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## **Washington state expecting a smaller apple crop**

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Washington state is expecting a smaller crop yield this year. Washington produces 65 percent of the fresh apples grown in the U.S., and as growers are reaching the midway point of harvest, they are observing an approximately 10 percent lighter crop load on the trees than the original estimate released in August.

The first forecast released by the Washington State Tree Fruit Association on Aug. 1, predicted a 134 million box (40-pound) crop based on grower estimates. Apple harvest begins in August and ends in early November. Currently, growers and orchard crews are about 70 percent through picking.



At the Oct. 8 Washington Apple Commission board of directors virtual meeting, industry members discussed the progress of the crop and contributing factors to the lower volume; alternate bearing season lightening the number of apples per tree, a recent windstorm, and more selective sort-picking happening in the orchard as growers work to improve pack outs in the warehouse.

“It is the growing consensus that the 2020 apple crop will be lower than earlier published estimates. This can be attributed to both a reduction in the quantity of bulk bins harvested, as well as lower conversion yields to packed boxes,” said James Foreman, chairman for the Washington Apple Commission board of directors.

Sizing appears to be smaller this year compared to last season as well, but it is region dependent. Washington’s growing regions spread along the state’s major river from the bottom of the state to the north Canadian border.

The apple category is experiencing an uptick in demand due to COVID-19 bringing health and nutrition to the forefront in the minds of consumers, and as result, an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption.

The 1,260 apple growers in the state produce eight core varieties: Gala, Red Delicious, Fuji, Honeycrisp, Granny Smith, Cripps Pink, Golden Delicious and Cosmic Crisp. Over 50 other club or proprietary varieties are also grown in Washington. In addition to being the top producer of apples in the country, Washington represents 85 percent of all U.S. organic apple production. Apples are the number one produced commodity in Washington and have a \$3 billion state economic impact.

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