



SEASON UPDATE:

CHILL ACCUMMULATION

Dr Jianlu Zhang reports that the chill accumulation is so far, average for this winter.

TRACTOR SPEED

Bob Beede from the USA recently made the following comment in his monthly Pistachio Newsletter

“You could tell which Westside orchards were oiled, because they were a solid 10 days ahead of the non-oiled. It was also very obvious which oiled orchards failed to get good coverage, because of grossly non-uniform leafing. Gee...I could have SWORN University of California has stated OVER AND OVER AND OVER that 2mph (3.2kph) is the limit! But what does the University of California know? We are just armchair academics! And since we know so little, why are WE called to serve in the arbitration between the grower and the PCO? How many sayings did your wise father have to offer you about doing it right the first time? I could go on, but I am afraid my head will explode! Tree growth seemed to progress slower than usual on non-oiled trees this year.”

Whilst his comment on tractor speed relates to applying oil to assist bloom break, it applies to all spray applications, especially fungicides.

PRUNING

If pruning for hand harvesting there is no need to prune to the formal vase shape.

If pruning for mechanical harvesting, there is the need in the early years to prune to the vase shape to allow the harvester access. Downward hanging branches should be removed as the action of the shaker is ineffective on these branches—any crop on them remains on the tree.

If the trees are in cropping make two kinds of cuts. Thinning cuts that remove whole branches are used to make room for cultural activities. Heading cuts are made where there are lateral buds which will produce a new shoot next season, rather than in the zone of fruiting buds which will lead to the production of a blind shoot. Remove prunings before spring flush of cover crop growth.



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Cooperative Extension



USA: NOW pressure heavy again

A second-year-in-a-row blowup of navel orangeworm in California almond and pistachios could be coming.

Conditions similar to those that contributed to last year's navel orangeworm (NOW) population explosions — a dry winter and warm spring — are being repeated in 2013.

“This season navel orangeworm levels look as potentially damaging as 2012,” says entomologist Joel Siegel, with the USDA's San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center, Parlier, Calif.

Last year NOW damage varied across the state. Tulare County pistachio orchards were hit particularly hard. Populations skyrocketed early in the harvest and stayed until the end.

“On the very first day, loads were coming in with as much as 4 percent navel orangeworm damage,” Siegel says. “In a normal year, you may get a fluke load like that early in the season. But, then it subsides. Last year, insect damage in Tulare County remained high throughout the harvest.”

In other areas, like Kern County, the low levels of NOW damage in pistachio orchards at the beginning of harvest rose as the harvest progressed.

As much as 15 percent of Nonpareil almond loads in Madera county orchards suffered damage from the feeding worms, Siegel notes.

Like 2012, almond and pistachio orchards started this season with already-high populations of overwintering NOW. In some instances, the numbers were very high.

Brad Higbee, research entomologist with Paramount Farms, reports egg counts totaling 8,000 per trap in Kern County, Siegel says.

“Up to then, the most he had seen in a trap was around 1,400,” Siegel says. “Many growers have never seen more than 300 eggs in a single trap.”

One reason for the high early-season numbers is limited winter rainfall both this year and last season.

“The key period for navel orangeworm mortality is from mid-December through mid-February, which usually coincides with winter rains,” he says. “But, we haven't had those rains the last two winters. That has resulted in the much higher survival rates.”

India: Pistachio prices down on low demand

Pistachio prices fell by Rs 5 per kg in the India capital on Wednesday owing to subdued demand from retailers and stockists.

Adequate stocks following increased arrivals from overseas markets also put pressure on prices.

Pistachio (hairati and peshawari) eased by Rs 5 each to Rs 800-850 and Rs 980-1,000 per kg, respectively.

Traders said subdued demand from retailers and stockists against fresh arrivals, mainly pulled down pistachio prices on the wholesale dry fruit market.

The following are up to date quotations (per 40 kg): Almond (California) Rs 13,800 Almond (Gurbandi-new) Rs 7,200-7,600; Almond (Girdhi) Rs 3,500-3,700; Abjosh Afghani Rs 8,000-20,000.

Almond Kernel (California-new) Rs 490-500 per kg, Almond Kernel (Gurbandi-new) Rs 350-450 per kg.

