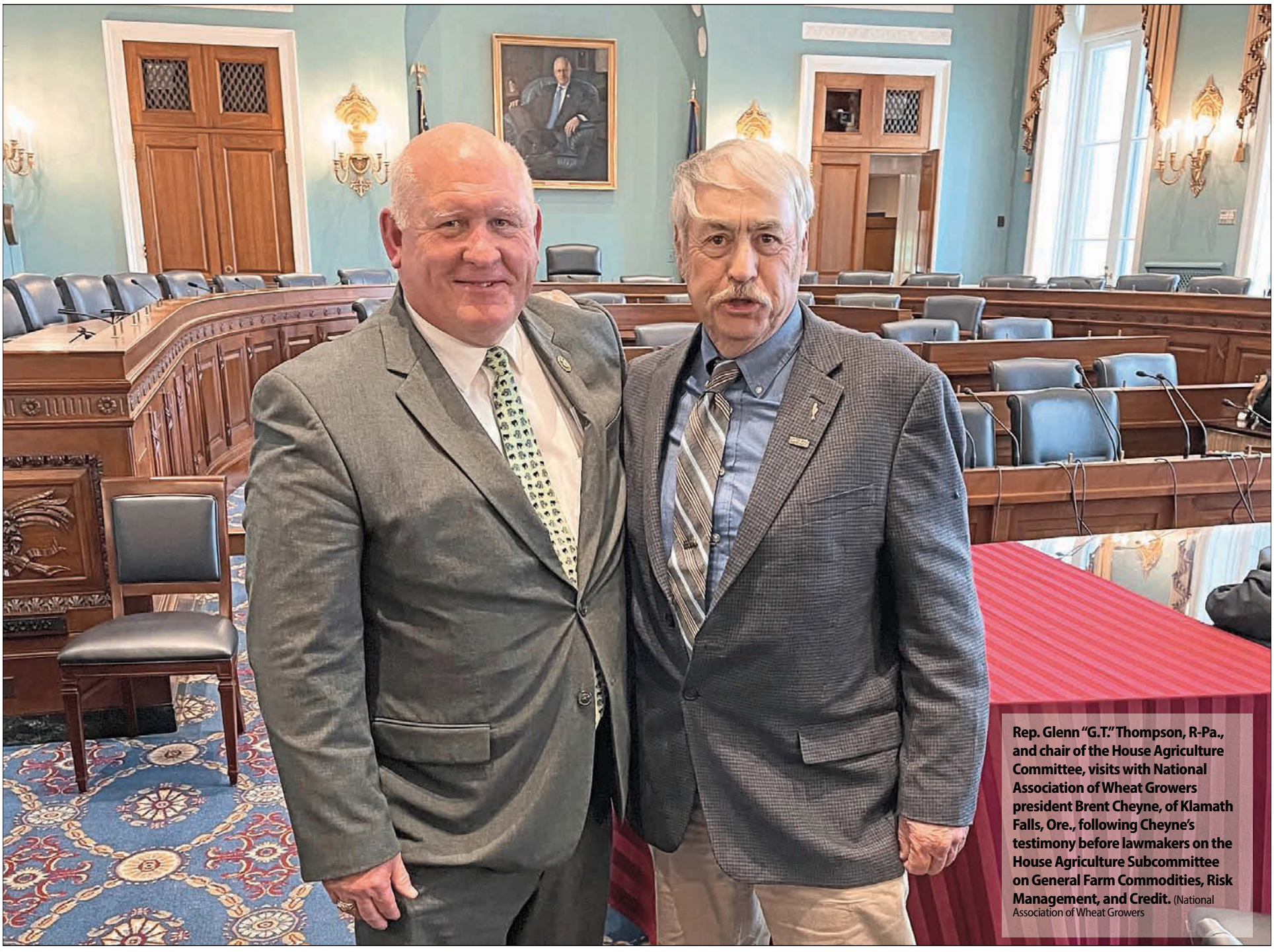
ADVERTISING INDEX LOCATED ON PAGE A8

The Growers' Guide

February 2026

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Rep. Glenn "G.T." Thompson, R-Pa., and chair of the House Agriculture Committee, visits with National Association of Wheat Growers president Brent Cheyne, of Klamath Falls, Ore., following Cheyne's testimony before lawmakers on the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities, Risk Management, and Credit. (National Association of Wheat Growers

Oregon Wheat Growers League turns 100

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

A "devastating freeze" in December 1924 left wheat farmers scrambling to find seed for the 1925 crop.

The next year, the Oregon Agricultural College Extension Service hosted the Eastern Oregon Wheat Growers Economic Conference, held Feb. 11-13, 1926.

Out of that meeting arose the Oregon Wheat Growers League — the first commodity organization for wheat in the United States.

Formation of the Oregon Wheat Commission followed, in 1947.

"At the time, farmers were dealing with situations that seem somewhat familiar to situations now — low commodity prices … market development, investment into future research initiatives, transportation, weed management," Oregon Wheat CEO Amanda Hoey said. "All of those things have continued on in various iterations for

See OWGL, Page A2

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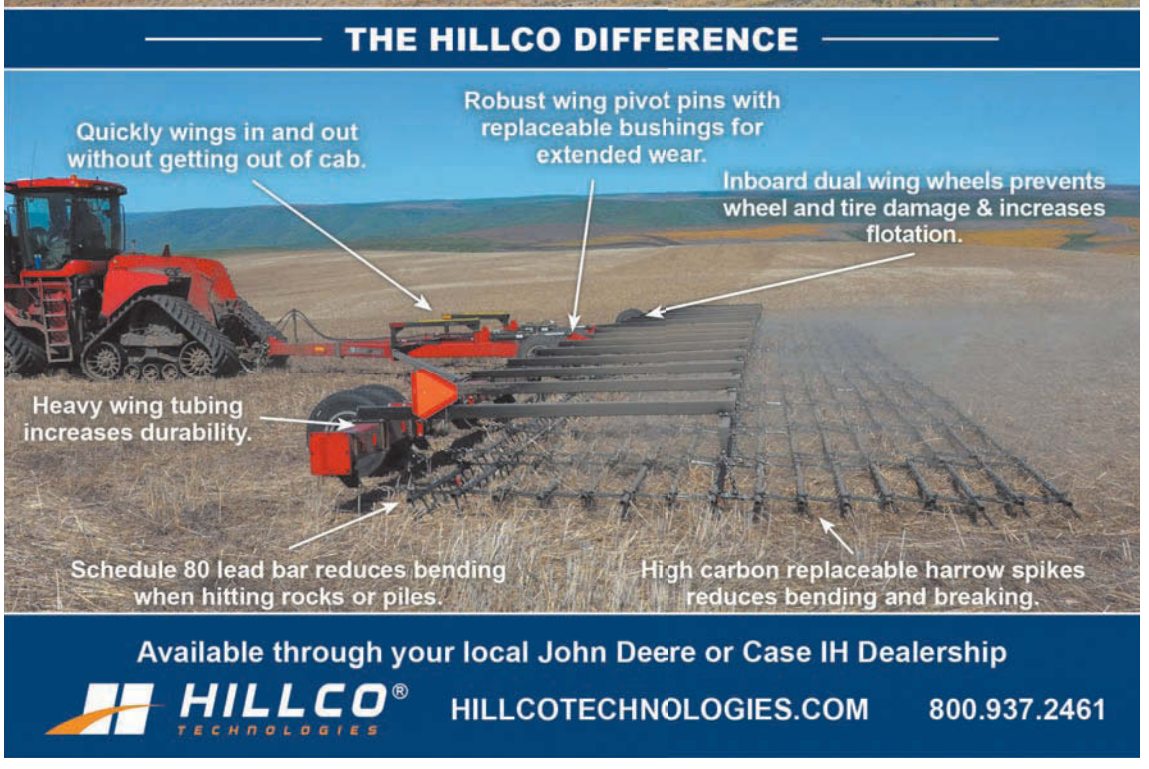
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OWGL

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the past 100 years."

Lawmakers have designated Feb. 11 as Oregon Wheat Day, commemorating the league's 100th anniversary.

The league is the voice for farmers in Salem and Washington D.C. Twelve county presidents represent about 2,000 farmers throughout the state.

"It's very hard for farmers, who are totally involved in farming during the season that the legislature is in session, to go down there and advocate for ourselves," said Hermiston farmer Tyler "TJ" Hansell, league president in 2016, now chairman of the Oregon Wheat Commission.

If one or two farmers spoke to lawmakers, they'd speak alone, and wouldn't necessarily know who to talk to, he said.

"We want to be speaking with a voice of 2,000 farmers, with one clear thought in the process," Hansell said.

Advocating for farmers

"A lot of the stuff is the same problems that we faced 15 years ago," Grass Valley farmer Darren Padget said. He was league president in 2010, and went on to serve as U.S. Wheat Associates chairman, among other leadership roles. "Regulations, trade … You have to constantly be there and beat back whoever's trying to push you down. It's a steady diet any more, of cuts here and cuts there. You've got to have somebody advocating for you."

"Those that think agriculture is harmful to the land, they are very vocal," said Wade Bingaman, league president in 2024, who farms in Imbler. "As a farmer, it's important for us to make our voices heard about regulations and how things are affecting agriculture. There's no better people to do that than those of us in the business of working the land."

Is the league making progress?

See OWGL, Page A5

The Growers' Guide

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OWGL

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"We are — sometimes it doesn't seem like it because in Oregon it's such an uphill battle," said Ontario farmer Dana Tuckness, league president in 2017 and now an Oregon Wheat Commission board member. "Everything's against us at all times. But if the league wasn't there, I'd hate to see where we'd be right now."

Priorities

Farmers will receive USDA bridge payments at the end of February. That's to the credit of groups like the league, said Wally Powell, Condon farmer. Powell was league president in 2013 and is a former commissioner.

"You don't get crop insurance coverage like we have today, automatic response from senators and congressmen if we're discussing issues relating to just trying to survive today, if you don't have strong grower organizations," Powell said.

"Whether you love the farm bill or hate it, we've had one since 1933," said Brent Cheyne of Klamath Falls, league president in 2018 and National Association of Wheat Growers president in 2023. "The ship has sailed, hard to recall it to port. Continued work on a good, workable, responsible farm bill that will keep not only Oregon's wheat growers, but all of the wheat growers in the nation, in business."

Cheyne worries about wheat falling from the third largest commodity in the U.S. to "America's largest specialty crop."

"It's organizations like the Oregon Wheat Growers League that maybe have the best chance of keeping wheat profitable," he said.

Celebrating 100 years

Farmers will observe Oregon Wheat Day Feb. 11 with lawmakers at the Capitol in Salem.

