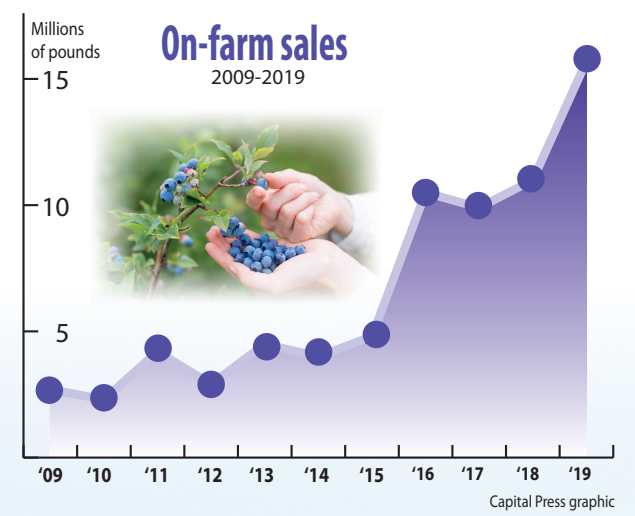
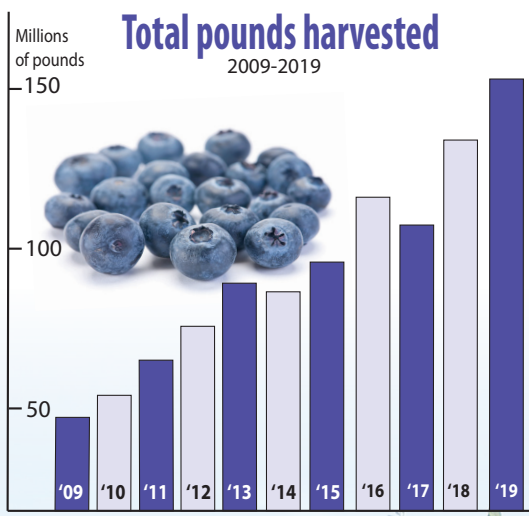
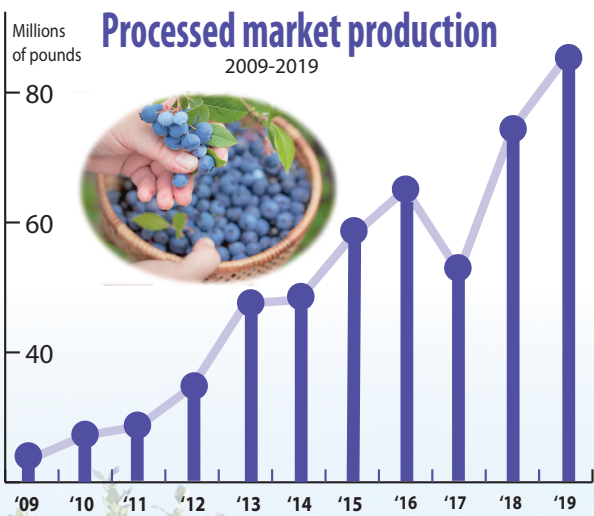




OREGON'S BLUEBERRY BOOM



Bernadine Strik/OSU

Workers pick organic Liberty blueberries, a late-season variety, as part of a trial at Oregon State University's North Willamette Research and Extension Center. The station has the world's only certified organic blueberry research planting.



George Plaven/Capital Press

Doug Kraher, president of Berries Northwest, walks between rows of organic blueberries during harvest at a farm near Albany, Ore. Berries Northwest grows both conventional and organic blueberries for the fresh and processed markets.

Worldwide growth creates challenges for NW producers

By GEORGE PLAGEN
Capital Press

ALBANY, Ore. — On a seasonably warm July afternoon in the fertile Willamette Valley, Doug Kraher stood between rows of organic blueberries and watched as a large mechanical harvester rolled slowly through the field, rattling bushes heavy with ripe fruit.

