

CGA Heads to Oregon

You'll be sure to find a "nutty" crowd out West this June.

The Chestnut Growers of America annual meeting will be Friday-Sunday, June 18-20, 2010, in Oregon and Washington.

Meeting chairs are Ben and Sandy Bole. The Magness Memorial Tree Farm, Wilsonville, Ore., will be the site of the Saturday meeting.

CGA members will want to plan to fly into the Portland, Ore., airport. Lodging is available in Wilsonville or Sherwood, south of Portland and close to Saturday's festivities.



On Friday please plan on arriving early enough to stop at Ray and Carolyn Young's Allen Creek Farm, Ridgefield, Wash., for an orchard tour, social hour and hors d'oeuvres.

Saturday will include presentations by Mike Gold, Dennis Fulbright and Ken Hunt on chestnut research and growing developments in their respective areas. This will provide a forum to discuss a variety of factors that may be common to all chestnut growers or unique to specific regions.

Marketing presentations will follow the on-site lunch. Laura Barton has extensive experience in the market development of many agricultural (cont. pg. 9)

Chestnut Update from Down Under!

by John Morton, Chestnuts Australia

Hi to all of the American friends of the Australian Chestnut growers. Our country has had areas of drought for most of the last 15 years but it seems we are going to have a fantastic season this year. No bushfires to speak of, regular rain in all growing areas and virtually the perfect pre-season. We have even had good rain in the month prior to cropping. My farm is in Stanley, in North Eastern Victoria, and it is the first time I have experienced a 'green fall' since I bought my farm in 1999.

We have just started to pick the early varieties and quality and size is exceptional; the big challenge with a regular crop will be the prices we can get from the markets. Hopefully many growers will manage their marketing well so we can all get a good average price and make some money. We have a peak season of three weeks which should come about from (cont. pg. 10)

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A Message from the President

MIKE GOLD
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
CENTER FOR AGROFORESTRY

The Year Ahead

Spring has arrived in Mid-Missouri (April 8th), the daffodils are in bloom, the magnolias and redbuds are peaking and the grass has turned emerald green. With plenty of moisture in the soil and warming breezes the possibilities and hopes for a fantastic 2010 growing season lay before us (so does the possibility that the Kansas City Royals will win the 2010 World Series =) but we won't push our luck that far).

Thank you to 49 CGA members for filling out the annual CGA member grower survey. Results are reported in this issue of The Chestnut Grower. Note that we are, at present, an industry dominated by small-scale producers (94 percent of respondents have under 30 acres of chestnuts) with 64 percent earning under \$25,000 per year from their production (18 percent of respondents did not answer this question). I want to mention one more finding from the CGA member survey results – price. Note the very wide range in reported prices in all categories of sales. It is very important to avoid undercutting the market and taking too low of a price for your chestnuts. Marketing successfully takes work. We all need to know our costs of production (including the value of our own labor) and I would hazard a guess that little to no profit is made when prices drop below \$1.50 per pound (a very low price for the grower). Let's create a Rule of Thumb that says "do not undercut the market" as all growers get hurt by this strategy. We will discuss these results (along with many other interesting topics) at our upcoming annual meeting (details in this issue) hosted by Ben and Sandy Bole.

The potential for expanding chestnut markets for both fresh and value-added products seem vast (e.g., someday the Olive Garden restaurant chain may feature U.S. grown chestnuts in their fall menu) and limited only by our creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. In that light, we continue to feature articles drawn from the Australian chestnut growers in The Chestnut Grower. The Australians seem to be a few years ahead of our U.S. chestnut industry and many of their successes and failures will help us along the way.

I look forward to seeing many of you this June in Oregon and Washington at the 2010 CGA annual meeting – shaping up to be an outstanding and informative gathering among friends.

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Center for Agroforestry
University of Missouri

PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Fall issue deadline 9/15 mailed 10/15
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2009 CGA Grower Survey Report

by Ina Cernusca, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

Here are some of the highlights of the results based on 49 surveys collected and analyzed.

Ten responses came from California, five from Oregon, four from Florida and Ohio, three from Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri and Washington, and one each from Alabama, Iowa, Kansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and British Columbia.

