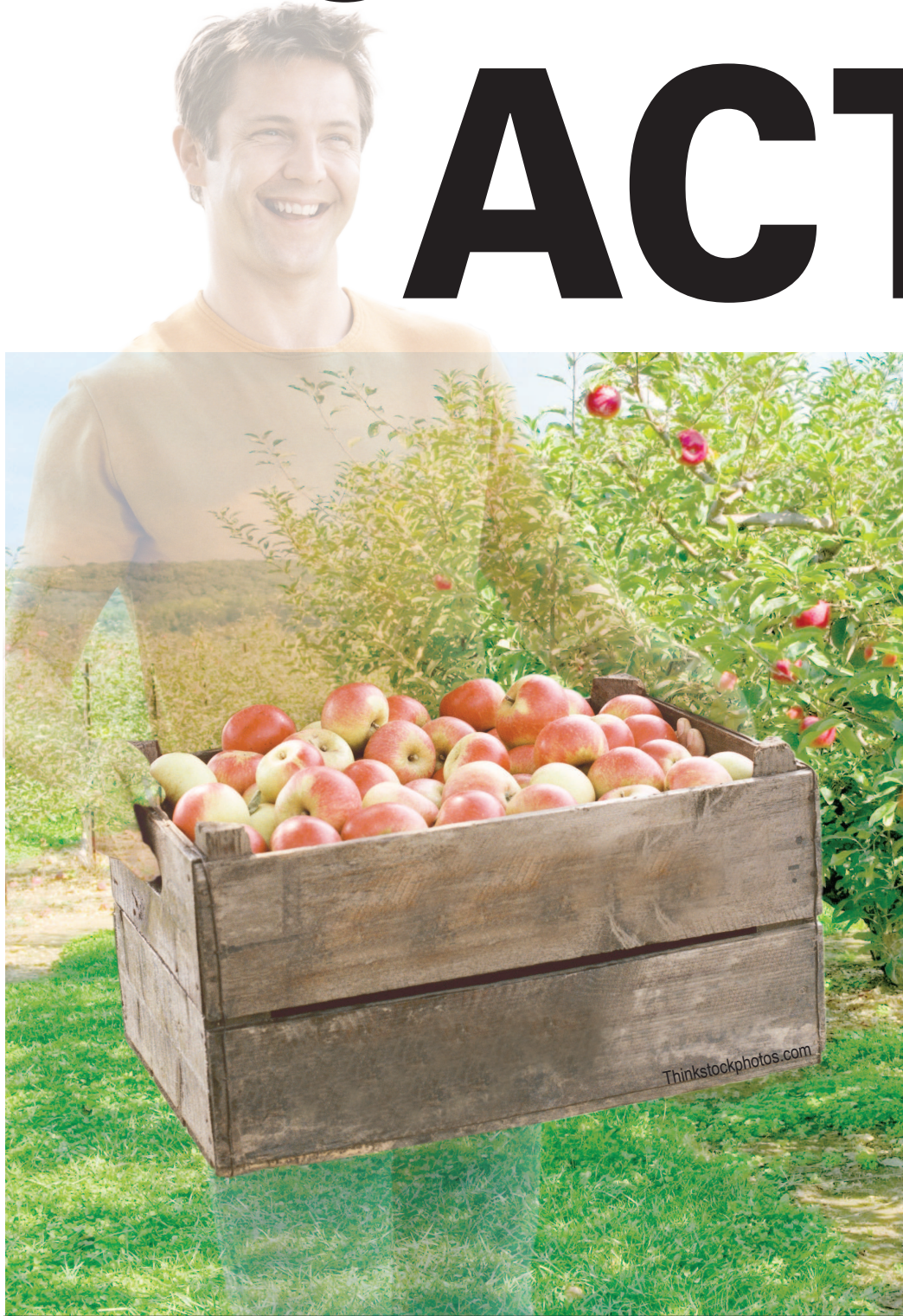


# DISAPPEARING ACT

**As the Washington apple industry continues to grow, the number of small-scale growers shrinks**



By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

**G**RANDVIEW, Wash. — Concord grapes, part of his family's farm for 75 years, grow on one side of his driveway, but on the other they've been replaced with a year-old planting of the new state apple, Cosmic Crisp, which Frank Lyall sees as an investment in the future.



Courtesy of Frank Lyall

Frank Lyall with his planting of new Cosmic Crisp apple trees, Grandview, Wash., Feb. 14. Like many growers, he's investing in the new state apple and hoping for good returns.

"The Concords go to Welch's. They're hardly a high value crop anymore. People are taking them out," says Lyall, 60, who farms in the Lower Yakima Valley, where in 1915 his great grandfather began with prunes, hay and cattle.

