

Below-average NW hop yields predicted due to summer heat wave

By BRAD CARLSON and SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

Growers are in the thick of hop harvest across the Pacific Northwest, where lower-than-average yields are predicted because of heat waves that scalded the region in June and July.

Across Washington, Oregon and Idaho, the nation's main hop-growing region, high temperatures brought losses, smaller hop cones and increased spider mite pressure. However, growers say the challenges were mild compared to 2020's wildfires, windstorms and market disruptions.

"Heat waves, the Delta variant — what's next?" said Steve Carpenter, chief supply officer for Yakima Chief Hops, a grower-owned dealer handling nearly 40% of the U.S. crop. "At least within our company, though, we're seeing a good crop coming in and very encouraging numbers in terms of shipments. It encourages me that we've maybe come



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press
Peter Weathers, left, and his sister, Erica Lorentz, during hop harvest.

around the corner."

In June, USDA predicted the Pacific Northwest would string 60,735 acres for harvest, 4% more than the previous year and an all-time record.

Carpenter estimated that because of heat damage, however, the 2021 harvest will actually fall below average. According to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the five-year average is 56,847 harvested acres.

Much of that decrease in strung hops can be attributed to baby hop plants, stunted by heat, never making it to the trellis, according to Ann

George, executive director of Hop Growers of America.

Yields in Yakima, Wash., the No. 1 hop producing state, are "down a bit" this year, said Carpenter of Yakima Chief. Moxee fared better, with yields at or above average.

Oregon, industry leaders say, was hurt more. The Citra variety, an aroma hop highly sought after by brewers, was hit worst because it's not very heat-resilient.

Fred Geschwill, co-owner of F & B Farms and Nursery in Woodburn, Ore., a third generation hop grower with about 300 hop acres, said some of his Citra bocks,

especially younger fields, took up to a 60% reduction in yield.

"We were affected pretty heavily on our farm," said Geschwill.

Because of the heat, Geschwill said, spider mites were "early and really abundant."

At Sodbuster Farms in Salem, brother-sister team Peter Weathers and Erica Lorentz, who run the farm alongside other family members, said they saw about a 30% Citra loss. Of the farm's 900 hop acres, about 230 acres are Citra.

Cones are also smaller and lighter, they said.

Like Geschwill, they also faced "really bad" spider mites, and both farms say finding enough laborers this harvest was even harder than in previous years.

Southwest Idaho hop yields will also be below average.

Obendorf Farms owner and manager Brock Obendorf said Sept. 13 that yields on early-maturing varieties have been down 15-20% from average.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Blane Saunders loads cranberries into bins Sept. 21 on Washington's Long Beach Peninsula.

Cranberry harvest begins with smaller surplus

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Growers in Oregon, Washington and three other states are expected to produce 813.5 million pounds of cranberries this year, a harvest that will further reduce a surplus that drove down prices, according to the Cranberry Marketing Committee.

The cranberry committee projects that U.S. and foreign production combined with carry-over inventory will exceed demand by 30%. The surplus peaked in 2016 at roughly 100%.

Washington cranberry grower Malcolm McPhail, a member of the Ocean Spray cooperative, said co-op prices have rebounded to above \$45 per 100-pound barrel after falling several years ago to \$25 a barrel.

"When we're in the 40s, we're OK," he said.

The industry resorted to volume controls in 2017 and 2018, as the USDA ordered farmers to withhold cranberries from the marketplace. Crops have been smaller since 2016, and the industry reports an increase in exports.

The USDA reported cranberry prices averaged \$37.30 per 100-pound barrel in 2020, compared to \$30.60 in 2016.

Oregon and Washington are expected to have solid crops, though short of records. The cranberry committee forecast Oregon's crop at 52 million pounds and Washington's at 17.3 million pounds.

Oregon farmers on the coast began delivering cranberries to Ocean

Spray earlier this month, according to grower Charlie Ruddle.

Wisconsin, by far the largest cranberry state, is expected to produce 492 million pounds, followed by Massachusetts with 196.9 million pounds and New Jersey at 53.4 million pounds.

Overall, the cranberry committee projected the crop to be about 5% larger than last year.

