

# Strike's impact spreading

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Cold-storage facilities, trucking firms and growers, both locally and throughout Central California, say they are among the victims of the two-week-old strike against two of Watsonville's major frozen food plants.

The strike against Richard A. Shaw Inc. and Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food Co. has financially hurt those companies and their 2,000-plus workers from the start. But related industries say they are losing money too, and predict the impact of the strike will ripple through the region.

"When nothing is coming in, there is no work for my people," said Rocky Criscola, plant manager of Termicold, a freezing facility on Riverside Drive that shares driveways and runways with its neighbor, Shaw.

"I am sending about 30 percent of my workers (two or three people) home per shift," said Criscola.

Criscola said his operation, owned by Beatrice Companies, depends on business from Shaw and Watsonville Canning and that suppliers, such as Fleming Foods and Safeway, depend on Termicold to fill orders for frozen vegetables.

Criscola said he can understand both sides of the strike, but adds he thinks that Watsonville Canning's offer of a 30 percent wage reduction was too severe.

He said he'd like to see the union and the Teamsters settle for his workers as well as for workers in related industries.

"So often in this strike you hear how it is hurting the people on the picket line, but you forget that if they aren't working it means people in the field aren't working either. A strike hurts everyone, and the results could be drastic for the community."

Don Bargiacchi, a brussels sprouts grower near Davenport, said the strike has already hit him hard.

"My crop is ready now. I could employ 20 people full-

market is no good. The fresh market cannot even begin to handle all that we have to give them."

Bargiacchi and other growers along Santa Cruz County's North Coast — who together are contracted to sell 3,500 tons of produce to Watsonville Canning and Shaw's — are trying to keep their crops from peaking by not watering them.

Bargiacchi said although he has a contract with the frozen-food companies he will have no

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time," Bargiacchi said. "Instead we have only been working two hours a day for fresh-market picking and then I send my workers home."

Some North Coast farmers who sell their produce to E.V. Maceo Co. in Santa Cruz have gotten their crops processed through that company, which is leasing the Shaw plant.

Bargiacchi said he normally would be harvesting 20 acres per week for Watsonville's frozen-food plants. Since he can't send his product to the freezers, his only option is sending it to the fresh market.

"Putting it on the fresh

recourse if they do not buy his product.

"The contract says if there is any labor dispute they will not be held responsible for our losses."

Broccoli growers are not being hurt as much as sprouts growers because of other market conditions. "The fresh market is giving a good price for the broccoli we would normally be sending to freezers, but the fresh market can change from hour to hour," said Clem Richardson, a manager at Fresh Western Marketing, which represents dozens of Salinas Valley growers.

"Of course, if the plants were taking our broccoli, then we could command a higher price on the fresh market," he said.

Richardson said cauliflower growers from Salinas through King City are getting a low price for their product on the fresh market. He said the spinach farmers he knows are leaving their crops in the field.

He said one effect from this is that hundreds of farm workers are not being called to work.

Trucking firms that would be hauling crops from the fields are also being affected. While Trans Valley Transport, a large Salinas-based firm, is pulling loads to rendezvous points near the struck plants, smaller firms are not working at all.

"I've closed my whole operation down," said Phil King, the owner of Posse Freight, a Patterson firm which has hauled cauliflower from King City to Shaw's for the last six years.

"Normally I keep four of my five trucks busy from July through December hauling produce to Shaw's. But now since their plant isn't running, they're (growers) not pulling anything out of the fields," said King.

King said even if Shaw's was processing more vegetables he probably wouldn't haul for them: "I won't go through a picket line. There are too many repercussions both immediately and down the line. Rather than risk getting something poured into the engine of one of my trucks, I'd rather just keep them off the road till everything settles down. Besides, I was a union member for 25-years."