A field day in June will mark the 100th celebration in Moro.

An industry event is still to be scheduled for the fall in Portland

Immediate past president Erin Hansell-Heideman, who farms in Ione, is interviewing all living league presidents, for a video to air during the annual convention Nov. 30 through Dec. 3 in Kennewick, Wash.

The league partnered with Stein Distillery, of Joseph, Ore., to create a whiskey, featuring a 100% Oregon wheat mash bill, aged for five years in new American oak barrels, available in limited quantities at select Ore-

See OWGL, Page A6

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OWGL

Continued from Page A5

gon liquor stores. Tasting notes include vanilla, honey and baked goods.

The league worked with Pendleton Woolen Mills to design an "iconic" Oregon Wheat limited-edition blanket. A total of 500 blankets were produced.

"I bought one for each of my boys for their weddings," Hansell-Heideman said.

Big questions ahead

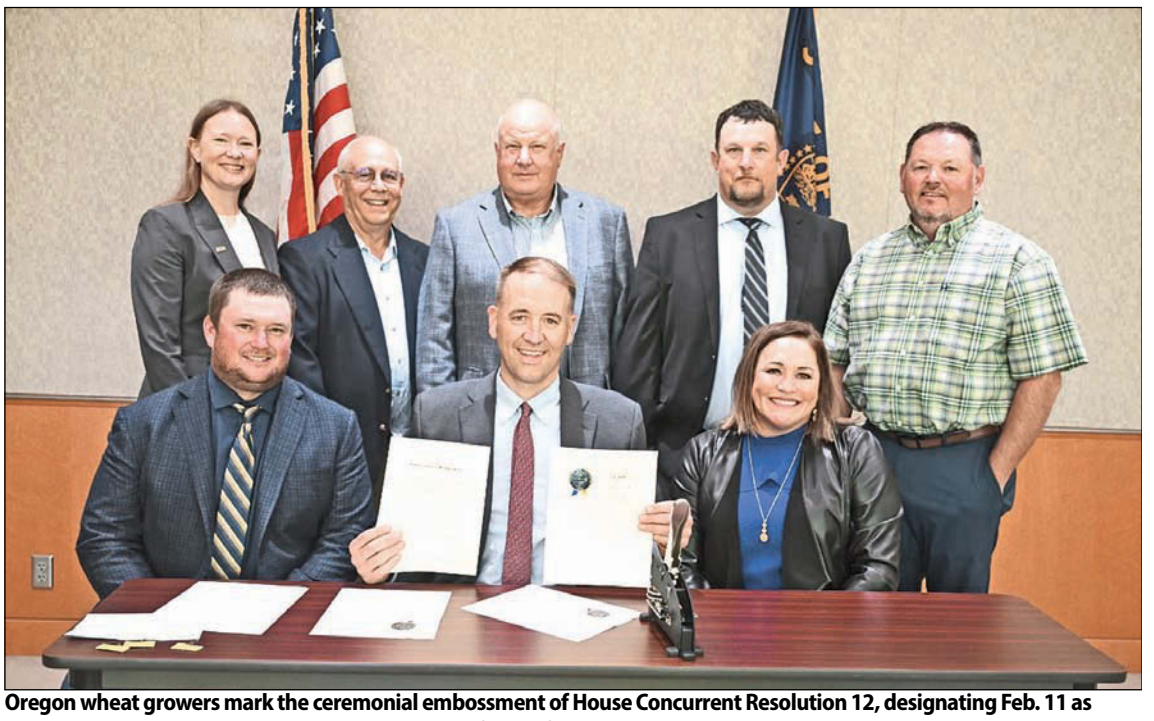
When Powell began farming, "we were cutting 1,800 acres a year and we were big." Today, some farmers in his area raise up to 9,000 acres each year.

Grower organizations must continue to serve the interests of both smaller and larger growers, Powell said.

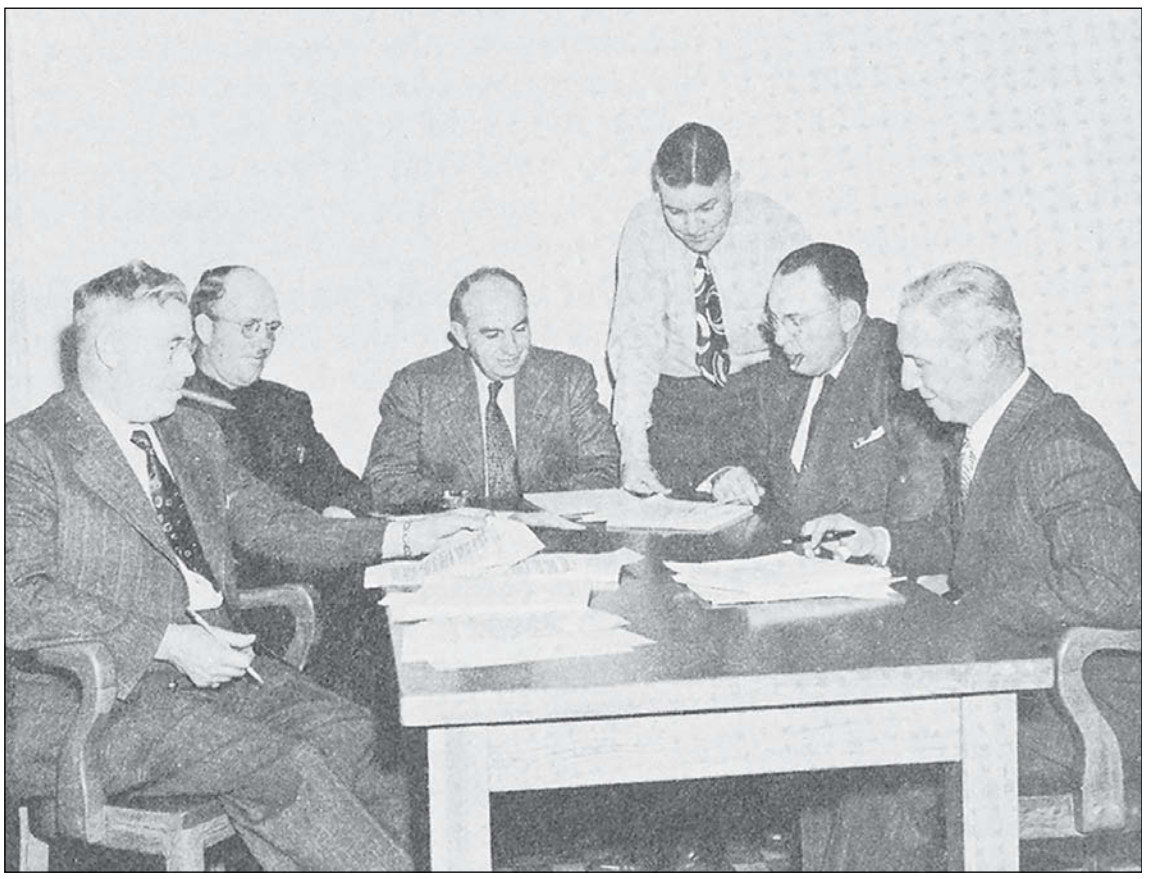
His neighbors are in their 60s, 70s and 80s, most of whom are carrying minimal debt. Equipment can cost $300,000 or more, Powell noted.

"At $5.25 wheat, for a young grower, how does that work?" he asked. "How do we transition? Who is going to step in to replace all of these people, and how are they going to be able to do it? As we've gotten bigger, there are less farmers. These farms are not going

See OWGL, Page A6



Oregon wheat growers mark the ceremonial embossment of House Concurrent Resolution 12, designating Feb. 11 as Oregon Wheat Day, in September 2025. Front row, from left to right, are current league president Thad Eakin; Oregon Secretary of State Tobias Read and immediate past president Erin Hansell-Heideman, of Ione. Back row are Oregon Wheat CEO Amanda Hoey, 1993 league president Bob Johns, 2023 league president Collin Crocker, Sherman County league president Josh Macnab and former league county president Brent Martin, now on the Oregon Wheat Commission. (Oregon Wheat Growers League)

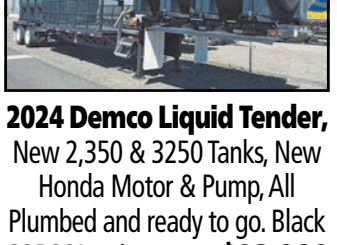


Seated left to right during an Oregon Wheat Commission meeting in 1947 are W.J. Enschede of Hillsboro; Millard Eakin of Grass Valley; commission chairman Jens Terjeson of Pendleton; vice chairman Marion T. Weatherford of Arlington and Ralph McEwen Jr. of Haines. Standing is administrator E.J. Bell. (Courtesy Oregon Wheat)

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OWGL

Continued from Page A6

to get any smaller."

"I think we'll still be relevant," Hansell-Heideman said. "Farming in itself will change, technology will change. We'll see a ton of research come in for all commodities that will change the way we do farming. We'll be able to do more and more with less and less, because we're going to be forced to do so."

New blood

"Right now the board is made up of actually some younger (growers) and by younger, I mean 40 years old and less," Hansell-Heideman said.

Farmers generally get involved in the league, politics or organizations when they retire, because they have the time, she said. The kids are grown, and expectations are different.

"But what we're finding now is that our young guys, even with small kids, are jumping on board because they're recognizing the need to keep the farming entity going," she said. "They have to be able to work off-farm to make sure on-farm happens."

Tuckness believes younger farmers see the value of the league, and want to be a part of it. He welcomes their involvement.

"I belong to several other organizations, people have been on the board there for 20 years or more," he said. "Pretty stagnant, and it kind of becomes a good ol' boys club after a while."

Part of the league's strategic plan is for county presidents to bring in and mentor new leaders, Hoey said.

"We're trying to leverage that to ensure there's an easy transition," she said. "I think it is a meaningful aspect of leadership to actively think about how to bring in the next generation."

Get involved

"My network got a whole lot bigger, because of the people that you meet when you're on these boards, statewide, nationwide," Padget said. "To this day, there's a lot of folks I can still call and get advice from who, depending on the subject, are much more knowledgeable than I. You can't have too many connections these days."

Powell was irritated about something. "And yet, since I wasn't participating, I didn't feel that I should bitch," he said.

So he asked to be put on a committee. That led to him getting more involved, "and then I complained," he said with a laugh.

