

# Washington apple prices stabilize

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — After two months of sliding, wholesale prices of Washington apples stabilized in March, but an analyst warns that they could drop again in April.

It's due to a large 2017 fresh crop that shrank another 311,000, 40-pound boxes through March as diversions to processing for juice and sauce slowed. The total crop was 135.3 million boxes with 79.7 million sold as of April 1. Shippers worry Chinese tariffs could slow sales to China and further pressure prices.

"April can be a rough month. Retailers are under a lot of price pressure with Amazon coming into the food business," said Desmond O'Rourke, retired Washington State University agricultural economist and world apple analyst.

"Retailers could pick on apples as a product they want lower prices for. Nobody knows what Amazon will do so retailers are trying to be proactive and get prices down in case Amazon buys Target or Toys R Us," O'Rourke said.

Amazon acquired 450 stores when it bought Whole Foods and might want more, he said.

It won't help if apple exports to China are disrupted, he said. A 15 percent tariff on top of the 10 percent existing duty won't be final for another 60 days, he said.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Saul Lopez, a Grandview, Wash., trucker, tightens a load of small Red Delicious apples at Custom Apple Packers, Wenatchee, on April 9. The load was being diverted from fresh sales to a processor in Watsonville, Calif., for juicing.

er 60 days, he said.

China has been running a trade war with the U.S. for 30 years by keeping most U.S. agricultural exports out and stealing intellectual properties, O'Rourke said. President Donald Trump has correctly identified China as an unfair trader but U.S. exporters will be unhappy if they don't look longterm and China could stall trade negotiations to see if Republicans lose November elections, he said.

As of April 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 were: \$12 to \$15 for Red Delicious, the same as a month ago.

Gala also stayed even at \$18 to \$24 for 80s and \$16 to \$22 for 88s.

Fuji stayed even at \$18 to

\$24 on 80s and \$16 to \$22 on 88s.

Golden Delicious stayed even on 80s at \$20 to \$26 and dropped \$1 per box on 88s from \$20 to \$24 down to \$19 to \$23.

Honeycrisp stayed even on 80s at \$45 to \$52 and dropped slightly on 88s from \$45 to \$52 down to \$44 to \$50.

Granny Smith fell \$4 per box on the low and high ends of 80s and 88s, from \$28 to \$34 on 80s down to \$24 to \$30 and from \$26 to \$32 on 88s down to \$22 to \$28. The drop was due to a large crop, O'Rourke said.

Average wholesale price of main varieties remained at \$24 per box and at \$21.50 without Honeycrisp, he said. Breakeven averages about \$20 per box with \$12 for packing and marketing and \$8 to the grower, he said.



USDA NRCS

The sediment basin under construction about 2 miles north of Parma, Idaho.

# Parma basin will reduce sediment in irrigation water

By BRAD CARLSON  
Capital Press

Getting dirt out of the water from upstream will help irrigators and river cleanliness downstream, farmers and canal company representatives said as work on a custom-designed sediment basin began April 6 north of Parma, Idaho.

Irrigation water flowing down the Farmers Cooperative Ditch Co. canal will enter the basin at an inlet at the start of an oxbow-like curve in the canal. It will flow through the basin for about 2,000 feet and allow the sediment to settle, according to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The sediment-free water will re-enter the canal through an outlet well below the oxbow. Inside the basin, a half dozen raised pads, each 60 feet wide on top and of varying lengths, will remove sediment.

The basin's benefits outweigh the additional maintenance responsibility the finished project will create, said Clint Eells, who manages Parma-based Farmers Cooperative Ditch Co. Member irrigators now get significant return

flow and sediment from the Black Canyon Irrigation District upstream. Return flow is water that leaves a field following irrigation.

Eells said the sediment-laden water from upstream eventually affects Farmers Cooperative members' equipment such as drip irrigation filters and other system components and sprinklers. The basin will make the water much cleaner for the approximately 4,000 member-irrigated acres, and when it empties into the Boise and Snake rivers, he said.

Bill Hartman, who farms east of Parma and is the Farmers Cooperative board vice president, said one-third or more of the water the company delivers is return flow from water users upstream. The sediment in it eventually fouls irrigation equipment and settles in farmers' ditches.

The basin, about halfway down the cooperative's 33-mile canal system, will make it easier for farmers below it to manage their systems. "These 4,000 acres will now be able to use drip-irrigation technologies," Hartman said.

Costs include \$356,000 for construction of the basin,

and \$300,000 in voluntary contributions for best management practices involving NRCS guidance; and another \$300,000 in in-kind contributions for long-term maintenance, he said.

Funding sources include \$500,000 in matching funds from NRCS, and contributions from Farmers Cooperative and Black Canyon irrigation districts; Southwest Idaho Resource and Development Council, the City of Parma; the Canyon County Board of Commissioners; the Lower Boise Watershed Council; the Canyon County Soil Conservation District; and NRCS in-kind contributions for best management practices.

Completion of the 8.8-acre basin is targeted for this fall on leased farmland. Hartman said similar projects may be built later, based on independent sediment analysis and the basin's success.

NRCS and Farmers Cooperative Ditch Co. developed a water quality monitoring plan as part of a five-year total timeline for the basin project, NRCS said.

# Water level in cattle troughs implicated in E. coli study

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Bacteria thrive in warm liquids, so it made sense for veterinary scientists to assume cattle water troughs would appeal to E. coli microbes during summer.

Researchers from several universities theorized that automatically refilling cattle troughs with less water — but more often — would keep temperatures lower and impede transmission of E. coli 0157:H7, which causes disease in humans.

They found the exact opposite occurred: Among feedlot pens with lower water levels in troughs, the prevalence of cattle expelling or "shedding" that bacteria in manure was 30 percent higher than in control pens with regular water levels.

The results of the study were unexpected, but adjusting water trough levels may still be a viable way to affect

E. coli's spread.

While further research is necessary, higher water levels may be protective because the bacteria's presence is diluted, said Renata Ivanek, an associate professor at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine and an author of the study.

It's possible that lower water levels allow cattle to disturb sediment at the trough's bottom, she said.

Determining the optimum level of water in troughs will necessitate follow-up tests, though.

People become ill from the Shiga toxins in E. coli 0157:H7 but the bacteria doesn't cause problems in cattle, so farmers don't have a direct incentive to vaccinate against the microbe.

For the meat industry, however, outbreaks are associated with expensive recalls and damage to reputations.

Roughly 20 people die and

63,000 people become sick from E. coli 0157:H7 each year, causing more than \$400 million in lost life, lost productivity and medical expenses, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Adding chlorine to water may be problematic because the amount needed to be effective could harm cattle.

Simple and inexpensive methods to reduce the bacteria may catch on more readily, said Ivanek. "Manipulating water levels should be easy to do. Much easier than, for example, vaccination."

Data for the study, which was published in the scientific journal PLOS One, was collected over two summers from 35 pens at a feedlot in Texas.

The report was co-authored by 21 researchers from Cornell University, Texas A&M University, West Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University.

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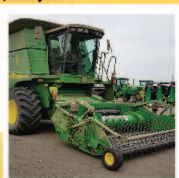
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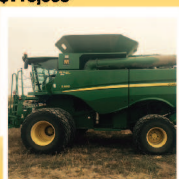
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