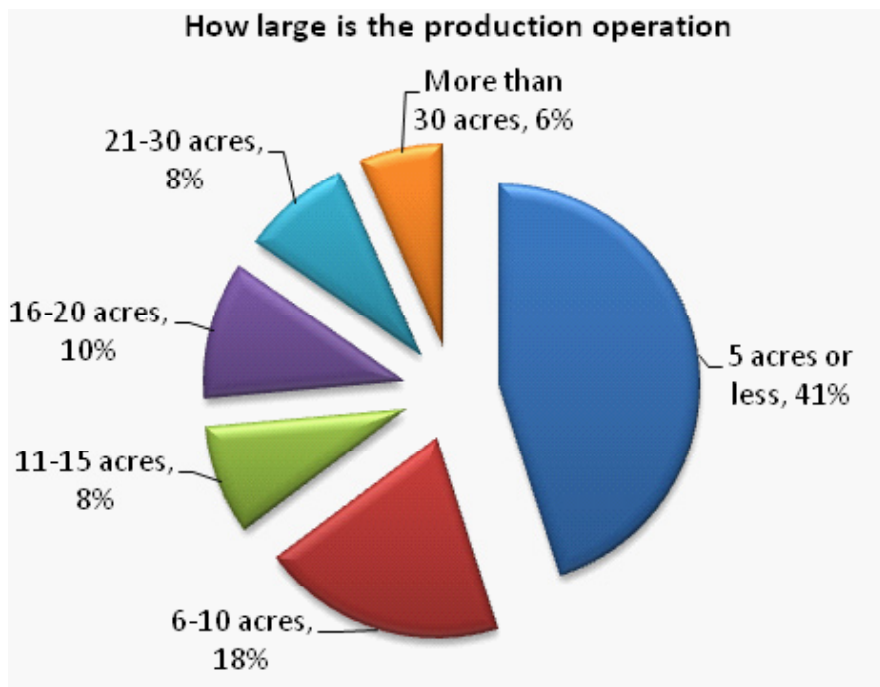


Fig. 1

Fifty-one percent of respondents sell only fresh chestnuts, 20 percent produce and sell fresh chestnuts and value-added products (e.g., flour, dried chestnuts, pancake mix, bread mix, biscuit mix, cornbread mix, soup mix, chestnut honey, roasted chestnuts) and chestnut related products (e.g., chestnut knives, cookbooks, cooking pans). Ten percent of respondents produce and sell nursery stock in addition to fresh chestnuts and 8 percent act as distributor for other growers.

Eighty-four percent of respondents produce and market their chestnuts while 16 percent belong to a cooperative that is responsible for marketing the chestnuts.

Respondents' planted chestnuts add up to 436 acres but the majority of respondents still produce on a limited commercial scale: 41 percent of respondents have 5 acres or less in chestnut production, 18 percent between 6 and 10 acres, 18 percent between 11 to 20 acres (Fig. 1).

Eighteen percent of respondents have trees less than 5 years old, 19 percent between 5 and 10 years old, 41

percent between 11 and 20 years old, 10 percent between 21 and 30 years old and 6 percent older than 30 years; 39 percent are interested in planting more trees as replacement or to expand their orchard.

Fifty-seven percent of growers use conventional methods to grow their chestnuts, 25 percent use caution in using fertilizer and weed control and 10 percent are certified organic.

2009 compared with 2008 provided a higher yield of chestnuts for 37 percent of respondents, same yield for 12 percent and a lower yield for 37 percent. Lower yield was obtained due to weather problems, late or early frost, cold and wet conditions during pollination, or many empty burs. Higher yield was usually reported for orchards that matured and more trees reached bearing age or commercial production.

Quality of chestnuts was higher for 12 percent of respondents, the same for 37 percent and lower for 37 percent. Lower quality means more splits than normal, smaller size due to delay in irrigation, smaller size and less sweetness or black tip issue.

