

# Local grower testifies against Chinese apple juice imports

By Ira T. Weiss  
Staff Reporter

BEEKMAN—A local apple grower and chairman of the Hudson Valley Fruit Grower Task Force testified before a House Appropriations Subcommittee May 22 concerning the increase of Chinese imports and the resulting damage they have done to apple growers locally and across the country.

Beekman resident and Councilman Peter Barton has made numerous trips to Washington since he was named chairman for the task force. The task force was formed last year due to the devastating early spring freezes that killed off much of the crop in the Hudson Valley. The group has been instrumental in including specialty crops in the 2003 Disaster Bill and is working with Congress to reform the federal crop insurance pro-

gram.

"Chinese apple juice exporters have dropped their process so low that apple juice processors now make the majority of their apple juice from apple juice concentrate," said Barton.

According to Barton, juice grade apples represent 20-40 % of the apples produced and that the revenue from juice apple sales went straight "to our bottom line, and offset our per-unit cost per acre." The juice apples helped to make apple growing profitable.

Juice grade apples are apples that are not sellable in stores due to blemishes and defects.

"Some years we can't even move the crop and it's destroyed," said Barton.

The United States Department of Commerce over the last two years had established a floor on concentrate prices

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The Union Vale Fire Department's Memorial Day Services included a rifle salute in honor of all the fallen men and women.

## ...Apple juice

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and monitored Chinese exporters that tried to go below the floor by raising the duties on the concentrate.

In November, the Department of Commerce picked Turkey's market economy over Poland's as a surrogate to estimate costs for China's non-market economy. The market price for apple juice concentrate is now lower than two years ago and come this fall it will price the local growers out of the market, Barton said.

Effectively, the tariffs that were in place to stop Chinese apple juice concentrate exporters from "dumping" onto the U.S. market have been removed.

"Commerce seems to have overlooked the interests of the U.S. apple industry," said U.S. Apple Association Past Chairman Philip B. Glaize, Jr.

The U.S. Apple Association

administers the Coalition for Fair Apple Juice Concentrate Trade (FACT) which filed an anti-dumping case in June 1999 against the below-cost Chinese apple juice concentrate.

In a statement to the Commerce Subcommittee, Barton said "China's export of apple juice concentrate to the U.S. market is eroding the future of our family farms."

Barton Orchards has adjusted to market trends and strategies over the last 10 years.

"I am not here to complain about slim profit margins or even a break-even market. I am talking about total loss," said Barton.

Barton said that the country's apple growers are producing crops that have no market value due to imports and not because of domestic overproduction.

Barton's trips to Washington have helped to build positive relationships with local representa-

tives and he said that Congressman Frank Wolf from the 10th District of Virginia, chair of the subcommittee, was "quite passionate about some positive outcome from the hearing."

Barton said that after the hearing he and Glaize were able to speak with the Department of Commerce Deputy Peter Allgeier and he said that they will be discussing in the future where the fruit industry is today, how it will be impacted by the November ruling and then readdress the issues.

Barton said that he hopes that the policies will be made beneficial so that U.S. companies end up winning and the commerce department won't be ruling against them.

Other local representatives that sit on the committee are co-chair Congressman John Sweeney (R-Clifton Park) and Congressman Jose E. Serrano (D-New York).