

Cherry Notes



Newsletter of the Okanagan Kootenay Cherry Growers
Association

June 2009

OKCGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greg Norton

How time flies. As I write this we're only $3\frac{1}{2}$ weeks away from another harvest. Since our AGM our board has been extremely busy with the business of growing cherries.

Clive and Dr. Dave have been working on WALI and labour issues. At the end of a grueling meeting schedule WALI no longer exists in its original form. Producer group support has fallen to the point that financially WALI could not continue. A new version of WALI is in formation and the B.C.F.G.A. is developing plans to assist with registrations and services for fruit growers in the interior. More information is provided in the following section.

Hopefully the Mexican and Canadian governments will recognize WALI's value in its absence and finally make participation mandatory so regulations and rules will be followed. Thanks to Clive and Dave and especially Mike Wallis.

In early June I signed a letter of understanding with PICO in order to facilitate OKCGA's continued access to research funding. In its wisdom, the federal government has changed the process for groups like ours to access matching research funds. Unfortunately for use, the new model discourages small projects like ours hence the need to partner up with PICO. With their package and the Ontario Apple Growers we became big enough to fit.

OKCGA will maintain our identity and with the help of PICO to administer a very involved process, we will be able to continue as we have in the past.

"Fruitsize" our new GA product is available now and has been applied to several hundred acres already. I was at South Valley Sales the day it arrived and was able to see the "ready to use" container. I still can't believe it's here and smile every time a cherry grower walks out with his product.

We're still making slow progress on accessing both Japan and China, working with AG Canada, embassies, and even our international trade minister Stockwell Day. This is a long, slow and complicated process and hopefully we'll be doing testing for coddling moth in BC cherries next year as part of the process to access Japan.

Access to new markets may be even more important as this year's Washington crop sounds like the biggest ever and their habit of screwing up marketing every year could yield some ever aggravating "cherry stories."

Our crop also sounds like a big one. So quality and size will be even more critical to strong sales.

With almost certain over supply at market, crazy weather, water shortages already in Kelowna, and a rising Canadian dollar we must all do our very best at what we do have control over..... growing big, crunchy, sweet cherries! The labour supply seems good at this time with Loose Bay in Oliver having 30% more campers than normal and most growers getting lots of calls.

In closing, I'd like to wish all of you and your families the best of luck in the 2009 crop year. I am certainly looking forward to hearing the "cherry stories" 2009 produces.

Labour and the WALI Situation

Dr. David Geen

The following is information from a letter by Glen Lucas, General Manager BCFGAs to BCFGAs members.

It is unfortunate that the WALI model did not become self-sustaining. The BCFGAs is a strong advocate for mandatory participation in WALI by anyone who participated in SAWP, but this was not supported by government legislation or insistence. So, we are back to the original model of the individual associations and growers working through the application process.

WALI/BCAC will remain as the negotiator for the industry on the terms of the contract, to be known as WALI-2. BCFGA is already gearing/geared up to carry on many of the functions no longer provided by WALI for tree fruit industry. The BCFGA sees its main role as being an advocate for growers who pay us the \$45 per worker fee (with the provision that the BCFGA's overriding interest is to protect the availability of the program). In other words, the fee provides that the BCFGA will be the "third party" in the agreement, representing the grower with the Mexican consulate. Our service is optional for BCFGA members, and it is available to the growers who pay our \$45 per worker fee.

Our aim will be to resolve issues in support of the program, achieving a balance between the growers' and workers' expectations:

- The BCFGA will seek to obtain all available information on a dispute, to assess the cause and potential resolution of the dispute. The BCFGA will communicate with the Mexican consulate and the Mexican consulate will communicate with the BCFGA immediately on becoming aware of an issue. The General Manager of the BCFGA will take the lead role for the BCFGA dispute resolution service.
- The BCFGA will report its proposed action for resolving the issue to the grower and achieve agreement of the grower prior to committing to any action.

The BCFGA will also, included as a service in the \$45 fee, provide assistance in completing

- the Labour Market Opinion form,
- the Employment Agreement form, and the other requirements, as follows.