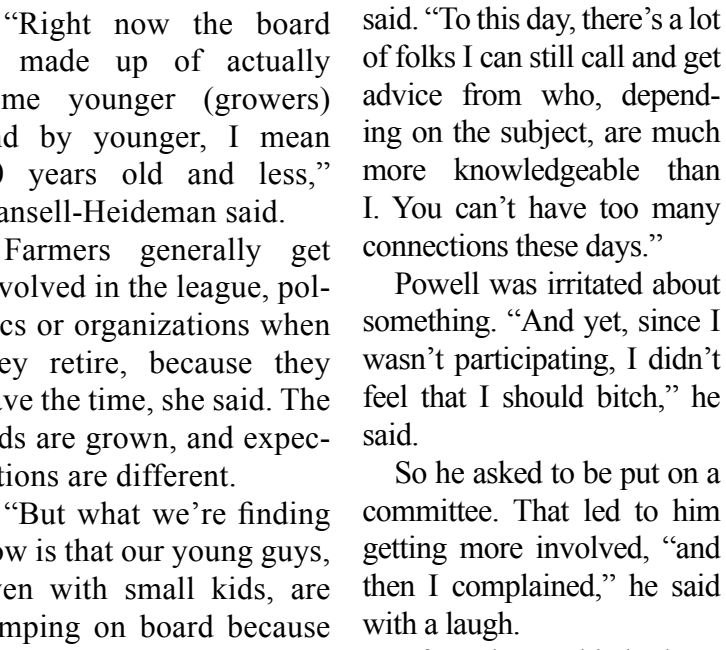
"If you have a bitch, that's fine, but if you aren't participating, your bitch is not going to be as well-valued as if you are a participant in the process," he said. "You will be more educated. You get much more out of this than you could ever contribute."

Cheyne enjoyed meeting urban legislators in Salem. He realized that "a lot of them, it wasn't that they were anti-ag, it was that they had no idea what was going on out on the farm."

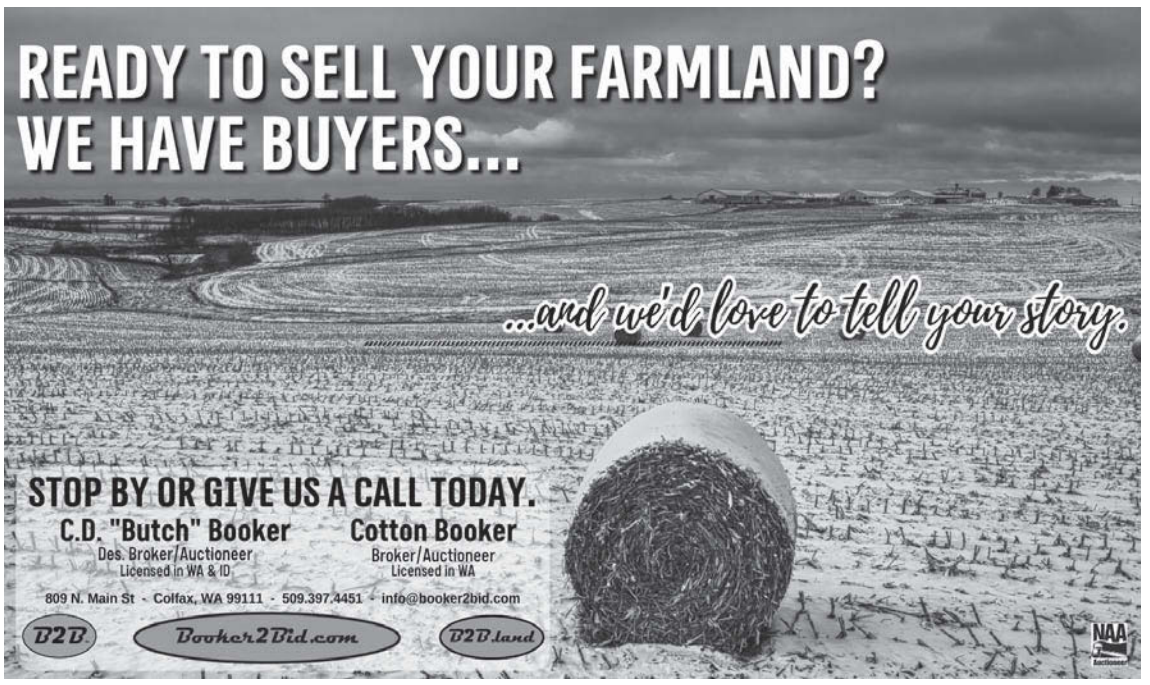
Working with the league ultimately led Cheyne to testify before House and Senate ag subcommittees on behalf of wheat farmers nationwide, as NAWG president in 2023.

"That was an experience I never saw myself in, not long ago," Cheyne said, calling the experience "humbling."

"Your voice does make a difference," he tells his fellow farmers. "Lend a helping hand. Get involved. Let your voice be heard. Make your voice be heard … Yes, you can talk to Congress. You have a voice, use it. I did it, it can't be that hard."



The Oregon Wheat Growers League and Stein Distillery, in Joseph., Ore., partnered to create a whiskey, featuring a 100% Oregon wheat mash bill aged for five years, to commemorate the 100th anniversar. The whiskey is available at Banks Liquor in Banks, Ore., and will be available in limited quantities at select Oregon liquor stores. (Kayla Duyck/D&A Photography)



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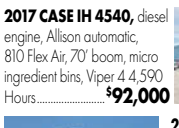


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It's the Pitts: Let's celebrate

By LEE PITTS

Ma and Pa Hosegarden were on their way back home in their International pickup after selling their entire calf crop at the sale barn.

"Can you believe it Ma?" said Pa Hosegarden, grinning like he just won the three-legged race at the family reunion. "We sold those calves for $2,200 apiece! I feel like we robbed a bank, inherited a fortune from a long lost uncle, won the lottery or struck oil. You got the check don't you Ma?"

"I sure do," said Ma as she clutched her purse to her bosom in a death grip. "I wasn't about to leave the auction barn without the money. I was afraid they'd say the clerk or the auctioneer made a mistake and they'd want their money back."

"What do you think we should do with all that money, Ma? I was thinking it's about time to buy a new pickup?"

"Are you outta your mind? This truck is a 1975 International pickup which is the last year they made 'em. It's a classic. By the way, slow down you're scaring me."

"I'm only going 35 miles per hour which just so happens to be this relic's top speed."

"How much does a new truck cost these days anyway," asked Ma.

"Well, the one I want would cost about $65,000."

Ma Hosegarden nearly fainted. "Now I know you have the brain's of a windshield defroster. That's more than we paid for the ranch back in '73! I'm telling you right now you aren't getting a new pickup so get such crazy thoughts outta your head."



Lee Pitts

They drove along in an awkward state of silence before Pa said, "Well, if I can't have a new truck how about a new cow pony. I'm tired of being the laughingstock at every branding we go to just because I have a psychotic stud horse your brother pawned off on me. It's downright embarrisin'."

"How much would this new horse cost?" Ma asked.

"To get a good one these days, I mean one you can rope off of that doesn't try to breed all the other horses while their owners are still riding them, it would cost around $25,000."

Again Ma clutched her purse to her chest even more tightly and said, "TWENTY FIVE THOUSAND FOR A HORSE? You can stand a lot of embarrassment for that much money! Now I know you're dumber than a brandin' iron. What other impossible dreams are you havin'?"

"Well, if I can't have a new truck or a new cow pony how about a new hydraulic squeeze chute with lead up alley and a tub?"

"Listen buster, the only new tub we're gettin' is a hot tub for my aching back I got from flanking calves and lifting heavy bales for 50 years."

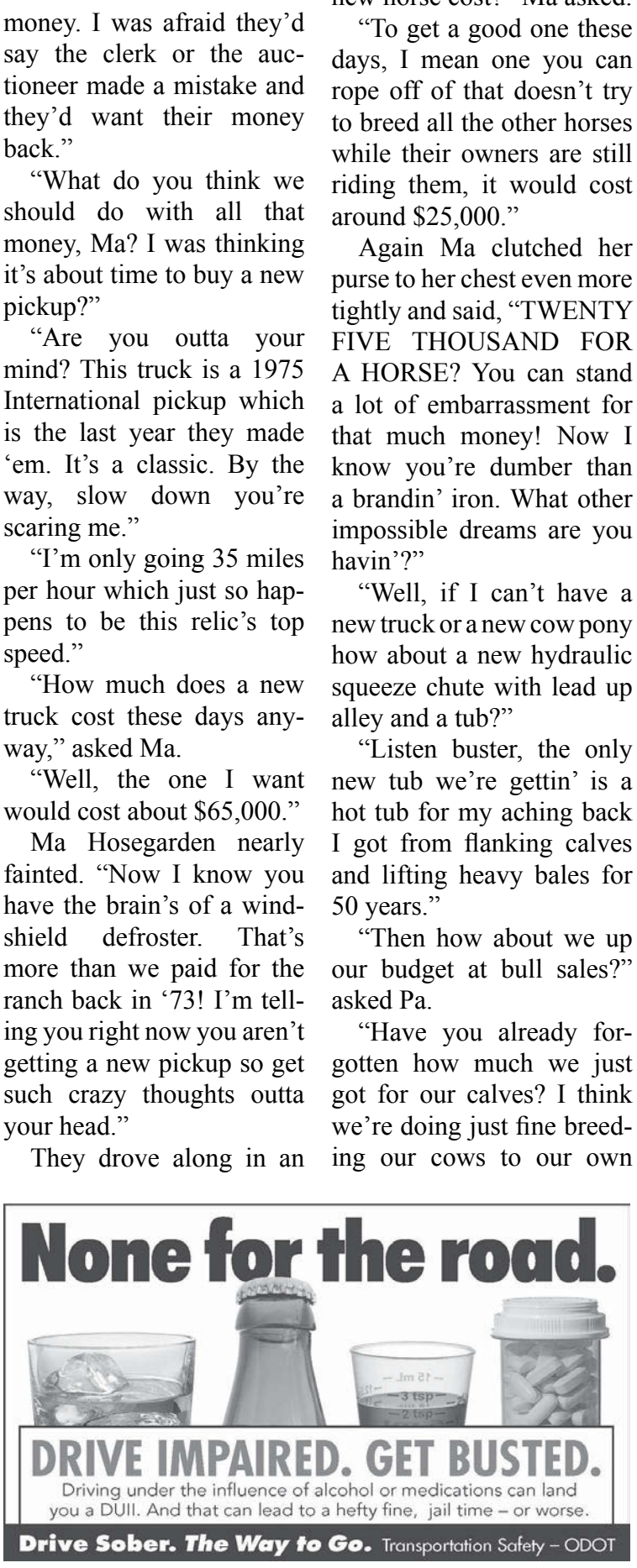
"Then how about we up our budget at bull sales?" asked Pa.

