

## Derrel Key has been farming for 61 Years.

When you talk to Mr. Key you get the feeling he has so much information in his head that it might start spilling out of his ears. His knowledge of agriculture is not limited to the stone fruits that he mostly grows now. He has background experience in raising everything from cattle to cucumbers. He has been making his own way in business since he was 13.

Now he annually produces 150 tons of fruit which he stores in several refrigerated storage buildings he constructed including the converted barn his grandfather built in 1920. He sells all of his fruit directly to consumers through farmer's markets in Walla Walla, Pendleton, LaGrande and Pasco allowing him to receive more money per pound of fruit than if he sold to a distributor or grocery store.



Mr. Key is describing how to check for ripeness in the plum by observing the sugar content of the plum flesh. Flesh with higher sugar is slightly darker and glossy. This is how he predicts when to pick the fruit.



Mr. Key and his son at the packing station near Milton Freewater OR

Mr. Key grows **8** varieties of plums, **3** varieties of apricots **12** varieties of peaches and **6** varieties of pluots (the cross between plum and apricot). He has such a variety that there are different fruits coming ripe at different times from July through September.