Information on program requirements, including

- minimum hours of work to be provided.
- requirements for housing, airfare, repatriation, terminal date (Dec. 15).
- limitation on transfers.

Housing inspection

- provide the grower with the requirements (checklist).
- provide the grower with the name and contact information for the housing inspector, and the expected fee.

Advertising

- provide the grower with a template for advertising in the local newspaper.

- provide the grower with instructions on how to keep records of response to the newspaper ad.
- provide the grower with instructions on the use of the Job Bank website for placing a job posting, or if the grower does not have internet access, register and post the ad for the grower.
- provide the grower with instructions on how to keep records of response to the newspaper ad.

Naming Workers from prior season

- provide instructions on what identification is required to name workers and which part of the form to list the named workers.

Transfers

- provide instructions to the grower on how to make a request for transfer of workers: identification of other farm, number/identification of workers, date of transfer, and ensuring the LMO and Employment agreement are complete.
- BCFGA will keep a list of transfer requests, but cannot provide assurance that transfers can be arranged, as this will depend on finding a suitable match.
- BC Agriculture Council may develop a 'members only' website where workers available for transfer will be listed.

Transportation and other details

- provide information on lowest-cost airfare.
- provide information on recoverable costs (Work visa and health coverage, meals if provided).

Translation

- provide a translation service in instances where Spanish language communication is a problem. This service will be limited to ensuring communication in Spanish language is available in urgent or emergency health situations and is separate from dispute resolution or mediation. Dispute resolution and mediation for growers is handled by the General Manager of the BCFGA.

The involvement of the BCFGA appears to be required only for the Mexican worker component of SAWP, as the Jamaican component of the program is supported with

additional monitoring and assistance, and language is not an issue, so involvement of the BCFGAs not needed for the Jamaican SAWP.

BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

What are the prospects for the 2009 BC Cherry Crop?

Jim Campbell, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Cherries are an important crop for many Okanagan, Similkameen and Kootenay tree fruit growers. At this time of year, the talk is about fruit set, the weather and fruit size. Now that we have got over the cool weather in April and May relatively unscathed by the frost, we have the luxury of determining if the crop is there or will there be a big drop. The early estimate for cherries is in the range of double last year's small crop. However the weather always plays its part in sorting out the cherry crop actually picked. Rain, hail, small size and the vagaries in the markets plays a significant part.

BC

Information from field service reps and crop consultants indicates the following:

- South Okanagan and Similkameen - some frost in Oliver and Osoyoos, but generally good crops with an expected good fruit size
- Central Okanagan and north Okanagan - Minimal frost damage so a very good set at the moment, but the drop is yet to come (and hopefully will)
- Creston Valley - a very good crop so far, but are expecting a good drop as weather at bloom was not great
- With cool conditions at bloom, the drop might be significant
- Winter injury to cherries does not seem to be evident so far, but the current warm spell will show any winter damage that has occurred. Some reports of winter injury in the Similkameen on Colt rootstock
- Crop will be late this year with the late bloom and dragged out pollination period

Washington State

Early reports from Washington State indicate a crop in the range of 15 - 18 million cartons in contrast to our less than 1 million cartons (potential BC crop in 2009). The last big Washington crop was 14 million cartons in 2006/07. The 2008 crop was 9 million cartons. The crop is about a week late this year, so significant shipments will not start until the end of June. Washington State cherry acreage is close to

33,000 acres - about 10 times BC's. Even so, Washington State shippers are optimistic about the cherry marketing season. Last year's supply was limited because of the smaller crop and retailers are ready for more this year. Good quality fruit will be the key to a successful marketing year.

Consider Strategic Planning

Jim Campbell, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

General

This program is part of the federal Orchards and vineyards Transition Program announced by the federal government in the summer and fall of 2007. Most of the funds from this program have or will go to tree fruit and grapevine removal projects, but a significant portion has been allocated to industry strategic planning.

