

# The Washington Post

FINAL

Inside: Home, local news Extra  
Today's Contents on Page A2

25¢

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan  
Washington. (See box on Page A4)

THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2001

M1

## Farm Policy's Blossoming Dilemma

### *Globalization Drives Apple Growers to First Plea for Federal Aid*

By DAN MORGAN  
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

ALBION, N.Y.—In the narrow fruit belt that clings to the southern shore of Lake Ontario like some fertile Yankee Monterey, apple growers are a flinty breed who have prospered for nearly two centuries without the federal support that many American farmers take for granted.

Country roads lined with sugar maples cross a reminder of the region's former economic importance—the Erie Canal, known locally as “DeWitt Clinton's Ditch” for the 19th century New York governor who helped create it. But this year, as a late spring once again begins to transform the gnarled fruit trees and orchards into a blanket of sweet-smelling blossoms, the apple industry is turning in desperation to Washington in what could mark the beginning of an

expensive new chapter in American agriculture.

The apple growers are at the heart of a debate that is just now beginning on Capitol Hill over how far the federal government should go to protect domestic agricultural interests in the increasingly globalized food economy. Perennial boom and bust cycles have always winnowed out weak farmers. But many fruit and vegetable growers believe they are facing something fundamentally different.

Foreign agribusinesses, using sophisticated Internet marketing, quickly fill gaps in U.S. supplies of everything from asparagus to garlic. Surging Latin American investments in transportation, packaging and marketing have turned countries such as Chile into tough competitors for U.S. fruit growers.

See APPLES, A12, Col. 1