While noting that 10 out of the 49 respondents didn't have a harvest in 2009, the remaining 39 respondents totaled 270,087 pounds in conventional production and 97,060 pounds in certified organic production. Sixty-four percent of respondents earned less than \$25,000 from chestnut sales in 2009 (cont. pg. 9)

Research Round-Up from the MU Center for Agroforestry

by Michelle Hall, MU Center for Agroforestry

In 2010, researchers at the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry will take on a variety of projects, including determining the effect of moisture levels in the growing media on whip and tongue grafting success of potted Chinese chestnut seedlings.

In 2009, researchers looking at the following chestnut aspects:

Spacing and Pruning. Plantings with various tree spacing and pruning techniques are being established to determine effects of pruning on nut yield, size and quality. Good nut yield and nut size in a tight spacing of 4 x 8 meters for open center pruned Qing trees show early promise. *(Ken Hunt)*

Low-Cost Harvesting Equipment. Chestnut producers have identified the high cost and scarce availability of labor during the harvest season as major limitations to profitable production of chestnuts. While most producers are hand-harvesting chestnuts with the aid of a nut wizard, UMCA researchers are currently modifying an inexpensive commercially available paddock vacuum to reduce chestnut harvest costs. Preliminary results indicate pick-up time of nuts can be reduced by 50 percent with the paddock vacuum as compared to a nut wizard. Further work on improving the efficiency of nut sorting and an economic analysis of the vacuum for the mechanical harvest of chestnut trees is in progress. *(Michele Warmund and Larry Godsey)*

Bur and Nut Production. More than 60 chestnut cultivars are being evaluated at HARC, but not all cultivars bear nuts at an early age. UMCA researchers have recently identified characteristics associated with early bearing trees with good productivity. Early fruiting and sustained yields occur on trees with shoots that have the capacity to produce a high percentage of primary flowers and/or primary and secondary flowers in consecutive years. These results will guide producers in selecting cultivars for planting. In related studies, it was found removal of chestnut burs produced in late July resulted in larger nut size at harvest and enhanced nut production in the following growing season. Future studies will seek to develop cost-efficient methods for removing secondary burs produced in July. *(Michele Warmund)*

Chestnut Weevil. UMCA researchers are aiming to establish an integrated pest management strategy for chestnut weevil, the most important economic pest of chestnut in the U.S. Studies are looking to see what makes chestnut weevils so host specific – what make a chestnut smell like a chestnut to a weevil? *(Bruce Barrett and Chung-Ho Lin)*

Researchers have found obvious differences in response to plant tissue volatiles based on the season the insects were collected. Anatomical differences were also noted in the insects; researchers hypothesize adult weevils are active in the spring to feed on catkins, which provide a required nutritional element for reproductive system development to occur. This hypothesis will be tested further in 2010.

Further work also will look to evaluate adult weevil physiological responses to chestnut volatiles via a new approach, electroantennography.

A Taste Test. In October 2009, as part of a UMCA study, expert food scientists tested the texture and flavor of various chestnut cultivars, including Peach, Eaton, Qing, AU Homestead, Colossal (from three locations around the country), Bouche de Betizac, and Marrone di Castel del Rio. Descriptive sensory terms were identified – data analysis is in progress. *(Michele Warmund) CGA*



What I Wouldn't Do Again

“I would never again lay out drip irrigation using well water – at least not without prior testing and expert consultation. Apparently, drip emitters works well enough with chlorinated city or rural water so long as you use particle filters. My well water was clear and had tested OK to drink. But I was naïve and overconfident when I home-designed and installed a drip irrigation grid for about 1,000 chestnut trees. My system clogged after the first few weeks.

If I had consulted information available through the cooperative extension service, I would have known that certain parts per million (ppm) concentrations of any of four dissolved minerals: iron, sulfur, manganese and calcium, pose either a slight, intermediate, or severe limitation for drip irrigation. Minerals in solution are not removed by filters. When exposed to oxygen, bacteria or heat the minerals precipitate as slimes and scale. Too late, I had my water tested by a commercial lab. My water scored “severe” in three minerals.

The fixes involve acids or other chemicals, which need injection systems, or aeration and settlement tanks, second stage pumps and sand filters. The necessary chemicals cannot be used in organic agriculture, the technology requires expertise, and the money is budget-busting.

