

AMERICAN/WESTERN
FRUIT GROWERTM

2014 FRUIT PRODUCTION
MARKET OUTLOOK

**A look ahead to 2014 for growers
and those serving the fruit production market**

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COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION CENTER FOR SPECIALIZED AGRICULTURE WORLDWIDE

Rising production costs are prompting growers to invest in new technology.

Growers need to catch up with technology, but many feel the ROI is too long. With a seeming lack of new equipment coming out, it's become more about modifying existing models.

Labor / immigration reform will continue to be a top concern for growers.

Immigration reform is making progress but may not make it out of the House. The focus on Capitol Hill seems to be on replacing the H-2A program with a more viable and user-friendly option. Meanwhile, this year's large crops could present challenges if growers are unable to line up enough help; not surprisingly, there has been a lot of investment in harvesting and automated technology designed to ease reliance on human labor.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is likely to move forward in the coming months.

As the deadline for implementation of the Produce Safety Rule grows closer, there is still confusion about the outcome, especially among smaller growers whose main concerns are related to water quality and natural fertilizers (manure/compost). While smaller growers may be exempt from certain provisions of the law, they still must treat food safety as a priority. For their part, tree fruit growers maintain the rules shouldn't run indiscriminately across markets and feel most shouldn't apply to them.

Government regulators (water, chemicals, healthcare) don't seem to understand farming.

The federal government is perceived as not being educated enough about farming issues, and as being imports-oriented rather than focused on domestic growers. The looming implementation of the Affordable Care Act adds another wrinkle to this perception. At the same time there are lingering Farm Bill questions; Specialty Crop Research Initiative projects appear safe, but there is still much concern over how they will be funded.

Crop and variety shifts are underway.

Walnuts and pistachios are poised for strong growth in coming years, and blueberries and other berries are staying strong. Another huge Washington apple crop is expected, and Michigan and New York should rebound sharply from 2012, a weather-affected year, to the point where there is some concern over available storage space. In Washington State the apple industry is making huge investments in research. While a new genetically modified, non-browning apple remains limited to Canada, other new varieties are being introduced in multiple ways – from state-limited, managed to more open.

Sustainable production, new chemistries, alternatives to methyl bromide and biologicals hit the market.

Crop protection companies are trying to get the message out on how to produce more efficiently in greater quantities with fewer resources as water becomes scarcer, ag land disappears, and the world population continues to increase. More crop protection companies are acquiring biological products or dipping into the market. The industry continues to seek alternatives to methyl bromide; other products are not likely to be total replacements, so more products and practices are needed to fight soilborne pests.

Bees / pollinators are endangered.

The mainstream media increasingly is placing the blame for bee losses on pesticides. Crop protection companies are trying to promote their focus on bee health, while growers continue to weigh various impacts and how they can be prepared. Efforts are now being directed to better labeling of crop protection products over banning them.

Weather / climate change is worsening.

Simply put, weather is becoming harder to predict, whatever its cause. In California a lack of snow could mean water scarcity next winter. In addition, grape growers face the potential of excessive warmth in some regions making it harder to grow certain varieties. Extreme weather also is a concern. Michigan is bouncing back huge from 2012 when late spring frosts decimated the fruit crop.

Invasive pests prompt some growers to abandon IPM practices and go back to “old” products.

Spotted wing drosophila and brown marmorated stink bug remain top pests in fruit. The broader concern is why the situation is getting worse and how to maintain integrated pest management programs while still controlling these pests. The longer-term concern is: Are there more invasive species on the way?

The locally grown movement grows.

Walmart is reemphasizing locally grown produce, and farmers markets are on the increase, according to USDA, and consumers are looking for a face to put on the produce they are buying. Is agriculture entering the mainstream? It would appear so, given the rise of reality shows like “Farm Kings.” Even larger growers are establishing so-called agri-tainment operations.

ABOUT AMERICAN/WESTERN FRUIT GROWER

American/Western Fruit Grower serves as a top information source for specialty crop growers seeking information about production techniques, crop protection, farm management, new varieties, and more. Our readers are commercial fruit growers as well as other allied professionals in the specialty agriculture industry.

GrowingProduce.com is the digital location to find out the latest news and trends in the fruit, vegetable, and citrus sectors. The site features relevant content from integrated, cross-market resources *American/Western Fruit Grower* as well as *American Vegetable Grower* and *Florida Grower* magazines. Featured videos, useful analysis, and opinion help round out this industry resource.

American/Western Fruit Grower's corporate headquarters are located in Willoughby, OH, in the Cleveland metro area where its parent company, Meister Media Worldwide, was founded in 1932.

ABOUT MEISTER MEDIA WORLDWIDE

Meister Media Worldwide, headquartered in Willoughby, Ohio, provides integrated media solutions for worldwide specialized agriculture. A leader in the industry, the company provides information and networking opportunities to global markets, including fruits and citrus, vegetables, cotton, ornamental horticulture, precision agriculture, plant protection, and Latin American agriculture. Founded in 1932, Meister Media Worldwide now produces 13 regular magazines, along with eNewsletters and more than 20 websites, as well as trade shows and exchange events. In addition, Meister produces custom print products, web development, videos, and strategic business development services. Contact us at www.MeisterMedia.com.

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