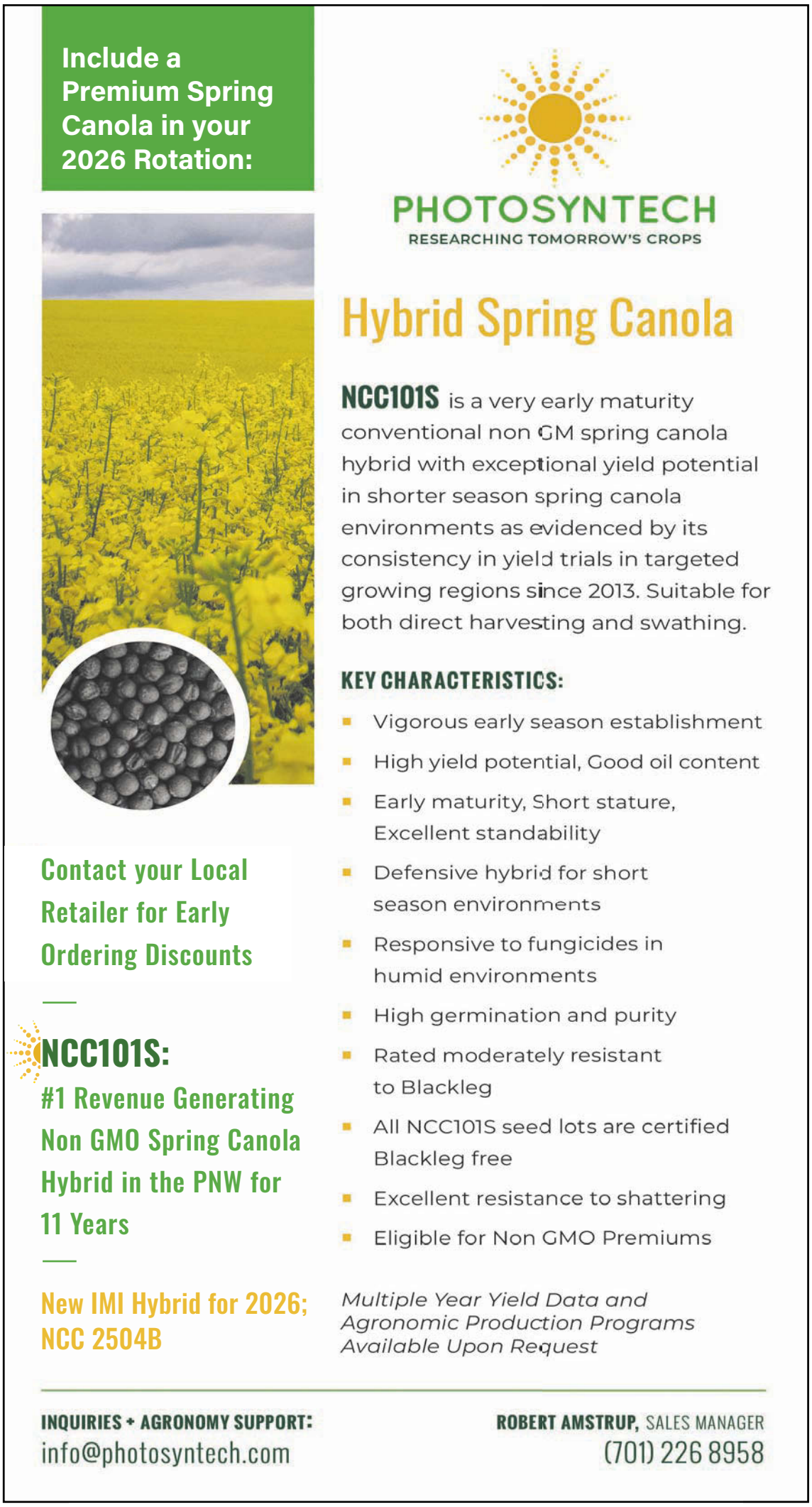
"Have you already forgotten how much we just got for our calves? I think we're doing just fine breeding our cows to our own home-raised bull calves and buying our bulls out of the slaughter run."

"But didn't you see how much more money the better calves brought at the sale. Just once before I die I'd like to get our name in the weekly market report for having calves amongst the top sellers. Can't we do anything to celebrate our good fortune today? How about we stop at that new steakhouse everyone is raving about and celebrate. I haven't had a great steak that wasn't out of one of our own cancer-eyed cows in forever."

"You really think they're going to let us in the door? Look at us. We look like we live under a bridge. Besides, you know we aren't going to get out of that steakhouse without dropping a hundred bucks and you're going to feel like a bad hangover tomorrow when you realize what you've done. No, instead we'll celebrate like we always do. You need to pull over and get fuel anyway so I'll treat you to a gas station sandwich, a bag of pork rinds and you can go next door to the 99 Cent Store and buy yourself a jug of tea."

"Gee whiz. Thanks a lot. And tomorrow I think I'll buy you a new padlock for your purse. I think the one you have is rusted shut."





Kitchen corner: Sourdough baking

By DANA

In 1966, the Capital Press began running a series of sourdough recipes. They became wildly popular.

By popular demand, we are republishing here a basic sourdough starter and a couple of recipes.

Sourdough starter

Allow one cup of milk to stand uncovered in a small crock or jar at room temperature for 24 hours. Then add one cup flour, mix, and continue to keep uncovered at room temperature until bubbles begin to form (2 to 4 days). Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Each time after using some of your starter (never use it all up) replenish it by adding equal parts of milk and flour — usually ¼ to ½ cup each. Allow to stand at room temperature, uncovered, for several hours (6 to 8), cover and refrigerate. If your starter has not been used for over 10 days, half of the starter should be discarded and the rest replenished as above. The starter is best used frequently.



Sourdough bread. (Courtesy Golden State Grains)

Sourdough Biscuits

Mix together:

½ cup starter

1 cup milk

1 cup flour (unsifted)

Cover bowl and let stand in warm place for 4 to 8 hours.

Then add:

1 cup flour (unsifted)

¾ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon soda

Mix together and turn out on a floured board. Knead lightly 8 or 10 times. Roll or pat out dough to about ½ to ¾ inch thickness. Cut out biscuits. Dip each biscuit in cooking oil or warm bacon grease before placing in the pan. Cover and let rise 30 minutes. Bake in a 375 degree oven for 30 minutes.

Sourdough pancakes

In baking your sourdough pancakes, be careful not to over cook them or they will become tough. Turn them as soon as the first bubbles start to break and they will be lighter than if you wait longer to turn them.

Mix together:

1 ¼ cups unsifted flour

1 ½ tablespoons sugar

½ teaspoon salt

1 ¼ cups milk

½ cup starter

Cover and let stand overnight.

Then add:

1 egg

1 teaspoon soda dissolved in a small amount of water.

Bake as you would regular pancakes. Makes about 12 medium pancakes.

Sourdough French Bread

Homemade bread is welcomed by and family, and this sourdough French bread is no exception. For the cook's benefit, this recipe is easy, and in comparison with some bread recipes is not particularly time consuming.

To shorten the rising time, a package of commercial yeast is added to the starter for the leavening agent. Bread which uses nothing but the starter for leavening takes much, much longer to rise.

This recipe requires only a light kneading of the dough, and it can easily be done in the bowl you mix your ingredients in. This way you do not have a messy bread board to clean.

To easily clean your hands after kneading, rub on a little cooking oil.

This recipe makes two large loaves of bread. However, you might prefer to shape your dough into smaller individual rolls to be used for "poor boy" sandwiches.

Dissolve:

1 package dry yeast in ¼ cup warm (not hot) water

Combine:

4 cups unsifted flour

2 tablespoons sugar

2 teaspoons salt

1 cup water

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

¼ cup starter yeast mixture

½ cup milk

Mix together, and knead lightly to blend ingredients. Place in greased bowl to rise to double in bulk (1 ½ to 2 hours).

Turn out on a floured board. Divide dough in two. Shape loaves by rolling into oblongs (about 8 by 12 inches) and then rolling up tightly beginning with one wide side. Seal outside edge by pinching. Or, divide dough into 12 equal parts and shape as above into "poor boy" rolls. Place loaves on greased baking sheet. Let rise until double in size (1 to 1 ½ hours).

Immediately before baking, make diagonal slashes across the top ¼ inch deep with scissors or a sharp knife. Brush top of loaves with water. Bake at 400 degrees for 25 minutes.

If this dough seems quite soft, a little more flour can be added with good success. After being formed into the loaf, it rises quickly.

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Tomás Guzmán and Kristi Gorenson host the "Washington Grown" television series, now airing its 13th season. Filming of the 14th season is slated to begin in April. (Washington Grown)

'Washington Grown' hosts celebrate farmers, farmworkers

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The 13th season of "Washington Grown" began airing in January. The new season includes 13 episodes.

The program premiered in 2013, highlighting the state's agriculture and food preparation.

Kristi Gorenson and Tomás Guzmán host the Emmy-winning series.

Gorenson has worked as host since its beginning.

Guzmán worked behind the scenes the first season as a videographer, then stepped in front of the camera for a segment about handmade cheese in Seattle in Season Two. He's been balancing shooting and hosting duties ever since.

This year, the series focuses on conservation, visiting different conservation districts and covering how farmers use them as a resource. Another emphasis is tourism, including the history of a community or a crop.

Guzmán and his 16-year-old daughter offer camping segments this year. They prepare food with Washington-grown ingredients while hiking in the wilderness.

"We have a lot of fun," Gorenson said. "I'm surprised every year about some crop that we are growing that I didn't know about. It's fun to learn about the new things, the innovations that farmers are coming up with."

Guzmán is touched by his hands-on experiences, such as picking and jarring asparagus alongside other workers in the heat or helping to drive cattle while on horseback.

"It showed me how much work and effort goes into preparing a lot of these foods for us," he said. "I go to the grocery store, and go through that produce section and I know first-hand the hard work and dedication by many, many people out there."

"Washington Grown" airs on various public television channels throughout the state. Episodes are also available online.

Kristi Gorenson

Gorenson grew up in Puyallup, which has a rich agricultural history, but wasn't too familiar with farming. That's what producers were looking for, she said: "Someone who didn't have all the answers and could ask the questions

See Hosts, Page 14

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WSU economist addresses long-term tariff impacts on trade

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

SPOKANE – Washington farmers have weakened financial standing due to their dependence on export markets, and rising labor and input costs, Washington State University economist EricJessup said during the annual economic outlook Feb. 4 at the Spokane Ag Show.

"A couple of more years like this year, and the hurt is going to get more severe," Jessup said.

Jessup is director of WSU's Freight Policy Transportation Institute and IMPACT Center.

The state's wheat exports are still strong, and cattle and beef prices will remain high for several more years, he said.

Nationwide, wheat, corn, barley, soybeans and other commodities all had a 2025 marketing year average below their break-even prices.

