



Horticulture 2021

Wrap Up

Washington Wine Growers convention goes virtual March 9, 18

SUBMITTED BY WASHINGTON WINEGROWERS ASSOCIATION

The Washington Winegrowers Association annual convention, WineVit™, will be virtual with sessions spread out between March 9 and 18. Specific session times, dates, and speakers will be posted soon. The virtual event

will provide cutting-edge presentations, networking opportunities, information on trends and products in the market and access to industry suppliers.

After an unprecedented 2020, a special focus will be on the State of the Industry session as

oversupply coupled with a pandemic have created challenges and opportunities. Speakers will discuss industry trends, global supply and demand chains, the latest research and future projects.

Though virtual, the annual

convention celebrates the Washington wine industry's collective resilience, dedication to connections without boundaries, and



commitment to high-caliber learning and networking.

Visit www.winevit.org to register or to

learn more.

The Washington Winegrowers Association serves as the synergistic leader and unifying voice – through advocacy and education – for growers, vintners, partners, and policymakers.

USDA offers farm loans for underserved, beginning farmers

SUBMITTED BY USDA

WENATCHEE - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers that FSA offers farm ownership and farm operating loans to underserved applicants as well as beginning farmers and ranchers. Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for FSA direct or guaranteed loans.

"Farming and ranching is a capital-intensive business and FSA is committed to helping producers start and maintain their agricultural operations," said Jon Wyss, FSA State Executive Director in Washington State. "FSA loans are designed to make sure that everyone has access to credit

including underserved and beginning farmers and ranchers. Last year, FSA in Washington obligated \$35.7 million in loans to underserved borrowers and beginning farmers and ranchers."

USDA defines underserved applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For farm loan program purposes, underserved groups are American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

In order to qualify as a beginning farmer, the individual or entity must meet the eligi-

bility requirements outlined for direct or guaranteed loans. Additionally, individuals and all entity members must have operated a farm for less than 10 years. Applicants must materially or substantially participate in the operation. For farm ownership purposes, the applicant must not own a farm greater than 30 percent of the average size farm in the county at the time of application. All direct farm ownership applicants must have participated in the business operations of a farm for at least three years out of the last 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted to FSA. Substitutions for as much as the full three years of experience may be made based on education, business management experience, military experience, participation

with a qualified mentor, and farm management experience as a hired laborer. Your local FSA office will be able to provide more details on acceptable substitutions.

If the applicant is an entity, all members must be related by blood or marriage and all entity members must be eligible beginning farmers. At least one of the members must have three years or more experience in the business operations of a farm prior to the date the application is submitted.

Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA guarantee allows lenders

to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria.

The direct and guaranteed loan program offers two types of loans: farm ownership loans and farm operating loans.

Farm ownership loan funds may be used to purchase or enlarge a farm or ranch; purchase easements or rights of way needed in the farm's operation; build or improve buildings such as a dwelling or barn; promote soil and water conservation and development; and pay closing costs.

Farm operating loan funds may be used to purchase livestock, poultry, farm equipment, fertilizer, and other materials necessary to operate a farm. Operating loan funds can also be used for

family living expenses; refinancing debts under certain conditions; paying salaries for hired farm laborers; installing or improving water systems for home, livestock or irrigation use; and other similar improvements.

Repayment terms for direct operating loans are scheduled from one to seven years. Financing for direct farm ownership loans cannot exceed 40 years. Interest rates for direct loans are set periodically according to the government's cost of borrowing. Guaranteed loan terms and interest rates are set by the lender.

For more information on FSA's farm loan programs and underserved and beginning farmer guidelines, please contact your local FSA office or visit farmers.gov.

