

# NHC NEWS

*A Monthly Bulletin of the Northwest Horticultural Council*

## **CODEX APPLE GRADE STANDARDS**

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization in the early mid-1990s began a process of developing commercial grade standards for fresh apples. The NHC joined the fray in the spring of 2000 and shortly thereafter asked Jim Archer of the Northwest Fruit Exporters to lead our industry's efforts on this issue. Since then he has diligently worked on this matter with the U.S. government's representative to the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, most recently Dorian LaFond of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

While Codex standards are only advisory in nature, individual nations might well use Codex standards to set their own minimum fresh apple grade standards. The NHC was concerned that absent active industry involvement the proposed Codex standards might be designed in such a way as to become a barrier to trade or to provide an unfair advantage to one producing nation over another.

Throughout this lengthy process of multilateral negotiations there was the very real threat of these standards not reflecting the commercial nature of our industry or the realities of international long distance transit conditions. Mr. Archer's expertise on grade and standard issues obtained during his years with the Commodity Inspection Service of the Washington State Department of Agriculture proved invaluable to prevent this from occurring. Many trips by Mr. Archer to Mexico City and other locations were required in order for him to participate in these debates as an expert advisor to the government of the United States, with his direct travel expenses paid for through special USDA grants or by the NHC.

Other industry groups playing important supporting roles in this multi-year process include the Washington State Horticultural Association's Grade and Pack Committee, U.S. Apple Export Council, and United States Apple Association.

It now appears that this project has come to the end of the road. The Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables adopted what we think to be a benign fresh apple standard at its meeting in Mexico City, October 19-23, 2009. Absent major and unforeseen problems, the Codex Alimentarius Commission is expected to review and adopt this new standard in 2010.



## **YVGSA**

One of the founding members of the Northwest Horticultural Council is the Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Association. It provides one trustee to our governing board, currently Bob Price of Price Cold Storage and Packing Company.

On November 23 an exchange of leadership took place at the YVGSA. Jon DeVaney arrived from Washington, D.C. to take over as executive director from Keith Mathews who had left to lead a new marketing firm, First Fruits of Washington. Mr. DeVaney had been most recently a legislative advisor to Congressman Doc Hastings, while earlier in his career he was employed for a time as a member of our own staff at the NHC. We wish both Mr. Mathews and Mr. DeVaney the best in their new positions and look forward to working closely with Mr. DeVaney on the multitude of issues confronting our tree fruit industry.



**December 9** – NHC Trustees meeting, Wenatchee, Washington.

## ***Travel***

### ***Christian Schlect***

**December 7-10** – Washington State Horticultural Association's 105th Annual Meeting and Trade Show and meeting of the Washington Apple Commission, Wenatchee, Washington.

**December 17** – Meeting of the Washington State Fruit Commission, Cle Elum, Washington.

### ***Mike Willett***

**December 8-9** – Washington State Horticultural Association's 105th Annual Meeting and Trade Show, Wenatchee, Washington.

### ***Deborah Carter***

**December 16-17** – Produce GAP Harmonization Technical Working Group Meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

Pickled, soured, and salted products stood in ranks of big oak barrels. Brim-full, they stood—vats of bilberry, cranberry, cloudberry...The frost-bitten cranberries were a wonderful dark burgundy, glossy as a glass necklace on the Christmas tree, tight and plump and bursting with juice. In smaller tubs smooth Antonov apples gleamed a pallid gold, smooth and round as ivory billiard balls, breathing an exquisite fragrance, half winey, half suffused with secret herbs.

## **A Vanished Present**

*The Memoirs of Alexander Pasternak*

*The Northwest Horticultural Council represents the deciduous tree fruit industry of Idaho, Oregon and Washington on national and international policy matters of interest to growers and shippers. Its full and associate members are:*

- *Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers*
- *Idaho Apple Commission*
- *Oregon Sweet Cherry Commission*
- *Pacific Northwest Canned Pear Service*
- *Washington Apple Commission*
- *Washington State Fruit Commission*
- *Washington Tree Fruit Research Comm.*
- *Wenatchee Valley Traffic Assn.*
- *Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Assn.*

*The NHC also advises the Fresh Pear Committee (Portland) on certain issues related to food safety, crisis control and international trade.*



- **Christian Schlect**, President
- **Mark Powers**, Vice President
- **Michael J. Willett, Ph.D.**, Vice President for Scientific Affairs
- **Deborah Carter**, Technical Issues Manager

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