Idaho wine grape yields depend on location

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Idaho wine grape yields likely will fall short of last year's robust totals, but some growers are bucking the trend.

One exception is 3 Horse Ranch Vineyards, in the foothills northwest of Eagle. The site is among the warmest in the region, an apparent advantage during a cooler 2019.

"It's a record harvest and the fruit is in fantastic condition," owner Gary Cunningham said. "We have really high-quality fruit and a lot of it."

He said harvest at 3 Horse started Sept. 15.

"Usually we start harvesting in August, but we had such a huge crop this year that the vines are holding a lot of fruit," Cunningham said. "It takes longer for the vine to ripen that fruit when it has that much on it."

He said 3 Horse is having its best-ever year, with "exceptional" grape quality to go with volume that looks to be around 30% higher than the record 2018.

Idaho wine grape harvest on average started 10 to 14 days later than usual, said Moya Dolsby, executive director of the state Grape Growers and Wine Producers Commission.

An unusually cool September slowed maturation and the start of harvest, which as of Oct. 8 was about 30-40% completed and likely to conclude in early November depending on the weather, she said.

Overall, yields likely will be slightly lower than those of 2018, though quality should be higher — common following a high-yield year, Dolsby said.

Growers in the second half of the Oct. 6-12 week faced the prospect of a hard freeze that would halt leaves' photosynthesis and grapes' sugar gains, among other impacts, said Mike Williamson, who co-owns Williamson Orchards & Vineyards in the Sunnyslope grape-growing area between Caldwell and Marsing.

"It's a pretty busy week, especially with that cold coming through," he said. "I want to say we are 40% through. We are doing quite a bit this week, and by the end of the week I think we will be more than halfway."

Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Martha Ramirez picks Pinot gris grapes Sept. 27 at 3 Horse Ranch Vineyards northwest of Eagle, Idaho.

Grapes may add sugar after a hard freeze, through yield-reducing dehydration. "Sugars could be there, but the flavors won't mature anymore," Williamson said.

Summer was "plenty warm," he said, but the usual high heat in July and August did not arrive. With only a couple of days above 100 degrees, grapes ripened evenly without having to slow maturation to combat the heat.

Ron Bitner of Bitner Vineyards, also in the Sunnyslope area, said summer conditions were good for growing and brought minimal mildew and insect pressure.

The number of ideal growing-degree days was a little behind average, he said. He hopes his crop's yield is around the long-term average.

Yields so far at Williamson Orchards appear to be up from long-term averages, Williamson said. Quality has been good.

"Winemakers have been pretty impressed with the quality and flavors coming off the vines this year," he said.

Dolsby said last year's total harvest of 2,800 tons compared to about 300 in 2017, following an exceptionally harsh winter. The excellent 2016 crop helped many wineries sustain operations in 2017.

Idaho growers may buy grapes from Washington and other states when production drops or demand outstrips supply.

Dolsby said growers are planting additional acres, but at a rate that lags the increase in demand driven by population growth, among other factors.

"Idaho wineries are growing, and selling out of wine," she said. "An influx of people is going to wineries."

U.S. meat exports, Jan.-Aug.

Quantity (Metric tons)

Item*	2018	2019	Percent change
Beef	899,300	881,526	-2%
Pork	1.63 million	1.7 million	4
Lamb and mutton	8,033	10,626	32

Value (Millions of dollars)

Item*	2018	2019	Percent change
Beef	$5,508.3	$5,439.1	-1%
Pork	4,319.5	4,355	1
Lamb and mutton	15.4	17.5	13

*All items include variety meats.

Source: USDA (data compiled by U.S. Meat Export Federation) Capital Press graphic

Pork exports grow, beef exports slow

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

U.S. pork exports grew handsomely in August year over year, increasing 22% in volume to 221,586 metric tons and 19% in value to $588.8 million, according to the U.S. Meat Export Federation.

But beef exports missed the mark, declining 4% from last year's large volumes to 114,119 metric tons and 8% in value to $690.3 million.

Year-over-year changes January through August were more subdued, with pork exports up 4% in volume and 1% in value. Beef exports were down 2% in volume and 1% in value compared with last year's record pace.

For the first eight months of the year, pork exports accounted for 26.4% of U.S. pork production and $51.70 per head of U.S. hog slaughter, USMEF reported this week.

Beef exports during the same period accounted for 14.2% of U.S. beef production and $309.85 per head of U.S. fed slaughter.

