

Oregon hazelnut growers look to penetrate new export markets

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

Oregon’s hazelnut industry is looking to expand beyond its traditional export market in northeast China and gain a better foothold in other Asian countries as well.

A new research export initiative overseen by the Oregon Hazelnut Marketing Board will examine improving the crop’s reach into China while better penetrating markets in Japan, South Korea and India.

The study will also analyze ramping up exports into Canada, which is already the second-largest destination for Oregon hazelnuts behind China.

“The potential is quite remarkable to access consumers around the world. It’s going to yield long-term benefits for all the growers and packers in the region,” said Jeff Nawn, whose North Hill Group consulting firm will conduct the analysis. “For the industry, it’s the right time to do this type of work.”

Of the 18,000 metric tons of Oregon hazelnuts exported last year, nearly 80% were shipped to China and most of the rest to Canada, with nominal amounts destined for other countries. Oregon’s total annual production has averaged more than 37,000 metric tons in recent years.

Japan and South Korea are attractive potential markets because they’re wealthy countries that already consume hazelnuts incorporated into high-end chocolates, and Oregon has strong “brand equity” in both nations, Nawn said.

“Oregon has the image of being very clean, natural, wholesome,” he said.

India, meanwhile, has the “largest collection of vegetarians in the world” whose wages are rising and who are looking for new sources



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press
Hazelnuts are swept into rows in preparation for harvest. The Oregon hazelnut industry is looking to expand export opportunities beyond its traditional market in northeast China.

of protein, he said.

Canada is a close neighbor that offers an opportunity to maximize “bang for the buck” in terms of marketing, but current exports are dominated by one confectionary company, Nawn said.

While China is already an important market for Oregon hazelnuts, most shipments end up in Beijing and surrounding areas, he said.

It may be possible to enlarge the Oregon industry’s footprint to include other major metropolitan areas in China, where in-shell hazelnuts could similarly be eaten as a snack food, he said.

“Even though it’s a nice market for hazelnuts, it could be better with some strategic marketing work,” Nawn said.

Last year, Chinese tariffs on Oregon in-shell hazelnuts — the most popular type consumed there — jumped from 25% to 65% due to the ongoing trade dispute with the U.S.

The tariff hike convinced Oregon’s industry to look for ways to increase sales despite the higher barrier while also diversifying beyond the Chinese export market, said Meredith Nagely, manager of the Oregon Hazelnut Marketing Board.

“Tariff mitigation was the impetus for it,” she said.

The trade turbulence comes at a time of looming growth in Oregon’s hazelnut production, as acreage has grown from fewer than 30,000 acres to roughly 85,000 in the past decade.

Between 2007 and 2015, growers focused on planting varieties meant for producing the in-shell hazelnuts that are popular in China, said Larry George, president of the George Packing Co.

More recently, packers have been urging growers to plant more cultivars meant for the production of kernels that can be used by domestic food manufacturers, George said.

However, the industry is “just barely starting to see

production increase now” of the kernel varieties, so it needs to focus on widening sales channels for the in-shell nuts that represent the bulk of new production, he said.

“We’re trying to develop those markets first,” George said. “It takes years to develop markets.”

The Oregon Hazelnut Marketing Board is paying for the export research initiative with about half of the \$385,000 it recently received in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Trade Promotion Program.

The study is intended to pave the way for the Oregon Hazelnut Marketing Board to receive export-oriented funding more regularly through the USDA’s Market Access Program, Nagely said.

“For us, we hope it will help our industry build sales,” she said. “We want to improve our presence and know where our processors should be moving into new markets.”

No romance here

Dear Annie: A few years ago, I moved into a duplex owned by an old college friend of mine, “Robby,” and his wife. During this time, I became very close friends with Robby’s wife. Earlier this year I moved out. Around this same time, Robby’s wife told him that she was thinking of divorce. The wife pretty much stopped talking to me once I moved out of the residence. However, Robby and I remained close friends. Since then, Robby has continued to confide in me about their marriage and their potential divorce. He started calling and texting all the time. One night when we were out, he told me he should have married me and was in love with me. I have no romantic interest in my friend. How do I get him to understand this? — *Confused in Ohio*

Dear Confused: Have you tried telling him? That’s a good place to start. Be direct: “I have no interest in you romantically.” Emphasize how much you value him as a friend, but let him know that if he doesn’t quit it with the love talk, you’ll need to take a break from seeing him and talking to him on the phone. Until you’ve stamped out every last ember of hope, he’ll keep stoking the potential flame.

Dear Annie: In response to “Married to a Hoarder”: The guy is apparently ready (finally) to let his son see his mother’s illness. But also he’s still going to suffer the embarrassment of not being able to host other relatives and having no explanation for why he can’t.

Can’t he just say, “I’m sorry, we’d love to have you stay with us, but unfortunately my wife is a hoarder and our spare rooms are all full”?

It would be OK for me to say, “We can’t go skiing because John broke his leg.” (And someone might even

come over to help me with some job John would normally have been able to do.) But when the affliction is mental, we can’t mention it. It seems our No. 1 responsibility is to cover up for the ill person. We’re supposed to sacrifice our social life, peace of mind and integrity to keep up appearances. (Which, incidentally, may also help him/her put off recognizing the need for professional help.) — *Sick of Secrets*

Dear Sick of Secrets: You raise great points. Keeping such issues a family secret serves no one. It enables the afflicted person to keep up the unhealthy behavior, and it leaves the other family members feeling stressed, isolated and alone. That doesn’t mean one should go shouting from the rooftops about a loved one’s disorders, of course. However, there should be no sense of shame in opening up to friends.

Dear Annie: I could have written the letter from “Never Enough” when I was younger. In my 30s, I, too, had everything I thought I needed for happiness. Yet I found myself crying on the porch of “the right house,” married to “the right man,” raising three young children in a community where I was accepted. I found the answer to my emptiness and depression by turning my search inward. I have discovered that it is absolutely true. We are more than a body that houses a mind and will; we are, at our cores, spiritual beings. To be fully alive, we have to recognize our need for spiritual growth. The next material thing that we acquire will never satisfy our innermost longing. “Never Enough” will never buy his way to inner peace. I hope he finds the better way. — *Bobbie M., A Friend of the Teacher*

Dear Bobbie: I couldn’t agree more. Thank you for writing.

DEAR ANNIE



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"LSPHS, DGLCDXR!"

Yesterday's Cryptquip: GROUP WHERE EVERY AUTHORIZED PLAYER MUST HAVE JUMBO-SIZED LOWER LIMBS: MAJOR-LEG BASEBALL.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: F equals W

12-7 CRYPTOQUIP

HATKGLDO UJHEDO MUA
KODFDVLQ J LDQL QARLMJOD
FDOQWAV ROAT SDLLWVS
PWQLOWYGLDP: J YDLJ
YCAHEDO.

Yesterday's Cryptquip: HOMER'S WIFE WAS RELUCTANT TO ENTER THE TRAFFIC FLOW. PEOPLE WERE SHOUTING "MERGE, SIMPSON!"
Today's Cryptquip Clue: L equals T

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