

Apple prices stable despite drop in sales to China

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — The size and prices of Washington's apple crop appear to have stabilized while exports to China are down 40 percent but some say could recover.

The industry's Jan. 1 storage report shows the 2016 crop at 142.3 million, 40-pound boxes, the same as a month ago. It's an estimate of what was picked and placed in storage, what's been shipped so far and packout versus cullage of fruit still in storage. It is second only to the 143.6-million-box crop of 2014.

Crop size should remain stable for the next several months unless there's some unforeseen increase in cullage, said Desmond O'Rourke, retired Washington State University agricultural economist and world apple market analyst.

"How rapidly the industry moves the crop is the big question and so far things look positive. The dollar is relatively weak and exports,



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Ana Delgado loads a tray with Ambrosia apples at the McDougall & Sons Baker Flats packing plant on Jan. 5. A managed variety, Ambrosia wholesales for about \$40 per box.

except China, are holding up very well," O'Rourke said.

So far this season, 579,000 boxes of Washington apples have been shipped to China compared with 957,000 at the same time last year.

"I've been warning people

to be cautious about China," O'Rourke said. "There are a lot of thumbs on the scale in China."

Todd Fryhover, president of the Washington Apple Commission in Wenatchee, said China has a huge crop,

exported 10 million boxes of apples to India last year and has been banned from India this year. Chinese importers pulled back early in the season when a shipment of Washington Gala was in poor shape and Chilean cherries

were stiff Christmas competition.

China has improved packaging of its high-end apples to its own markets. The nation is a crowded market among international competitors, making this a "challenging" season, Rebecca Lyons, the commission's export marketing director, reported to the commission on Dec. 14.

Chuck Zeutenhorst, general manager of First Fruits Marketing of Washington in Yakima, said he's not worried and that exports had a slow start this season due to a later harvest but are only 2 percent behind a year ago.

"We are just getting going. Exports are picking up. I think we will turn the corner and numbers will change dramatically," he said.

O'Rourke said exports to Asia and the Middle East will pick up because of lighter European apple crops.

Washington apple exports are 12.3 million boxes compared with 12.6 million a year ago.

Export and domestic shipments total 41 million boxes versus 46 million a year ago

and 40 million two years ago.

"We are behind where we would expect to be with this size of crop because of the late harvest," O'Rourke said.

Washington's largest apple export market, Mexico, is down 5 percent and Canada, second largest, is down 17 percent, he said. India is up 27 percent at 898,000 boxes so far, he said.

Wholesale Washington apple asking prices on main varieties are unchanged in the last month or two, according to USDA, with the exception of a \$2 per box increase in size 88 Granny Smith and size 80 Honeycrisp in the last month and a \$2 drop in size 88 Fuji.

Red Delicious remain at \$14 to \$17 for 80s and 88s and Gala remains at \$18 to \$24 on 80s and \$16 to \$22 on 88s.

O'Rourke said it's too early to know if prices have bottomed. Zeutenhorst agreed while noting a shift to greater volume of smaller fruit is creating price stability in larger sizes. Size 113 (113 apples per box) now appears to be peak size, he said.



ODFW

A young female wolf, designated OR-54, recovers after being caught and fitted with a tracking collar. The wolf belongs to the Rogue wolfpack and was detected near a dead calf found on a Jackson County, Ore., ranch.

Wolves kill calf in southwest Oregon

Depredation attributed to Rogue pack

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

Oregon wolves have notched their first confirmed depredation of livestock in 2018.

A 250-pound calf was found dead and partially eaten Jan. 4 at Mill-Mar Ranch in Jackson County, which wildlife officials attributed Monday to wolves from the Rogue pack in southwest Oregon.

Another dead calf was reported in the same area Jan. 10, but an investigation into the cause had not been completed by press time.

The Rogue pack was established by Oregon's famous wandering wolf, OR-7, which traveled more than 1,000 miles from northeast Oregon to California and into southern Oregon before finding a mate in 2014. The pack now has between seven and 12 individuals, according to John Stephenson, Oregon wolf coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wolves remain listed as a federally endangered species in western Oregon.

GPS collar data shows OR-54, a female member of the Rogue pack that biologists believe is directly related to OR-7, was less than a mile from the dead calf the morning it was found. Investigators also documented numerous wolf tracks and bite marks consistent with a wolf attack.

Ted Birdseye, who purchased Mill-Mar Ranch near Boundary Butte about two years ago, said wolf activity is not unusual around the area, but until recently the predators had kept to hunting deer and elk.

