



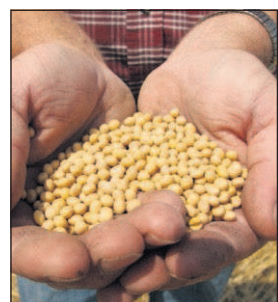
Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Seed Association Executive Director Roger Batt, right, speaks with leaders of the state's dry bean industry in Boise last week after speaking with lawmakers about the two industries' concerns about soybean production in Idaho. They will introduce a bill soon that would ban soybean production in southwestern and southcentral Idaho.

Idaho Bean Commission may drop idea of banning soybean production

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho's dry bean industry might drop its proposal to ban soybeans from being grown in some parts of the state and instead help pave the way for that crop to be grown here.



Associated Press File

Soybean acres in Idaho have fluctuated between a few dozen and a couple hundred, but some people believe it's only a matter of time before they increase because of the state's large dairy and cattle industries.

The Idaho Bean Commission is considering exploring ways to ensure people interested in growing soybeans in the state have a source of seed that is certified disease-free and grows well in the region.

Idaho Bean Commission representatives told legislators this year they are concerned about soybeans bringing in plant diseases such as soybean cyst nematode that could be harmful to dry beans.

A proposal by the IBC to place a moratorium on soybean production in south-central and southwestern Idaho, where the state's dry bean industry is centered, has not turned into legislation because lawmakers apparently are not convinced that soybeans pose a real threat to dry beans, IBC Commissioner Don Tolmie told Capital Press.

The commission may now shift its focus to exploring ways to ensure people interested in growing soybeans in Idaho have a source of seed that is certified disease-free and grows well in the region.

During their regular meeting Dec. 7, IBC commissioners talked about the idea of bringing soybeans under the umbrella of the bean commission, which would mean seed for that crop would have to face the same strict testing guidelines that require dry bean seed to undergo serology testing and be certified disease-free.

If legislators aren't going to accept the industry's concerns, "then we are going to have to do something different and it seems to me the only way we can do something different is to ... start our own soybean production under the umbrella of the Idaho Bean Commission so we can monitor it and control it," Tolmie said.

"We can't fight it so we might as well make sure it's done safely," said IBC Commissioner Gina Lohnes.

To ensure there is a supply of disease-free soybean seed that is adapted to the region's growing conditions, the IBC is talking with Clint Shock, the retiring director of Oregon State University's Malheur County agriculture experiment station in Ontario.

Shock has been researching and testing soybean varieties in the area for 30 years and told IBC commissioners he would be happy to assist anyone interested in growing soybeans in the region.

"I would be delight-

ed to help you grow out some trials of varieties," he said.

IBC Administrator Andi Woolf-Weiby said the industry will have a lot of discussions this year with possible stakeholders such as the dairy and livestock industries "to get the barometer of the industry to see where they would like to go with this."

IBC Commissioner Mike Goodson said it's important to get ahead of the issue and he would like to have a source of certified disease-free soybean seed available in the next 24 months.

"If the dairy or other industries want soybeans to be grown here, then let's make sure they're safe for the bean industry as well," he said.

Bob's Red Mill begins exporting to Japan

By RICHARD SMITH
For the Capital Press

CHIBA CITY, Japan — Bob's Red Mill, a niche natural foods company in Milwaukie, Ore., started exporting to Japanese customers about six months ago.

The employee-owned company's certified organic, non-GMO and gluten-free milled grain products can now be found in several prominent retail chains in this country including Costco Japan, National Azabu and Jimmy's in Okinawa.

Bob's Red Mill's products are also sold at bakeries, and can be ordered on Amazon Japan, company export regional sales manager Sandi Funk said.

The company showcased its oats, baking flours, spe-



Bob's Red Mill

The Bob's Red Mill store and restaurant in Milwaukie, Ore. The natural foods company has begun exporting its products to Japan and exhibited at the recent Foodex in Chiba City.

cialty flours, muesli and granola at the Foodex international food trade show, held March 6-9.

