

# Washington orchard strike gets resolved

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

QUINCY, Wash. — Several H-2A-visa foreign guest-workers who went on strike at a Quincy orchard are back at work with assurances they won't be retaliated against but with no guarantee of work next year.

Seventeen of approximately 27 H-2A workers at W&L Orchards nine miles southwest of Quincy quit picking Gala apples for five days in protest of alleged bullying by a supervisor for allegedly not working fast enough. There were other complaints about working conditions.

"They took advantage of our open door policy and brought their complaints to us and we listened and were happy to be able to address their concerns and get everyone moving forward again," said Keith Larson, president of Larson Fruit Co., Selah, which owns W&L.

In response to their complaints there were multiple state Department of Labor & Industries inspections and "no serious violations brought to our attention," Larson said.

Three workers who were fired have been reinstated and a different person has been put in supervision of the crew, said Larson, who declined comment on the validity of the complaints.

An agreement was worked out between the workers and the company. Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ) and Columbia Legal Services helped the workers, Larson said.

FUJ is a Burlington farm-workers union that started in 2013 to represent workers at Sakuma Bros. berry farm in Burlington.

Larson Fruit agreed to not retaliate against or blacklist the workers, may hire them back next year if they do good work but there are no guarantees,

Larson said.

Larson Fruit hired the workers from Mexico with the help of the Olympia-based farm labor association WAFLA.

The association hires firms to recruit H-2A workers in Mexico, arranges their visas and transports them to the employer who hires them. WAFLA has arranged hirings of probably about 10,000 H-2A workers this year.

Dan Fazio, WAFLA director, said the workers who struck at W&L came from the same state in Mexico and apparently were friends or relatives of H-2A workers who struck at Sarbanand Farms, a blueberry farm in Sumas, after a 28-year-old H-2A worker died there in early August apparently from pre-existing conditions.

Sumas is on the Canadian border about 45 miles north of Burlington. WAFLA is not involved with the blueberry farm, Fazio said.

Joe Morrison, Columbia Legal Services attorney in Wenatchee, said there is no evidence the Quincy strike was in sympathy or connected with the strike in Sumas.

Morrison said he and FUJ were both involved in Sumas and Quincy but that workers in Quincy approached Larson with grievances before he and FUJ were involved.

Complaints in Quincy and Sumas were similar about abusive foremen and work conditions.

"Sumas should have been a wake up call to the industry, that a company should listen instead of doing what they did in Sumas which is to fire people. A month later in Quincy, Larson and WAFLA didn't learn from that. They followed the same play book and to me that's incredibly disturbing," Morrison said.

The workers in Quincy presented grievances to Larson Fruit on Sept. 6. On Sept. 7 a Larson employee and a WA-

FLA employee visited the orchard and said a list would be prepared of those who could work and those who could go back to Mexico, Morrison said.

Fearful for their jobs the whole group went back to work, Morrison said.

On Sept. 8 state L&I inspectors arrived at the workers' request. On Sept. 9 Larson fired three workers and then all the workers went on strike again, he said. FUJ helped workers in negotiations with Larson and the company reversed course, reinstated fired workers, changed the foreman and signed an agreement, Morrison said.

"We were just motivated to get everyone back to work. We have a crop to pick," Larson said.

He declined comment on whether worker grievances were valid or contrived by union agitation.

"Does Larson or WAFLA have any proof FUJ was there to trump up stuff? Why, if this was trumped up, would Larson rehire them?" Morrison asked.

A Larson Fruit Co. attorney told WAFLA that FUJ wanted WAFLA to sign Larson's agreement with its workers, Fazio said.

"Normally, you don't sign an agreement where you're not a party to the dispute and are not at the negotiating table," he said, explaining WAFLA did not sign.

"I think the workers wanted a guarantee to be hired through WAFLA next year if Larson did not hire them," Fazio said. "The H-2A program is a great deal for workers and Washington employers have a well-deserved reputation as tops in the nation. I understand the workers' concern."

Morrison said either Fazio doesn't trust his lawyer or his client or doesn't want to pledge that WAFLA won't retaliate.



Photos courtesy Kyle Dunning

Holly Dunning, left, operates a canning machine with her sons, Brayden, center, and Parker, right, to can the family's estate-grown Pinot gris. Canned wine has surged in popularity in recent years.

