

Trade Notes...

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New American Bento Lunchbox Enjoys Brisk Sales in Japan

The American-made rice *O-Bento* being sold by the Japan Railway East subsidiary, Nippon Restaurant Enterprise (NRE), debuted in Japan with substantial media attention. Newspaper and television reports praised the high quality and reasonable price for this organic lunchbox. Train-traveling consumers seem to find the U.S. product appealing, and sales look promising. NRE reported that sales of the new *O-Bento* are 2.5 times the previous best selling *bento*.

Chile Opens Market to Apples and Pears From Two More States

Chile recently agreed to allow imports of apples and pears from Oregon and Idaho. Before this decision, Chile allowed apples and pears only from the state of Washington. Access for the three states is limited to approved production areas that do not have apple maggot quarantines. This new market opportunity could result in more than \$1 million per year to the two states' fruit industries. In marketing year 1999/2000 (July-June), Washington state apple shipments to Chile totaled 129 tons, valued at just over \$51,450. A lower Washington state apple crop, higher prices and a stronger U.S. dollar vis-à-vis the Chilean peso limited shipments to Chile last season.

U.S. Pork Exports Forecast at Record Level

U.S. pork exports for calendar year 2001 are forecast at a record 700,000 tons, up 18 percent from last year, and the largest yearly change since 1998. Sales to Japan for the first five months were up 37 percent from the previous year. In addition, sales to Canada and Mexico are also at a record-setting pace.

New Zealand Market for Organic Foods Growing Rapidly

According to a major organic food importer, the New Zealand organic food market is about \$80-\$100 million, of which at least 30 percent is imported. The demand for organic food products in New Zealand has risen significantly due to consumers' concern about food safety and nutrition, the environment and the debate over foods from biotechnology. New Zealanders seem to be becoming more interested in the effects of food upon their personal health and the health of their families.

Minnesota Governor Takes Trade Mission to Canada

This summer, Governor Jesse Ventura led a three-day mission to Canada aimed at promoting and strengthening Minnesota's relationship with its largest trading partner. The value of Minnesota agricultural exports to Canada ranked third among all states, at \$429 million last year.