Our chestnut trees survived, regardless of the irrigation failure. I’m still searching for an economical way to salvage my investment and make some use of the buried pipe and miles of poly drip tubing which is now rolled up and leaning against my trees.” CGA

Thanks to the grower who contributed this issue’s “What I Wouldn’t Do Again.” We encourage everyone to pass along their stories to Michelle Hall at hallmich@missouri.edu or mail to 203 ABNR, Columbia, MO 65211. Contributions are anonymous.

Don’t look now but we’ve posted each and every “What I Wouldn’t Do Again” online at the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry Web site. Now you can browse these tips anytime. Go to <http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/pubs/chestnut/index.asp> to see them all!

From the Blogs *The New York Times Blog on Dining Out, Diner’s Journal, included an entry Feb. 2 on a new restaurant in NYC, which just so happened to have tried a few pounds of the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry’s chestnuts (and ordered more!) the week before. Here’s what they had to say:*

“To find unusual ingredients from farms around the country, Print, the restaurant in the new Ink 48 hotel at 48th Street and 11th Avenue, has an in-house forager.”

Heather Carlucci-Rodriguez, who will run the kitchen with her husband, Charles Rodriguez, formerly the executive chef at the Sony Club, raved about the chestnuts that the forager, Johanna Kolodny, got from the Center for Agroforestry of the University of Missouri. “She also loved the Greek-style yogurt from a farm in upstate New York. Ms. Carlucci-Rodriguez, who closed Lassi, her tiny Indian takeout shop in Greenwich Village last summer, is the pastry chef and said she will be using those ingredients in her desserts...”

To see the blog entry, go to <http://dinersjournal.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/02/ingredients-you-wont-find-in-a-store/?emc=eta1>

Did You Know? *The idea for the Easy-Bake Oven actually grew out of a trip to New York – a colleague had just returned from the city, and told inventor Ronald Howes about the street vendors peddling roasted chestnuts. Howes set out to make a toy version of a roast chestnut cart, and the Easy-Bake Oven was born, heated by a light bulb to make it (relatively!) child safe. The toy has been getting kids hooked on cooking for more than 40 years.*

Information taken from the Village Voice blog: http://blogs.villagevoice.com/forinthetoad/archives/2010/02/easy_bake_oven.php

Members Applying or Renewing Since Directory Published

Please add the following CGA members to your directory:

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Thank you! CGA



Dennis Fulbright passed along these additional photos of the Cuneo [Italy] Chestnut Festival, held in October 2009. He says: "I had heard that Joyce Ivory, one of the growers that attended the Italian meeting, [and CGA member] had a nice photo of the streets during the festival. Since I was in the meetings, my only time was at night – I could not capture the number of people and the energy that was in the street at the chestnut festival." Thanks Dennis and Joyce!



Sorting, Scanning, Sniffing the Way to Less Chestnut Decay

article originally appeared in the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station 2009 Annual Report

Floating chestnuts used to mean sinking profits for chestnut growers around the world, but MAES [Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station] researchers have found problems with the age-old selection practice and are working toward a high-tech solution.

For centuries, chestnuts have been discarded if they float, because healthy chestnuts tend to sink. But studies have proven this post-harvest sorting method unreliable, with some healthy floating chestnuts being discarded and some decayed, empty or damaged chestnuts ultimately making their way to consumers.

Since blight wiped out the American chestnut forests in the 1940s, domestic chestnut lovers have relied on European and Asian imports to satisfy their chestnut cravings. Now the development of blight-resistant chestnut tree varieties has Michigan leading the nation's growing domestic chestnut industry with the most acres devoted to chestnut production and the largest number of chestnut-growing farmers, according to the 2007 U.S. Department of Agriculture Census. As demand increases, MAES scientists are helping the industry scale their production practices up from boutique to commercial.

“The most important reason for establishing a domestic chestnut industry is to provide a more profitable, diversified enterprise for commodity growers, which, in turn, will offer a good product for the consumer,” said Dan Guyer, MAES biosystems and agricultural engineering researcher. “It will also allow us to rely less on imported chestnuts, which tend to be lower in quality and often arrive in a moldy and/or rotted condition. Domestic chestnuts can also rot, however, and the greater the production the more likely rot will appear.”

