

# SEED & ROW CROP

MARCH 6, 2026



**Capital Press**

EMPOWERING PRODUCERS OF FOOD & FIBER

# Oregon Seed Council advocates for industry's success

By ALIYA HALL

For the Capital Press

Megan Chuinard, executive producer of the Oregon Seed Council, wants to ensure that Oregon seed is not forgotten.

"There's a lot of policy conversations at the capitol, at the federal level, where we need to be involved in the conversations and have folks know the impact that their decisions will make on this industry," she said.

Created in the 1960s, the Oregon Seed Council is a trade organization that advocates for seed farmers, marketers, brokers, researchers and others involved in the Oregon seed industry within the public, media and government decision makers.

"We are the umbrella organization for the industry because we have such diverse members representing different sections of Ore-



Members of the Oregon Seed Council meet with House Representative Suzanne Bonamici. Executive Director Megan Chuinard (right) said she wants Oregon Seed to be involved with policy conversations on the state and federal level so officials, "know the impact that their decisions will make on this industry." (Courtesy Oregon Seed Council)

gon's seed industry," Chuinard said. "So for us, it's really bringing people together and being the voice for the industry."

Dave Goracke, president of Oregon Seed Council and owner of Cala Farms, said from his per-

spective as a grower the council is a great place to convene and discuss their plan to "defend their rights as farmers, especially when legislature is in session."

"We're working hard to prioritize what items that we're going

to stand up and fight for," he said. "And so it's a great tool in that respect."

Goracke sees the three biggest issues the seed council is currently tackling in the buckets of regulation, production and market

challenges.

"In the market world, we are faced with an extremely down market right now with a lot of overproduction coming off of the COVID era," he said.

To alleviate those challenges, the seed council has done more active outreach through social media promotion as well as organized activities like a trade mission to China to educate their industry and government officials on the benefits of Oregon seed crops.

Chuinard added that there's been barriers with international trade. Normally, Oregon exports \$162,824,000 worth of seed to 56 countries.

For regulation and production, Goracke said the biggest combination issue is field voles. Although there's a lot of research around the

See OSC, Page 3



## We can help you save on your energy costs.

Visit [EnergyTrust.org/Ag](https://EnergyTrust.org/Ag) to learn more about our cash incentives for agriculture.

  
EnergyTrust  
of Oregon

## OSC

*Continued from Page 2*

pests, he said it's been a "tricky deal to navigate."

Despite the challenges facing the industry, the Oregon Seed Council was honored with the 2025 Global Trailblazer Award by the Oregon Consular Corps for its impact in sports and recreation.

For the last four consecutive FIFA World Cups, 99% to 100% of the grass seed for the natural turf fields were from Oregon companies, Chuinard said.

"I think it was really helpful to provide a view of agriculture that people don't always see," she said. "I don't think folks always think about, 'wow, this thing that I really love has this strong connection to Oregon agriculture' and we're, able to take that and tell more story about Oregon seed."

Going forward, Goracke hopes for the industry to get out of its market slump and focus on tackling the production challenges, and Chuinard said the council is advocating for policies to help members during times like these when it is a hard market.

"We are a significant industry for the state of Oregon. Agriculture is our number two economic driver and grass seed is the number four commodity," she said. "So how do we keep propping up the seed industry as a whole?"

As someone who grew up in seed production, Groacke said he's passionate about the industry and would hate to lose production to a competing area.

"We're in a special place. Our climate, our soils are just perfect for what we do," he said. "So, I'm doing what I can to help preserve Oregon's ability to produce quality seed."



**Best Prices on Irrigation Supplies**

**IrrigationKing.com**

**Fast & Free Shipping from Oregon**  
[www.irrigationking.com](http://www.irrigationking.com)  
**1-844-259-0640**

**10% OFF**  
 PROMO CODE:  
**CAP10**

**Do you know your banker?**

*You should.*

At Citizens Bank, banking is about more than just account numbers & transactions.

Your Citizens Banker is a loyal partner, a trusted consultant, and an advocate for your future success.

