



By Carl Collen

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Congress opens doors to apple advocates



Young apple leaders from Washington State met with congressional members on Capitol Hill to discuss trade and labour

Seven Washington individuals travelled to Washington DC to meet with members of Congress on 13 March to advocate on behalf of the apple industry.

As part of the US Apple Association annual fly-in, the group of young apple leaders were selected by the organisation to meet one-on-one with representative Dan Newhouse, senator Maria Cantwell and six other congressional representatives to discuss hard-hitting issues affecting the future of US agriculture.

The focus for the Washington group was impacts of trade on the apple industry and agriculture labour issues.

"It was a privilege and honour to join with other young apple advocates across our state and the country to serve and represent the apple industry in US Apple Association's Capitol Hill day visits," said Garrett Joeckel of CMI Orchards. "It was a great experience to meet with our state's representatives to educate them on challenges our industry faces and

advocate for policy change to improve the economic climate for apple growers."

The Young Apple Leaders, alongside industry principals, outlined their concerns regarding retaliatory tariffs impacting apple exports and shortage of labour.

They urged congressional leaders to support the passing of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and improvements to the H-2A guest worker programme.

The USMCA is beneficial to healthy trade between Washington and top export markets, while the H-2A guest worker programme is necessary to provide an adequate labour supply but also is costly and challenging to growers.

The visit provided an opportunity for those in the beginning of their career to learn more about the issues and take an active role in advocacy.

"2019 US Apple Capitol Hill Day was an amazing experience," said Aylin Moreno, McDougall & Sons. "It is true what they

say about collaborating with likeminded people, 'plenty of energy and fire in the room'. Voicing our needs was an incredibly rewarding experience and encouraged me to become more involved in our industry."

"The Young Apple Leaders programme provided a great opportunity for industry members across the United States to come to together and spread our message to our state representatives," added Logan Janin of Taggares Fruit.

The seven representatives were Toni Lynn Adams of the Washington Apple Commission, Nicole Gordy from Sage Fruit Company, Logan Janin of Taggares Fruit Company, Garrett Joeckel from CMI Orchards, Tyler Monson of Monson Fruit Company, Aylin Moreno from McDougall and Sons, and Marianne Plath of Washington Fruit and Produce.

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