Measuring a little more than 15 feet tall, 11 feet wide and weighing 7 tons, the harvester seemingly floated in the distance over neat rows while fiberglass rods, or “fingers,” shook the berries onto a conveyor belt that

swooped them to the upper deck and into plastic crates.

From there, the crates were loaded into refrigerated trucks and driven from the farm north of Albany, Ore., to a packing shed east of Portland.

Kraher popped a berry in his mouth, reflecting on what he said has been a fairly decent growing season. “Weather-wise, it’s been OK,” said Kraher, president of Berries Northwest. “It’s getting hot now, but we’re past that critical point.”

Twenty years ago, blueberries were a niche crop in Oregon and along the West Coast. Most U.S.



George Plaven/Capital Press
Ripe organic blueberries ready to harvest.



George Plaven/Capital Press

An over-the-row mechanical blueberry harvester in action at Berries Northwest, north of Albany, Ore. Machine harvesting is one way to save on rising labor costs, but may not be right for all varieties and markets, industry experts say.

See Blueberries, Page 9

USDA details beef/cattle price spread

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

USDA this week released a detailed report on its investigation into the record gap that developed between beef and cattle prices related to the August 2019 fire at a Kansas packing plant and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cattle producers across the

REPORT ONLINE

The report is available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/reports/boxed-beef-and-fed-cattle-price-spread-investigation-report>

country have called for an investigation by USDA and the Department of Justice to determine whether meatpackers took advantage of the situation through

price manipulation or other unfair practices.

The report, however, does not examine potential violations but summarizes the market conditions,

fed cattle prices, boxed beef values and the price spread caused by the two events.

The investigation into potential violations is continuing, and USDA is engaged with DOJ regarding allegations of anticompetitive practices, the agency said.

“Findings thus far do not preclude the possibility that individual entities or groups of entities vio-

lated the Packers and Stockyards Act,” USDA stated in the report.

The report outlines the market reactions to the fire at the processing plant and COVID-19’s significant disruptions to markets and beef processing:

- On Aug. 9, 2019, a fire at Tyson’s plant in Holcomb, Kan.,

See Price, Page 9

State officials warn about mysterious seed packets from China

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

Agriculture departments in at least 27 states are warning residents to report any unsolicited packages of seeds that arrive in the mail appearing to come from China.

The packages, officials warn, might contain invasive plant seeds, insect species or pathogens, some of which may be invisible to the naked eye.

Officials in Washington state, Virginia, Kansas and Louisiana have issued statements during the past few days about residents receiving in the mail packages of seeds that they did not order.

According to local news reports, residents in Utah, Arizona and Ohio have also received seeds. Chanel Tewalt, spokeswoman for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, told the Capital Press Monday the agency has also received about 20 reports

from Idahoans who received seeds.

“Please, do not open the seed packet,” Chris McGann, spokesman for the Washington State Department of Agriculture asked the Capital Press to tell readers. “It may contain insect pests or pathogens. These things could be inside any type of seed, and since they entered the United States without agricultural inspection, they pose a higher risk.”

In a statement, WSDA warned the seeds could introduce disease to local plants or harm livestock. Researchers warn the packages, if opened, may pose a risk to agricultural industries and the environment.

Photographs from WSDA show the seeds appear to have been mailed in white pouches marked on the outside with Chinese lettering and the words “China Post.” But Monday, the

WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECEIVE SEEDS

What Washington residents should do

Here is what Washington State residents who receive unsolicited international seed packages in the mail should do:

- Do not open the seed packets or plant the seeds.
- Double bag the seeds (for example, leave in the seed packet they came in and also put inside a sealed zip-lock bag) and put them in the regular trash. Don’t put them in a compost or recycling bin.
- If you already planted the seeds, please pull up the plants, double bag them and put them in the trash (not compost) bin.

What residents in other states should do

Anyone outside of Washington State who receives an unsolicited package of seeds from China or other countries should contact their state plant regulatory official or APHIS State plant health director.

Source: Washington State Department of Agriculture



WSDA
Unsolicited seed packages that appear to come from China.



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