Pistachio Irani Rs 980-1,020 Pistachio Hairati Rs 800-850 Pistachio Peshawari Rs 980-1,000
Pistachio Dodi (Roasted) 630-680.

Source: *thehindubusinessline.com*

Infopest

PHA industry member Growcom has released the Infopest agvet chemical database, which includes more than 11500 chemical products, permits and safety sheets. Changes to available products and information by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority are regularly updated, providing users with accurate, up-to-date information for the effective control of weeds, pests and diseases in a wide range of crops and livestock.

The agvet component features:

- advanced search capability for approved chemical products
- label and permit images
- rates of use
- withholding periods
- maximum residue limits
- export slaughter intervals
- information on managing pests resistant to chemicals
- tools to prepare your own reports about chemical uses.

Infopest is available free online to registered users.

LANDHOLDERS TO EARN CARBON CREDITS BY PLANTING MALLEE

Landholders will be able to generate carbon credits from establishing mallee plantings on their properties under a new Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) methodology approved by the Australian Government today.

The methodology for *Quantifying Carbon Sequestration by Permanent Mallee Plantings using the Reforestation Modelling Tool* sets out rules for setting up and monitoring projects that store carbon in permanent plantings of mallee trees.

Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change, Industry and Innovation, Yvette D'Ath, and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Joe Ludwig, welcomed the latest methodology. Mrs D'Ath said it would assist landholders in drier areas that receive an average rainfall of 600mm or less.

"Landholders in these areas will be able to generate Australian carbon credit units by establishing permanent mallee belts or forests through direct seeding or planting tubestock," Mrs D'Ath said.

"Just like other commodities, they will be able to sell these units to businesses wanting to offset their carbon pollution, or to companies that sell carbon-neutral products."

The methodology has been endorsed by the Oil Mallee Association of Australia and applies to land that has been cleared or partially cleared for the previous five years, where tree growth has been suppressed by prior land use.

Minister Ludwig noted that the benefits extend far beyond an additional source of income.

"By incorporating shelter belts or forests where appropriate, farmers can lift the overall productivity of their land, reduce dryland salinity, wind or water erosion, provide shelter for livestock and enhance biodiversity," Minister Ludwig said.

The Methodology Determination is available from the [ComLaw website](#) and project applications may be made to the [Clean Energy Regulator](#).

Further information on the Carbon Farming Initiative is available at <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/cfi>

Updates to BOLT e- learning system

Plant Health Australia (PHA) has upgraded its e-learning system, [BOLT](#) (Biosecurity Online Training). Hosted by Canopi, the new version has greater functionality, is more visually appealing, interactive and easy to use. All existing BOLT enrolments have been seamlessly integrated into the new, updated system with users being notified of the changes. PHA will also be creating new modules, including one on the role of National Committees which will be available in May 2013. It's hoped that the new and improved BOLT system will encourage more use of this e-learning tool to boost awareness of plant biosecurity.

If you have any enquiries relating to BOLT, please contact Ameera Yousiph by [email](#) or phone 02 6215 7728

ACCC releases free online education program for small businesses

The ACCC has released a free online education program for small businesses to help them learn about their rights and obligations under Australian competition and consumer laws.

The program is a simple, interactive learning resource which provides a broad overview of the key provisions of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*. It includes 10 modules covering topics such as pricing, advertising, consumer rights, selling safe products, unlawful competition and scams.

Each module should take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Users can work through the entire set of modules, or select only those topics most relevant to their business operations. At the end of most modules, users can do a short self-assessment quiz to test their understanding of the topic.

The free online education program for small business is available at www.ccaeducationprograms.org.

We encourage you to make use of this free resource – visit the site and work through the modules.

If you are a business advisor, we also encourage you to share the link to the program with your small business clients.

When launching the new resource, ACCC Deputy Chair Dr Michael Schaper said: 'The ACCC is committed to helping businesses understand their rights and obligations under the CCA. We recognise that small business operators are busy running their business, and need simple, clear information which can be accessed at any time, at their own pace.' You can read the full media release on the [ACCC website](#).

Education & Engagement
Compliance Strategies Branch

Good pistachio bloom winds down

The pistachio bloom across northern Kings County and points south in the San Joaquin Valley has run its course, reports PCA Zack Raven, grower service manager for Keenan Farms, Avenal, Calif.