Guyer has teamed with doctoral student Irwin Donis-González to develop a non-invasive technique to detect internal decay in fresh, unpeeled chestnuts and study its commercial viability for the burgeoning industry.

“Seeing inside a chestnut is like looking at your toes through a leather boot,” Guyer said. “We can’t destroy the product or rely on a process that has been proven to have a high error rate, so we are testing some of the same technologies that the medical industry and other industries use to non-invasively detect internal decay in chestnuts.”

Like many crops, Michigan chestnuts are harvested once a year and placed in cold storage for future processing or distribution.

“Despite their name, chestnuts aren’t nuts, they’re a fruit,” Guyer said. “They have high water content and get bruised and diseased if not cared for properly. You wouldn’t leave fresh cherries out on a table and bump them around; chestnuts also need to be treated with care.”

To see beyond “the boot” — chestnuts’ tough outer shell — Guyer and Donis-González evaluated technologies such as ultrasound, X-rays and CT scanning to get an inside look. More than a year of research indicates that CT scanning appears to give the most reliable information about internal chestnut structure.

“We have to take what the human mind does in interpreting images and translate it into an algorithm to develop a reliable computer-based model,” Guyer said. “We can determine a really good or a really rotten chestnut, but the gray area is the problem. The product that may or may not be sorted out will determine whether a grower is profitable.”

Donis-González said that the team is simultaneously working on determining the underlying physiological and biological causes of chestnut decay.

“In nature, deer do not eat rotten, bad, decayed chestnuts. Deer don’t need a CT scan to know which chestnuts are good, so how do we determine what we’re missing? What do they smell that we can’t?” Donis-González asked.

Profiling the volatiles emitted from chestnuts could lead to the development of laboratory sensors, also called electronic noses, that could distinguish decayed from healthy chestnuts. Commercial portable electronic noses are available for other industries, but sorting systems based on the technology have not been commercialized yet.

“So we must determine the best methodology. Then automate the decision. Then scale it up for operation in a packing house,” Guyer said. “We’re talking about going from scanning several chestnuts per hour to 10 per second. We’ve taken the first steps toward making that a possibility.” *CGA*

Developing Chestnut Flour Products

from the September 2009 issue of the Australian Nutgrower

Jennifer Wilkinson asks Luciano Cester about his experience producing and processing chestnuts

Australians of Italian heritage have a yearning for fresh chestnuts and Luciano Cester is no exception. Luciano had studied economics but after several years in business he found himself looking for a less stressful occupation. When he was thinking about buying a farm, it was no surprise he decided to plant chestnuts. Luciano had fond memories of his cousin's farm and in 1982 he and wife Anna purchased an 11 hectare apple orchard at Stanley in north-east Victoria. The region provides the ideal climate and soil for chestnuts and boasts some magnificent chestnut orchards.

Luciano planted an array of chestnut varieties and while he loved the contrast that country life provided, after six years he had serious concerns. By this time he had expected the orchard to be in production, yet many trees were not producing and many other trees produced poor quality nuts. This was difficult to understand when neighbouring chestnut growers were so successful. After seeking advice, Luciano discovered that the orchard soil was deficient and many of the chestnut varieties planted were undesirable. Thankfully after applying the necessary nutrients production increased from 2 to 6 tonne. Luciano then embarked on a topworking program which transformed the orchard to a mix of sweet, easy peeling varieties primarily 'Luciente' and 'De Coppi Marone.' Luciano says that the varieties must peel cleanly because pellicle make the flavour bitter. Following the improved orchard management production steadily increased and by 1999 yield topped 15 tonne and has continued to increase to the present 17 tonne.

For many years the Cester family had a poultry business, Cester Poultry, and in 1992 Luciano's younger brother Adrian continued the theme establishing a poultry seasoning company, Flavour Makers. Flavour Makers developed quickly to meet the increasing demand for prepared seasonings, sauces and marinades used by butchers, supermarkets and convenience food manufacturers. The Flavour Makers premises in Braeside south of Melbourne are modern, extensive and highly technical ensuring efficient production whilst satisfying quality assurance requirements for food manufacturing, packaging and dispatch. In 2007 Flavour Makers

established a Culinary Development Centre which has facilities for microbiological analysis, testing of pH, colour and light sensitivity, incubators for shelf-life testing as well as laboratories for development of new products.

