enforcement officers to hold anyone arrested for up to 48 hours for further checks if they could not prove legal residence.

But House Bill 198 has sat in the House State Affairs Committee since Feb. 22 and with the 2017 session nearing its homestretch, it's unlikely

the bill will advance, Chaney said.

"As of right now, no hearing date has been set," he said. "As time winds down (in the session), it becomes less likely."

After the bill was re-written to try to address concerns from the agricultural industry, some of the enthusiasm from its initial supporters was lost, Chaney said.

"In the end, we weren't able to come up with language that everybody was comfortable with," he said.

Some of Idaho's main farm groups were concerned about language in House Joint Me-

morial 1 that they believed was inaccurate, including language about country of origin labeling.

The memorial's author, Canyon County farmer Sid Freeman, worked with those groups to change some of the language and the memorial has been reintroduced as HJM6.

The rewritten memorial passed the House unanimously March 14 and has moved to the Senate.

Freeman believes there is still enough time in the legislative session to get it passed.

"I think we'll get it done," he said.