He works with other growers as far north as Madera County, where, he estimates, 70 percent or more of the trees had finished blooming.

“It’s been a good bloom and now a lot of the nuts are the size of BBs,” he says. “In a few cases, some of the male trees started blooming earlier and some later than the females. But, the overlap should be sufficient for a successful fruit set. Some growers self-pollinated trees by using airplanes or blowers to spread pollen over their orchards.”

Growers who treated orchards with a dormant oil, typically in early February, saw their trees blooming about 10 to 14 days earlier than those who didn’t use oil.

Recorded winter chilling hours seemed to be enough for the trees. However, Raven notes, a modest mistiming between the males and females is raising doubts whether chilling was sufficient. Regardless, by speeding up the start of the season, the dormant oil treatment puts those growers in better position for timely harvesting once the nuts mature.

“With continued warm weather into early summer, harvest could begin around the first of September on Kerman and around mid-August on Hill varieties,” Raven says. “That’s about the normal time. It would be at least a week earlier than last year.”

Now, however, it is the shortage of surface water for irrigating this year’s crop that is a big concern. Surface water allocations are only 20 percent of contract this year, the lowest in four seasons.

With declining water tables, some growers will dig wells deeper than ever to make up for the shortfall in surface water. “I’ve heard of one grower who had to drill 2,300 feet to get water,” Raven says.



However, there's an upside to the mostly dry weather this year. With little moisture to trigger development of fungal diseases, alternaria and botrytisphaeria have posed few, if any, problems for his growers, he notes.

At the same, though, the overwintering navel orangeworm (NOW) have "enjoyed" the dry winter. That's especially worrisome, following the flare-up in NOW populations late last season. In fact, it prompted some growers to interrupt their harvest to treat orchards with an insecticide.

The extent of any NOW threat this season depends to a large degree on how well growers practiced winter sanitation. That involves shaking mummies off trees, shredding prunings and disking in the mummies.

Raven, though, is encouraged. "Growers are paying more attention to the navel orangeworm problem and are taking more action to keep their fields clean," he says.

US pistachio industry continues growth stride

Beeping sounds coming from cash register scanners at grocery stores across the nation signal substantial increases in U.S. pistachio purchases by consumers, much to the delight of the U.S. pistachio industry.

Cash register data from U.S. grocery stores, including Wal-Mart, reveal a 24-percent increase in pistachio sales in 2012 over the previous year, says Richard Matoian, executive director, American Pistachio Growers (APG), Fresno, Calif.

Matoian, speaking at the 6th annual APG Conference held in San Diego, Calif., in February, piled on a heaping helping of good news for the audience of pistachio growers, processors, marketers, and other industry members.

One-hundred percent of the U.S. pistachio crop is grown in the West, including California (98.5 percent of the crop), Arizona, and New Mexico. There are about 850 pistachio growers in the tri-state area.

California growers have about 250,000 acres of pistachios in 22 counties.

The financial impact of the U.S. pistachio industry is about \$1.3 billion.

"2012 was a remarkable year," said APG Board Chairman Jim Zion, a pistachio grower. "We produced a record pistachio crop last year, have record shipments, and some of the highest grower prices in recent years."

Zion added, "We can truly say it is good to be a pistachio grower."

Globally, sales of pistachios, as with its Western tree nut cousins — walnuts, almonds, and pecans — are ... going nuts.

Over the last six years, Matoian said U.S. pistachio exports doubled, from more than 100 million pounds to almost 270 million pounds (through Aug. 31, 2012).

"This is a phenomenal record regardless of the commodity," Matoian said.

Over the last eight years, U.S. pistachio sales to China pole vaulted from about 5 million pounds per year to 120 million pounds annually. Since last September, sales to Eastern Europe are up 70 percent. Exports to Asia are 43 percent higher.

“These are very positive trends which continue to show that pistachios are gaining worldwide acceptance,” Matoian said.

Pushing global sales to the higher side are major financial investments by the pistachio industry.

Five years ago, Matoian said APG spent \$400,000 on the marketing and promotion of pistachios. During the current fiscal year, the association will invest more \$10.5 million on domestic and international marketing and public relations; 84 percent of the APG budget.