Foodex Japan is among the largest food expos in the

world, attracting more than 3,000 exhibitors. Since 1976 it has brought together food exporters from around the world, and buyers from within and outside Japan.

Most exhibitors group themselves under their country's pavilion, although some prefer to exhibit alongside companies producing similar products, with a small number exhibiting independently.

Bob's Red Mill was in the U.S. pavilion.

"We're here to meet some additional retailers," Funk said.

"(Bluff Bakery in Yokohama) used our flour to make bread that we're sampling," she said.

Ryuhei Suzuki, representative director for Upperleft, a Tokyo company that imports Bob's Red Mill products, said not many stores in Japan yet carry organic products. "But there are many (consumers) who are looking for better-quality products," Suzuki said.

Washington apple prices drop more

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Just as some analysts predicted a month ago, Washington apple prices have continued to slide due to a large state and national crop and apparently anemic consumer demand.

Wholesale prices averaged \$24 per 40-pound fresh packed box season-to-date on March 1 for all grades and sizes of the main varieties, said Desmond O'Rourke, retired Washington State University agricultural economist and world apple analyst. Without Honeycrisp in the mix, the average is \$21.50 per box.

"That's probably a little higher than it really is because the season started later and at high prices," O'Rourke said.

The average is skating along just above break-even for growers, and marketers need greater movement to get prices back, he said. Break-even averages about \$20 per box with \$12 for packing and marketing and \$8 for the grower, he said.

Tom Riggan, general manager of Chelan Fresh Market-

ing, said he thinks prices will rebound as the crop shrinks but that this year is definitely more difficult for growers than the previous two years.

The main varieties outside Honeycrisp O'Rourke surveyed were Red Delicious, Gala, Granny Smith, Fuji, Golden Delicious and Cripps Pink.

As of March 6, USDA tracking of average asking prices among Yakima and Wenatchee shippers for extra fancy (standard grade) medium size 80 and 88 apples per packed box was \$12 to \$15 for Red Delicious, down \$1 on the low end and stable on the high end since Feb. 9.

Most of the main varieties have slid \$1 to \$2 per box or more in the past two months, according to USDA, with only Honeycrisp gaining due to less supply. Proprietary varieties, while small in volume, are doing well in price, and organics are doing well.

A lot of small fruit pulls average prices down but growers with large fruit are doing OK with Gala 72s and larger over \$26 per box, O'Rourke said.

"We're seeing some retail prices we haven't seen in a while. The WinCo store in Moscow, Idaho, had 3-pound bags of Fuji, Gala, Reds and Grannies for 97 cents per bag," O'Rourke said. "I was blown away by that price. It tells you some marketers are under pressure to move product. This is a tough time of the year for the apple market. The next couple of months could be a real challenge."

Prices usually stabilize in January when crops are smaller, but that didn't happen this year, he said.

His own index of movement and prices shows consumers spending 3.5 percent less on apples in general nationwide, he said.

Marketers may have "underestimated the strength of retail demand this year. It's sluggish overall for fresh apples," O'Rourke said. "This year will cause a lot of head-scratching over what to do next, how fast to push ahead with new varieties and organics, how many Red Delicious orchards to take out when you still need some for export."

Nationally, there were

77.3 million boxes of fresh apples in storage on March 1, 11 percent more than a year earlier, according to the U.S. Apple Association. Processing apple inventory was also up 11 percent at 33.3 million boxes. That's apples for sauce, juice and baked ingredients. Total apples were 17 percent above the five-year average for March 1.

Washington accounts for the bulk of the national fresh crop and was at 68 million boxes sold on March 1 versus 72.6 million a year ago. Washington has the same amount, 68 million, still in storage.

The total 2017 Washington crop was estimated at 135.6 million boxes on March 1, down 6.7 million from a high of 142.3 million on Dec. 1 and Jan. 1, according to the Washington State Tree Fruit Association.

There has been "considerable diversion" of fresh apples to processing with the estimated size of the processing crop up 5 to 6 percent, while the fresh crop has fallen nearly the same amount, O'Rourke said.

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