Tariff impacts are estimated at $40 billion to $50 billion, Jessup said. Farmer losses remain after USDA's $12 billion federal bridge payment assistance.

"Essentially, when you take a $12 billion Band-Aid to try to fix a $50 billion impact, it's going to be more hurt than there is Band-Aid," he said.



Washington State University economist Eric Jessup, director of the Freight Policy Transportation Institute and IMPACT Center, answers a farmer's question during the economic outlook Feb. 4 at the Spokane Ag Show. (Matthew Weaver/Capital Press)

About 300 farms filed for bankruptcy nationwide in 2025, he said.

Some growers thought they were diversifying by raising cotton, rice and soybeans, expecting to make money on one or two out of three most years.

"But this year they lost money on all three of them," he said. "Two or more three years of net returns to farmers like we've had this past year, I would expect those bankruptcy numbers to take off."

Tariffs impact markets

In 2025, tariffs brought in about $288.5 billion in revenues. U.S. consumers pay between 60% and 90% of that, Jessup said, or about $173 billion.

The tariffs were announced in response to counter China's weight on the global market. But China posted a record trade surplus of $1.2 trillion in 2025, Jessup said.

"Those tariffs didn't have any impact on what China was doing; China just pivoted," he said. "They developed huge relationships with India, Europe, other parts of the world. I would argue that those tariffs had almost insignificant impact upon what China was doing."

The value of the U.S. dollar has declined 12% since January 2025, driven by inconsistent policy and trade war threats. Wall Street expects another 20% decline this year.

Most of the time, that's positive for agriculture, Jessup said. As the value of the currency decreases, it increases the affordability of goods on more markets.

"That's conditional upon one important point – that those markets are still open to us," he said. "When China said, 'No, we're not buying any more soybeans,' well, it doesn't really matter what your currency is … The full consequences are long-term, how it affects our potential to get into those markets from here on out."

Empty containers

Jessup pointed to the International Monetary Fund's forecast for world import and export trade volumes in advanced economies. Both are reduced by about half, from 3.1% in 2025 to 1.3% in 2026, and from 2.1% in 2025 to 1.7% in 2026, respectively.

"The fact that a boatload of cell phones coming into the country costs more than a boatload of wheat going the other direction shouldn't be necessarily a bad thing," Jessup said.

Consumer durable goods entering the U.S. from Asia or China arrive at large population centers on containers. Companies pay the full freight for the container to make the round-trip back.

Many ag shippers depend on access to available empty containers, with ocean-shipping companies providing a discounted rate, since they would otherwise be returning anyway.

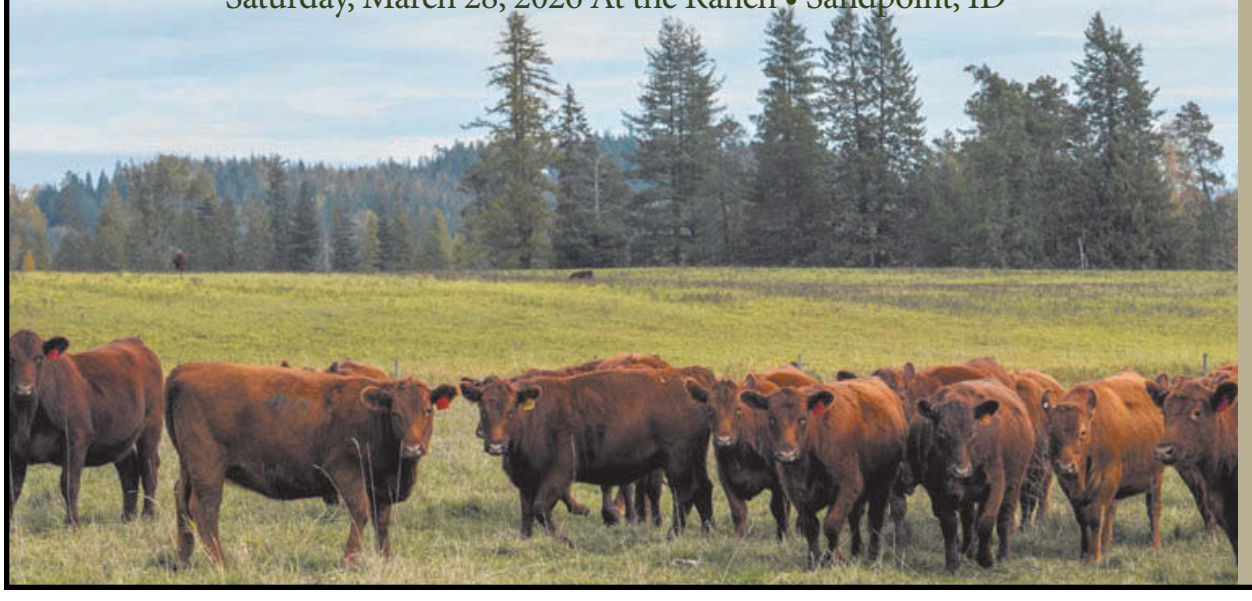
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Weatherman says PNW will be dry this year

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

SPOKANE — Heading into a "very strong El Niño event" means dry conditions ahead for the Pacific Northwest for the year, popular weatherman Art Douglas said.

Douglas, professor emeritus of atmospheric sciences at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., has been speaking at the Spokane Ag Show since the winter of 1977-1978. He delivered his annual forecast to about 200 farmers Feb. 3.

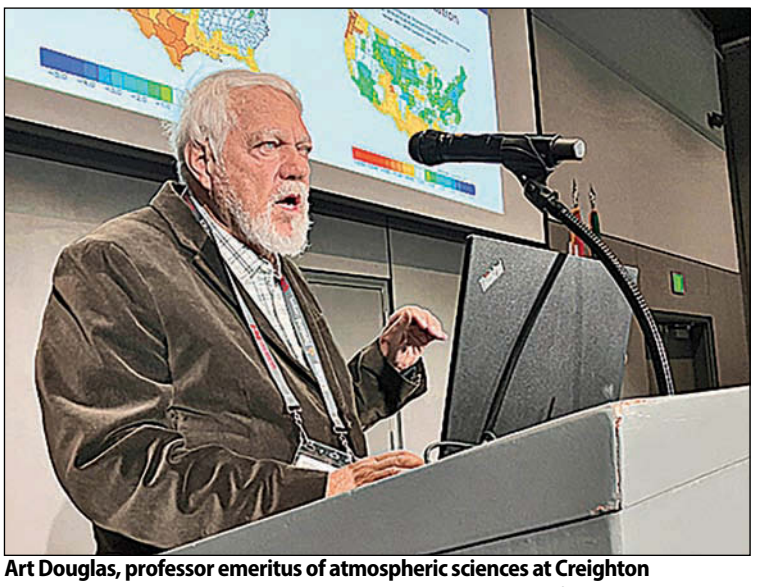
There's a lot of drought in the U.S. right now, Douglas noted. During his flight into Spokane from Arizona, "I've never seen that trip as bare of snow as I did this year," he said.

He predicts "tremendous warming" along the equator between March and July.

The winter so far

The last three months have been dry through much of the country, Douglas said.

Most of the dryness in the southeast is gradually shifting to the Northwest, typical of the end of a La Niña event, he said.



Art Douglas, professor emeritus of atmospheric sciences at Creighton University, delivers his annual spring and summer weather forecast to about 200 farmers Feb. 3 at the Spokane Ag Show. Douglas has been presenting to farmers at the show since the winter of 1977-1978. (Matthew Weaver/Capital Press)

"Dryness is a real problem in large agriculture areas, not only the Pacific Northwest, but also the Midwest," he said. There's also dryness in western Oregon.

La Niña conditions appear to have peaked in January, Douglas said. The shift away from La Niña reduced precipitation in the Pacific Northwest.

Cold sea surface temperatures developed in the equatorial Atlantic Ocean while warm sea surface temperatures are intensifying off the West Coast. These are typical pre-El Niño shifts, Douglas said.

February

The upper level heights pattern, about 10,000 feet in the atmosphere, is dominated by blocking ridges in the North Pacific and North Atlantic.

Douglas said his February forecast most closely aligns with the years 2009 and 2014.

Broad areas of above-normal upper level heights will favor below-normal precipitation through much of the U.S., Douglas said.

Below-normal precipitation will be widespread through the southern two-thirds of the country, but it's unclear how much moisture a weak trough off of the West Coast will provide.

It will be "somewhat dry" on the west coast of the Pacific Northwest, he said.

"I'm not real comfortable that the cold is ever going to get into Washington," he said. "I still think it's going to tend to shift more towards east of the Rockies and not here. But precipitation-wise it's not real promising for the return of a lot of moisture for the end of the winter."

Spring

Douglas called for a colder and wetter March and April in the Pacific Northwest, and then hotter and drier conditions in May.

Precipitation will be above normal in the Southeast, and through scattered sections of the interior Northwest, Douglas said.

East of the Rockies, colder temperatures will be dominant in March and April before sudden strong warming in May.

Cold is moving along the Canadian border, but not really hitting eastern Washington or Oregon, Douglas said.

The cold is likely to delay spring planting in the Mid-

See Weather, Page 14

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Weather

Continued from Page 13

west, although it may be offset by drier soils favoring early fieldwork.

March to May are most comparable to 2018, 2009 and 2014, Douglas said.

Summer

Warm temperatures will persist from May into June.

Weaker high-pressure ridge patterns aren't good for moisture entering the United States. Cold fronts will have a hard time getting in.

A high-pressure ridge in the Pacific Northwest and eastern Gulf of Alaska means "warmer than normal temperatures and very dry conditions," he said. "Classic El Niño response."

Douglas called for below normal summer temperatures and precipitation in Eastern Washington and Oregon.

"If you normally have 6 inches of rain, this is probably saying you're more likely to have on average less than 4 inches," he added. "It's dry, but it's not a total disaster."

The west coast of Washington and Oregon are "super-dry," he added.

"This is where the fires are going to take place this summer, because the temperatures are all so much warmer than normal along the coastal areas," he said.

Eastern Washington and Oregon will be dry in June and July, with moisture coming in August due to an enhanced monsoon in western Mexico and tropical storms moving north from California and Nevada, he said.

June to August are most comparable to 2018, 2023, 2009 and 2014, Douglas said.

Fall

"September is very warm and dry throughout the central crop areas of the United States, but the warmth goes all the way to the West Coast," Douglas said. "It also is not promising for a wet fall for planting in the Pacific Northwest. Most strong El Nino events are warm, dry falls in the Pacific Northwest."

Hosts

Continued from Page 11

the general public has."

During the shooting season, from April to October, Gorenson works more than 20 days, heading out for three-day mid-week shoots, visiting farms, production facilities, wineries and restaurants.