ODFW sets April meeting for Wolf Plan adoption

Proposal has drawn criticism from ranchers, environmentalists

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will consider adopting a long-awaited update to the state's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan at its April 19-20 meeting in Astoria.

A decision was scheduled for Jan. 19 in Salem, but the commission decided more time was needed to work on the proposal

after drawing criticism from ranchers and environmentalists alike.

At the last commission meeting in December, environmental groups argued the plan would move to lethal control of wolves too quickly in cases of livestock predation. Cattlemen, on the other hand, said they would like to see management zones for wolves across the state, with population caps.

The Oregon wolf plan was last updated in 2010, and a scheduled five-year update is now three years overdue.

Public testimony about the plan will be taken at the Astoria meeting, or can be submitted via email at odfw.commission.state.or.us.

coming a chronic problem at the ranch.

The Rogue pack was also involved in a confirmed depredation in the fall of 2016 on private land in adjacent Klamath County. Stephenson

said the pack tends to travel back and forth between the two counties.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife is updating its Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

Interest groups respond to Oregon 'cap-and-invest' bill

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — State lawmakers have released the first draft of a bill to charge Oregon industries for emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and to use the revenue to invest in projects meant to slow climate change.

The state's "cap-and-invest" bill emerges after several years of work and coincides with an announcement from Washington lawmakers for a similar program in their state. The bill will be considered during the Legislature's policymaking session in February. Democrats have identified the legislation as a top priority for the session.

Modeled after a program in California, Oregon's so-called "Clean Energy Jobs" bill would set a cap of less than 25,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year for each company, beginning in 2021.

"In other words, your favorite brewery or grocery store down the street will not fall under the cap, only the largest polluters in the state," said Brad Reed of Renew Oregon, a leading proponent of the bill. "The cap will decline over time through 2050 to ensure we reach our reduction targets and provide certainty for business."

The estimated 100 Oregon companies that emit more than that amount would be required to buy market-priced allowances for the excess. The "price" on emissions is designed to encourage businesses to adopt technologies and practices that reduce their carbon footprint. The allowances would be sold at a North American auction and generate revenue that would be invested in green-energy and environmentally friendly agriculture projects.

Climate change

The program would eventually generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue that

would be invested in projects that slow climate change. The exact cost of the program has yet to be calculated, he said. But previous estimates pegged revenue at about \$700 million per year. Investments could include rebates for electric vehicles, solar panels on homes or safety improvements on bicycle lanes, among other things, he has said.

Carbon trading markets are gaining momentum around the globe. China has plans to launch a carbon market later this year that would account for about a quarter of that country's industrial emissions, according to E & E News, a Washington, D.C., environment and energy publication.

A cap-and-invest bill in 2016 drew strong opposition from certain Oregon business groups, including Associated Oregon Industries, since merged into Oregon Business & Industry.

Mark Johnson, the group's president and CEO, said the program would drive up prices on consumers and drive away businesses from the state.

"Unfortunately, the legislation introduced (Monday) is an example of misplaced priorities," Johnson said. "Greenhouse gas emissions are decreasing, while Oregon's fiscal crisis is worsening. Rather than pushing a complex, costly program to address an issue that businesses already are making progress on, legislators need to focus on a problem only they can fix — Oregon's fiscal instability."

Tom Koehler, co-founder of Pacific Ethanol and secretary of the Oregon Business Alliance on Climate, said he supports moving forward on the legislation this year.

"There is a fundamental decision that needs to be made now and not danced around: Do we believe the climate crisis is real and are we ready to do our part to make a difference?" Koehler said.

Weekly fieldwork report

	Ore.	Wash.	Idaho	Calif.
Item/description				
• Snow water equivalent*	38%	80.8%	75.3%	41.5%
• Percent area in drought	0	0	Less than 1%	44.3%
• Avg. temperature, 6-10 day outlook (Percent chance deviation from normal)	60-90% above	50-70% above	50-70% above	90% or more above
• Precipitation, 6-10 day outlook (Percent chance deviation from normal)	40-50% above	40-50% above	33-40% above	Above (north)/below (south)
• Soil moisture anomaly (Monthly deviation from normal)	Normal/below normal	Normal/above normal	Normal/above normal	Below normal

*Aggregate average percent of median as of Jan. 9. Medians calculated for the period from 1981-2010. Sources: USDA, NRCS; NOAA, www.ca.gov/; www.drought.gov/

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