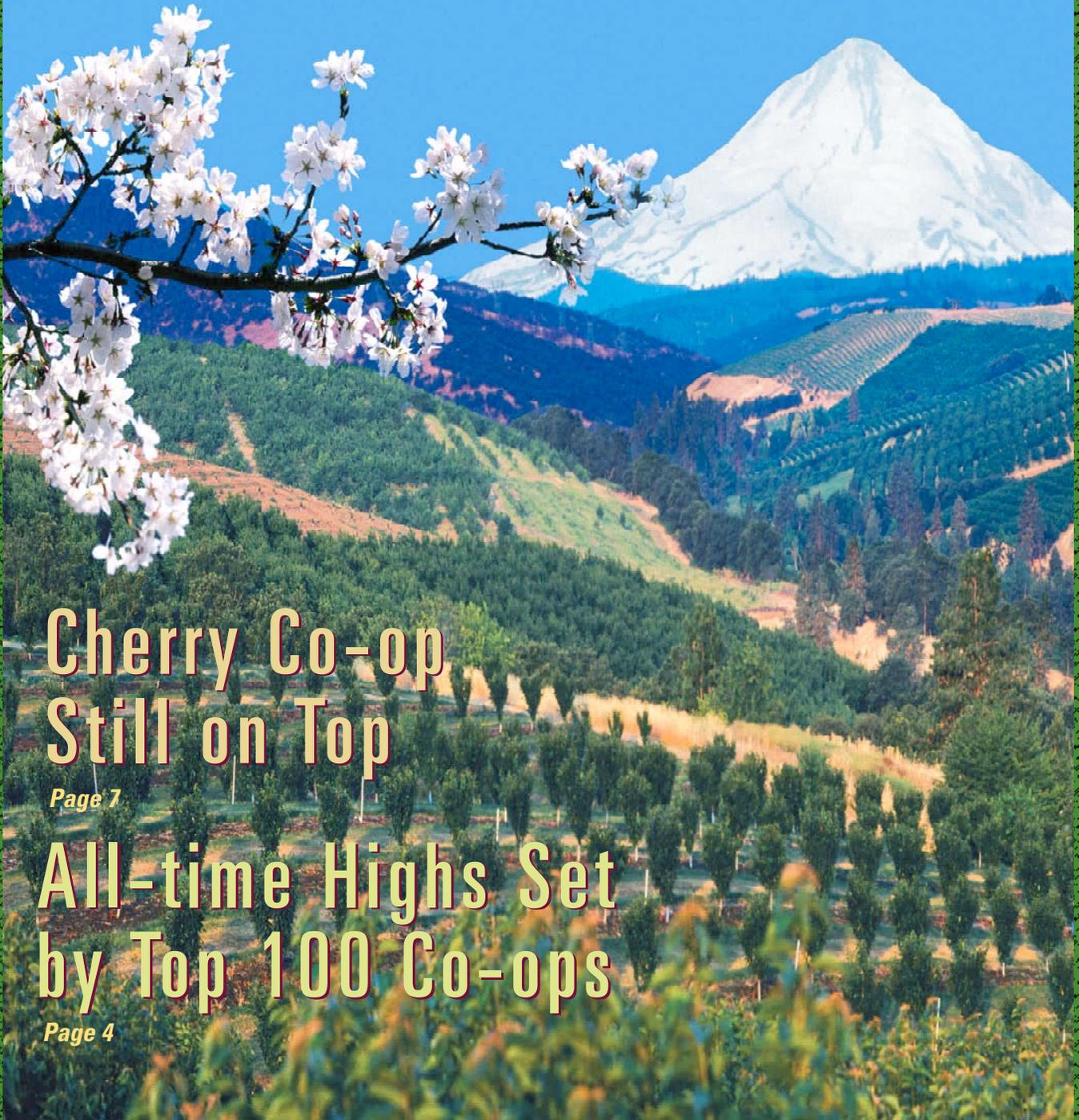


# Rural COOPERATIVES

USDA / Rural Development

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## Cherry Co-op Still on Top

*Page 7*

## All-time Highs Set by Top 100 Co-ops

*Page 4*

## Quilters co-op goes private



*Quilting has long provided an important source of income for craftspeople in West Virginia. After many years as a co-op, Cabin Creek Quilters now operates as a privately owned business. The co-op's retail store has closed. USDA file photos*



For more than three decades, Cabin Creek Quilters Cooperative served rural crafts people of West Virginia. It provided income for many coal mining families, promoted tourism in the area and preserved the region's traditions and heritage.

Ten years ago, the cooperative had 300 members and was strategically headquartered in an 1840-vintage house. Today, Cabin Creek Quilters still strives to preserve heritage and provide income, but as a privately owned company rather than as a cooperative.

President and owner Rebecca Stelling was once a member of the cooperative's board. "You've got to get someone involved that really understands marketing and the business aspects, and that's where I came into play," she says. "The women... came to me."

Stelling asserts that the cooperative model was very effective in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, but she feels it is no longer a viable way of doing things. "From a management perspective, it's really hard to manage it and maintain it with that kind of structure," she says. "Now it's a business that I operate, so I can really stay on top of things."

When Cabin Creek Quilters changed from a cooperative to a corporation in July 2007, there were only about 20 co-op members. Stelling still works with the former members of the co-op to produce quilts and she also uses new quilters. "I'm involving more women, which is truly a goal of something like this," she says.

Cabin Creek Quilters no longer has a retail location, and West Virginia State University now owns the historic house that once served as the co-op's headquarters. Stelling markets her product by doing special shows throughout the year, and she provides custom quilts for customers through her Web site: [www.cabincreekquilts.com](http://www.cabincreekquilts.com).