"It's a huge honor to be able to work with these folks," she said. "Whether it's a restaurant owner or a farmer, they're such hard-working people and for them to take time out of their busy days, the busy work they do to show us … the whole group of 'Washington Grown,' we so appreciate the hard work these people do and we're just happy to share it with the rest of the state."

Gorenson particularly enjoys visiting farmers on the Washington coast, including cranberry and shellfish producers.

"It's always fun to go into production facilities and see how these crops are packaged or processed," she added. "It's always fun to see the behind the scenes from that, and to know how fresh our frozen food is. It comes straight from the field, flash frozen into a bag to the store. Even though it's frozen, it's the freshest food you could possibly eat."

Gorenson again expressed her thanks to the farmers.

"We can't be thankful enough for their hard work," she said. "Everything they do to create the best food in the world and keep our earth healthy, too, at the same time."

Tomás Guzmán

Guzmán grew up in Yakima, also surrounded by agriculture. He's loved learning how the food is produced and handled.

"I have grown such an appreciation for food that as the show has gone on, I've become somewhat of a foodie myself," he said. "I enjoy cooking so much more because I've had the opportunity to learn so much. We've been in so many restaurants that I have been able to see techniques and ways of preparing food that now I can bring home."

One recipe that particularly impressed him was a dish that used only leeks, cream, salt and pepper, baked in the oven.

"I was just blown away by the simplicity of it all," he said. "I think sometimes we overcomplicate things when it comes to our food, and it doesn't necessarily need to be that. A well-seasoned dish can go a long way."

He appreciates the hard work Washington farmers and farmworkers alike put into producing "an incredible bounty."

"That is back-breaking work, those are hard jobs and I am so grateful that these migrant workers come in and break their backs day in and day out so we can go into a grocery store and pick any piece of produce that we want at any time of the year," he said.

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WSU grain economist Fortenbery to retire

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Randy Fortenbery, the Thomas Mick Endowed Chair in Small Grain Economics at Washington State University, will retire in May.

"It's probably time," Fortenbery told Capital Press. He intends to spend time with family, go hunting in the back country and skiing.

He's had a consulting company since the early 1990s, and will likely still "hang around" WSU's School of Economics, helping during the transition to the new person.

"I'll be stepping back pretty significantly," Fortenbery said.

Fortenbery is the first person to hold the position, endowed by the Washington Grain Commission. He was hired in 2011.

His is the latest in a string of key WSU wheat research positions to become vacant due to retirement or departure, including weed researchers Drew Lyon and Ian Burke and plant pathologist Tim Murray.



Randy Fortenbery, Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Small Grains Economics at Washington State University, at his desk at the WSU IMPACT Center, where he is director, the afternoon of Sept. 25 in Pullman, Wash. (Matthew Weaver/Capital Press)

WSU intends to fill the positions.

Market volatility

Volatility has varied "quite a bit" over the last 10 years. But it's always varied over his entire career, which began in 1988, Fortenbery said.

He pointed to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which caused energy prices to "explode," affecting agriculture; the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There's been several periods where uncertainty has been heightened and maybe volatility has been increased," Fortenbery said.

Farmers are facing very low prices, but that was the case 10 years ago, too, he noted.

"It's challenging times right now, but we've also had challenging times in the past," he said. "We've had a lot of uncertainty and times where we weren't sure what was going to happen going forward."

New strategies

Fortenbery enjoyed working with individual farmers, grower groups, state decision makers and the grain commission over the years.

As markets evolve and the geopolitical environment changes trade, he recommends finding new strategies for price risk management.

"The institutions are changing, who we trade with is changing," he said. "How we price is going to be changing, I think."

Understanding market dynamics, institutional structure "and recognizing that that might change the way we need to do business will be important going forward," he said.

Fortenbery's advice to the next person in the endowed chair position is simple:

"Do better," he said.

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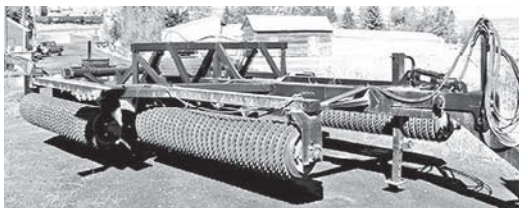
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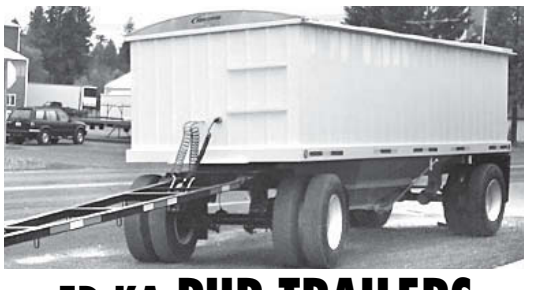
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2008 FORD F450 Powerstroke double winch pump truck $37,000



2001 FORD F150 XLT, Triton V8, 4×4, one owner, well maintained, runs excellent, nice older truck... $6,000



2008 FORD F550, Crew Cab, leather, 6.4L Diesel, 4×4, duals, 89,000 miles, flatbed with boxes and trailer ball hitch, good tires and aluminum wheels. ..... $28,000 OBO



2004 IH WATER TRUCK, 4200 gal stainless steel tank, auto trans, Cummins N14, 370 hp, approximately 128,000 miles $50,000



1959 CHEVY PUMP TRUCK $3,500



2020 DODGE RAM 2500 Laramie 4x4, loaded, 5,950 miles, excellent condition $63,500

HARVEST



2010 JD 9770, 4577 sep hrs, 630 Draper header w/cart, clean machine..... $100,000



2019 JD S780 Hillco hillside, 3164 eng hrs, 2284 sep hrs, well maintained, great condition. $290,000



2019 MACDON FD145 FLEX DRAPER W/CART, NEW GUARDS, GOOD SHAPE. $50,000



1996 GLEANER R72 W/30' MACDON HEADER & CART, 4WD, rear wheel assist, chopper, rear tires like new..... $25,000



2016 JD S690, Hillco hillside, 2980 eng hrs, 2029 sep hrs, well maintained, great shape. $265,000



2014 JD S680, 2,633 sep hours. good tires, JD 635D Draper header. All belts, bearings, and rollers replaced June 2025, high speed Patriot header cart $158,500



2012 JD S680 LEVEL LAND COMBINE, DUALS, 2029 sep hrs, w/2012 MacDon 40' D65-S Draper header & cart..... $114,500



2013 BRENT 882 GRAIN CART, 30.5×32 tires in good shape, well maintained $25,000

QUADTRACS

'19 CASE IH 580Q, 5130 Hours, Powershift, Deluxe Cab, LED Cab Roof Work Light Package, Single Beacon Light, RH Window Bar Display, Guidance Ready, Telematics, Cold Weather Starting Aid, Engine Compression Brake, True Ground Speed Sensor, Back-up Warning Alarm, High Capacity Draw Bar, High Capacity Hydraulic Pump, 6 Electric Remotes, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Hi Capacity Bar w/ Diff Lock, Undercarriage Scrapers, 36" CAMSO, 650 AG Tracks, Front Bumper Weights **$234,900**

'18 CASE IH 580Q, 4398 Hours, PowerShift, Deluxe Cab, LED Cab Roof Work Light Package, Single Beacon Light, RH Window Bar Display Ready, Telematics, Cold Weather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Sensor, High-Capacity Draw Bar, High-Capacity Hydraulic Pump, 6 Electric Remotes, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Hi Capacity Bar w/Diff Lock, Drive Wheel Scrapers, 36" CAMSO Tracks, Front Bumper Weights **$224,900**

4WD 150-HP & OVER

'08 JD 9430, 6250 Hrs, 710/70R42 Tires, Hyd Flow 44 GPM, 4 Hyd Outlets, AutoTrac Ready, 1000 PTO, 3PT..... **$149,900**

'98 CASE IH 9370Q, 9711 Hours, Powershift, 4 Remotes, Trimble EZ-Steer, FM750, 2000 hours on reman Engine, Good Tracks, Consigned **$65,000**

CASEIH 9380Q, 13,000 Hour, 36" Tracks, 4 Remotes .....



..... **$29,900**

'20 JD 9520RX, 3511 Hrs, 36" Tracks, PTO, High Flow Hydraulics, 5 Valves, Premium Cab w/Leather, Refrigerator, Premium Lighting w/

'08 JD 8530, 8200 Hrs, 420/85R34 Fronts, 480/80R50 Rear Duals, MFWD, 4 Hyd Outlets, 1000 PTO, 3PT..... **$129,900**

'11 NH T8.360, 6150 Hrs, 4WD, Duals, Front Weights, Deluxe Cab, Consigned **$115,000**

'23 CASE IH STEIGER 470 AFS CONNECT, 981 hrs Luxury Performance Cab, PowerDrive, Engine Brake, Cold Weather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Radar, RH Armrest, AFS Pro 1200, High-Capacity Pump, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Performance Lighting, Dual Beacon, LED Cap Roof Work Lights, 710/70R42 R1 Duals, Wheel Weights, Ballast Package, Rear Weight Support, Tow Cable..... **$ $358,000**

'23 CASE IH STEIGER 500 AFS CONNECT, PowerShift Heavy Duty Version, Engine Brake, Cold Weather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Radar, RH Armrest AFS Pro 1200, High Capacity Hydraulic Pump, Power Beyond Supply & Return, Performance Lighting, Dual Beacon, LED Cab Roof Work Lights, Luxury Performance Cab, PTO, Hitch Drawbar, 4 Rear Remotes, Parallel Flow Hydraulic, AutoGuidance, Connectivity, Front Ballast, Rear Ballast, Wheel Weights, Rear Weight Support, Tow Cable, 710/70R42 Duals.... **$399,500**

'22 CASE IH 500W, 1352 Hours, Luxury Cab, Power Drive, HHP, Engine Brake, Cold Weather Starting Aid, True Ground Speed Radar, RH Armrest AFS Pro 1200, High Capacity Hydraulic Pump, Power Beyond Supply and Return, Performance Lighting, Dual Beacon, LED Cab Roof Work Lights, Luxury Performance Cab **$379,900**

'22 CASE IH PUMA 150, 668 HRS, Mechanical Cab Suspension, BlueTooth Radio, 2 Tele/Heat/Rem Adjustable Mirrors, ISOBUS Class 3 Speed Control, 200 Amp Alternator, 3 Electronic Rear Remotes, ... **$171,900**

'12 CASE IH 450W, 4654 Hrs, Luxury Cab, 16 Speed Powershift, 1000 RPM PTO, High Capacity Hydro Pump, 4 Hydraulic Remotes, 710/70R38 Tires, Wheel Weights **$199,900**

