

Apple Commission eyes Vietnam

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — The Washington Apple Commission is focusing on Vietnam, India and Indonesia for potential growth of apple exports as China remains questionable.

Even with the Dec. 13 announcement that agriculture is included in a new Phase One U.S.-China trade deal, Todd Fryhover, Apple Commission, president expressed caution, saying the “devil is in the details.”

He noted the U.S.-China Business Council has not been very optimistic, that Chinese apple importers have to make a profit and that lower tariffs would help.

With a 60% tariff China still imported 908,809 boxes of Washington apples last season, but so far is down 23.8% from the same point a year ago, Fryhover said, adding it could end up about 700,000 boxes this season which “could be a real disappointment.”

While a smaller market than


Todd Fryhover

India, Vietnam is the only one of the three that is growing and appears to be the most trouble-free. It has a 10% tariff compared to India’s 70% and doesn’t have the import permit problems of Indonesia.

“The average age in Vietnam is 32. There are 97 million consumers there. It’s a young society. These are the people we need to convince to eat more apples and they’re users of social media networks,” Fryhover told apple commissioners at a Dec. 11 meeting.

Fryhover had just returned with two Washington apple growers from a promotional push in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam that was funded by Agricultural Trade Promotion federal tariff relief.

They met with consumers in marketplaces and with retailers and importers. Growers John Freese of Omak and Jose Rameriz of Royal City accompanied Fryhover.

Simultaneously, growers Carlos Lopez of Cowiche and Andy Arnold of Mattawa took part in a similar trip to Mexico led by Rebecca Lyons, the commission’s export marketing director.

Arnold, who also is director of farm operations for Domex Super-fresh Growers in Yakima, told commissioners that a large Mexico City marketplace was a big eye-opener.

“They put everything off their own trees in the market, even apples with russet and bitter pit,” Arnold said, noting the superior quality of Washington apples.

“Authenticity is the key connection of growers to consumers. Consumers, particularly younger ones, want to know where their fruit is coming from and who grows it. These guys’ stories really resonated with the people we were speaking to,” Fryhover said.

The growers stressed Washington quality and food safety in media interviews in the foreign countries, he said.

A third trip is planned for Janu-

ary to India and Thailand.

The commission is also interested in Colombia, but protests against the government there would make it hard to get media attention. Any trip will be delayed for more favorable conditions, Lyons said.

Mexico is Washington’s largest apple export market, usually taking around 10 million, 40-pound boxes and peaking at over 15 million from the big 2014 crop.

Anticipated passage of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement is expected to make the Mexican market more reliable with fewer phytosanitary and market dumping allegations.

This year, Mexico has its largest domestic crop in years, which will pressure the market, Fryhover said.

“In a season like this (large crop) we need to do close to 15 million. Right now we’re up 17.4% compared with last year and last year was 10.3 million so maybe we’ll hit 11 million. We have to find a way to pick that up,” he said.

India, Indonesia and Vietnam all have growing middle classes with

money to buy Washington apples, Fryhover said.

Even with a 50% tariff on U.S. apples for years, India has been a top market for Washington apples, averaging about 5 million, 40-pound boxes annually worth roughly \$100 million. Now the tariff is 70% and U.S.-India trade negotiations appear stalled. Europe also competes there.

Fryhover said he’ll be happy if Washington sells 3 million boxes to India this season.

Indonesia’s peak since 2000 has been 2.6 million boxes and probably will be similar to last year at 1.4 million, he said. Import permit problems continue.

Vietnam is up 71.9% so far this season and should reach 2 million boxes this year, up from 1.7 million last year, Fryhover said.

“It’s a great success because they pay the price and have a wide diversity of varietal interest,” he said.

Vietnam was once a conduit for Washington apples into China, but Fryhover said he hasn’t been able to confirm if that’s still happening.

Washington legislator: Let’s double maximum revenue for cottage foods

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A Washington legislator has proposed doubling to \$50,000 a year the gross revenue makers of home-made foods can collect before they come under the state’s food processing law.

