



Hort Headlines

September 26, 2008

- **Pear Harvest Underway: Peak Harvest For Apples Around The Corner** – Washington orchards are filled with the sounds of harvest. The cooler night-time temperatures are providing great coloring conditions for Washington apples. The 2008 crop is currently estimated at 99.6 million boxes, the third largest crop on record. Early indications point toward a good quality crop in both apples and pears. If marginal and lower-grade fruit remains off the fresh market, grower returns and consumer demand may improve. Peak apple harvest is expected to hit the state mid-September and run through the month of October.
- **Labor Concerns Continue** – At this point in the season growers appear to be meeting their labor needs for pickers. The success in meeting employment demand may be due to the increased use of the H-2A program and the rise in unemployment, partially due to the slowdown in the construction industry. The situation could change quickly if weather were to compress the harvest window. Meaningful immigration reform and the creation of a viable guest worker program remains the greatest dilemma facing the tree fruit industry and we need to keep the pressure on public policymakers to create a solution. Please report labor needs through WorkSource so that the Employment Security Department can document labor shortages.
- **Federal Appellate Court Upheld Arizona's Law** – On September 17, a federal appellate court upheld Arizona's law requiring all employers to participate in E-Verify. Formerly the Basic Pilot/Employment Eligibility Verification Program, E-Verify is an online system employers can use to check the work status of new

hires. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the Legal Arizona Workers Act (LAWA) was not preempted by federal immigration law. The court also said that the Act does not deprive employers of due process since employers may be heard before sanctions are imposed. Read more from [NCAE](#) on this story.

- **Organic Certification Has \$22 Million Available** – Recently the USDA announced that \$22 million in federal funds are available to assist in organic certification. The funds are allocated to states through the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program. The amount each state receives is based on the amount of organic production and handling that occur in the state. The program will reimburse eligible producers and handlers up to 75 percent of their organic certification costs not to exceed \$750. To participate in the program, an organic production or handling operation must be located within a qualified state, comply with the USDA National Organic Program regulations for organic production or handling, and have received certification or continuation of certification by a USDA-accredited certifying agent. For additional information visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop.
- **Washington's Minimum Wage Will Increase In '09** – Washington State's minimum wage will increase 48 cents, to \$8.55 per hour effective January 1, 2009. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) recalculates the state's minimum wage each year in September as required by Initiative 688, which Washington voters approved in 1998. The 2009 adjustment will provide a 5.9-percent increase to minimum wage workers. Washington currently has the highest minimum wage of all 50 states, with California, Massachusetts, and Oregon close behind. Visit www.lni.wa.gov for more information.
- **Columbia Basin Water Initiative Conference** – The Columbia Basin Development League's 2008 Water Initiative Conference will be held Thursday, November 6, 2008 at Big Bend Community College in the ATEC Center. You will learn about the latest developments with the Columbia Basin Water Initiative. For more information contact Alice Parker at (509) 346-9442 or visit their website at www.cbdl.org.
- **Gov. Gregoire Seeks Support for "Feeding Washington" Initiative** – Washington's slowing economy has created hardships statewide and now food banks are running short on donations. Governor Gregoire has started the "Feeding Washington" initiative, which encourages citizens to donate fruit, vegetables, canned meat, and dairy products to local food banks. She's also asking that companies and individuals who already donate to give more food or to donate money to food banks. To find a food bank in your area visit <http://cted.wa.gov/maps> or contact Eric Hurlburt at (360) 902-1933 or email ehurlburt@agr.wa.gov if you have questions.
- **Poster Session Invitation** – The call for poster presenters is now underway as part of the 104th Washington State Horticultural Association Annual Meeting and Postharvest conference. The poster session for this year's meeting will take place

at the Yakima Convention Center December 1, 2, & 3 with a special poster presenter meet and greet Tuesday evening before the banquet. WTFRC is organizing and managing the poster session. If you would like to be a poster presenter please submit your request to hanrahan@treefruitresearch.com by November 3, 2008. Remember to include titles, author, names, organizations and your contact information. For more information download the [poster presenter invitation](#).

- **WSHA 104th Annual Meeting Information is Now On-Line** – The Washington State Horticultural Association's 104th Annual Meeting program guide, registration form and lodging guide are now available on the WSHA web-site at www.wahort.org. This year's 104th Annual Meeting will take place December 1, 2, & 3 at the Yakima Convention Center. The theme this year is "***Celebrating Tree Fruit: Opportunities for the Next Generation.***" This year's meeting will give you a perspective on over production, labor issues, availability of water, use of pesticides, access to capital and other issues, yet to surface. Don't miss the largest educational conference in the nation dedicated to tree fruit industry issues – sign up to attend today! To register contact Vicki at (509) 665-9641 or email vicki@wahort.org.
- **NW Hort Expo/Trade Show** – The 104th WSHA NW Hort Expo/Trade Show will be held at the Yakima Sun Dome, December 1 (Monday) and December 2 (Tuesday) from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. both days. If you have not received information about the upcoming NW Hort Expo or booked space for your booth please contact [Angie Fiscus](#) or call (509) 573.9858. The NW Hort Show is held in conjunction with the 104th WSHA Annual Meeting.

Headline Links

Hazard Alert On Agricultural Equipment – The incident occurred in an orchard where employees were using a "extenday roller' to roll up "extenday fabric." Read more from L&I on this story. Learn more on this story from [LNI](#).

Pear Prices Too Low, Say Growers – The negotiated base price of \$240 a ton for Pacific Northwest processor pears for this season was met with dismay by growers, who say the current system for negotiating prices isn't working. Read more at the [Good Fruit Grower](#).

EPA Fines Packers – The lack of a risk management plan for ammonia can result in a hefty fine. Read the following article at the [Good Fruit Grower](#).

Labels Would Keep Rejected Food Out – The Food and Drug Administration wants to slap warning labels on food turned back from U.S. ports. Visit the [Capital Press](#) to learn more.

Sustainability Science In Action – From reducing carbon footprints, to conserving energy and water, an increasing amount of companies are publishing sustainability reports to measure the impact of their business on the world around them. Visit the [Food Navigator](#) to learn more.

Cle Elum Water Issue Heats Up – The final version of a draft water policy, which would dramatically change the rules under which property can be annexed to the city, is headed for a public hearing — and a possible vote — by the Cle Elum City Council Tuesday night. Visit the [KVNews Website](#) to learn more.

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