



By Matthew Jones

Tuesday 24th March 2020, 23:51 GMT

## LCD hits Northwest cherry crop



Disease intervention removes several million cartons of production capability for the coming season

**A** group of pathogens collectively known as Little Cherry Disease (LCD) will shrink the cherry crop out of the US' Pacific Northwest this season.

Pointing to the latest industry estimate, marketing body Northwest Cherry Growers said intervention measures to prevent the spread of the disease will reduce the region's potential production volume by up to 3m cartons.

Though different in nature, the group of viruses and bacteria classed as LCD cause the same results: small, under-developed and bitter fruit. Researchers have narrowed down their spread between orchards to several insects who carry LCD on their bodies. The exact method of insect relocation between orchards or spots within an orchard is still yet to be determined.

Consequently, a remedy has not yet been developed, meaning the only procedure to stop the spread is tree or orchard removal.

"Even after removal, the ground must be attended to and the local source of infection must be addressed, otherwise growers risk re-infecting their replanted orchard," Northwest Cherry Growers said in a release.

"Aside from heavy financial costs, this orchard and tree removal has hit our industry production capability as well. Collectively, our industry estimates that intervention measures have reduced our potential volume by 2.5m-3m boxes for the coming season."

While LCD is a growing challenge for the industry, Northwest Cherry Growers said it posed no threat to end consumers.

"What we do know is that our industry's orchard practices and packing technology ensure none of the small and bitter fruit is shipped for consumers," the release added.

"The high quality of Northwest cherries is a standard throughout the world, and we are committed to maintaining that

bar. Even though it's been an orchard issue for several years, our shipped crop five-year average is 80 per cent 10.5 row and larger, which is an increase over the 10-year and 15-year averages."

Northwest Cherry Growers said the industry was on track for one of its earliest starts on record, with producers tending to over 60,000 acres spread across five states. "We are expecting to have a quality crop of fruit for market in 2020," the release said.