At the time Flavour Makers was establishing its place as a food manufacturer, the market price for fresh chestnuts was dwindling. The chestnut industry needed a new direction and developing processed products seemed the natural solution. Luciano was inspired by the success of Flavour Makers and could see the facilities were ideal for developing chestnuts products, particularly dried chestnut products. The first product Luciano developed was Chestnut and Cranberry stuffing which was in line with other products manufactured by Flavour Makers. The year was 2004 and when Luciano asked brother Adrian if it would be possible to develop this product at Flavour Makers, Adrian said, "if you can dry and peel the chestnuts, I will offer the chestnut stuffing mix to Inghams Poultry for their Steggles Christmas turkeys."

Luciano dried a sample of fresh chestnuts, hand peeled and ground them and prepared the Chestnut and Cranberry stuffing mix sending the packed sample to Adrian. In a few days Adrian phoned to say he had a national deal to supply chestnut stuffing for the Christmas turkeys. Luciano was thrilled but daunted by the prospect as he wasn't geared up for mass production. However with help from the family he managed to produce 300kg of dried chestnuts to manufacture sufficient stuffing mix for the order. The chestnut flour component is 10% of the stuffing mix.

In his search for a chestnut dryer, Luciano found a lady who dried tomatoes and as this was seasonal, she allowed Luciano to borrow the dryer for his chestnut drying. Renting the dryer continued for some years until finally it was for sale and Luciano could purchase it. The dryer is gas fired and fitted with perforated plastic trays on racks. He says fresh chestnuts are 65-70% moisture so 600kg of fresh product produces about 200kg of dried chestnuts. The dryer is set at 52°C and 5% RH for three days. After one and a half days Luciano swaps the bottom trays to the top racks in the dryer.

(cont. pg. 11)

CGA Survey (cont. from page 3)

(35 percent less than \$5,000 and 29 percent between \$5,000 and \$25,000), 10 percent between \$25,000 and \$50,000, 4 percent between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and 4 percent more than \$100,000.

Thirty-five respondents sold their chestnuts on farm for prices between \$1.50 to \$6.50 per pound. About 27 percent sold to grocery stores for prices between \$1.20 and \$5 and 27 percent online from \$2.15 to \$6.50 per pound. Ten percent sold to health and natural food stores and obtained \$4 to \$4.50 per pound for their chestnuts. Twenty-two percent of respondents sold their chestnuts at farmers markets for prices between \$3 to \$6.50 per pound and 22 percent sold to restaurants for \$1.50 to \$5 a pound of chestnuts. Those who sold to a marketing cooperative (14 percent) got between \$1 to \$3.25 for a pound of chestnuts.

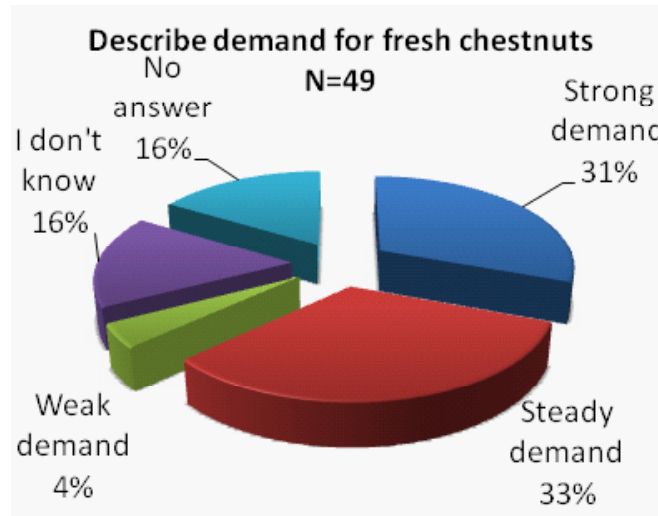


Fig. 2

Respondents that sold wholesale (16 percent) or to a distributor (14 percent) got between \$1.25 and \$4.25 for a pound of fresh chestnuts.

