

President's Message 8-19

Well, harvest season is here, and I am, like many of you I'll bet, anxious for it to be over. A May 30th hail storm has turned a large portion of our crop into processing fruit. That, along with our inability to meet the new market demand from Walmart that our Premier Honeycrisp have a minimum of 50% red, has made the start of the season a little less rewarding than I had hoped. Growing to last year's standard is not enough. As we move forward, we will need to continually increase our standards to meet the market demand. This is a challenge we must accept; there is no other choice.

Other varieties, where we had no hail, have started out well, though, and so long as there are some bright spots in this crop, and there are, it has a good shot at being better than last year.

Fortunately, at least to this point, we have not had the deluge of rain we experienced last season. Hopefully it will remain that way.

Our contract for H-2A workers was for July 25th. They just arrived (Aug 16th). We now have an adequate workforce to get the crop in. Having approximately 5,000 bushels of apples go on the ground due to lack of workers in each of the two years prior to using H-2A workers makes me really appreciate this program. It has been a Godsend in that we have enough harvest workers to get the crop in. Workers coming from a poor region in Central America are able to earn in a month what they would earn in a year back home. It is truly a win, win situation. Our workers have rebuilt their community church (1st year here) and their community kindergarten (2nd year) with money they put aside while working here in the U.S.

If only the government agencies in both our country and the countries where we seek workers would make the program less burdensome and more affordable. It is, without a doubt, extremely burdensome and costly.

A group from the White House, including the Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, along with Guatemala Ministers of Agriculture, Economy, Labor and Governance visited our farm on August 15th. Their purpose was to work together to streamline the H-2A program in hopes of reducing burdensome paperwork. They all certainly enjoyed the Premier Honeycrisp apples we were picking the day they visited. Hopefully the fruits of their labor will taste as good to us.

As I said, Harvest season is here. So, just like you, I need to keep moving. Clear skies, fair breezes and easy going food safety auditors to you all,

SHAP President

Chris Baugher