## Canned wine aimed at active drinkers

Sales of canned wine have surged in recent years

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press



A can of Knotty Brothers wine, which is produced by the Dunning family from grapes grown on their property near Corvallis, Ore. Canned wine has surged in popularity in recent years.

ly's wine will also be sold.

About 350 cases of the wine cans were fermented by winemaker Joe Dobbes from grapes that were harvested from the family's vineyard last year.

The Dunnings have a ready-made clientele for the product among the wineries, breweries and cideries across Eastern Oregon and Idaho that contract with Knotty Brothers for bottling and canning services.

Cans offer convenient portion control, as each holds the equivalent of two wine glasses, said Holly. With a 750-milliliter bottle, consumers must either commit to drinking the whole thing or risk degrading the quality of leftover wine by exposing it to oxygen.

For breweries, the cans

provide an opportune serving container, so they don't have to invest in glasses, said Parker. "They don't need to do anything to sell our wine."

Many sports arenas and parks don't allow glass bottles but can be entered with cans, which are also simple to recycle, said Robert Zarate, a canning consultant hired by the Dunnings.

"It's growing for sure. It's getting big," he said.

Between 2012 and 2016, sales of canned wine surged from less than \$2 million to more than \$14 million in the U.S., according to the Nielsen research company.

That's still only about 1 percent of the total wine market, but "portability" is seen as a big plus, with 73 percent of consumers saying easy-to-carry containers are important to them, according to Nielsen.

Canning wine involves a somewhat different process than canning beer, since the federal government requires a slightly larger can size — the equivalent of half a bottle, or roughly 12.5 fluid ounces.

The cans are also lined with a polymer coating to prevent wine from eating away at the aluminum container, since it's more acidic than beer.

Also, each can must be dosed with nitrogen gas to replace oxygen, which spoils wine over time.

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## Newsday Crossword

BEWILDERED by Billie Truitt  
Edited by Stanley Newman  
www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Copenhagen residents
  - 6 Gawk at
  - 10 Melt
  - 14 Conscious (of)
  - 15 Once in a blue \_\_\_
  - 16 Mystical glow
  - 17 Open the door for
  - 18 Sunrise direction
  - 19 Speak unclearly
  - 20 Bewildered comment
  - 23 "No \_\_, ands, or but!"
  - 24 Your pick of
  - 25 Buffet table heater
  - 29 \_\_ cost (free)
  - 31 Watchdog's warning
  - 34 Lake boat
  - 35 Oil cartel
  - 36 Moccasin or loafer
  - 37 Bewildered comment
  - 40 Long-running argument
  - 41 Waffle appliance
  - 42 Flip-chart stand
  - 43 Rage
  - 44 Neck-and-neck
  - 45 Brief disputes
  - 46 Pref for light
  - 47 Puppy's bite
  - 48 Bewildered comment
  - 57 Slips into
  - 58 Bearded farm animal
  - 59 Pollute
  - 60 Behind schedule
  - 61 Poker pot starter
- DOWN**
- 1 Painter Salvador
  - 2 Very impressed
  - 3 USA alliance
  - 4 Ireland nickname
  - 5 One on guard duty
  - 6 Prophetic signs
  - 7 Urge on
  - 8 Come in second
  - 9 Highway on-ramp
  - 10 Yummy
  - 11 Hawaiian dance
  - 12 Make \_\_\_ for it (flee)
  - 13 Stave (off)
  - 21 25 Down craft, for short
  - 22 \_\_\_-cone (icy treat)
  - 25 Futuristic novel genre
  - 26 Potato, slangily
  - 27 Happen next
  - 28 Highway
  - 29 Kitchen wear
  - 30 Adolescent
  - 31 White Halloween costume
  - 32 Juliet's love
  - 33 Fishing-line holders
  - 35 Fairy tale meanie
  - 36 Bit of numerical trivia
  - 38 Residing in
  - 39 Don't give up
  - 44 Lamb's mother
  - 45 Take a chair
  - 46 Entertainment room appliance
  - 47 Paid attention to
  - 48 Not doing anything
  - 49 Elaborate ruse
  - 50 \_\_\_-lock brakes
  - 51 Way of speaking
  - 52 Airplane boarding place
  - 53 Walking stick
  - 54 Jar tops
  - 55 Troop group
  - 56 Expected landing hrs.

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