General Objective:

To fund plans or studies that provides strategic direction to the industry to improve the long term profitability of producers.

Eligible Organizations

- Any association of tree fruit and grape producers that are legal entities.

Eligible Projects

Strategic Plans that include but not limited to the following:

- Identify varieties that show promising marketability
- Identify supplies and potential shortages of rootstock
- Suggest modifications to industry structure
- Identify means to improve product quality
- Assess impact of tree or vine removal
- Develop new markets and marketing strategies
- Identify research requirements
- Develop research plans for future activities
- Develop mechanisms to increase productivity and lower production costs

Funding available

Funding is limited and will be targeted toward projects that have wide benefit to the industry producer. Funds are expected to be approved on a project by project basis and may be submitted now until March 31, 2011.

Applications

- Project applications may be submitted through the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, C/O Jim Campbell, Box 5000, Oliver, BC V0H 1T0 or Jim.G.Campbell@gov.bc.ca Telephone 250 498 5254 or 1 888 812 8811 or Fax 250 498 4952

News from Creston

Bill Truscott

It has been an interesting spring in the Creston Valley. Weather has dogged grower's efforts to get pruning done through March and April with delays for everyone getting anything done. While pruning was delayed luckily so was the season. Bloom began for us the second week of May and continued on with the latest blocks in full bloom on the 20th of May. Blossom festival on the May long weekend sometimes sees apples in full bloom but nobody can remember a year like this with cherries in full bloom. We did get good pollination but there was cool weather between Lapins bloom and the later varieties giving a much larger than normal spread between them at the start. Warm weather since then has given incredible cell division and at this time the crop looks to be one of the largest we have seen both in terms of overall crop size and present fruit size. Frost risks were marginal and while wind machines ran off and on there has been little or no crop reduction as a result. Some of the later blocks are showing some signs of winter injury with some tips dying back during our recent hot spell but again with very little impact. Creston's crop continues to grow larger on the late end with the traditional Lapins bulge being supplemented with a newer Staccato bulge. 2008 saw the first Sentennial harvested and we look to see further growth at this end of the season. Sentennial timing over here will push into September and perhaps as late as Labour Day. While we are a bit later than last year and much later than normal the hot weather could well offset the delay in the long run. Experimentation continues with some of the growers testing the use of GA at full bloom to achieve even greater size. So while all looks rosy today there is still plenty of time for it to go all to hell, however, growers remain optimistic.

PARC-Summerland Notes

Cherry Fruit Fly: international update and a few tips

Howard Thistlewood
Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre, Summerland, BC

Today (1 June) we saw our first catches of the western cherry fruitfly, *Rhagoletis indifferens*, so I thought a research update and a tip might be handy.

In October, I participated in a meeting in France on Integrated Fruit Production, which had 201 presentations from international tree fruit experts. An interesting theme was the continuing establishment of cherry fruit flies [and walnut husk fly] from North America in various European countries. The European species, *Rhagoletis cerasi*, emerges much earlier than ours, at the time of their sweet cherry production, but the arrival of *R. cingulata* (eastern cherry fruit fly) or *R. indifferens* effectively prolongs the danger period and extends it into the time of sour cherry production, a major crop, for the first time. Also interesting was a session on woolly apple aphid, their interactions with earwigs, the effects of releasing earwigs for WAA control, and the impacts of many pesticides on earwig or WAA populations. Considerable effort has gone into unravelling the secrets of earwig population dynamics, which include two identical sibling species with different oviposition seasons, and live in three habitats of soil, grass, and tree.

Germans started catching the European cherry fruit fly on 5 May this year. Earlier, I participated "virtually" in a meeting of about 50 experts in Heidelberg. Their cherry growers have been in difficulty in recent years regarding fruit fly control and following the establishment of North American species. A collaborator from Germany reports that their main problem is that they do not have a permanent registration of any product for control of cherry fruit flies. Each year discussions start again about potential "candidates" and temporary permits are requested for pesticides. As Spinosad is not registered, and consequently neither is GF-120, work is continuing on alternatives (nematodes, fungi, bait sprays using natural pyrethrins or neem oil). These are currently still not efficient enough in practice or only in development at the research stage. They are also concerned that bait sprays may not be compatible with their damp climate. In 2009, German growers received temporary permission for one application of dimethoate with a PHI of 21 days. Similarly, acetamiprid is also allowed for two applications, but with a long PreHarvestInterval (21 days), due to the MRL having been exceeded in some orchards. If the PHI is not changed to 14 days it may be a big problem.