China/Hong Kong were the largest destinations for U.S. pork in August despite China's retaliatory tariffs. Pork shipment to China more than tripled in volume year over year to 63,656 metric tons and were up 160% in value to $137.6 million.

Pork exports to Mexico have rebounded significantly since that country removed its tariffs on U.S pork but are still trailing record-large numbers in 2017, USMEF reported.

Pork shipments to Mexico in August were down 1% in volume to 61,365 metric tons, but value increased 18% to $121.1 million.

"China's demand for imported pork has increased steadily over the past few months, and the U.S. industry is well-positioned to help fill the need," Dan Halstrom, USMEF president and CEO, said in the report.

"But the really positive story behind these numbers is that even as U.S. exports to China/Hong Kong have surged and exports to Mexico rebounded after the removal of retaliatory duties, demand in other markets is proving resilient and continues to grow," he said.

On the beef side, the U.S. industry looks forward to gaining tariff relief in Japan — its top foreign market — through the recently announced U.S.-Japan trade agreement. August beef exports to Japan were down 15% in volume to 28,646 metric tons and 22% in value to $164.3 million. January through August, they were down 2% in volume and 1% in value.

Cattlemen applaud Trump's regulatory relief

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Cattle producers were among those invited to participate in President Trump's signing of two executive orders on Oct. 11 to bring more fairness and transparency to federal regulatory guidelines and enforcement.

Third-generation cattle rancher Kevin Lunny of Point Reyes, Calif., was present at the signing and told Trump his family also owned Drakes Bay oyster farm until it was forced out of business by the National Park Service.

The demise of the oyster farm was the result of an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act that cost the Lunny family millions of dollars and lasted more than eight years.

The rest of agriculture within the Point Reyes National Seashore, including 24 other ranching families, are facing the same process, he said.

He urged Trump to make sure federal policies are managed in a way that family farmers and ranchers actually benefit and survive the process "so they're not just for federal agencies that have pre-decided what they want before the process has begun and for professional litigants that abuse the process."

In signing the executive orders, Trump said a lack of transparency and accountability under the Obama administration "allowed federal agencies to commit horrible abuses against the American people."

Courtesy of www.donaldjtrump.com

President Donald Trump

"Agencies abused their power by imposing unlawful and secret interpretations of regulations as well as by threatening families and businesses with unfair and unexpected penalties," he said.

The "Improved Agency Guidance Documents" order requires agencies to put their guidance documents on easily searchable websites for public access and to seek public comment on the most important guidance they issue. It also allows the public to ask agencies to withdraw guidance they believe is wrong.

The "Transparency and Fairness" order prohibits agencies from enforcing rules they have not made publicly known in advance. It also instructs agencies to offer opinion letters to individuals and businesses requesting them so they can learn how to comply.

Ethan Lane, vice president of government affairs for National Cattlemen's Beef Association, wasn't available for comment on Monday. But in the latest "Beltway Beef" podcast, he said NCBA spends a lot of time talking about NEPA.

When it comes to the federal government and the environmental review process and other processes, ranchers and feedlot operators are dealing with experts who run the playbook day in and day out.

"So if you have federal agencies that are engaged in those processes that are using their knowledge of the home court to achieve a predetermined result to restrict what you're doing, that's not fair," he said.

That's not how these processes are supposed to work, and that's not what was intended when they were created, he said.

"So I think this is a nod towards balancing the scale and making sure we're getting back to the original intent," he said.

The president is trying to make sure past abuses aren't repeated, he said.

Cattlemen's Foundation calls for scholarship applicants

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The National Cattlemen's Foundation is seeking applications for 2020-2021 beef industry scholarships sponsored by CME Group.

Ten scholarships of $1,500 each will be awarded to outstanding students pursuing careers in the beef industry.

Students studying education, communication, production, research or other areas related to the beef industry can apply.

Applicants must submit a one-page letter expressing their career goals related to the beef industry. Students must also write a 750-word essay describing an issue in the beef industry and offering solutions to the problem.

Applicants must be a graduating high school senior or full-time undergraduate student enrolled at a two- or four-year college.

The application deadline closes Nov. 11, and online applications should be submitted by Nov. 8.

Scholarship winners will be announced in January and recognition will be given in San Antonio during the 2020 Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA Trade Show.

For more information visit www.nationalcattlemensfoundation.org