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OREGON TREES

Channel 6

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5:11

Judy Rooks

And while Governor Atiyeh continues touring the Middle East his trade mission may be bearing fruit already. A member of the Mission says the Saudis are interested in the apple growing industry. From our Willamette Valley bureau, Eric Mason reports.

Eric Mason

When you think of apple trees you think of cooler climates like Oregon's. Now Saudi Arabia is thinking the same way. According to members of the Governor's trade mission, the Saudis are interested in apples. But to grow their own the Saudis want high tech apple trees.

There's where David Smith of Oregon Root Stock comes in. Smith and his brothers grow about five million dwarf apple tree roots every year from the Woodburn operation. From cloning in laboratories to growing in greenhouses and stool beds, the Smiths grow almost half of the country's supply of such apple tree roots.

Now the Saudis are making their interest known.

David Smith

The interest that they've been showing with Governor Vic Atiyeh on his visit over there, his trade mission visit, is showing some good signs. I think that they'll be calling us quite shortly.

Eric Mason

Smith expects the Saudis to buy between 100,000 and 200,000 roots, and they're not just any roots. The Smiths can take tissue samples from one tree that grows well in the Saudi climate and propagate some half million clones that will be best suited for the dessert country.

Smith says a few years ago he knew that the potential for selling to other countries was there. Now, says Smith, trade missions like Governor Atiyeh's have spread the world that Oregon has something to offer.

The Saudis are not the only ones interested in apple trees from Oregon, Knoll View is finalizing a deal with the Mexican government to sell some 200,000 trees this spring. Near Salem, Eric Mason reporting for Newsroom 6.

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