



Tim Hearden/For the Capital Press

Bret Adney of Valley Ag Resources in Visalia, Calif., shows a pump system that monitors the acidity level in irrigation water at the Colusa Farm Show in Colusa, Calif., on Feb. 6.

Business brisk at Colusa Farm Show

By **TIM HEARDEN**
For the Capital Press

COLUSA, Calif. — The booming economy has found its way into agriculture equipment sales, as vendors at the Colusa Farm Show say their business has been brisk in recent weeks.

Bret Adney, whose family's Visalia, Calif.-based Valley Ag Resources was displaying pump

systems at the show, credits the recently enacted \$1.5 trillion tax cut for making farm equipment immediately deductible.

"This was the best January we ever had," Adney said. "Everything's good."

Likewise, the Chico, Calif.-based Thomas Manufacturing is expecting 2018 to be a good sales year for its tree nut harvesters and other equipment

as the economy picks up globally, company representative John Ray said.

"The phone calls are definitely starting to come in," he said. "If you look at the whole picture of exports, it's a good driver for us."

That sense of optimism permeated the grounds at the 53rd annual gathering, where hundreds of vendors of agricultural goods

large and small set up displays at the self-proclaimed "granddaddy of farm shows" Feb. 6-8 at the fairgrounds in Colusa.

The show included seminars on new water management regulations, tree nut cultivation and other topics as well as the annual Ag Leadership Breakfast sponsored by California State University-Chico's College of Agriculture and its supporters.

Washington wines still well positioned in market

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

KENNEWICK, Wash. — Washington wines are well positioned in the premium market but growth of that market is slowing, competition is increasing and margins are squeezed at all levels, a partner in the world's largest wine brokerage firm says.

With a recent consolidation, three distributors now control 61 percent of the U.S. wine market and 10 grocery chains control more than 50 percent of sales, making it tougher for wineries to get into the marketplace, Glenn Proctor, a partner in Ciatti Co., San Rafael, Calif., told attendees at the Washington Winegrowers Association annual meeting in Kennewick on Feb. 7.

"Wineries will continue to get bigger to be competitive and hold margin. Imports will continue to grow from the bulk side and premium. There is a margin squeeze at all levels as labor and land values go up," Proctor said.

Large supermarkets are labeling wines, which erodes brands, he said.

But Michael Veseth, editor of The Wine Economist, Tacoma, said a slower pace of premium wine growth is good because it was too fast to be sustained. A slower pace makes a new market plateau more likely than a collapse, he said.

There's a proliferation of new premium wines as consumers are willing to pay more for new wines in their quest for authenticity, Veseth said.

Washington is well positioned for success with land and brands like Red Mountain for growth in the premium market, above \$9 per bottle, while the market below \$9 shrinks, he said.

Proctor said France, Italy, Germany, the U.S. and China account for 49 percent of wine consumption. Consumption is flat in the three European nations while it's growing in the U.S. and China. Worldwide consumption has been flat after declining from a 2007 peak, he said.

Because of that, vineyard planting is down 6 percent in Spain from 2010 to 2015, down 2 percent in France and down 8 percent in Italy. Those three nations produce more than half the world's wine. The U.S., which produces 12 percent of the world's wine, increased plantings 4 percent in that same period, and China increased plantings by 42 percent, Proctor said.

A light world wine grape crop of 30.6 million tons in 2017 tightened prices but the 2018 crop should return to 34 million tons, allowing prices to come back down, he said.

Wade Wolfe, winemaker and co-owner of Thurston Wolfe Winery, Prosser, gave his annual review of the past vineyard season. He said Washington's 2017 crop was 243,000 tons, down from the record 270,000 tons in 2016.

Mildew, freeze damage and smoke taint contributed to the smaller crop, but perhaps the biggest factor was the alternate bearing cycle, he said.

Tom Collins, assistant professor at the Washington State University Wine Science Center, Richland, told of his wildfire smoke taint research that began in 2016 using a commercial smoker in a vineyard and studies of wine compromised by wildfire smoke in the 2015 crop.