**CITIZENS BANK™**  
[www.citizensEbank.com](http://www.citizensEbank.com) • 1-844-770-7100

Member FDIC  
 LENDER

# Washington State Crop Improvement Association balances seed production, certification

By ALIYA HALL  
For the Capital Press

For the Washington State Crop Improvement Association, collaboration is “always key,” according to association manager Aaron Jeschke.

“We have a really good pool of resources to learn on, or other colleagues we can ask questions,” he said. “We’re always getting information and turn it around to share with [growers] in Washington.”

The Washington State Crop Improvement Association (WSCIA) is a nonprofit organization that works alongside public and private breeding programs, state departments and seed growers to develop, produce and distribute certified seed to improve crop yields in Washington.

As a member of the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (ASOCA), the WSCIA has a specific set of seed crops it grows, inspects and performs certifica-

tion on.

“That’s always been a critical need within to the state to make sure seed quality is where it needs to be,” Jeschke said. “That the varieties dealers are selling are the correct variety, and the quality germination and physical seed purity is there for growers to be able to maximize their potential return per acre every single year.”

The association works with Washington State University, Oregon State University as well as the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and more recently with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

WSCIA formally established in 1951 with seed certification, but in 1978 the association added in production and distribution of breeder and foundation seed.

The seed certification process starts with breeder seed. What is harvested from that becomes foundation seed, which is sold to distributors around the area. What is harvested from the foundation seed becomes



**A Washington Field of wheat. The Washington State Crop Improvement Association is a nonprofit organization that works alongside public and private breeding programs, state departments and seed growers to develop, produce and distribute certified seed in order to improve crop yields in Washington.** (Courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture)

registered, and then certified.

“It’s a big process to get foundation seed but basically it all comes down to the crop standards,” Cheyan James, foundation seed manager, said. “It’s making sure every single seed field that is in Washington, for small grains and pulses, meets the minimum standards.”

Each seed variety that is released has a trait the breeder has been working into the seed, James said, adding that new varieties of seed roughly show up every two years, depending on the crop.

While there are certain traits that are being worked into seeds for disease or herbicide resistance, James said that breeders predominately focus on developing varieties to specific locations around Washington.

“They’ll develop specific varieties for high rainfall or low rainfall areas, and then whatever disease package they put into that

will directly be associated with that area,” she said.

Many of the disease packages include resistance to rust, wireworm, or root breaker.

The biggest challenge facing the WSCIA is similar to any grower in the seed industry, James said, working with the ground and not being able to control the weather.

“The challenge is always going to be to just get the best product I can,” she said.

The WSCIA’s latest goal is reaching the industry in different ways, such as promoting their active memberships, to help growers get involved in the process and better understand seed certification.

“If anybody has questions, we are always very happy to answer,” James said, “because that’s going to help them better understand and they’ll take that knowledge and hopefully pass it on to someone else.”

## LEE'S DIESEL & MOBILE REPAIR, LLC

Rickreall, OR • 541-936-9146 • [www.leasediesel.com](http://www.leasediesel.com)

### Pivot & Linear Irrigation Systems

Parts & Service - All Electric Machines, Diesel Engines & Generators



**GPS Guidance Systems**  
Submersible & Line-Shaft  
Turbine Pumps, VFD's

**Deutz Linear Engine**  
Timing Belts  
Replace every 5 Years  
or 4500 hrs

**Lima Generator Bearing and Cap**  
New Engines: Isuzu, FPT,  
Perkins & Others

LEGEND X VIKING PRO



MAXX-D DOX

Large Variety of Trailers and Truck Beds

Your Full Service Dealer • Halsey, OR • 541-369-2755 • [www.DIAMONDKSALES.com](http://www.DIAMONDKSALES.com)

Diamond  Sales

- Dumps
- Enclosed
- Utilities
- Car Haulers
- Flat Beds
- Stock Trailers



# Six generations of Bennett family have farmed Lake Labish

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**  
For the Capital Press

The Bennett family has farmed in the historical, unique Lake Labish area for more than 125 years.

