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## **New apple varieties set the stage for strong season in Washington**

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Washington apple growers and shippers continue to diversify and adjust their plantings to meet the growing demand for Honeycrisp, Fuji, Gala and the highly anticipated Cosmic Crisp variety.

In addition, growers continue to incorporate new “club” or trademarked apple varieties into their crop mix.

Randy Hartmann, president of Pacificpro, based in Bellevue, WA, noted this has resulted in some great, well received and delicious new apple varieties to the marketplace and allowed individual growers and shippers to market a unique product to their customers and the end consumer.

“With the public’s increasing focus on healthy diets and lifestyles, we are seeing continual growth in the sector as a whole and specifically in the organic category on all varieties,” he said. “As an industry and a company, we continue to focus on items that are important to our customers like overall quality, food safety, traceability and inventory management.”



Craig Hartmann, Randy Hartmann and Marcus Hartmann of Pacificpro. Pacificpro procures and ships the entire Washington state apple manifest, including all organics and many club varieties to its wholesale, foodservice and retail customers in all regions of the United States.

“Our strong access to the entire Washington manifest year-round and very competitive pricing coupled with our consolidation, cross-docking and LTL flexibility makes us a unique and value-added partner for our customers,” Hartmann said. “This is the core of our business and has been since our inception. As a third-generation Washington apple family, along with our entire team, we remain dedicated to the principle of providing the freshest and best quality apples and pears, at the right price, and at the right time, to our valued partners nation-wide.”

The company is anticipating a great 2017 apple crop with estimates in the 130 million range — in line with 2016 but behind the 140 million record crop of 2014.

“A good spring and summer growing season, with minimal inclement weather, and some new growing strategies to increase yield should offset the usual decline we see after a large crop year like 2016 was,” Hartmann said. “The lack of a freeze, hail, wind, or excessive heat should result in a very clean crop.”

However, the company does anticipate seeing a decline in total crop size although new plantings, new trees, increased acreage and new growing methods should help offset the usual decline.

“The good weather should result in a clean crop overall,” he said. “The cooler spring will impact both peak sizing and the likely harvest start for most growers. We are seeing harvest dates two weeks behind 2016 on average. The projected smaller peak sizing was also impacted by a late summer heat wave that does impact the trees by putting them in a hibernation state and slowing the individual apple growing rate.”

Trending this year are a couple of the younger varieties, individual club varieties trademarked and marketed by individually shippers and organic plantings. Statewide, Pacificpro believes each of these will compose a growing percentage of the Washington apple crop in coming years.

The packaging demands and needs of customers seems to remain relatively consistent. Hartmann said the tray pack and 12/3 poly and soft-net bagged apples continue to make up large majority of all Washington apple shipments.

“We have seen some growth in sliced apples and other value-added packs,” he said. “We are seeing some movement from the standard 12/3 poly bags to the pouch bags, particularly at retail.”

Pacificpro is excited about a number of things for the 2017-18 season, starting with some delicious new varieties of apples that developed a good footprint and loyalty last season.

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“Secondly, we are excited about our growing cross-dock and consolidation operation to help minimize the impact of the ELog legislation that is scheduled to go into effect in December,” Hartmann said. “We believe the investment into this operation will help minimize picks for the long-haul trucks, speed up overall loading times, and ultimately help us meet our customers delivery needs.”

The company is also enthusiastic about its new arm, Pacificpro Logistics, and its manager Matt Knight, who with 15 years of transportation experience is allowing the company to provide its customers and other large apple receivers nationwide with expert third-party logistics services.

“It is a great complement to our access to state-wide apple inventories and our consolidation operation in Yakima, WA to make us a complete supply chain solution for retail, wholesale and food service companies nationwide,” Hartmann said. “In addition, we are thrilled about our growing team and the positive contributions Colin Mizumori, TJ Johns, Doug Christie and David Call will make to our marketing, procurement and operations teams. We are so grateful for our entire team and their tireless contribution every day to meeting our partners and the industry’s demands.”

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