Trade report: U.S. blueberry industry doing fine

By DON JENKINS Capital Press

The U.S. International Trade Commission found signs that blueberry farms are reasonably profitable, rejecting claims that growers need protection from foreign competitors, a report issued Monday states.

The report to U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai details why the five-member trade commission in February unanimously voted against putting up trade barriers to safeguard American blueberry

Although some producers lost money between 2015 and 2019, the industry overall planted more berries, employed more people, paid higher wages and increased sales, according to the report.

'With respect to profitability, we find that there is no clear trend sufficient to support a finding of threat of serious injury," according to the commission.

Tai's predecessor, Robert Lighthizer, asked the commission to investigate whether fruit from several countries seriously harmed or threatened to harm the U.S. blueberry industry.

The commission looked at industry trends over the five-year period, taking testimony and reviewing financial information from public sources and confidential questionnaires.

By several measurements, the blueberry industry thrived, according to the commission. "We find it persuasive in this case that the industry reported substantial operating

The American Blueberry Growers Alliance, a trade group that sought the investigation, claimed that a surge of imports in the spring and fall suppressed lucrative early and late harvest prices.

"The reality for American blueberry



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press File

The U.S. International Trade Commission concludes that imports are not seriously harming the U.S. blueberry industry.

farmers is that foreign imports targeting the U.S. blueberry market have had a devastating impact on the domestic blueberry market — causing great hardship for family-owned farm operations," an alliance spokeswoman said Tuesday in an email.

Canada, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Argentina intervened in the investigation, as did U.S. farm and food companies with international operations.

Representatives testified that foreign farmers supply blueberries to U.S. consumers during off-seasons.

The trade commission concluded that peak-season prices — during May, June and July — are generally rising, offsetting any loss of revenue for the shoulder

The commission rejected a claim that foreign countries are poised to flood the U.S. with more blueberries.

"Indeed the record often indicates that exports to the United States will account for

a declining share of shipments for foreign producers," according to the commission.

The industry's average hourly wage rose from \$16.51 in 2015 to \$20.51 in 2020, according to the report.

"We observe that labor availability was a frequently cited issue for U.S. growers, which suggests that employment levels likely would have been greater if U.S. producers had been able to obtain additional workers," the report stated.

Lighthizer sought the investigation under a U.S. trade law that allows the president to erect trade barriers, such as tariffs or quotas, to protect an industry from serious harm.

The investigation drew wide interest from farm groups. Organizations whose members rely on foreign trade cautioned the commission against starting a trade war. Other groups that rely on U.S. consumers urged the commission to safeguard American agriculture.

Washington potato industry tallies cost of COVID-19 precautions

By MATTHEW WEAVER Capital Press

It cost Washington potato farmers \$2,532 per month and potato packers \$4,340 per month to supply and manage COVID-19 precautions, a Washington State University survey found.

Farmers spent 17 hours per month and packers spent 49 hours per month managing COVID safety protocols, according to the survey, which was done by the university's IMPACT Center.

There were 43 grower responses, a 20% response rate. Packers-shippers provided 15

The average farm in the survey had 1,889 acres in potatoes. The largest farm was 8,000

The survey was conducted Oct. 26-Dec. 8. The average respondent reported total COVID costs of \$24,116.

The Washington Potato Commission wanted to use information from the survey to convey to legislators that farmers were taking COVID-19 seriously and to tally the costs associated with keeping employees safe, commission director of government affairs Matt Harris told the Cap-

· Seventeen farmers said they experienced delays in planting or harvest due to worker absences or shortages, while 18 had not. About 290 working days were lost with a financial loss of \$920,000 due to the delays.

 Fourteen farmers said they experienced efficiency losses in potato grading due to social distancing. The survey says those farm-

working days due to worker absences or shortages, with an average loss of \$162,560.

· Four packers said they experienced effi-\$43,750, for a total of \$175,000.

 Growers averaged 25 temperature checks per day, and estimated four hours of routine san-

\$22,443 purchasing new permanent equipment or structures, such as hand washing stations or hand sanitizing stands, for a total cost

• Twenty growers spent an average of \$5,005 purchasing disposable equipment, such as masks, other personal protective equipment, thermometers or hand sanitizer, for a total cost of \$160,150.