UNDER 150-HP

'14 KUBOTA M59TL, BT 1200 Backhoe, 84" Bucket, 3 Range Hydro-Shuttle, Consigned **$44,900**

'17 NH BOOMER 24, 107 Hrs, 24HP, ROPS, 23x.850 R4 Fronts, 16.5 R4 Rears **$14900**

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DRILLS

'20 CASE IH 3555, 555 Bushels, High Floatation-Hydraulic Control, Deluxe Auger Screen, 650/75R38 High Float Duals, 8 Run Double Shoot, Light Bar, Amber Rotating Beacon, Bulk Tank Lights, Sectional Command, Rear Ladder w/Folding Steps, Rear Tow Hitch, Tank Fill Indicator, Tillage Mounted Work Switch..... **$174,900**

'15 CASEIH FH700, 60'x12", High Floatation, 550LB Trips, 5.5" Rubber Press Wheels, Air TBT, Double Shoot..... **$145,000**

'12 CASE IH PH800, 12" Centers, 5" Pneumatic Packer Wheels, Precision Opener, Mud Scrapers, Bourgault Opener & Points, Consigned **$59,000**

'07 FLEXI-COIL 4350, 6430 Bushels, Variable Dual Fan, 10" Auger, Velocity Sensors, 18.4x38 R1 Duals, Transport Lights..... **$29,900**

'03 FLEXI-COIL 5000HD, 45' single shoot, liquid deep band set-up, 12" spacing, 5.5" rubber press wheels, 5" paired row boots..... **$68,900**

'02 FLEXI-COIL 3450, Tow Behind Air Cart, Variable Rate, Dual Fan, Consigned..... **$15,900**

JD 1910, 3 Tank, 12" Conveyer, Tow Between, New Fan Housing, Duals, Single Shoot..... **$74,900**

JD 1890, 60', 7.5" Spacing, Blockage Monitor..... **$91,000**

BALERS

'19 NH RB450, 4x5 1.8M Sileage, Endless Belt, Net and Twine, DLX Wrap, 18L1.6 Tires, Dual Wheels, Manual Hyd Pickup Lift, 5 Bar Reel, Roller Windguard, Clevis Hitch..... **$39,900**

'10 NH BB9080, Big Baler, Tandem Axle, Roller Chute, Cons..... **$30,000**

'03 NH 580, 16x18 Bale, Hydraulic Pick-up, Bale Extension, ¼ Turn Chute, Newer Knotters , Consigned..... **$13,900**

JD 468, Mega Wide Plus Round Baler, 21.5l-16.1 SL Tires, 540 PTO, Twine Only, Wid Picku-up, Monitor..... **$12,900**

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JD 946, Mower Conditioner, 13' Cutter Bar, Center Pivot, Flail Conditioner, Hydraulic Angle Adjust, Regular Maintenance, Consigned..... **$18,500**

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'23 NH C345, EH2 Aircab, 17.7" Tracks, 84" HD Ext Bucket w/ Smart Teeth, Block Heater, HVAC Cab, Air Ride Suspension Seat, 2 Speed E-H Controls, Steel Lights, Glass Door, High Flow PKG, Heavy Duty Rear Door, Eco Disc Mulcher Attachment, Great Condition, Consigned **$135,000**

HARROWS

(6) STOESS 4000, 10 1/2' Rodweeders, No Hitch, Consigned **$2,000 EA**

PLOWS

IH 800, 10-bottom plow, walking beam in center, good moldboards, good landsides and pads..... **$5,600**

(2) IH 770, 5 Bottom, Auto Reset, Good Tires, New Mold Boards Included, Consigned..... **$2,595 EA**

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'15 MacDon FD75..... **$55,900**
'15 MacDon FD75..... **$64,900**
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VERMEER R2800, Basket V-Rake, 28', Full Hydraulic Control, Rubber Mounted Rake Teeth..... **$19,500**

'21 SITREX SM-300, Hay Tedder Rake, PTO Driven, Like New, Consigned..... **$5,495**

'25 Sitrex RP3, 3 Wheel Windrow Turner !!NEW!!..... **$1,530**

SWATHERS

'13 MACDON-PW7,16' Rake Up Header..... **$19,900**

SPRAYERS/APPLICATORS

'19 CASE IH 4440, 2700 Hrs, 120' Boom, 7 sensor Auto Boom Height Control, 1200 gal tank, Aim Command Flex, Case IH Pro 700 auto steer package, 710/70R38 Tires..... **$249,900**

'17 CASE IH 4440, 3200 Hrs, 120' Boom, 7 Section, 20" Spacing, Luxury Surveyor Cab, Active Suspension, 280/90R46 Wheels, Manual Adj Mirrors, 3" Front Fill, SS Tank, CR 11 Single Nozzle Body, Boom Flush Valve, AFS Pro700, AIM Command Flex, AutoBoom Height Control, Combo Rate Dual Body Shut-Off **$184,900**

'16 CASE IH 4440, 4100 Hours, 120' Boom, AccuBoom Section Control, AutoBoom Height Control, Pro 700, AIM Command, Foam Marker, Alliance 650/65R38 Turf Tread..... **$154,900**

CASE IH PATRIOT 4430, 3268 Hours, 100' Boom, 6 Section, 20" Spacing, DLX Surveyor Cab, 650/65R38, Tires, Power Adj Mirrors, 3" Fill, AFS Pro 700, AFS 372 Receiver, AutoBoom Height Control..... **$125,900**

JD 4940, 3892 Hrs, 120' Booms, 1200 Gallon Tank, GS3 Display, Starfire ITC Receiver, Boom Trac Pro, 11 Sections, Air Suspension..... **$84,900**

'19 CASEIH 4440, 2882 Hrs, Luxury Surveyor Cab, Active Suspension, 380/90R46 Tires, 120' 7 Section 20" Spacing, AFS Pro 700, AutoBoom, Control, Combo Rate Dual Body Shutoff, Nav II Controller, Intake..... **$249,900**

'24 JD 616R, 529 Hrs, Signature Edition, 1600 Gallon Tank, 120' Boom, Exact Apply, Command Drive, Boom Trac Pro 2, Integrated StarFire 7500 Receiver, G5 Plus Command Center Display, LSW 800/55F46 Floats, Set of Skinny's and Fenders to Match..... **$569,000**

SCHABAU SF.8500, 90' Boom, 1500 Gallon Tank, 100 Gallon Rinse Tank, Tripple Nozzle, 5 Section Control, 380/90R46 Tires, AutoBoom Height **$16,900**

AG 100 FERTILIZER SPREADER, Ground Drive, 66cuft Hopper, Stainless Box, Consigned..... **$3,900**

'20 JD R4045, 120' Carbon Fiber Booms, Dual Monitor Display, Starfire 6000 Receiver, G4 O.S., 120 Gal Tank, Front Load Valve, Stainless Induction, Air Suspension, 620/70R46 Tires, 20" Nozzle Spacing, Backup Camera, LED Light Pkg, Fenders, Premium Command View, Autotrac Guidance, Rowsense, Section Control, Exact Apply Nozzle Control System..... **$284,900**

HILLSIDE COMBINES

(2) '23 Case IH 8250, Luxury Cab w/Leather Seat, Harvest Command, w/Camera, Power+ CVT Drive, Yield Monitor, Pro 700 Nav Controller 737 Hrs..... **$591,500**

'14 CASE IH 8230, 1924 Sep Hours, 520/85R42 Duals, 600/65RS8 Rears, Chopper, GPS..... **$129,900**

'05 CASE IH 8010, 3554 Engine Hours, 4WD, Leveler, '12 CIH 3020 35' Header Included, Cons..... **$70,000**

CASE IH 1680, 6900 Engine Hours, Hillco 2000 Leveler, Rear Weights, Great Condition, Consigned..... **$12,000**

'02 GLEANER R72, Duals, 2WD, 30' Header Included, Consigned..... **$29,900**

'13 CaseIH 8230, 096 Hrs, PowerPlus CVT Drive, Ext Wear Rotor, Cross Auger Control, Fine Cut Chopper, Spreader, Weather Bank Radio, Diff Lock, 600/65R28 Steering Tires, Yield & Moisture Logging..... **$145,900**

'25 Case IH 8260, 249 Sep Hrs, Hillco Leveler, Harvest Command Automation w/Camera, Power+ CVT Drive, Yield Monitor, Lux Cab w/ Leather Seat, Pro 1200 Large Color Touch Screen, Telematics, Ext Wear Rotor w/Spikes, 50' Unloading Auger..... **$708,500**

'25 CaseIH 9260, Harvest Command Automation w/Camera, Power+ CVT Drive, Yield Monitor, Luxury Cab w/Leather Seat, Pro1200 Large Color Touch Screen, Independent Cross Auger Control .....
234 Sep Hrs..... **$729,500**
353 Sep Hrs..... **$714,500**

'21 CaseIH 9250, 1573 HRS Sep Hrs, Luxury Cab, AM/FM/BT Radio, Pro 700, Large Color Touch Screen, Autoguidance Nav Controller, Hillco Lvlr, Command Automation, Power+ CVT Drive w/Feedrate, Yield Monitor, Harvest Command w/Cameras, Auto Cleaning Fan, Block Heater, Independent Cross Auger Control, Diff Lock..... **$439,900**

'21 CaseIH 8250, 1209 Sep Hrs, Hillside, Lux Cab, Autoguidance, Yield Monitor, HVSTC w/Camera, PowerPlus CVT Drive w/Feedrate, 40' Auger w/ Pivoting Spout, Upper Cross Auger Control, Large Color Touch Screen, Diff Lock, 650/65R38 Duals..... **$524,900**

LEVEL LAND

'17 CASE IH 8240, 1484 Sep Hrs, Level Land, Duals, 4WD, Chopper, Guidance, Folding Auger..... **$169,900**

'15 CASE IH 9240, 2297 Rotor Hours, Level Land..... **$149,900**

'13 CASE IH 8230, level land, 2261-Sep-hrs, header tilt, rock trap, cross-auger control, fine cut chopper, HID lights, Diff lock, AFS autosteer, 520 front duals, 750/85R42 rear..... **$115,900**

'02 CASE IH 2388, 3458-Sep-hrs, level land, feeder reverser, single spd hydro, 2WD, 20.8x42 duals, 18.4x26 rears, new rub bars, Field Tracker..... **$19,900**

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McFarland named new malting barley association president

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Ashley McFarland has been named the American Malting Barley Association president and CEO.

McFarland was the association's vice president and technical director for four years.


McFarland

She replaces Scott Heisel, who will retire in April. Heisel will continue to serve as senior adviser.

McFarland grew up on a family dairy farm in northeast Iowa. Her parents no longer farm.

