

Northwest pear crop prices are good, but sales are slow



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Esperanza Sanchez boxes Bartlett pears at Blue Star Growers Inc., in Cashmere, Wash., on Nov. 2. The 2018 Northwest pear crop is near record volume. Prices are good. Sales are slow.

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — August through October pear harvest is over and now the Pacific Northwest pear industry is about three months into packing and shipping a near-record crop of 20.4 million, 44-pound boxes.

The crop is 29 percent larger than a year ago and 5.5 percent behind the record 21.6-million-box crop of 2013.

“Prices are good compared to last year while movement is not,” said Brian Focht,

manager of the Washington and Mid-Columbia Pear Marketing Associations, in Wenatchee.

The Nov. 2 averages of industry asking prices, in Wenatchee and Yakima, were \$23 to \$28.90 per box for size 70s and 80s of U.S. No. 1 Bartlett and \$22 to \$26.90 for 90s, according to USDA.

The price for d’Anjou U.S. No. 1 was \$24 to \$30.90 for 70s and 80s and \$24 to \$28.90 for 90s. Bosc U.S. No. 1 was \$26 to \$30.90 for 70s and 80s and \$24 to \$28.90 for 90s.

“Movement started out slower than we would like

but has been picking up,” said Kevin Moffitt, president of The Pear Bureau Northwest in Portland.

As of Nov. 2, 20.6 percent of the crop had been shipped versus 25.7 percent a year earlier with a much smaller crop, Moffitt said.

Movement has been slow because California, always in the market before Washington and Oregon, had a large crop with slow movement causing retailers to take their time switching over to buy Northwest Bartlett, Moffitt said.

California had 2.75 million, 36-pound boxes of pears

versus 3 million a year ago, he said. Warm weather in the Midwest, New England and Canada slowed fall pear sales and a lot of grapes and summer fruit stayed in the market longer, Moffitt said.

The table grape crop was huge and that delayed up front sales displays of pears in grocery stores, Focht said.

This year’s d’Anjou pear crop in the Wenatchee Valley was larger, which contributed to it being better quality than recent seasons, said Greg Rains, horticulturalist for Blue Star Growers Inc., in Cashmere.

\$5.3M awarded to 7 Oregon water projects; decision on 8th delayed

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Seven Oregon water infrastructure projects have won \$5.3 million in grant funding from the Oregon Water Resources Commission, which postponed deciding on an eighth project until next year.

Most of the projects focus on improving water conveyance systems, such as replacing open canals with pipes, as well as improving the function of water storage and diversion structures.

One of the grant proposals that state water regulators recommended for approval — \$1 million for replacing a municipal pipeline in The Dalles — will be reconsidered by the commission in 2019 due to objections from tribes and an environmental group.

The commission also turned down 11 grant proposals for nearly \$10 million at the recommendation of the Oregon Water Resources Department. The decisions were made during the commission’s final meeting of 2018, held Nov. 15-16 in Salem, Ore.

A portion of one of the rejected proposals — drilling two deep water supply wells in Mosier, Ore. — did win funding under a previous grant cycle, but the remaining phase did not rank high enough under a scoring system intended to measure social, environmental and economic value.

Money from the previous water supply development grant proved insufficient to drill both Mosier wells, so a farmer and local soil and water conservation district asked for \$670,000 in funding to complete the second well.

Members of the commission discussed the project’s value to learning more about Columbia Basin basalt aquifers, but decided to allow supporters to re-apply with more information during a future grant cycle.

Tom Byler, OWRD’s director, noted that Oregon’s water supply development grant program is relatively new, and more established grant programs also wrestle with tough decisions. “We have a lot to learn,” Byler said.

Following are descriptions of the projects that did win funding:

- Conversion of 300 acres in Wallowa County from flood irrigation to a center pivot irrigation system, with the conserved water dedicated to in-stream flows that will benefit federally protected fish. The grant will pay for about \$600,000 of the project’s total cost of \$800,000.

- Replacing 6 miles of open canals and aging pipe used by the Dee Irrigation District in Hood River County with a new pipeline, with the conserved water dedicated to in-stream flows. The grant will pay for \$1.6 million of the total project cost of \$2.7 million.

- Installing 6 miles of pipe to replace an open canal used by the Tumalo Irrigation District in Deschutes County, with conserved water to be dedicated to in-stream flows. The grant will pay for \$1.3 million of the total \$6.7 million project cost.

- Raising the capacity of the Painted Hills reservoir in Wheeler County from 800 acre-feet to 1,300 acre-feet, along with upgraded irrigation equipment that will conserve water, contributing to in-stream flows. The grant will pay for \$580,000 of the project’s total \$1 million price tag.