Last year, 74 percent of the APG budget was spent on marketing and promotion.

Looking at U.S. pistachio production and acreage, the 2012 record crop totaled 555 million pounds. With the existing bearing acreage and non-bearing acres entering commercial production, Matoian believes the industry could reach the 1-billion pound production plateau between 2018 and 2020.

Andy Anzaldo, Paramount Farms’ grower relations director, last fall shared the same projection with Western Farm Press.

In essence, this means almost doubling pistachio production in the next five to seven years.

Matoian told the crowd, “One billion pounds might be a scary number, but I am confident the pistachio industry can achieve the 1 billion-pound mark by 2020.”

Over the last decade, U.S. pistachio plantings have increased dramatically due to increased consumer demand. Over the last decade, 2007 was the peak planting year with about 25,000 new acres. Plantings last year fell in the 14,000 acre range.

Matoian said, “Based on discussions I’ve had with the people at this APG meeting I believe new plantings in 2013 could reach 20,000 acres.”

The optimistic leader believes the pistachio industry could achieve 250,000 bearing acres by 2017.

In comparison, 2011 California almond acreage totaled 760,000 bearing acres and 75,000 non-bearing acres, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The agency pegged California walnut acreage at 245,000 bearing acres. Walnut non-bearing information was unavailable.

Always at the forefront for tree nut growers is the grower price. Matoian shared a PowerPoint slide of National Agricultural Statistics Service data which showed pistachio grower prices since 2005 have hovered around \$2 per pound. This is the initial price plus any bonuses, but does not reflect marketing bonuses paid at year’s end.

Matoian says gross returns to the grower per acre of pistachios were about \$7,000 per acre for last year’s crop. Gross returns in 2011 were about \$8,000 per acre.

Hansen family bullish on pistachios

Enjoying lunch at the APG Conference was the Hansen family of Hansen Ranches based in Corcoran, Calif. (Kings County). Seated at the table were brothers Jim and Jess (fifth generation producers), and their sons Erik and Phillip, and Nis, respectively.

The family also farms in Mendota and Three Rocks in neighboring Fresno County. Hansen Ranches produces pistachios, almonds, Pima cotton, and feedstuffs for dairies.

Like many California pistachio growers, the Hansen's are bullish on the outlook for the pistachio industry.

"The demand for pistachios is growing very rapidly which is keeping prices higher to where it's a good investment," Jim Hansen said.

Last year, the family planted about 600 acres to pistachios on land purchased years ago. The Hansen's total pistachio acreage is about 1,500 acres.

"We had to be optimistic on pistachios to plant 600 acres last year," said Jim Hansen, which was followed by hearty laughter from the Hansen clan. "The large planting was a big move for us; a major effort and expense."

No pistachio plantings are planned this year.

Most of the pistachios are the Kerman variety with some recent plantings in Golden Hills.

The oldest pistachio plantings are a decade old. With just a few years of commercial production under the family's belt, yields continue to increase.

"Our yields have been reasonably good," Erik Hansen said. "Results have been good so far."

In the first production year, yields were about 800 pounds per acre (sixth and seven leaf). "Now we're up to about 3,200 pounds," Erik said. "Last year, we had an off year for the older trees. We're seeing a lot of good fruit buds right now (in February)."

When asked about the number one challenge facing the Hansen farm, everyone chimed in at once — "WATER."

"Water restrictions are a major issue for us so water is our number one concern, especially for our almonds planted in Westlands (Water District) due to cutbacks in federal water," Jim said.

At press time, Hansen said the family will fallow about 500 acres in Westlands this year, much of the land previously planted in Pima cotton. Prices for supplemental water were in the \$350 per acre foot range or higher. The Hansen's will also fallow land in the Corcoran area due to water issues.

Overall, the Hansen's call their operation successful due to many reasons, including good advice from consultants. Erik says their top asset is the family. "It helps to have people who are engaged and have ownership in the business on a day-to-day basis," Erik said. "When you have someone who will live or die by how well the organization is run then they tend to put a little more into it."

Jim added, "We are lucky to have a good group of people and family which have led to our family's success in agriculture. We are very fortunate."