Rep. Carolyn Eslick, R-Sultan, said she introduced House Bill 2218 at the request of a constituent, who said she won’t be able to make her business work with the current \$25,000 cap.

“We need to make it as easy as possible to make money, especially for those trying to raise children,” Eslick said.

The Legislature in 2011 authorized “cottage” food-makers to sell their homemade products directly to consumers. The state has about 300 licensed cottage food-makers, who are regulated by health officials and the state Department of Agriculture.

The food-makers prepare their products in home kitchens, pay fees and are subject to inspections. There are rules to follow, including one that bars infants, small children or pets from the kitchen during food preparation.

Lawmakers initially capped gross income at \$15,000 a year. The limit was raised to \$25,000 a year in 2015.



Courtesy Photo

Washington state Rep. Carolyn Eslick, R-Sultan, has introduced a bill to double to \$50,000 the gross revenue a person can collect selling homemade food directly to customers.

The Department of Agriculture is open to talking about raising the cap, an agency spokesman said.

A \$50,000 cap on annual gross sales would match the limit for California’s cottage food-makers. In Oregon, the cap is \$20,000.

In Idaho, homemade foods that don’t need refrigeration can be sold without a license directly to consumers.

Eslick also has introduced legislation to change labeling requirements on homemade foods.

House Bill 2217 would eliminate the requirement that food-makers put their home addresses on labels. Instead, the labels would have the number of the permit issued by the state Department of Agriculture.

“These are moms taking care of their children. They don’t want people coming to their home,” Eslick said.



Washington Apple Commission
A new specialty vehicle license plate has been proposed in Washington to generate revenue for the Washington Apple Education Foundation.

Apple license plate proposed

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — The Washington Apple Commission is proposing a new license plate celebrating Washington apples and providing revenue for the Washington Apple Education Foundation.

State Sen. Brad Hawkins, R-East Wenatchee, has pre-filed Senate Bill 6032, authorizing the plate, which has 20 bipartisan co-sponsors. Hawkins expects the bill to be referred to the Senate Transportation Committee.

The plate would feature the Washington apple logo and the slogan, “World’s Finest Apples.”

“I’m a big supporter of Washington apples and this will bring awareness to the industry and help raise money for local scholarships,” Hawkins said.

In 2019, the foundation awarded \$1.1 million in scholarships to more than 330 students of tree fruit industry families in Central Washington. The foundation also supports school programs for farmworker families and provides professional employment preparedness training and mentorship to students.

At a Dec. 11 Apple Commission meeting, commissioner Bob Mast, president of CMI Orchards, Wenatchee, said it’s a great idea for additional foundation funding given that it’s a challenging year for the industry financially.

The idea came from Jared England, manager of Manson Growers, said Todd Fryhover, commission president. The commission agreed to provide a \$6,500 refundable payment to the state to cover start-up costs.

The Department of Licensing requires the collection of signatures of at least 3,500 people who intend to buy the new plates. The Apple Commission is collecting signatures online at ipetitions.com. The signatures are needed by Jan. 22.

Specialty license plates promoting Washington universities, sports teams, parks, military and other interests range from \$60 to \$75. The foundation’s portion would be \$28 per plate, Fryhover said.

Storms in central, south Idaho aid snowpack

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Recent storms in central and southern Idaho boosted snowpack that had fallen well behind long-term averages after a warm, dry November.

Storms Dec. 11-12 affected snow-water equivalents in the state’s central

mountains, while a weather system that arrived late Dec. 13 and continued the next day targeted areas south of the Interstate 84-86 corridor.

The first storms “added a considerable amount to our central mountains,” said Tim Axford, warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Pocatello. “Even though they didn’t get us back up to where we typically are at this time of year, they did increase snow totals substantially across the Sawtooths and central mountains,” including around Sun Valley and Stanley.

After a mostly dry Dec. 13, storms that arrived that night and lasted into the next day added significant snowpack to the south and east, he said. This area also previously lagged the

30-year average for the time of year.

Eastern Idaho snowpack is important because it supplies water the upper reaches of a Snake River that supports irrigation, power, recreation and other uses across a large area. The region’s high-altitude melt can continue into late summer.