The lake-marsh just north of Salem, Ore., was drained in the early 1900s under the Swamp Land Act of 1860 to create more farmland. The process revealed level expanses of dark, fertile peat soil considered among the richest, most productive soils in the Willamette Valley.

Owned and managed by Greg Bennett and his sons, Tony and Ryan, who represent the fifth generation on the farm, Lake Labish Farms comprises about 850 acres of this ground.

While there's standing water in winter, by spring the soil dries up enough for them to plant, and by late summer they're kicking up dust.

The Bennetts dedicate around 350 acres to onions, planting 200,000 seeds per acre, resulting in an impressive annual yield of around 25 million pounds. In addition to onions, the farm rotates grass and wheat crops on another 350 acres, with smaller plots planted in blueberries and hazelnuts.

Greg Bennett started Northwest Onion Company in 1985 to provide a grower-packer-shipper relationship in the marketplace. What began as a small family onion packing facility has become one of the largest onion shippers in Western Oregon, hauling onions from various storage barns all winter long.

Northwest Onion processes between 700,000 and 900,000 50-pound onion bags annually and, depending on the market,



From left, Tony, Greg and Ryan Bennett farm on the rich soil of Lake Labish. Greg formed Northwest Onion Company in 1985 to process, pack and sell their onions and those of other local farmers.

they send 10% to 40% of these around the world.

Numerous factors — a sudden glut in the market; a natural disaster in another country — can fire a volatile market, not to mention the ever present threat of weeds, disease and pests.

In recent years, the Bennetts have made significant investments to stay ahead of the game.

Three years ago, they automatized their 1985 packing line, employing hyperspectral imaging to assess the internal and external quality of onions. The machine kicks out those that don't make the grade.

"It took 30 people to run our old line, and we could do about six semi loads a

day," Bennett said. "Now we can do eight loads a day with just eight people."

They've automatized several other

aspects of the business that they'd done by hand for decades, the latest being the purchase of a Swiss-made Ecorobotix robotic sprayer.

The three-point machine, attached to the back of a tractor, is 20 feet wide and traverses the fields at 4 mph, identifying and spraying weeds only.

"Our fields are cleaner; we're saving the field labor and using a lot less pesticides; it's been a good advancement for us."

As their parents begin to step back from certain aspects of the business, Tony and Ryan are taking on increased responsibilities and thoughtfully considering the farm's future, especially with their own children in mind.

The oldest of six from the next generation is studying ag business management at college with plans to return to the family farm, but whatever their offspring choose to do, they have the full support of their parents.

"My dad always said, 'If you love what you do, you never have to work a day in your life.'"



## 35 SERIES 5835R



- Cast Iron Housings, Metal Hood And Fenders
- Large Operator's Platform
- Adjustable 3-point Hitch Links
- Fender Mounted 3 Point Lift
- "Wet" Clutch And Shuttle With Sensitivity Control Adjustment

### THE TRACTOR STORE

541-342-5464 • 5450 W. 11<sup>TH</sup>, EUGENE OR



**WACKER  
NEUSON**  
*all it takes!*



**RICKREALL**  
Since 1947  
**Farm Supply**  
503-623-2365



**Kubota**










5226625-1



## PREVENT DAMAGE to your CROPS



### ZP AG

PELLETS • OATS

- ZP Ag is available in various forms (Pellets, Oats) and can be broadcast in many different applications, including Fruit and Nut Tree Orchards, Vineyards and Nurseries
- The proven zinc phosphide formula controls a variety of pests such as voles, gophers, ground squirrels, as well as rats and mice.

### PCQ Ag

PELLETED BAIT

- Restricted Use product for control of California Ground Squirrels, Meadow & Pine Voles, Rats and Mice
- Broad label for a variety of baiting situations\*, including in and around Fruit Tree Orchards (apply after harvest)
- Versatile, durable pelleted bait with proven palatability
- PCQ AG is registered for sale in the following states: WA, OR, NV, MI, PA, MA, VA, NC, GA, CA, MT, ID

ZP Ag and PCQ Ag are Restricted Use products for use ONLY by Certified Applicators  
\*See product label for complete application instructions

Not approved for the control of Meadow & Pine Voles in the State of CA



## MOTOMCO

THE WORLD LEADER IN RODENT CONTROL TECHNOLOGY®  
www.motomco.com. • (800) 418-9242

# Cal Farms is one of the largest carrot operations

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**

For the Capital Press

Ambrose Calcagno is an agricultural entrepreneur who has built one of the nation's leading independent carrot operations, ranking fourth among independent growers and producers of baby carrots across the country.