New USDA projects funded to support the Washington tree fruit industry

WRITTEN BY FAITH CRITZER, WSU FOOD SAFETY, DECEMBER 2020

Members of the Tree Fruit Extension team have been working hard to secure federal funding for challenges facing the industry. They are part of national teams and represent \$16.9 million in total federal support from the USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative. The three projects will focus on precision crop load management, fire blight, and food safety, and are all geared towards identi-

fying effective solutions that improve the resiliency of the tree fruit industry in the future. You can read more about each below.

Precision Crop Load Management for Apples

Project Director – Terrance Robinson, Cornell University
Other PIs – Stefano Musacchi and Karen Lewis, Washington State University; Tory Schmidt, Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission

Controlling the final fruit number on an apple tree is

one of the most economically critical management practices in apple growing. Optimizing fruit numbers within a narrow, economically optimum range is currently imprecisely done by pruning, chemical thinning and remedial hand thinning which is very expensive. We have previously developed ideas and tactics to precisely control crop load by calculating the optimum fruit number per tree, manually counting buds, flowers and fruits and by using various computer models we have developed (carbon balance model, fruit growth rate model, and the pollen tube growth model) to help growers achieve the optimum number of fruits per tree; however, the process is tedious and time-consuming. This project will further develop precision crop load management tools consisting of computer models, machine vision, robotics, and decision support tools to allow apple growers to accurately calculate a target fruit number for each tree and then quickly count flower buds and later fruitlets using machine vision and geo-referenced maps to guide the severity of pruning and later guide bloom and post-bloom chemical thin-

ning, and lastly to guide human workers when hand thinning to maximize crop value.

Comprehensive fire blight management systems for the United States

Project Director – George Sundin, Michigan State University
Other PIs – Tianna DuPont and Karina Gallardo, Washington State University



Courtesy photo

A team of the leading fire blight research and extension scientists from across the nation will be working together to develop novel and effective management strategies.

New Specialty Crop Research Initiative grant invests \$5.1 mill to improve fire blight management with more than \$600,000 directed to WA research and extension. A team of the leading

fire blight research and extension scientists from across the nation will be working together to develop novel and effective management strategies. The goal is to develop a comprehensive strategy for effective fire blight management optimizing shoot and blossom blight management, understanding and managing the systemic phase of fire blight, developing a pre-breeding line of fire blight resistant varieties, providing economic analysis, and a nationally coordinated outreach program. The team will use innovative techniques, for example, they will use advanced transcriptomics to study the most effective use of defense elicitors. National coordination will multiply efforts, to more quickly find effective strategies. For example, products tested in multiple regions with diverse environmental conditions will provide in-depth information to dissect variable efficacy and model the most effective use and timings. Demonstration trials will provide answers to long-standing questions to grower questions from cutting blight to defense elicitors.

Cost-Effective Management of Food Safety Risks

Project Director – Michelle Danyluk, University of Florida
Other PIs – Faith Critzer and Troy Peters, Washington State University

This work will provide the fresh produce industry with tools to effectively manage food safety risks while making the most efficient use of available resources. We will identify the important factors (and their uncertainties) that drive risk and are candidates for interventions. Key sources of uncertainty will be addressed by empirical data collection and analysis. The immediate outcome of this research will be integrated, publicly available decision analysis tools to aid in pathogen control on produce that supports decision-making by all stakeholders. This will support increased transparency and collaboration among federal partners, industry, and consumer groups. We will model cost-effectiveness ratios of possible interventions, taking into account the preventable incidence of illness and economic costs of disease, as well as the costs and benefits to industry. Since different stakeholders consider different aspects of the costs and benefits of interventions, evaluations will be presented from different perspectives, including societal and industry perspectives and the results will be available at different levels of aggregation. The framework will provide opportunities to evaluate produce safety regulatory policies using the most recent scientific data. Critzer and Peters will contribute to work in preharvest water, postharvest handling, and outreach activities with others representing the tree fruit industry on the stakeholder advisory board. The project team is currently soliciting input which will help drive priorities from those in the produce and allied industries, you can participate at <https://go.rutgers.edu/4tuxsrdf>.

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