

# ***NHC NEWS***

***A Monthly Bulletin of the Northwest Horticultural Council***

## ***Chinese Ya Pears***

On December 19, 2003 USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) prohibited indefinitely the importation, sale and distribution of Ya pears from China. This decisive action was taken after the Plant Protection & Quarantine division of APHIS made numerous detections of an exotic fungal disease (*Alternaria* sp.) on shipments entering the U.S. at multiple West Coast ports and in supermarkets in Wenatchee, Washington and across the nation. This disease is not known to occur in the U.S. and if it were to become established, it would have a significant economic impact on the pear industry. There is concern that it could also attack other tree fruits such as apples.

USDA/APHIS/PPQ's Quarantine Policy Analysis and Support, headed by Alan Green, directed the recall. PPQ's Safeguarding, Intervention and Trade Compliance (SITC) worked with various state departments of agriculture offices to physically locate and remove Chinese Ya pears from the marketplace. All known Chinese Ya pears in the U.S. were destroyed or re-exported by January 23. Across the U.S. 7,617 stores were surveyed for the fruit and it was found in 906 stores. Nationwide over 3.2 million pounds (the vast majority in California) were destroyed or re-exported.

The Tree Fruit Technical Advisory Council's (TreeTAC) Pear Working Group, chaired by the NHC's Mark Powers, is working closely with USDA as it now considers when, and under what conditions, the U.S. market might be reopened to Chinese Ya pear imports. Ya pears were being imported from China under a work plan between

the U.S. and the Peoples Republic of China that was twice revised, over the past three seasons, to eliminate any risk of *Alternaria* infection in the fruit upon arrival in this country. Obviously, either these revisions or the management of the work plan were ineffective.

In anticipation of a February technical bilateral meeting between the U.S. and the PRC on this issue, a TreeTAC letter expressing appreciation and strong support for the national recall and market closure action APHIS took was sent on January 9 to Bobby Acord, Administrator of APHIS. The letter outlined concerns industry has regarding the exotic *Alternaria* disease and made clear TreeTAC's position that Chinese Ya pears should not be allowed re-entry to the U.S. until scientific experts are convinced that any imported fruit will not be a pathway for the introduction of a destructive disease.



## ***CAFTA***

On January 25, 2004 the U.S. and Costa Rica concluded negotiations on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Costa Rica now joins four other Central American nations (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) that originally agreed to form this regional trade group on December 17, 2003. The intent to enter into a free trade agreement was announced in January of 2002 and the NHC shortly thereafter sent a letter of support to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative outlining how such an FTA might benefit the apple, pear and cherry growers of the Pacific Northwest. Since then, the NHC has worked closely with friends in Congress and lead

agriculture negotiators, Jason Hafemeister of USTR and Brian Grunenfelder, Director of the Asia and Americas Division of USDA/FAS/International Trade Policy, to obtain immediate duty free access for our fruit shipped to this region.

The NHC has been assured that all five countries agreed to reduce their tariffs on apples, pears and cherries to zero immediately upon enactment of the agreement. Currently, tariffs range from 15 to 25 percent. (An important competitor, Chile, already has duty free access to these countries under its own FTAs with this region.) There are no phytosanitary barriers preventing the export of our products to these four countries and they do not pose an import threat to U.S. producers since they grow few, if any, deciduous tree fruits. If ratified by Congress, CAFTA will provide a clear example of a trade agreement accomplishing exactly what our growers and packers expect: Duty free access to important foreign markets--which is the same open access foreign producers for years have enjoyed for their own fruit shipped to the U.S. market.



## ***Travel***

### ***Chris Schlect***

**February 10** – Board meeting of the Washington Apple Education Foundation, Wenatchee, Washington.

**February 17-20**– Speaker on panel on international trade, USDA’s Agricultural Outlook Conference, Washington, D.C.

### ***Mike Willett***

**February 4-7** – U.S. Department of Agriculture/Mexico phytosanitary technical meetings, Mexico City, Mexico.

**February 19** – Speaker at a meeting of the Fruit Growers League, Medford, Oregon.

Shakespeare’s company played for the Queen for the last time on 2 February 1603; eight weeks later, on 24 March, she died. John Manningham, who was close to court circles, recorded the event in his notebook: ‘This morning about three at clock Her Majesty departed this life, mildly like a lamb, easily like a ripe apple from the tree...’

**Stanley Wells**  
*Shakespeare*

*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:*

- *Fruit Growers League*
- *Hood River Grower-Shipper Assn.*
- *Idaho Apple Commission*
- *Oregon Bartlett Pear Commission*
- *Oregon Sweet Cherry Commission*
- *Pacific Northwest Canned Pear Service*
- *Washington Apple Commission*
- *Washington State Fruit Commission*
- *Wenatchee Valley Traffic Assn.*
- *Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Assn.*

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



- **Christian Schlect**, President
- **Mark Powers**, Vice President
- **Michael J. Willett, Ph.D.**, Vice President for Scientific Affairs
- **Vacant**, Director of Legislative & Regulatory Affairs

**Street address:**

6 South 2nd Street  
Larson Bldg., Room 600  
Yakima, Washington 98901 USA

Telephone: (509) 453-3193

Facsimile: (509) 457-7615

E-mail: [general@nwhort.org](mailto:general@nwhort.org)

Web site: [www.nwhort.org](http://www.nwhort.org)