

NHC NEWS

A Monthly Bulletin of the Northwest Horticultural Council

GAPs

Over the past several years, sporadic but sometimes serious public health incidents-usually arising from human pathogens associated with the consumption of certain vegetables-have drawn attention to the entire fresh produce sector, including low-risk tree fruits.

On January 4, 2011, President Obama signed the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act. Even before this legislation went into effect, the Food and Drug Administration had launched a regulatory process aimed at eventually establishing safety standards for the nation's produce industry. On parallel tracks, some major retail grocery chains have expressed a contractual desire to have produce suppliers subject to private food safety schemes of one sort or another. In an attempt to prevent the burden of multiple audits on suppliers, the United Fresh Produce Association has been leading a food safety harmonization process since 2009. To cap it off, governments in important fruit export markets, such as Mexico, have evidenced a direct interest in the food safety standards in place at the orchard level within the United States. Thirty percent of the Pacific Northwest's apples, pears, and cherries are exported.

The Northwest Horticultural Council has initiated an effort to develop Good Agricultural Practices for apples, pears, cherries, and similar deciduous tree fruits. An industry task force of food safety personnel from industry firms and associations, such as the Washington State Horticultural Association, has been assembled and a first meeting of about 25 people was held on January 21. Work is being focused on possible food safety

risks and situations of special interest to deciduous tree fruit: water, animal exclusion, and bins. General areas of coverage, such as worker sanitation, already exist due to work done by other produce commodities. (Among the items of produce already with or planning commodity specific GAPs are leafy greens, tomatoes, citrus, onions, potatoes, mushrooms, and avocados.) A final product is planned for completion by the end of June. The desire is to address true food safety issues in a responsible way that will be accepted by consumers and government, yet without unnecessary costs and rules. And while addressing these issues, impose as few recordkeeping requirements on orchardists as possible consistent with the primary objective of ensuring a solid food safety program.

While we are starting in the Pacific Northwest, it is our hope that any GAPs that might finally be developed will be accepted by other similar production areas within the United States. The NHC will be communicating with colleague fruit-industry trade associations, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and many others as we proceed on this undesired but necessary journey.



LAME DUCK SESSIONS

The post-election session of the 110th Congress produced a burst of legislative activity, including passage of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act. This was not the only time this has happened. For example, according to Michael Burlingame in his "Abraham Lincoln: A Life", back in 1840 "shortly after election day the [Illinois] General Assembly began a session marred by special bitterness

occasioned by an impending change in the partisan balance. The Democrats, aware that this session represented ‘the last apple they will have’ because of the Whig’s triumph in the national election, were ‘determined to extract every drop of juice while they have the chance.’”



Travel

Christian Schlect

February 1-4 – Annual meeting of the National Council of Agricultural Employers, Washington, D.C.

February 7 – Board of Directors meeting of the Alliance for Food & Farming, Sacramento, California.

February 8 – Speaker at the annual meeting of the Washington Growers Clearing House, Wenatchee, Washington.

February 14-19 – Meetings of United Fresh Produce Association’s Government Relations Council, Canadian Produce Association’s North American Trade Committee and Minor Crop Farmer Alliance, Washington, D.C.

Mike Willett

February 8 – Mid-Columbia Cherry Day & MCAREC Sweet Cherry Research Symposium, The Dalles, Oregon.

February 14-15 – USDA/ARS Program Visioning Workshop, Parlier, California.

February 17-19 – Meeting of the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance Technical Committee, Washington, D.C.

Mark Powers

February 7-13 - Annual meetings of Freshfel Europe’s Import and Export Division and the World Apple and Pear Association; and attendance at Fruit Logistica, Berlin, Germany.

I must have met some twenty different types of Swedes who have been in Germany lately. They were all unanimous in saying that collapse is very close. ‘The whole thing’, they said, ‘is like a rotten pear, only kept together by its rind.’

***The War Years 1939-1945:
Volume II of the Diaries & Letters
of Harold Nicolson***

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

Street address:

105 So. 18th Street
Suite 105
Yakima, Washington 98901 USA

Telephone: (509) 453-3193

Facsimile: (509) 457-7615

E-mail: general@nwhort.org

Web site: www.nwhort.org