The costs of keeping employees and the food

"We can't demand more money for our produce because historically farms and farmers You just can't keep producing food for a loss. Will banks lend if you're always losing money?

Whether those costs continue or increase depends on the availability of supplies, Harris

farmworkers, safety protocols will continue,

Debate over banning Oregon mink farms centers on coronavirus the disease quickly and pose

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI Capital Press

SALEM — Arguments over whether lawmakers should prohibit mink farms in Oregon recently centered on whether coronavirus risks from such operations are either unjustifiable or exaggerated. Proponents of Senate Bill

832, which would ban mink farming within nine months of enactment, argue the animals pose a unique danger for spreading the coronavirus and amplifying its hazards to humans.

Mink are the only species known to get infected by the virus and then transmit it back to people, said Jim Keen, a veterinarian who serves on the veterinary council of the Animal Wellness Action nonprofit.

The animals are housed in stressful conditions under which the virus can more readily spread, adding to the risk of new variants developing, Keen said.

The species is also considered a top candidate for the "missing link" that transmitted the corona-



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File Joe Ruef holds a mink at his farm in Mt. Angel, Ore. Ruef recently testified against a bill that would ban mink farming in Oregon.

virus between bats and humans, starting or accelerating the pandemic, he said.

Oregon has only five mink farms. One facility had an outbreak of the coronavirus during which three of the animals escaped, said Lori Ann Burd, environmental health program

director for the Center for Biological Diversity nonprofit.

Aside from the threat to public health, escaped mink can imperil related species such as river otters, fishers and martens, Burd said.

"This is not an attack on Oregon agriculture. This is looking at the threat five operations pose to us," she said.

John Easley, a veterinarian and mink industry consultant, countered that mink farms have developed new biosecurity measures aimed at thwarting coronavirus spread, in collaboration with federal and state agencies.

A vaccine against the coronavirus has been developed for mink, which will further reduce the chances of transmission and mutations, Easley said.

Denmark, which euthanized 17 million mink after an outbreak, had 1,100 mink farms in an area one-third the size of Wisconsin, so the odds of virus transmission among them was much higher, he said.

Even so, the animals clear

a minimal threat to the public health, Easley said. "The decision to cull an entire industry was not warranted. The science did not support that." Opponents of SB 832 claimed

that battling the coronavirus pandemic is merely a pretext for animal rights organizations to ban fur production, which has long been their aim. The bill's critics also argued

that prohibiting a single agricultural sector would set a terrible precedent for the state's farm industry.

Mink farmers testified that provisions in SB 832 that would provide them with loans and training could not compensate for the loss of their operations.

Joe Ruef, a mink farmer near Mt. Angel, said his family has been in the industry for 50 years and would have no other uses for the associated equip ment and would squander valuable genetics if the bill passes.

"We make every effort to keep our employees safe and our mink safe," he said.

but may be managed differently, Harris said.

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC

2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2012 JEEP WRANGLER 4W VIN = 1C4BJWFG8CL206604 Amount due on lien \$1,415.00 \(\frac{7}{2} \)

GIOVANNY OBREGON & MARIA GUEVARA ONPOINT COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION LEGAL

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2018 CHRYSLER PACIFICA VAN 2018 CHRYSLER PACIFICA VAN 🚽 VIN = 2C4RC1H76JR168609 🤮 Amount due on lien \$1,535.00 ♡ Reputed owner(s) JILL SCOBY

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2016 TOYOTA PRIUS 4DR Amount due on lien \$1,575.00 & Reputed Owner(-) IBSA SUFIYAN MUSE

TOYOTA MOTOR CREDIT CORP

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2005 FORD F350 PU VIN = 1FTWW31Y05EC00790 Amount due on lien \$1,515.00 g Reputed owner(s)

JOHN SELDON COMSTOCK

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2016 HONDA CIVIC 4DR Reputed owner(s) MICHELLE RUIZ BK OF THE WEST

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2019 JEEP CHEROKEE 4W -VIN = 1C4RJFBGXKC637741 Amount due on lien \$1,535.00 8 Reputed owner(s)
THOMAS GANAHL LEWIS USB LEASING LT-LESSOR

LEGAL

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2013 TOYOTA 4RUNNER UT vin = JTEBU5JR4D5132738 \$
Amount due on lien \$1,595.00 \$
Reputed owner(s) LEE ROSS WRIGHT UNITUS COMMUNITY C.U

