

Tech company gearing up for harvest interest

Device pays pickers by weight

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

SPOKANE — Agriculture tech company 2nd Sight Bioscience has sold 50 of its automated harvest weighing stations for the coming season.

The Spokane business will build 50 more units next month, some of which are included in that sale, said Monika Cetnarowski, director of business development.

Growers have tested the company's FairPick system in recent seasons. The product is designed to improve labor efficiency, paying pickers by weight and recording the data electronically.

After testing it last year, Mike Omeg, owner of Omeg Family Orchards in The Dalles, Ore., plans to add the equipment to his cherry operation. He previously paid harvesters by the bucket, but challenges arose when monitoring staff would ask for fuller buckets and pickers would say the bucket was full.

"If we move to pay by the pound, it takes all of the tension out of the equation, it keeps the harvest staff doing the picking honest, and it keeps me, doing the paying, honest," Omeg said. "I really like that concept. It's better for everyone involved in the harvest process."

The system records each employee's work in real time, which helps protect Omeg against possible wage complaints. As the technology is proven in various fruit operations, he expects it to be widely adopted.

Omeg is a member of the Capital Press board of directors.

John Raap, chief financial officer for Olsen Brothers Ranches Inc. in Prosser, Wash., will also use 2nd Sight Biosciences Systems.

"There's going to be more technology and efforts toward automating and becoming more efficient," Raap said. "This is certainly a way to do that, bringing technology out to



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Monika Cetnarowski, director of business development for 2nd Sight Bioscience, demonstrates the InstaCaliper, used to help measure and count nursery stock, March 22 in the company's office in Spokane.



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Monika Cetnarowski, director of business development for 2nd Sight Bioscience, demonstrates the FairPick automated weighing system March 22 in the company's Spokane office. Roughly 50 of the units were sold for the upcoming harvest season, Cetnarowski said.

the farm, out in the fields. For payroll, it's a beautiful thing."

2nd Sight offers a labor tracking application, FairTrak, which comes on a "ruggedized" hand-held device.

"You can beat it up a little bit," Cetnarowski said. "We've

pushed to have it on a rugged piece of equipment, just because we know in farming environments, you have direct sunlight, heat, moisture, you're going to drop this thing, it's going to be beaten up."

Growers can use the app to

track their labor all year, with data going to the same account, Cetnarowski said.

2nd Sight also offers an electronic calipering device for counting and measuring nursery stock, and is working on yield tracking with me-

Online

<http://www.2ndsightbio.com/>

chanical harvesters.

The company is working with a California tomato grower to design an electronic application to meet that specific harvest process.

Also in the pipeline, 2nd Sight CEO Kevin Oldenburg has discussed a backpack-style blueberry harvester that picks berries gently enough for them to be sold in the fresh market, Cetnarowski said.

The company is also working to adapt its calipering device for rootstock growers.

The company has customers in Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, Ontario, Georgia and Florida.

"We're kind of finding these pockets of growers that are interested and then of course the word spreads from there," Cetnarowski said.