- Storing and treating stormwater from Beaverton, Ore., with the water then recharging an aquifer through an existing well. The grant will pay for \$860,000 of the project’s total \$1.15 million cost.

- Replacing equipment and moving the point of diversion for irrigation water from Galls Creek in Jackson County, restoring fish habitat due to dam removal and conserving water through improved efficiency. The grant will pay for roughly \$150,000 of the \$200,000 cost.

- Excavating the Pinchot reservoir in Grant County to return it to full storage capacity. As part of the project, converting the irrigation system from wheel lines to a center pivot is expected to conserve water, and a new delivery headgate will include a fish screen. The \$200,000 grant will pay for half the project’s cost.

Seed cooperative grows in regional niche

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

The Snake River Seed Cooperative is bigger than its compact spread in a northwest Boise neighborhood might indicate.

Founder Casey O’Leary likes it that way.

“A lot of people are becoming interested in where their seeds come from,” she said. A growing contingent also wants to learn about saving seeds, the subject of an instructional booklet Snake River sells.

The seed cooperative, now in its fifth year, is adding to its grower base while increasing the number of seed varieties it has available. The volume of sales to end-user customers also is rising.

As the world’s seed industry consolidates, “more people are waking up to the idea that it is scary to have your food security in the hands of a handful of corporations,” O’Leary said. “So the demand for ‘seeds with a face’ — produced in your area by someone you trust — is increasing.”

More people are gardening, including a rising percentage in the millennial generation, which bodes well for continued solid demand, she said.

Operations Manager Reiley Ney said Snake River offers around 320 varieties.

“It seems like we add about



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

SNAKE RIVER SEED COOPERATIVE OPERATIONS MANAGER REILEY NEY, left, packs seed in the northwest Boise shop as founder Casey O’Leary takes in seed from a new grower.

Online
<https://www.snakeriverseeds.com/>

30 every year,” she said.

O’Leary said 36 family farmers produced seed for Snake River this year, up from 29 a year earlier.

The cooperative’s farmer-suppliers produce a wide variety of seeds in and for the Intermountain West — from sugar snap peas and zucchini to carrots, Zinnia flowers and various heirloom seeds. They use organic practices to grow seeds for mostly home gardeners and small-scale farmers in the region.

Cooperative-member suppliers range from home gardeners to larger farms, O’Leary said. Some are com-

mercial growers of pea and bean seed. All must use organic practices under the cooperative’s rules.

End-user customers, including those selling at farmers’ markets, range from home gardeners to growers who occupy several acres. They use low-input approaches and want locally adapted, non-genetically-modified seeds that produce a good crop and good seed for replanting, she said.

“When you save a seed in a certain place, it becomes more adapted, year after year, to that place,” O’Leary said.

Because Snake River’s seeds were started in the region, they tend to grow better and with less care in its arid environment compared to seeds that originated elsewhere, she said.

FALL SAVINGS



Hesston 9240
2005

14 sickle head grass seed special, 1545-hrs, #HP92142
—Located in McMinnville

\$28,000



Case 500Q
2013

Premium cab, 36" belts, 1000 PTO, 1797-hrs, #DF139168
—Located in Colfax

\$269,000



MF 8660
2010

MFWD w/susp, susp, cab, CVT trans, 3412-hrs, #
—Located in Merrill

\$107,000



Case 800
2011

60" Width, 7.5" spacing No CART, #4012
—Located in Tekoa

\$39,000



Case 305
2008

MFWD w/susp, 5 SCV, PS Trans, 3458-hrs, #Z05380
—Located in Tangent

\$112,000



CAT MT755B
2008

25" Belts, 3pt, PTO, PS Trans, 7103-hrs, #NTBC1048
—Located in Merrill

\$114,000



JD 2210
2014

38" 6' 3" section, 40" Harrow, #760005
—Located in Hillsboro

\$49,000



KU L6060D
2015

Cab, Hydro Trans, Loader, 138-hrs, #60D31089
—Located in Donald

\$45,500



LA VT7431
2013

26'3", 22" blades, 137" transport width, #J1203522
—Located in Harrisburg

\$39,500



Case SPX213
1999

80 Booms, Poly Tank/Hyd/Tread adj, 2500-hrs, #G0002561
—Located in McMinnville

\$30,000



CAT MT865
2004

36" Belts, Bareback, PS Trans, 5085-hrs, #BDS40713
—Located in Tangent

\$111,000



Case 2188
1996

small grain, 10156PU platform, 4681-hrs, #C0193663
—Located in Harrisburg

\$31,000

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