In a separate prediction, the USDA projects the U.S. crop will be 783 million pounds, up 1% from last year. The USDA does not include Washington in its forecast or in calculating the harvest. The USDA forecast Oregon's crop at 604 million pounds.

With cranberry consumption in the U.S. fairly flat, the industry has looked to increase sales overseas, particularly in China and India.

Cranberries continue to be caught up in trade disputes, however. The European Union slapped a 25% retaliatory tariff on cranberry concentrate in 2018 in response to U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum.

The value of concentrate exports to Europe has declined to \$5 million from \$51 million, according to the cranberry marketing committee.

Dried cranberries were among many U.S. goods that faced a 25% retaliatory tariff by the European Union earlier this year.

The U.S. and EU agreed to suspend the warring tariffs for five years while trying to work out a dispute over government subsidies to aircraft companies Boeing and Airbus.

Hemp insulation company chooses south-central Idaho

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Matthew Mead

Hempitecture Inc., a Ketchum, Idaho, company that specializes in sustainable building materials, is expanding its operations and bringing a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility to Jerome, Idaho.

The company has since finalized a Jerome location to be the home of its 21,632-square-foot facility. It will be at the Northridge Junction industrial park directly off Interstate 84 and U.S. Highway 93.

The proposed facility will manufacture HempWool, a sustainable, high-performing natural fiber thermal insulation for residential and commercial construction projects, according to a press release from Southern Idaho Economic Development

Organization.

The insulation product is non-toxic and carbon neutral. The product is made from the inner woody core of the hemp plant, according to the company's website.

Additionally, the facility can manufacture sustainable packaging insulation for the cold-freight shipping industry.

"We're thrilled to be locating our non-woven manufacturing facility in Jerome, Idaho," said Matthew Mead, Hempitecture founder and CEO.

Jerome is ideally situated between large acreage hemp cultivation in the Rocky Mountain West and major

U.S. construction markets, he said.

"We're thankful for the support of the community in making this project possible, and we look forward to being an asset to the region and insulation industry for many years to come," he said.

Connie Stopher, executive director of Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization, said "the combination of sustainability, agricultural technology and innovation makes this a wonderful addition to the Magic Valley and the state of Idaho."

The company brings jobs, new opportunities for local farmers to diversify their rotational crops using less water and a product to booming construction projects in the state and region, said Charlie Howell, Jerome

County commissioner.

Hempitecture cofounders Mead and Tommy Gibbons were named on the 2019 Forbes 30 Under 30 list. In May of 2021, Gibbons was selected to represent Hempitecture at a Department of Energy-sponsored research fellowship program at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Knoxville, Tenn.

In June of 2021, Hempitecture and its research partners at the University of Idaho's College of Renewable Resources were awarded a \$206,000 research grant from the Idaho Department of Commerce's Idaho Global Entrepreneurial Mission program.

At the beginning of June, Hempitecture announced an equity fundraising campaign to build the facility and surpassed its goal of \$2.5 million by the end of June.

National cattlemen association slams beef advertising complaint

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



USDA Agricultural Research Service
A cattle roundup in New Mexico. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association has taken umbrage at a complaint filed by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

"NCBA's advertisement is contrary to abundant scientific evidence and deceptive on its face," the petition said.

The Physicians Committee also sent a letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack asking him to "replace these deceptive advertisements with helpful notices that promote

replacing animal products for plant-based diets to improve both climate and human health."

NCBA said its campaign reached millions of consumers and inspired curious readers to learn more and, unsurprisingly, led to mudslinging from animal activist groups.

The Physicians Committee masquerades as medical authorities, despite the fact that fewer than 10% of its members are physicians, NCBA said.

On its website, the committee claims to have 175,000

members, 17,000 of whom are doctors.

"The Physicians Committee is dedicated to saving and improving human and animal lives through plant-based diets and ethical and effective scientific research," the committee's website says.

"PCRM's questionable reputation aside, the facts and science are on beef's side," NCBA said.

Beef cattle account for 2% of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., according to the EPA. And according to USDA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the U.S. has produced the most sustainable beef in the world for decades and has reduced emissions per pound of beef by 40% since the 1960s, NCBA said.

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