

Western U.S. states are forecasting big cherry crops this year, with both California and the Northwest region expecting to harvest some of the largest volumes in years.

Industry association Northwest Cherry Growers (NWCG) has forecast what would be its third-largest crop in history for the 2021 season, with the first estimate pegging volumes at 237,992 metric tons (MT). California meanwhile is expected to produce a crop nearly reaching the 2017 record levels.

NWCG President BJ Thurlby said that although the size may change over the coming months, signs suggested a longer crop, with a more typical distribution between growing districts.

He also said that he is not concerned about a potential oversupply situation, amid strong demand.

"Demand for cherries the last few years has been outstanding," said B.J. Thurlby, president of the Washington State Fruit Commission and Northwest Cherry Growers.

"So, as always, we hope there is enough demand to keep both (California) and the (Northwest) from backing up. Right now, we think that both the domestic and export markets have the ability to absorb the Pacific Coast crop that we have on the trees."

California farms in the southernmost growing regions started picking the first week of May.

"We're looking forward to 2021 being an excellent year for California cherries in terms of both volume and quality," Chris Zanobini, executive director of the California Cherry Advisory Board, told the [Capital Press](#).

Statewide, Zanobini said, the crop prediction is 9.47 million 18-pound boxes, near the record volume produced in 2017.

In the Pacific Northwest, harvest in early districts should begin by the start of June.

"It appears that at this point we are on track for a start that should begin by 1 June. In several of our earliest regions we are only a day or two behind last year, which saw harvest start on 28 May," said Thurlby.

"As more orchards & regions come online during the first two weeks of June, volume may accumulate more slowly due to weather-impacted orchards. While volume may accumulate more slowly, as the end of June approaches we expect shipping volumes to exceed last

year.”

Thurlby noted supplies for late June and the 4 July promotions looked promising while July should be a strong month all the way through. In August, projected volume is predicted to trickle out through the end of the month.

NWCG has revealed it will implement the largest marketing campaign in the organization's history to support this campaign. The campaign will be focused on promoting the health benefits of sweet cherries.

“In North America, digital promotions remain critical to reaching the massive growth in online shoppers,” said Thurlby. “However, whether consumers are shopping in stores or online, they all seem to be putting more focus on healthier eating and so are we.”