Here in British Columbia, when using GF120 bait spray, remember to place it up in the top third of the canopy. Working both at dawn and dusk so as to catch the resting and moving flies, I observed (from a gyrette) three to four times as many flies in the top third of the canopy of large sweet cherries than in the bottom third. The flies were studied throughout the season in an infested PARC orchard in 2006 and 2007. These studies agree with earlier work using yellow sticky traps at different heights.

If you have been finding some fruit flies arriving from elsewhere at the edges of a block treated with GF-120, as reported in the last couple of years, you should take a look for, and cut down or treat any plant hosts of the flies in surrounding gardens, hedgerows, or bush. The best time to look is in the spring, when blooming. In the southern part of the cherry-growing area are mahaleb cherry *Prunus mahaleb* and Red or Black chokecherry *Prunus virginiana*, which grow wild in pockets from Summerland south to the border, and in the Creston Valley. About half of mahaleb cherry sites are reproductive hosts of *R. indifferens* and a risk for growers, but many growers and packing house staff cannot recognize mahaleb cherry. Although numerous *R. indifferens* can be found on traps in the plants, Red and Black Chokecherry were very rarely (1 of more than 20 samples, over 3 years) reproductive hosts of *Rhagoletis indifferens*. North of Enderby, both western cherry fruit fly and black cherry fruit fly, *R. fausta*, are caught on traps around the moisture-loving trees Pin cherry *Prunus pensylvanica* and Bitter cherry *Prunus emarginata*. We have found that Pin cherry and Bitter cherry occur only rarely south of Enderby in the Okanagan area (e.g., we have them in Summerland), but are common in the Creston Valley.

Other approaches are under investigation at PARC, for those using GF120 and concerned about occasional damage at the edges, as an alternative to treating the entire block with harsh materials all season. One project is testing the "border spray" as used successfully for 30 years in apple orchards of eastern North America against the apple maggot, *R. pomonella*, an insect similar to cherry fruit flies. Typically, only the edge four rows (ca. 20m in the east) of a block are treated with a quick-acting pesticide active against adults. In most years and circumstance, this provides effective protection of apples whilst preserving natural enemies and saving costs.

Up Coming Events

Mark your calendars for Thursday 30 July for the **PARC Cherry Day**. It will be held in the gardens on the lawn to the south east of the Director's former residence. Start time will be 6:00 p.m.

Research Shorts

No improvement in fruit quality through chemical flower thinning in sweet cherry (*Prunus avium* L.)

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Chemical flower thinning with ammonium thiosulfate (ATS) was applied on branches of sweet cherry (*Prunus avium* L.) cultivars Blaze Star, Samba, Techlovan and Merchant (all grafted on GiSela 5) in a two-year field study in 2006 and 2007. Different concentrations of ATS (8.82 and 17.64 g L⁻¹) and different application times were studied. Fruit quality parameters analysed included crop load, fruit size, fruit weight, flesh/stone ratio, content of soluble solids, pH value and content of titratable acids.

RESULTS: Crop load was significantly affected ($P < 0.01$) by application, cultivar and year. Fruit size, fruit weight and content of titratable acids were not improved by any of the application strategies. An influence of cultivar and application on pH value was observed ($P < 0.05$). Flesh/stone ratio was significantly enhanced ($P < 0.05$) in Blaze Star only, while content of soluble solids was significantly affected in Techlovan only in 2007.

CONCLUSION: No general improvement in quality parameters was achieved by chemical flower thinning in the *P. avium* cultivars studied over a two-year field experiment.

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