“At the headwaters of the Snake above Palisades Reservoir, we are sitting right at 100% of normal” as of Dec. 16, Axford said. “Anywhere south of that, we are at or above our seasonal average so far.”

Reservoirs in the Upper Snake River system are at 68% of capacity, around year-earlier levels, he said.

Snowpack as of mid-December in Idaho’s central mountains and northern region is running around

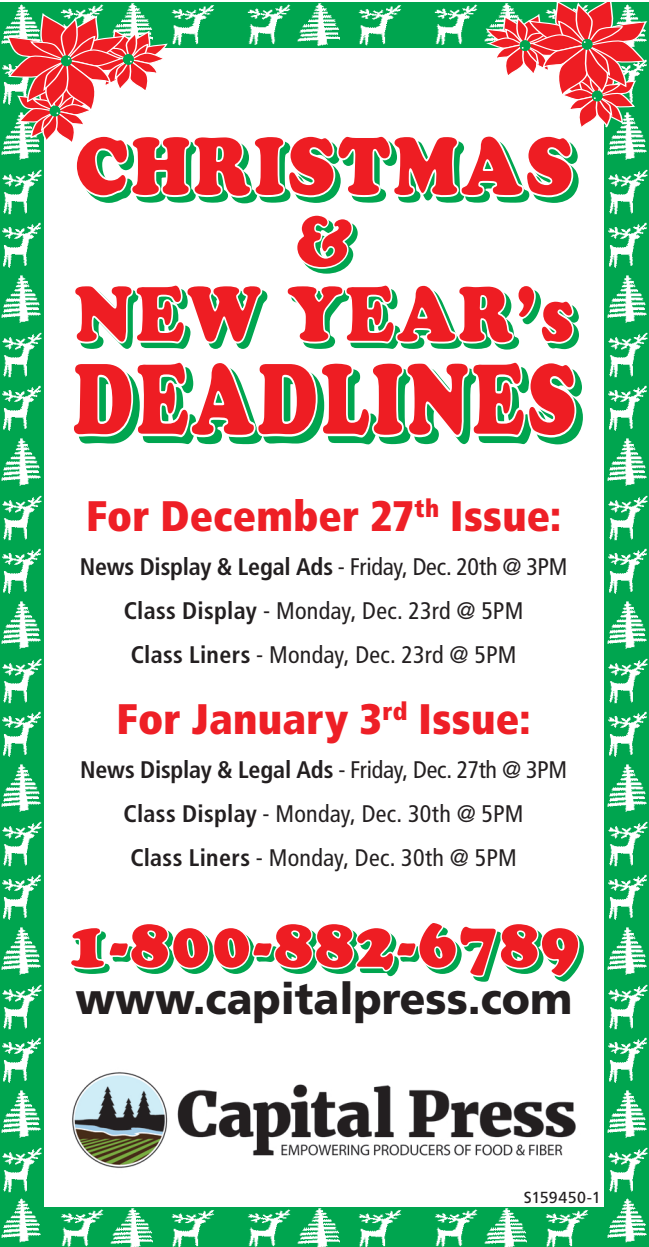
one-third to one-fourth below long-term averages following the more southerly storm tracks of recent weeks, Axford said. Snowpack thus is well above normal in Utah, Colorado and parts of Wyoming, and behind long-term averages from central Idaho through the Northwest.

Snowpack in many basins dropped from 150 to 200% of normal at the end of October to well below normal a month later, Axford said.

The dry November, which put snowpack totals farther behind season-to-date averages as time progressed, largely was a result of persistent high pressure over the Western U.S. “That cut us off from any moisture coming in from the Pacific,” he said.

Troy Lindquist, NWS senior service hydrologist in Boise, said most forecast models for December through February call for precipitation to be above normal in northern and eastern Idaho, and near normal in the southwest region.

Dec. 16 percentages of average for southeastern Idaho snowpack included 101 in the Snake Basin above Palisades, 105 for Willow-Blackfoot-Portneuf, and 129 for Bear River, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service reported. Percentages in the central mountains and basins to the northeast ranged from the low 60s to high 80s.



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