His leadership at Cal Farms in Clackamas County, Ore., focuses on vertical integration and achieving operational scale through disciplined expansion. With operations in Oregon and Arizona, Cal Farms leverages geographic diversification to ensure supply continuity, quality control and year-round production stability.

As president and CEO of their carrot operation Calacagno Fresh, the fourth-generation farmer developed major processing and packing facilities serving grocery retailers throughout the Western United States. He oversees the growing, processing, packing and distribution of more than 30 varieties of fresh market vegetables, supplying several of the nation's leading grocery chains with a strategic mix of conventional and organic products.

The 44-year-old had wanted to be a farmer as far back as he can remember, growing up riding around in tractors and trucks with his father. The legacy continues.

"My son, Wilder, has been out in the field with me since he was born," Ambrose Calcagno said. "He loves riding the John Deere tractors, and his play revolves around harvesting crops.

"Watching his interest grow confirms that farming really is in our blood."

The long days, the volatility of weather, water access and costs, along with inflation and shifting markets, requires continual reinvestment in infrastructure and skilled operations despite the tight margins.

One of their most useful advancements has been the addition of a modern carrot processing facility.

"The automation in harvesting, optical sorting, sizing and packing — especially for baby cut peeled carrots — has improved efficiency and consistency throughout while helping reduce waste," Calcagno said. "Operations that combine technology with experienced, skilled teams will be the ones that last."

Calcagno is grateful and humbled to be part



**Ambrose Calcagno has built one of the nation's leading independent carrot operations. Carrot Fresh, a division of Cal Farms of Clackamas County, Ore., ranks fourth in the nation among independent producers of baby carrots.** (Courtesy Cal Farms)

of such a rich tradition.

"When you work with the land, you think long-term," he said. "My responsibility is to make decisions today that keep the farm viable and healthy for the generations that follow."

The family's work ethic still exists, but the operation is now much larger and more complex. Raising a myriad of vegetables involves coordination, technology and business decisions that didn't exist generations ago.

Meeting his wife, an environmental law professor, has had a significant impact on his life and the direction of the family farm.

"Every generation made decisions that allowed the next to continue farming," he said. "My wife and I talk often about creating a sustainable operation that can support our children and their children."

Cal Farms is among the first farms in the country to apply for the United States Department of Agriculture's Pilot Program for Regenerative Farming. Launched in December 2025 by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the program is a farmer-first, outcomes-based approach to conservation designed to return the agency to its core mission — helping people help the land.

To that end, NRCS is investing \$700 million to specifically support regenerative agriculture.

"We appreciate the federal support to help family farms continue to become better stewards of the land we depend on," Calcagno said. "Knowing you're feeding people, starting with our local community and extending to families across the country, with fresh, healthy vegetables is deeply satisfying."

# Idaho Bean Commission helps guide sizable industry

By **BRAD CARLSON**  
Capital Press

PARMA, Idaho — Bean season can't come soon enough for farmer Michael Goodson, who in late February alternately checked a tractor's specialized planter attachment and looked out his shop's open overhead door at heavy rain.

"About 25% of our operation is bean seed," the southwest Idaho farmer and Idaho Bean Commission board member said.

Bean seed "adds to diversification in the crop rotation," Goodson said. And bean production comes with lower input costs — the crop is a mid-level water user, for example — compared to some of the more intensive specialty crops.

"They take proper water management," he said. "I don't know if they're necessarily more durable."

## A national leader

"Idaho's claim to fame in the industry is as a seed production state," said Monty Hamilton, a Kimberly-based commission board member who works for a green bean seed dealer. "We can produce clean seed where most states cannot" due to strict state rules and a dry climate in the southwest and south-central regions where the industry is centered.