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following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/12/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by COPART OF WASHINGTON INC

2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2018 DODGE CHARGER 4DR VIN = 2C3CDXCT9JH180869Amount due on lien \$1,535.00 & Reputed owner(s) PAUL M SCHWEND & ANDREA G GASPAR REGIONAL ACCEPTANCE CORP

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2017 TOYOTA CAMRY 4DR VIN = 4T1BF1FK6HU712793 Panited 1,415.00 & Reputed owner(s) JOHN DUDLEY MARTÍN RELIABLE CREDIT ASSOCIATION INC

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2014 VOLVO XC90 UT STACY COYNE HOUSER

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2020 INDI ROADMSTR VIN = 56KTKDBBXL3384766 Amount due on lien \$1,535.00 [™] Reputed owner(s) **COPART**

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR

2009 FORD F 150 PU VIN = 1FTPW14V89FA34903
Amount due on lien \$1,555.00 Reputed owner(s) STEVEN F & GRACE K ATKINS OREGON STATE CREDIT UNION

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2018 TOYOTA CAMRY 4DR VIN = JTNB11HK3J3042580 Amount due on lien \$1,415.00 € Reputed owner(s) MOHAMED ADEN HASSAN HYUNDAI MOTOR FINANCE

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2009 DODGE 3500 PU -2009 DUDGE 3500 FO
VIN = 3D7MX38L19G511860 & 88
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NICKOLOUS WAYNE DEVLIN IRONWORKERS USA C.U

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2013 AUDI Q 7 LL VIN = WA1DGAFE0DD013054 Report due on lien \$1,535.00 & Reputed owner(s) NORBERTO ACEVEDO MAGDELANO COLUMBIA CREDIT UNION

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR

2019 JEEP CHEROKEE UT VIN = 1C4RJFBGXKC637741

Amount due on lien \$1,935.00 Reputed owner(s) THOMAS GANAHL LEWIS USB LEASING LT - LESSOR

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2018 JEEP RENEGADE UT 2018 JEEP RENEGADE UT
VIN = ZACCJBAB4JPG87842
Amount due on lien \$1,415.00 & Reputed owner(s) NICOLAS & STACI OTTO WELLS FARGO AUTO LEGAL

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2018 KIA OPTIMA 4DR -VIN = 5XXGT4L30JG260496

Amount due on lien \$2,435.00 & Reputed owner(s) Reputed owner(s)

DAWNIELLE M & GEORGE R POST JR OREGON COMMUNITY C.U

LEGAL

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2011 CHEV EXPRESS VAN VIN = 1GB3G3BG166052 & Remount due on lien \$1,535.00 & Remount Reputed owner(s) IRS ENVIRONMENT OF PDX INC WASHINGTON TRUST BANK

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 1971 V W BEETLE 2DR HALEY A & AMY R BALLARD

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC 2016 FORD ESCAPE UT

Reputed owner(s) NORTH AMERICAN BREWERIES INC BBL FLEET CO - LESSOR

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 1996 OTHR R.T

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2012 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER UT VIN = JTEDC3EH3C2009708 & Remount due on lien \$1,535.00 & Remo Reputed owner(s)

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following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/19/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by COPART OF WASHINGTON INC

2020 TOYOTA RAV 4 UT VIN = 2T3G1RFV4LC110800 27 Amount due on lien \$1,575.00 8

Reputed owner(s) JUN CHEN

responses, a 28% response rate.

acres, and the smallest was 175 acres.

According to the survey:

ers averaged a \$16,000 loss, for a total loss estimate of \$176,000. • Ten packers had an average delay of 13

ciency losses. Each had an average loss of

itizing and five additional hours of sanitizing. · Twenty growers spent an average of

supply safe can't be recouped, Harris said.

are price takers," he said. "As these costs are incurred, prices for all food will start to rise. Probably not."

Even with COVID-19 vaccines rolling out to

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2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR VIN = 1FMCU9G94GUC00405 ☆ Amount due on lien \$1,575.00 $\stackrel{\circ}{\mathbb{R}}$

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at 10:00am by
COPART OF WASHINGTON INC

ZOUHAIR J & ZAKARYA BAZA SOUND CREDIT UNION

Notice is hereby given that the

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TOYOTA MOTOR CREDIT CORP