Respondents perceive that demand for fresh chestnuts is strong (31 percent) or steady (33 percent) (Fig. 2). Thirty-one percent of respondents think that demand is in excess of supply, 16 percent equal to supply and 10 percent below supply; 60 percent of respondents that produce chestnut value-added products see demand for

value added as steady and equal to supply.

A big THANK YOU for all those taking part in our recent member survey. We greatly appreciate your time and feedback and hope you found the annual CGA member survey of value. **CGA**

Annual Meeting (cont. from front page)

products domestically and abroad. She has been associated with the Food Innovation Center of the Oregon Department of Agriculture since its founding. Martha Holmberg is the former editor of Fine Cooking Magazine and former Food Editor of The Portland Oregonian. She is now marketing food and wine with the public relations firm Watershed Communications. The Boles expect these presentations to stimulate a lively discussion on their application to the development of marketing our products.

A visit to a local chestnut orchard will round out Saturday afternoon. Saturday evening will include a picnic dinner and orchard tour at Ladd Hill Orchards. Lunch and dinner are included with the conference.

Sunday morning will feature a visit to Haworth Nursery in Gaston, Ore., a well-established nursery specializing in the production of bare root shade, fruit and ornamental trees. They have grown Colossal chestnuts for the Boles

and are interested in expanding this effort. Attendees will then drive to Chris Foster's Cascadia Chestnuts to see his orchard, which includes many chestnut cultivars. Lunch (no host) will be at Bridgeport Brewing Company in downtown Portland. Bridgeport is a local micro-brewery where everyone can relax, socialize and wrap up the meeting.

A registration form is included in the newsletter. Please complete and mail to Ray Young. Maps to Allen Creek Farm and Magness Memorial Tree Farm are available at the Chestnut Growers' Web site.

An all-weather sign to designate your facility as a chestnut orchard is included in the registration fee. They are 8" x 24" and are suitable for mounting on a fence or separate post. Similar signs have been effectively used along Oregon highways to designate specific crops. Questions? 503-625-1248 or email: laddhill1@aol.com **CGA**

Chestnuts Down Under (cont. from front page)

10th to 30th April this year. It is also possible the season will extend until end of May; if this is so those growers with Controlled Atmosphere equipment will need to delay their entry into the market from July onwards. All marketing theories will be well tested, that's for sure.

Thirteen intrepid members of our association travelled last October to the Cuneo Chestnut Congress and thanks to Jane Casey, who arranged the trip, they had a magnificent trip – it must have been because we are hearing about it all the time. Certainly those of us who did not go are looking forward to the next Congress, planned for three years' time, maybe in Hungary??

During February we held a Field Day just outside of Adelaide in South Australia, in the beautiful Adelaide Hills, very close to our premier wine growing region of the Barossa Valley. Many members made the trip from nearby states and enjoyed the many food pleasures of the region as well as visiting several local chestnut growers' orchards. Every year now we are conducting these Field Days in smaller growing areas to show them to our



The throng at the Beechworth Harvest Festival, trying to get their hands on all things chestnut!



members and enjoy the camaraderie and friendship that growing chestnuts can bring. Most of the credit for this work must go to our Office Manager and Communications Officer, Mrs. Tanya

Edwards; she is the rock around whom our Association is built.

In May, our Association will be represented on four successive Sundays at food festivals throughout the state of Victoria. We engage our members to man the stalls, usually from growers in that area. I have attached a few photos which show the throng at the Beechworth Harvest Festival trying to get their hands on all things chestnut!

*Kind regards,
John Morton, President
Chestnuts Australia CGA*

CGA Slate of Officers 2010-11

The Nominating Committee will present the following slate of officers for next year at the Annual Meeting in June:

President: Mike Gold
Vice President: Dennis Fulbright
Secretary/Treasurer: Ray Young
Directors: Sandy Bole, Lee Williams, Charlie NovoGradac, Bob Wallace

Any member in good standing of the CGA is eligible to serve on the Board. Please contact the Secretary, according to the By-Laws, if you would like to nominate another member for any of the positions. Thank you. CGA

Chestnut Flour Products (cont. from page 8)

Because the dried kernel shrinks, it becomes loose inside the peel and the peel can be removed with a knife.

