

SUNRISE FRESH DRIED FRUIT

OCTOBER 2020

WALNUTS



Fall is officially under way, and we have had some very warm days for October! Consecutive days of 90 degrees might not sound that bad, unless you are a walnut tree wanting to release the crop you have been growing for 8 months. As the days continue to be warm, the green hull on the walnut adheres to the shell and meat inside. Ethylene production allows the hull to begin its dehiscence; however, the warm weather and low humidity slow this process.

In addition, with the warmer days the crop is heavier as expected. In early September, the USDA released the crop estimate at 780,500 tons, up from the 2019 crop of 653,000 tons. This 19% increase from crop year to crop year is largely due to an increase in producing acreage and higher density plantings.

As we are nearing the end of October, the crop is nearly harvested. The early varieties were harvested in mid- late September, depending on the location in California as different microclimates throughout the valley aid the harvest times. Our own operation is finishing Chandler harvest, the most abundant and well-known walnut variety. The quality this season is proving to be well, yet the late summer heat aided in mite pressure (an insect pest that will force the leaves to drop earlier) and has caused sunburn which can destroy the meat inside the protective hull and shell. Some other contributing factors resulted in shorter crop than originally projected, so while the crop will be larger than last year it will not be the anticipated 19% growth.

Overall, it's exciting to see a larger crop, and it will be nice once all of our acreage is completely harvested and at the processor. Now, the real work begins for the processors -- to market and sell the larger crop with the current challenge we are all facing with the pandemic and world markets.

Sincerely,
Jake Samuel

