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Antonio de Jesus Bailon is one of thousands of foreign guestworkers who U.S. growers depend on to harvest their crops. But their story goes beyond the fields and orchards.

Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Antonio de Jesus Bailon in the bunkhouse kitchen, where other H-2A guestworkers are beginning to prepare dinner. They work at Griggs Orchards in Orondo, Wash.

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

ORONDO, Wash. — He's up and down a ladder in mere seconds, picking apples quickly with both hands and placing them into the canvas bag strapped to his chest.

It's grab the ladder and on to the next trees. He's moving fast because the Gala apples are sparse, most having been picked days earlier. This is the final sweep for apples that needed more time to ripen.

Antonio de Jesus Bailon is a good picker, slightly faster than average. He picks a 700-800-pound bin of apples per hour, says his foreman, Gustavo San-

chez, at Griggs Orchards in Orondo.

Bailon, 34, is a quiet man of short, slender build affectionately called "Chuy" — pronounced "Chew-wee" — by his peers, a common Mexican nickname for people named Jesus.

"These are good apples," he says, grabbing nicely sized red Gala at ground level.

Bailon is one of a growing number of foreign guestworkers working on U.S. farms and orchards. He has received a temporary H-2A (agricultural) visa often used to pick tree fruit, berries or vegetables. His employer has obtained special permission from the federal government to hire him and bring him from his home

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Antonio de Jesus "Chuy" Bailon picks Gala apples at Griggs Orchards in Orondo, Wash., on Aug. 21. He's in his fifth season as one of thousands of H-2A-visa agricultural guestworkers from Mexico.

Western U.S. drought conditions

(As of Aug. 23)

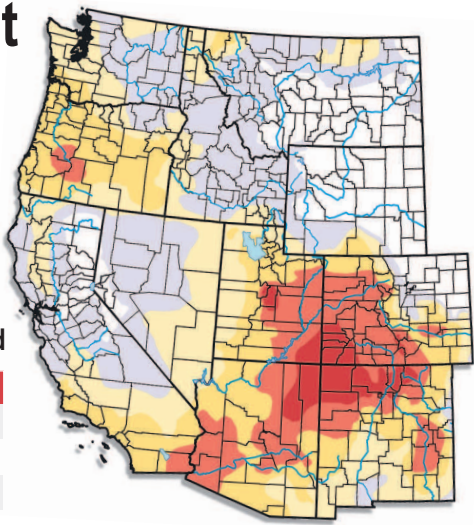
Legend

- D0-Abnormally dry
- D1-Drought (moderate)
- D2-Drought (severe)
- D3-Drought (extreme)
- D4-Drought (exceptional)

Intensity of drought by percent area affected

Date	None	D0-4	D1-4	D2-4	D3-4	D4
Current	15.8%	84.2	58.1	35.9	15.9	3.6
3 mo. ago	39.4	60.6	44.6	31.6	18.8	4.6
1 yr. ago	64.8	35.2	15.3	7.5	4.3	1.5

Source: National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Capital Press graphic

Drought lingers across PNW

Wildfires, low stream flows impact agriculture

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

More hot and dry weather is expected to hang around the Pacific Northwest, exacerbating drought conditions that have gripped the region.

As of Aug. 23, every corner of Oregon, Washington state and Idaho is experienc-

ing some stage of drought, from "abnormally dry" to "extreme," according to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor.

The result is a summer filled with wildfires belching smoke that has impacted air quality for days at a time, and low stream flows prompting water regulators to curtail deliveries in some basins.

The worst conditions appear to be in Western Oregon, which is reeling from a historic lack of rainfall in some areas. The National Weather Service reports the city of Sa-

lem had gone 78 straight days without any significant rain as of Wednesday, and will likely break the record of 79 consecutive days set in 1967. Other parts of the region did get a few light showers last weekend and Monday.

Overall, Oregon precipitation is averaging 86 percent of normal, while stream flows are averaging less than 50 percent of normal — ranging from 30 percent in the

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USDA to provide \$6.1 billion in farm aid

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

USDA Monday announced details of a three-pronged plan to assist U.S. farmers and ranchers in response to trade damages from retaliatory tariffs by China and other countries.

The plan includes nearly \$4.7 billion in direct payments to producers harmed, more than \$1.2 billion in gov-

ernment food purchases and \$200 million to develop foreign markets.

"For months President Trump has been standing up to China and other nations sending a clear message that the United States will no longer tolerate the unfair trade practices, which include non-tariff barriers and forced transfer of intellectual property," Sonny Perdue, USDA secretary, said in a phone con-

ference with the media.

"President Trump has said enough is enough," he said.

But he also did not want agricultural producers bearing the brunt of the retaliatory tariffs and instructed Perdue to craft a short-term relief strategy, Perdue said.

Economic pressure already exists in farm country, where net farm income has dropped more than 50 percent in the last five years. Produc-

ers simply cannot pay their bills with patriotism, he said.

The \$6.1 billion in farm assistance announced Monday is about half the \$12 billion USDA expects in lost exports. There may be another round of aid depending on how the trade disputes evolve, but the goal is to begin taking applications for assistance Sept. 4.

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Market Facilitation Program payments

(Direct payments to producers)

Commodity	Payment (\$dollars)	Total (\$ millions)
Cotton	0.06/lb	276.9
Corn	0.01/bu.	96
Dairy (milk)	0.12/cwt	127.4
Pork (hogs)	8/head	290.3
Soybeans	0.86/bu.	3,629.7
Sorghum	0.86/bu.	156.8
Wheat	0.14/bu.	119.2
Total	—	4,696.3

Source: USDA

Capital Press graphic

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