For some years Luciano took the dried nuts to his parents who hand peeled batch after batch, but it wasn't long before it was time for a mechanical peeler. Luciano approached an Italian engineer who developed food processing machinery. They did trials using brushes and rollers without success and Luciano explained that what they needed was a drum with a cutting surface like a grater and some mechanism to rotate the nuts around the drum. They based their final chestnut peeling machine on a potato peeler which has a sand paper finish and uses water to wash away potato peel. Luciano and the engineer lined a drum with the stainless steel cutting sheet and used a brush to move the dried nuts around in the drum and a fan to remove the debris. Both peel and pellicle is removed in the peeling process. 'Luciente' and 'De Coppi Marone' come out 100% clean but Spanish Red and other varieties retain some pellicle and are used for different products. The peeled chestnuts then proceed through an air leg to achieve 100% clean peeled product.

After harvest, fresh chestnuts are quality graded before they are dried and peeled at the farm and the dried nuts are transported to a commercial flour mill in Melbourne. The chestnut flour is then transported to Flavour Makers for manufacture and packaging. Flavour Makers is building a new allergy-free batching room for manufacture of chestnut products.

The milled chestnut flour is silky fine and beautifully pale in colour and one of the product lines packaged is pure Chestnut Flour. Luciano and Anna market their products under the CelebrateHealth brand. Their first CelebrateHealth product, Chestnut Chocolate cake, was launched at the Beechworth Harvest Festival in May 2006.

In addition to Chestnut Flour and Chestnut and Cranberry and Traditional Chestnut Stuffing mixes, CelebrateHealth products include Chestnut and Raspberry Muffin, Chestnut Honey Cinnamon Pancake, two cake mixes, Chocolate Chestnut Cake and Chestnut Lemon Coconut Cake, and two pudding mixes, Sticky Date Pudding and Black Forest

Pudding. Luciano is excited about the potential for more chestnut flour products such as soup mixes. He says the products are all gluten-free and are therefore very popular with people who have gluten intolerance. The products contain chestnut flour as a main ingredient and rice flour which lightens the cakes and tapioca starch which acts as a binder. Chestnut flour does not bind well as it has no gluten. The products also contain gluten free baking powder. All products were developed at the Research and Development kitchen at Flavour Makers.

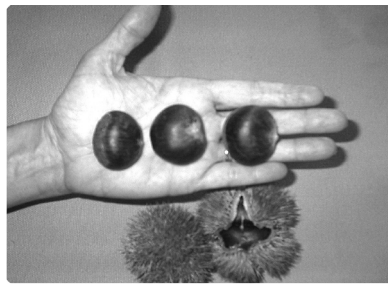
Sales of CelebrateHealth have grown by 50% in the last year. Luciano has plans to develop allergen-free ready-to-cook chestnut meals too. New silver foil packaging has been adopted which looks most attractive and ensures optimum shelf life. Dried chestnut products can be stored without refrigeration. CelebrateHealth products are available in six IGA supermarkets and several boutique food stores. As production increases, products will be stocked nationally by IGA. Luciano says that he has also received interest from Canada.

One of the advantages of chestnut flour products is that they can be manufactured from split and second-grade nuts. Growers are keen to sell these for processing and the nuts can be machine harvested as surface blemish is not important. Luciano is optimistic about the future for the chestnut industry and believes that large-scale production of dried product could solve any over-supply in the fresh chestnut market and establish a market for second grade nuts. He also believes that there is a great future market and education potential if chestnut flour is incorporated into chef training courses.

Luciano is confident that with Flavour Makers place in the market and its facilities, the company will be able to answer the why's as well as the why not's of chestnuts for culinary as well as dietary merit. But having discovered the unique gluten-free quality of chestnut flour for the baking end of the market, what remains to be discovered is: How big is the market and is it only a health market or is it also mainstream market? Is it a growing market? No doubt these questions will be answered in the near future and what a promising future it is. CGA



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