Australian researchers identified four smoke compounds that can render wine with smoky, ashy aromas and



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Wade Wolfe, a Prosser, Wash., winemaker, left, and Glenn Proctor, of the Ciatti Company in San Rafael, Calif., visit after their speeches at the Washington Winegrowers' conference in Kennewick on Feb. 7.

flavors that can leave long, harsh after tastes, Collins said.

"Looking at affected wines of the 2015 vintage, we saw a whole range of compounds and complicated mixtures," he said.

He is seeking to understand the chemistry and mitigate exposure and said smoke taint can worsen in storage.

WSU President Kirk Schulz talked about WSU's strong commitment to the industry and how the WSU Wine Science Center is a key part of making WSU world-class in research.

John Aguirre, executive director of Winegrape Growers of America and the California Association of Winegrape Growers, Sacramento, talked about federal-level policy and politics.

He said the H-2C foreign



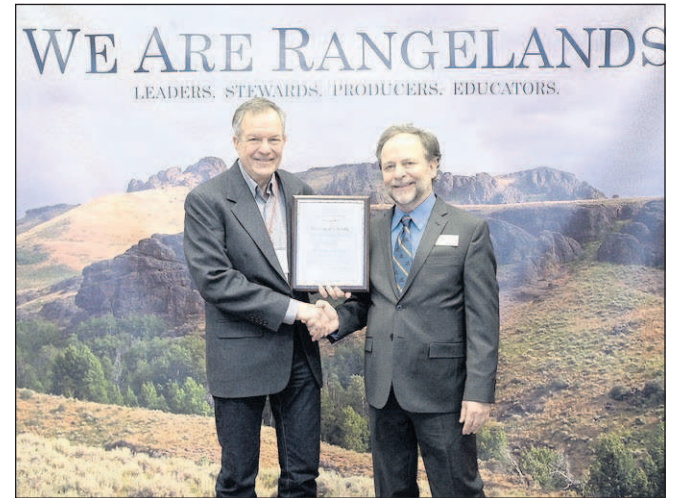
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Pinot noir grapes await harvest. Washington state's 2017 wine grape crop was 243,000 tons, down from a record 270,000 tons in 2016.

guestworker bill sponsored by U.S. Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., gets little enthusiasm from agriculture not only for capping the re-entry of illegal immigrants who leave the country to come back under the program but also because it requires them to purchase health insurance, which would fall to employers.

The associations contin-

ue to fight for the exclusion of wine grapes under the Produce Safety Rule of the Food Safety Modernization Act. Wine grapes should be exempt because they are not consumed on the fresh market and the rule imposes irrigation water testing, employee training, education and record keeping — all at a cost, he said.



Society for Range Management

Tony Svejcar, left, of Burns, Ore., received the 2018 Sustained Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Range Management. The award was presented by SRM President Larry Howery at the group's 71st annual meeting, technical training and trade show in Sparks, Nev.

E. Oregon scientist receives range management award

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

For nearly 30 years, Tony Svejcar served as research leader for the USDA Agricultural Research Service at the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center in Burns, Ore.

The Society for Range Management recently honored Svejcar and his work at the organization's 71st annual meeting, technical training and trade show in Sparks, Nev., where he was presented with the 2018 Sustained Lifetime Achievement Award.

Svejcar is nationally and internationally recognized for his contributions in rangeland science and management. He

initiated the carbon dioxide Flux Network through the ARS to identify the influence of U.S. rangelands on global carbon, and pioneered use of the stable isotope 13C for carbon cycling research.

Svejcar and his colleagues have also tested and refined an array of techniques for reducing or managing populations of western juniper, and made lasting contributions to understanding seedling ecology of native plant species in sagebrush steppe habitat. His research has generated more than 200 publications.

Though he retired from the ARS in 2016, Svejcar continues to work as a professor and senior researcher for Oregon State University at the research center.

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