



## Hort Headlines

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January 20, 2012

- **Legislature: Budget Shortfall Act III** – With nearly 15 days of the current 60 day session receding into the rear view mirror, one is left to ponder why the budget issues are not in the forefront of the Legislature's discussions? An unproductive Special Session to end 2011 appeared to 'kick the can' to the 2012 session. The headlines are filled with efforts to ban plastic bags at all retail stores, to allow gay marriage and to address other social issues. What about the budget shortfall? WSHA is monitoring a handful of measures that would impact agriculture; of major concern will be the budgetary component of how the current biennial shortfall will be handled. The Governor has suggested a half cent temporary bump in the sales tax in order to forestall cuts to higher education as well as K-12 programs. Will there be program cuts, higher taxes/closure of loopholes or some combination thereof? Stay tuned....but only 45 days remain in the session.
- **Washington Becomes First State With Minimum Wage Above \$9 an Hour** – Washington's minimum wage increased 37 cents to a record high of \$9.04 an hour (the rate for workers who are 14 or 15 years old is \$7.68), which went into effect January 1, 2012. Washington has had the highest minimum wage in the nation for many years, but the city of San Francisco now holds that rank with a wage of \$10.24 an hour. The Department of Labor and Industries recalculates the state's minimum wage each year in September as required by Initiative 688, which Washington state voters approved in 1998. Washington is one of 10 states that adjusts the minimum wage based on inflation and CPI.
- **AgTools™ Academy Workshop** – AgTools™ is a suite of software programs that helps producers make better decisions to manage the financial risk involved in agriculture. This

particular workshop will explore the financial realities of orchard renewal strategies. The workshop series will focus on how to finance orchard renewal strategies using updated features of the AgTools™ program. For more information or to register visit [www.agtools.org/](http://www.agtools.org/). The workshops will be held at the following locations: Wenatchee (pears/cherries) – February 15th | Grandview (apples) – February 16th | Kennewick (cherries) – February 17th

- **Growers Extend Cherry Marketing Order** – Washington cherry growers have approved a six-year extension of a federal marketing order for the industry's grade and pack committee with a 92 percent favorable vote. Read more at the [Capital Press](#).
- **Apple Maggot Quarantine May Grow** – An apple maggot working group meets Feb. 6 to determine the next step in the program and possibly recommend quarantines. Quarantines would be decided by Director of Agriculture Dan Newhouse after public hearings, said Mike Klaus, department entomologist at the North Central Washington Pear Day. In 2011, 35 flies were caught at 23 sites in Chelan County, including 15 of the sites in Leavenworth, six near Campbell Road off the Blewett Pass Highway and two sites in Wenatchee, Klaus said. Mexico and other major export markets for Washington apples have no tolerance for apple maggot, so infestations may pose economic threats. Read more at the [Capital Press](#)
- **2012 Census of Agriculture** – The Census of Agriculture, taken every five years, is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Any person with estimated or expected annual sales of agricultural products of at least \$1,000 is considered a producer and should be counted. The 2012 census will be conducted late in 2012 and into 2013 to reflect 2012 farming activities. It is the voice of agriculture: Make your voice heard. Sign up to be counted at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).
- **Ag Safety Day Set For Wenatchee** – The 8th annual Agriculture Safety Day will be held Wednesday, February 22, at the Wenatchee Convention Center from 7:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. The program is designed for employers, supervisors, farmworkers and safety professionals. All sessions will be offered in English and Spanish. For more information or to register visit [www.wa.gov/conf.org](http://www.wa.gov/conf.org). For more information please email [GovSafetyConf@lni.wa.gov](mailto:GovSafetyConf@lni.wa.gov).

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## Headline Links

- **Bipartisan House Bill 2408 Introduced Last Week** – Gempler said the bill would add efficiency to the agricultural employment system, which he said could easily see another labor shortage this year. Read more at [the Yakima Herald](#).
- **US: Pacific Northwest Has Large Pear Crop** – Kevin Moffit, President and CEO of Pear Bureau Northwest notes that this season, which is midway through, is looking to be a record crop. Read more at [Fresh Plaza](#).
- **Pear Industry Seeks Major Grant** – Scientists from Washington State University, Oregon State University and the University of California-Davis will apply Jan. 31 for a USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative grant of \$7 million or \$8 million to aid U.S. pear research. Read more at [Fresh Plaza](#).

- **Healthy Snack Program Is Bearing Fruit** – Students with access to fruits and veggies through this program are eating about half a serving more of these nutrient-rich snacks each day, according to a study released by the USDA in September. Read more at [www.lodinews.com](http://www.lodinews.com).
  - **Washington Farm Bureau Labor Conference** – Washington Farm Bureau Labor Conference The Washington Farm Bureau's Labor Conference will be held in Ellensburg February 15 and 16 at Central Washington University dedicated to the labor and employment needs of Washington's farm and seasonal employers. To view the agenda and register visit [www.wafla.org](http://www.wafla.org).
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## Calendar Of Upcoming Industry Meetings

- WSHA BOD Meeting Thursday, January 26, 2012 in Ellensburg
- Pest Management Workshop, Wenatchee Valley College – February 2, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. IPM workshops cover various topics 2 credits
  - Women in Agriculture Conference, Yakima – February 11, 2012 – Contact Debra Hansen Kollock at (509) 684-2588.
- Pesticide License Pre-Test Training, Wenatchee Valley College – February 14, 6:30pm – 8:30pm. 2 credits
  - WGCH Board Meeting, Wenatchee Apple Commission – February 14, 2012
- Tree Fruit Research Commission NW Pear Review, Wenatchee CTC Center– Feb 22 – 23, 2012



Visit the GRAS2P Web-Site – [web-site](http://web-site).

View photos from recent orchard visits:  
[Image 1](#), [Image 2](#), [Image 3](#), and [Image 4](#),

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