The commission is a key driver of the industry's ongoing success in the state, Goodson and Hamilton said. All industry participants pay an assessment — increased last July 1 for the first time since 1992 — that funds research, marketing and promotion, and education.

"All the work we do benefits farmers," Hamilton said.

And dealers "use the commission to help unify," he said. Every company in the state was represented at annual bean schools held in the southwest and south-central regions in January, and "those bean schools are important to bring growers and the industry together."

Grower and acre totals vary because beans are a rotation crop and subject to the strict rules, but IBC estimates the state has about 500 growers who last year grew about 45,000 acres combined, commission executive director Andi Woolf-Weibye said. The number of dealers, not immediately available, also can vary on factors such as openings and consolidations.



Michael Goodson inspects a 12-row bean planter's opening disc, which opens a uniform trench in which to plant seed, Feb. 24 near Parma, Idaho. Brad Carlson/Capital Press

"Our irrigated acres, hot, dry summers and volcanic soils are very good for production," she said. Idaho traditionally ranks first in the U.S. in production of certified disease-free bean seed and fifth in bean acres.

## Level playing field

IBC's board is comprised equally between growers and dealers, which results in "a more complete industry buy-in and industry involvement," Woolf-Weibye said. It's a way to make sure "everyone is following the guidelines and there is an equal playing field."

The assessment is paid entirely by the state's bean industry, and the commission does not receive state general fund dollars.

The commission's organizational setup "allows us to do things like apply for grants," Woolf-Weibye said. "In the last eight years, we have received over \$400,000 in grants" mainly for research.

The longtime assessment was 12 cents per hundredweight, paid 8 cents by growers and 4 cents by dealers. The 2025 legislature approved 16-24 cents shared equally by growers and dealers; as of last July 1, it is 16 cents. Driving factors included inflation, increased research — such as in entomology — better-yielding varieties that reduced the need to increase acreage, and participation over the previous decade in several international trade missions organized by the governor's office.

"Dealers proposed making the assessment

equal," Woolf-Weibye said. "Nobody loves paying more, but I've really not heard any

huge grumblings."

## On-ground benefits

Commission work ranges from variety, chemical and cultural practice research to "developing new markets and continuing to educate current markets on why clean seed is important to the bean industry," Goodson said. On the seed side, a goal is to "make sure Idaho remains the top-tier class."

Some 90% of Idaho bean acres are for seed, the rest for edibles, Hamilton said.

One aspect of state rules is to limit sprinkler irrigation of a field to two years before changing to gravity or drip, a way to keep foliage dry over seed generations, he said.

Goodson, who contracts with companies in the region that sell to commercial growers around the world, said one of the commission's value propositions is "an unbiased perspective for growers on new products that are out in the marketplace, so growers can see the data." He is considering using a newly labeled product for beans to help with weed control.

Relationships  
Beyond Lending



HARVEST CAPITAL COMPANY, LLC

dba Harvest Capital Company of America, LLC in AZ, CA, ID, MT, NE, UT, and WA

DEDICATED TO THE BUSINESS OF AGRICULTURE

Long Term Real  
Estate Lending for  
Agriculture

Give us a call at:  
(503) 263-6616

207 SW 1st Ave Suite 105 | Canby, OR 97013 [HARVCAP.COM](http://HARVCAP.COM) | [f](#) [in](#) [ig](#)

Terms and conditions apply. Financing offered in connection with Farmer Mac and our underwriting partners, and is available only where Harvest Capital Company, LLC is licensed. To qualify, a borrower must meet the underwriting requirements and all credit is subject to approval. Interest rates and fees will vary depending on your individual situation. Not all applicants will qualify. NMLS No. 2237848



You're an owner. And ownership pays.



Put earnings back in your pocket with competitive borrowing rates and an annual cash dividend through our Patronage Program.

In 2025, AgWest paid the equivalent of 1.25% of eligible average daily loan balances back to our customer-owners.

[AgWestFC.com](http://AgWestFC.com)



 Equal Housing Lender  
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.