There was a time when the Lyalls' operation, which now includes 450 acres near Grandview and Mattawa, would have been considered large. Today, it's small, and like so many other small growers in Central Washington, Lyall looks at the mounting pressures that have knocked some of them out of business and wonders how long they will survive.

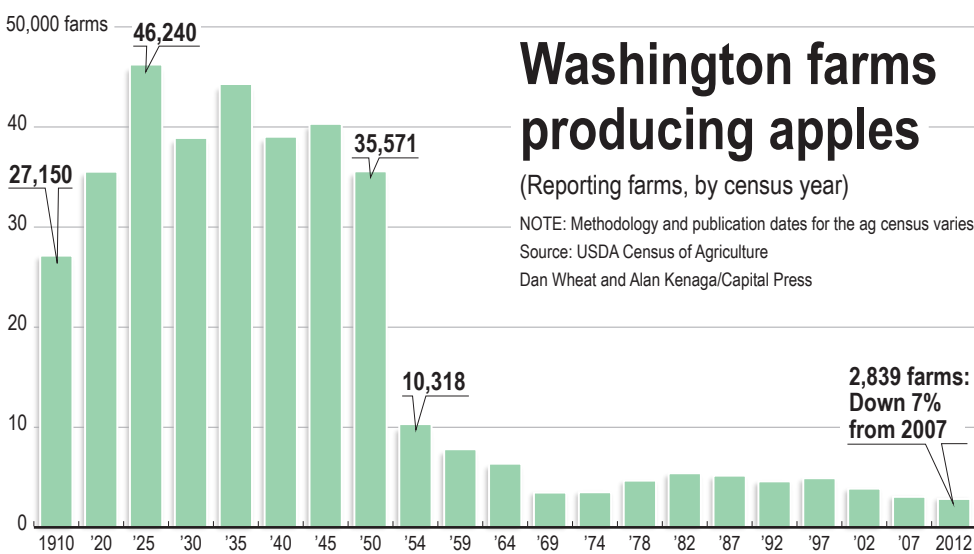
There's the shortage of labor and its increasing cost. The cost of mechanization. The growth of government regulations. Then there's the cost of replanting with new apple varieties, usually around \$30,000 per acre. Combined, they make the viability of small-scale tree fruit farms daunting.

## Orchards shrink

The numbers are equally daunting. In 1925, 46,240 Washington farms grew apples. By 2012, only 2,839 remained, according to the U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Lyall, who is president of the Yakima County Farm Bureau, believes some of the region's large tree fruit companies, which grow, pack and sell their own fruit in addition to fruit from small independent growers like himself, would be just as happy if more small growers disappeared.

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## Mercury pollution may impact Oregon farm erosion rules

Environmental regulators face court-ordered deadline to revise water standard

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

To meet a court-ordered deadline, environmental regulators are racing to update mercury pollution limits in Oregon's Willamette River Basin that may affect agricultural erosion rules.

Mercury is a neurotoxin that's

naturally found in soils but is also emitted by fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes. In Oregon, mercury from coal-burning power plants thousands of miles away in China, deposited through rain and dust, is also a significant source.

Agricultural practices are implicated as a source of mercury pollu-

tion due to the erosion of soils containing the element.

Currently, there's a "minimal" amount of awareness among Oregon farmers about the link between erosion and mercury pollution, said Eric Horning, a farmer near Corvallis.

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The Willamette River flows through downtown Portland. Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality has set up a committee, which includes representatives of the agriculture and timber industries, to advise on the revision of the water quality standard for mercury.

Capital Press File

## Washington House OKs bill to move wolves

Cattleman welcomes allies

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — The state House last week showed strong support for redistributing wolves in Washington, except from lawmakers whose districts could be candidates for taking in wolves.

The House voted 85-13 on to direct the Department of Fish and Wildlife to study moving wolves



Joel Kretz

from Eastern Washington to Western Washington. The "no" votes, three Democrats and 10 Republicans, were cast by westside legislators whose districts include expansive tracts of wildlife habitat.

Okanogan County Republican Joel Kretz pushed the bill to relieve his district from having a vast majority of the state's wolves. His alternative proposal, giving wildlife managers more leeway to control the

wolf population in four northeast counties, has gone nowhere.

"I don't have any hard feelings about the people who voted 'no.' They voted their districts, and I told them they should. I get their concerns," Kretz said Thursday. "I'm not excited about putting wolves onto anyone, anywhere, but on the flip side, I've tried to deal with this in a way that didn't affect anybody else's district, and it hasn't worked."

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