



Hort Headlines

January 23, 2009

- **FINAL CALL: Tree Fruit Day Sign Up** – Only a few spots remain for WSHA's 7th Annual Tree Fruit Day which is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3, in Olympia. The one-day event will include visits with key legislators and agency officials. Tree fruit industry gift boxes will also be distributed again this year to all legislators and their legislative assistants. There are still a few spots available, visit the WSHA web-site to download a [registration form](#). The final date for signup is extended to January 26th.
- **Uncertainty Lingers As H2A Rule Goes Into Effect** – The U.S. Labor Department recently published its final rule on the H-2A program for employing legal foreign workers in temporary or seasonal agriculture jobs. The department said the rule increases worker protections and employer penalties for violations. The H-2A rule prohibits employers and recruiters from charging fees to workers for accessing jobs and increases fines up to \$100,000 for violations that result in serious injury or death of a worker. The rule had not been updated in more than 20 years. It was published in the Federal Register and went into effect January 17th. Transitional provisions are now in effect, and full compliance is set for July 1, 2009.
- **New I-9 Form Effective** – Employers will be required to use the revised I-9 form for all new hires as well as re-verifying any employee with expiring employment authorization beginning February 2, 2009. As of February 2, 2009 the current edition of the Form I-9 dated 6/05/2007 will no longer be valid. **IMPORTANT NOTE: DO NOT use the [new form](#) until February 2, 2009 and DO NOT use**

the *old form* after February 2, 2009. For more information visit www.wsfb.com.

The new rule:

- Requires that all documents presented during the verification process be unexpired;
 - Eliminates List A identity and employment authorization documentation Forms I-688, I-688A, and I-688B (*Temporary Resident Card and outdated Employment Authorization Cards*);
 - Adds foreign passports containing certain machine-readable immigrant visas to List A;
 - Adds valid passports to List A as evidence of identity and employment authorization for citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), along with Form I-94 or Form I-94A indicating nonimmigrant admission under the Compact of Free Association Between the United States and the FSM or RMI.
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- **New Canadian Requirements For U.S. Exporters** – Officials from the Canada Produce Marketing Association say grower-shippers who export fresh fruits and vegetables to Canada should expect new regulations designed to address food safety and phytosanitary concerns. Effective January 1, labels on packaged fruit and vegetable products must include ingredient lists, net contents, and country of origin. Produce heading to the province of Quebec must include information in French on the label. On June 30, new regulations for organic products and import labels will be released. Canadian border inspections will increase and Canadian retailers may ask importers to obtain more third-party certifications.
 - **WSDA Offers Reimbursement for Organic Certification Costs** – The Washington State Dept. of Agriculture (WSDA) is encouraging qualified organic producers, handlers and food processors to apply for reimbursement for some of the costs associated with organic certification. Reimbursements are limited to 75 percent of licensing costs up to a maximum of \$750. Funds are available for both the 2008 and 2009 certification year on a reimbursable basis. Organic businesses certified by WSDA must renew their licenses each year. Under state law, the program is required to recover the full cost of organic certification through fees. Applications for the cost-share program can be obtained by contacting WSDA at (360) 902-1805 or downloading the application from the Organic Food Program's Web site at www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic.
 - **Washington Unemployment Rate Creeps Up Again** – Washington's unemployment rate rose to 7.1 percent last month from November's 6.4 percent. Despite the unemployment increase, the rate remains slightly below the average of 7.2 percent since 1976 and far from the November 1982 record of 12.2 percent. The number of non-agricultural jobs declined by 22,200 from November to December.

- **Fruit Grower Decision-Making Workshop** – A series of free computer workshops have been designed to assist fruit growers with long-term decision making. Three workshops are scheduled to teach growers how to use A Grower's Technology Economic Assessment Model computer program. There is no cost to attend but pre-registration is requested since space is limited to only 15 students. The workshops are scheduled for January 20, in Wenatchee; January 22, in Moses Lake; and February 3, in Omak. Contact WSU to register (509) 422-7245 or email suveryly@wsu.edu.
- **Pest Management Workshops** – WSU Chelan County Extension will be providing Pest Management Workshops. The IPM workshops cover various topics that highlight critical issues, discuss industry trends, and point out possible horticultural and business solutions. The training workshops are presented by Tim Smith, WSU Extension. For more information email smithtj@wsu.edu.
 - **January 28** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Lyceum (2 credits)
 - **February 17** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Lyceum (2 credits)
 - **February 7** | 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. Oroville (2 credits)

(Note Below: attend both sessions 1 and 2 for complete pesticide license pre-testing training)

 - **February 25** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Library Lyceum (2 credits)
 - **March 4** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Library Lyceum (2 credits)

Headline Links

The Large-Scale Disappearance Of The Humble Honeybee Threatens Agriculture Worldwide – Something like a quarter of America's honeybee colonies has perished in the past two years, threatening the world's multibillion dollar agricultural industry, which depends on bees to pollinate flowers and set fruit and vegetables. Learn more at www.newsobserver.com.

Farmers Urged To Reduce Pesticide Runoff – EPA Northwest Region Administrator Elin Miller urged farmers to do their part to reduce pollutants in the Columbia River Basin. Learn more on this story from [the Capital Press](http://the-capital-press.com).

Court Rules Pesticides Not Exempt From Water Act – The 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals has thrown out an Environmental Protection Agency rule that

exempts pesticides from being regulated as pollutants under the Clean Water Act. Read more at [*the Capital Press*](#).

Misunderstood By Consumers And Misrepresented By Pressure Groups, Pesticides Are A Soft Target For Legislators – The latest blow to that soft target could have hard consequences for the European food industry and for developing countries. Read the following article at [*the Food Navigator*](#).

Beekeepers Fear Sting Of Imported Australian Hives – Beekeepers who are battling a mysterious ailment that led to the disappearance of millions of honeybees now fear the sting of imported Australian bees that they worry could outcompete their hives and might carry a deadly parasite unseen in the United States. Visit [*the Capital Press*](#) to learn more.

Program Sends Assistance Directly To Ag Producers – Financial assistance to promote ground and surface water conservation and water-quality improvement is available to ag producers and ag entities, thanks to \$58.4 million in funding in the new farm bill. Visit [*the Capital Press*](#) to read more.

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