



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

Washington state is expected to produce a smaller-than-average crop this year due in part to a prolonged cool, stormy spring.

Washington's apple crop expected to be smaller than average

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

Apple industry leaders predict Washington state will produce a smaller-than-average crop this year due in part to a cold and stormy spring that damaged blossoms and limited pollination.

The Washington State Tree Fruit Association on Monday projected that the 2022 state fresh apple crop will total 108.7 million 40-pound boxes, an 11.1% decrease from last year's 122.3 million boxes and significantly smaller than the five-year average of 128.3 million boxes.

This prediction falls in line with earlier estimates from growers at the Washington Apple Commission meeting May 26, who had forecast 105 million to 115 million boxes.

Growers at the commission meeting based their estimates on how apple trees bloomed this spring, which many said was "spotty," in some cases with entire orchard blocks not blooming.

"My take is, it seems like nobody has a good crop," commissioner Jim Thomas had said at the May meeting.

Jon DeVaney, president of Washington State Tree Fruit Association, or WSTFA, said in a statement Monday that his organization is nevertheless "pleased with the size of the harvest, particularly in the face of a long, cold spring."

DeVaney said WSTFA members are still evaluating the impact of the prolonged cold weather and are gauging ongoing crop development.

Apple harvest typically begins in August and continues into November. In previous years, figures on crop volumes have frequently changed as the harvest season has progressed.

"Weather is always a factor, and some varieties still have several months of growth ahead," said DeVaney.

WSTFA's estimates show that five popular apple varieties will make up the majority of the harvest. Gala is leading at 20% of total production. Red Delicious and Honeycrisp are each projected at 14%, followed by Granny Smith at 13.4% and Fuji at 12.7%.

Cosmic Crisp, a new proprietary variety grown only in Washington state, will make up 4.6% of the harvest this year, up from 3.2% last year.

The organic category also continues to grow. Washington leads the nation in production of organic apples, accounting for more than 90% of domestic production. This year, Washington's organic apple crop is forecast to be 14.4 million boxes, 13% of the total harvest.

According to WSTFA, apples grown in Washington state are sold in more than 40 countries, although exports have fallen since COVID-19 hit in 2020.

According to data from the Northwest Horticultural Council and Washington Apple Commission, Washington's apple exports hit a 22-year low this January, with only 21.3% of the state's apples being exported compared to the 31% pre-COVID average due to tariffs, shipping congestion and disrupted global markets.

With some markets and shipping lines still out of whack, growers welcome this year's smaller crop; a large crop could be harder to market and ship globally.

In a statement, Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, said apple harvest remains vitally important to the state's economy, representing about \$7.5 billion in annual economic impact.

"Although they have faced many challenges this year, I wish the workforce and the state's growers success as they begin another great harvest," said Sandison.

Innovator turns sheep's milk into ice cream

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

Twelve years ago, a wild idea popped into Alexis Negranti's head: Was it possible to turn sheep's milk into ice cream?

Sheep cheeses — including Manchego, Pecorino Romano and feta — were growing in popularity in the U.S. market. But ice cream? Although she had never heard of someone making sheep's milk ice cream, the concept of starting a sheep dairy and creamery appealed to Negranti, marrying her love for animals with her passion for high-quality, delicious food.

After a deeper research dive, Negranti found that companies were making sheep's milk ice cream in New Zealand and Europe, but she couldn't find anyone who had produced it in the U.S. for retail or wholesale. Negranti saw it as a gap she could fill.

When she first shared the idea with her husband, Wade, she recalls he thought it was crazy.

"We didn't have an ounce of dairy experience," she said.

Wade raised cattle in Central California, but neither he nor Alexis had ever milked an animal before, much less invented a new kind of ice cream.

Alexis Negranti, however, was determined, and a month later, she and her husband drove 18 hours to buy a starter



Alexis Negranti holds a sheep's milk ice cream cone.

GET IN TOUCH

Sheep dairy farmers interested in selling milk to Negranti Creamery can email alexis@negranti-creamery.com or call (805)-801-3847.



Negranti Creamery

The Negranti family, left to right: June, Alexis, Wade and Eli Negranti.

relocated from California.

The family also runs an ice cream catering truck and sells ice cream online.

Watching the business and consumer interest in sheep's milk grow has been "extremely exciting," Negranti said.

Negranti Creamery targets customers who care about healthy eating or are sensitive to cow milk. Many people with cow milk allergies find goat and sheep milk easier to digest and often prefer the taste and creaminess of sheep ice cream over alternative plant-based ice creams.

The creamery's high-end products are also popular among health-conscious consumers because the business uses mainly whole ingredients with limited processing or additives.

The creamery's two most popular ice cream flavors are salted brown sugar and strawberry basil.

As the business grew in recent years, Negranti said it became difficult to balance running both the farm and creamery. So, she sold her flock and decided to source milk from other sheep farms, allowing her to focus on ice cream production and marketing.

Negranti has sourced milk from the West Coast, including Oregon, and is open to working with more dairy sheep farms, especially those with Lacaune and East Friesen breeds or crosses.

"One of our core values is supporting American farmers and ranchers and American-made goods," said Negranti.

Idaho takes over distribution of cattle trich tags

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Changes to the Idaho State Department of Agriculture trichomoniasis testing program aim to benefit cattle producers and veterinarians.

The department said abortions and markedly smaller calf crops, especially in first-calf heifers, could indicate a herd has been infected by the venereal disease. It does not present outward signs of infection.

Idaho in 1989 became the first state to require annual trich testing, which the industry requested. More than 300 bulls tested positive that year.

The state requires annual testing for all resident non-virgin bulls and all at least two years old. Non-virgin bulls brought in from another state must be tested within 60 days if they are at least 18 months old unless they are part of a herd moving on an approved grazing permit. These herds must have a current-season result submitted with the grazing application.

State Veterinarian Scott Leibsle of ISDA said trich ebbs and flows, with the most recent season producing two positives out of nearly 30,000 cattle tests.

He said testing every

required bull every year drives program success by providing valuable information beyond annual raw numbers.

Even in low-incidence years, "grazing next door to a guy with a positive test is a concern," Leibsle said.

A challenge is that much of the demand occurs in October and November when cattle come off pasture, and in March and April when they go back onto pasture. Tags, which vets have distributed through the season, can run short.

ISDA announced it is taking over tag distribution for the Sept. 1-Aug. 31 testing year.

Leibsle said the department is buying a full-year supply of trich tags

upfront "to eliminate back orders and supply-chain issues so vets will always have tags available when they need them throughout the year."

A department advisory said this should eliminate the frustration of having to cancel or reschedule appointments due to tags being out of stock.

The department said orders can be placed starting Aug. 22. Total cost to veterinarians for the coming season is \$1.50 per tag includ-

ing shipping and handling. The minimum order is 20. Larger orders can be made in increments of 10.

Leibsle said the department also developed a new submission protocol for sending in samples for testing. The key feature is a different container in which the sample is submitted.

He said the new container is inexpensive and widely available, which should make it easier and more affordable for veterinarians to submit samples.



Dr. Scott Leibsle

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