"I was a 4-H and FFA kid at heart," she said. "Just the big picture of the importance of agriculture is deeply rooted in me."

She planned to work with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and conservation agriculture, and wound up working in research through cooperative extension, including University of Idaho Extension in Benewah County from 2007 to 2012.

"As a Benewah County Extension educator, you're there and you're the only one, so I was doing everything from soil test analysis to supporting the Master Gardeners to logger education courses to helping people put food plots in," she said. "It ran the gamut but it was one of the best experiences of my early career to understand the breadth and work of cooperative extension."

The association ensures industry members have the barley they need.

"We cannot do that job without strong relationships with the farmers, too," McFarland said. "I'm really passionate about strengthening those relationships so we can understand the entire supply chain."



Highway-adjacent fencing project aids wildlife, cattle

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

LEADORE, Idaho — A three-mile stretch of tall, strong fencing that funnels big game animals away from State Highway 28 and toward safe Lemhi River crossings at recently rebuilt bridges proved effective to an extent that biologists, ranchers and others reunited to expand it.

No collisions between big game animals and vehicles have occurred between Leadore and Salmon so far since the original project was completed in October 2020, compared to around 40 in the previous five-year period, said Jessie Shallow, partner biologist with Idaho Fish and Game and the Mule Deer Foundation.

In the original project, fencing on both sides of the highway routes animals toward either of two bridges the Idaho Transportation Department rebuilt to be longer, taller and wider — a benefit to river habitat and to big game animals crossing underneath a bridge, she said. These ancillary benefits helped prompt development of the fence project, which ITD funded with savings realized by combining both bridges' regulatory compliance work.



Mule Deer Foundation biologist Sarah Wolf shows a one-way gate on part of a wildlife fencing system between Leadore and Salmon, Idaho. Courtesy Mule Deer Foundation and Idaho Fish and Game

The extension, completed in November 2025, added 2.6 miles of fencing and more one-way exits. To keep animals from getting trapped on the highway side of the fencing — such as at either end or through a livestock gate left open — the system has ramped jump-outs and one-way "liberty" gates back to safety.

A National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to the Mule Deer Foundation funded the extension. As matching contributions, Fish and Game provided wildlife cameras and related research into the gate system's effectiveness, and joined ITD and a landowner in paying for fencing.

"Hot spots" for wildlife-vehicle collisions existed near both ends of the original fencing project, Shallow said. Siting for the extension, which added fencing to both ends, was planned based on opportunities to further reduce collisions and to tie into existing large culverts that allow small game to pass underneath the highway.

"Having a place where animals can cross under the highway safely can allow them to at least get to available habitat," she said. "There are animals that are on private land in winter and migrate to BLM and forest (land) in summer, and they do have to cross the highway to get there."

Private land surrounds the bridges, and landowners were involved in the wildlife fencing project — from supplying gravel and staging areas to building

See Fencing, Page B5



Dry weather prompts wildfire concerns in much of West

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

The West faces a long, active peak wildfire season unless conditions change, according to forecasters.

The current situation is "dismal, just because of the state of snowpack," said Jim Wallmann, a meteorologist based at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

Snowpack is well below normal in many river basins, and those with snow tend to be at high elevation and feature little surface area, he said. And with dry conditions expected into February's second week, "it's going to take a miracle March to get back close to normal for snowpack."

Grasses remain standing in several locations, helped by last year's mostly good water conditions, Wallmann said.

The risk of large wildfires will be elevated when summer arrives, especially in forests, if current conditions persist, he said.



Meteorologist Jim Wallmann. (Courtesy National Interagency Fire Center)

Dry spring conditions and faster runoff on top of below-normal snowpack likely would lead to a "potentially very active season in the West" that starts early, as occurred in 2021, Wallmann said.

"If we do have a wetter-than-normal spring, we can delay the most active part of the season until later in the summer," he said. "It looks like we will be very busy at some point. But if we have a wet spring, the window will be much shorter."

Normal potential for large fires is expected for the northern half of the U.S. into May, with a gradual increase in activity in the Northwest, according to NIFC's National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for February through May.

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center expects La Nina — a weather pattern associated with Northwest conditions that are colder and wetter than normal — to continue to weaken before waning by March.

In the Northwest, snowpack remains near record lows given few storms, according to the NIFC report. Most basins had snow water equivalent readings at less than 40% of long-term medians. In the spring, the potential for large fires "begins to rise modestly in areas experiencing persistent dryness, especially east of the Cascades." But late-spring fire activity and intensity "will depend heavily on short-term precipitation patterns rather than snowpack alone."

In California, where conditions dried fairly quickly following storms at the start of January, the potential for large fires is expected to remain minimal through April in the south and normal through May in the north.

The potential for large fires is expected to remain normal in the northern Rocky Mountains through May. While most of Montana and northern Idaho are experiencing "a top-five-warmest winter, and dryness is expanding on the landscape," a single storm in February "can dramatically reverse conditions and reduce fire threats," according to the report.

Normal risk also is expected through May in the Great Basin, where nearly normal to wetter-than-normal conditions are possible in northern areas. A lack of significant snowpack at middle to upper elevations could limit prescribed fire activity, the report said. If green-up is early and weak, large fire activity could increase in late May.





Fencing

Continued from Page B3

a portion of the fencing, Shallow said. The wildlife fencing is about twice as high as a cattle fence, and stronger.

Rancher perspective

Ranchers in the Lemhi Valley for years have worked to improve fish and wildlife habitat, from reconnecting tributaries to the Lemhi River's main stem to creating conservation easements.

"Some of the most critical habitat is located on private rangelands," said Merrill Beyeler, among several ranchers involved in the project. "And to maintain function, you have to have that."

Around five years ago, "one day, we ran cattle and there were 200 head of antelope, about 100 head of elk and many white-tailed and mule deer right next to the road," he said.

Also once in the area where the wildlife fencing is now, "elk were the east side moving from one canyon to another canyon," Beyeler said. "We were fixing fence and could see them. There must've been 600 elk, at least. So you have that migration from one side of the (Lemhi) valley to the other."

Given the increase in traffic in recent years and the ongoing importance of the migration corridors, "the funnel fence has absolutely been good," he said.

Highway 28 "goes right down through the middle of a riparian area on the Lemhi River, and that's where you're going to have a lot of wildlife," Beyeler said. "Having a funnel fence just makes it safe for wildlife."

Anti-strike markers fo birds are to be added to the fencing, Shallow said.

The wildlife fencing goes through parts of the Beyeler family's ranch and three other ranches.

The wildlife fences replace previous fencing for cattle and "are very secure," Beyeler said. "There is almost no chance you're going to have livestock on the road, so it benefits the ranch as well."

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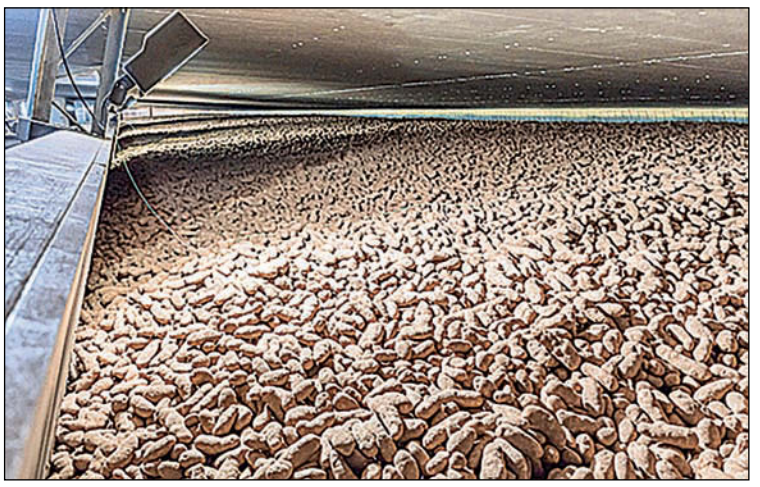
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States outside the Pacific Northwest get access to South Korean potato market

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Eleven additional states can export fresh table-stock and chipping potatoes to South Korea, according to a Jan. 23 agreement that USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection announced.

Previously only Idaho, Oregon and Washington growers of fresh and chipping potatoes were allowed to access the Korean market. The new agreement allows export of fresh and chipping potatoes grown in Arizona, California, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota and Wisconsin.



States outside of the Pacific Northwest have been granted to South Korea's fresh and chipping potato market. (Courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture)

"We thank the administration for this landmark trade achievement," National Potato Council vice president of trade affairs Brett Jensen, a grower from Idaho, said in a council news release. The announcement "marks the culmination of 19 years of persistence by USDA APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine, NPC, our state and national partner organizations, our market access advisers at Bryant Christie Inc. and the entire administration."

Economic impact

The South Korean market for U.S. fresh potatoes is valued between $12 million and $20 million a year, a figure historically constrained by quotas and limited state eligibility, according to NPC. While total U.S. potato exports to Korea exceed $150 million, the fresh market represents significant untapped potential.

NPC said by granting access to major chipping-potato states — including Michigan, North Dakota and Wisconsin — the U.S. is better positioned to supply the Korean market during the newly established year-long duty-free access for chipping potatoes agreed to under the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement 15 years ago and fully implemented this year.

A 2024 economic impact study by Michigan State University modeled a 10% increase in exports resulting from the market expansion.

U.S. potato growers face financial losses due to high input costs and market instability, according to recent American Farm Bureau Association data, and opening new export channels helps alleviate some of that economic burden for growers in these vital production areas, according to the NPC release.

Requirements

National industry marketing group Potatoes USA said potatoes from the approved states may be shipped to South Korea from registered and approved packing facilities. Among requirements are the use of certified seed from approved seed states — Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Colorado and Montana — psyllid trapping and testing for bacterial disease zebra chip, documented grower integrated pest management practices, fry testing for table stock potatoes, use of sprout sup-

See Potatoes, Page C8

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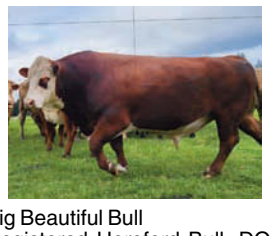
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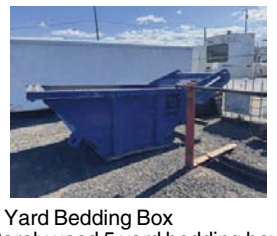
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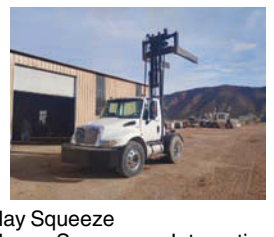
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Potatoes

Continued from Page 6

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NW commissions react

The agreement is a great opportunity for more states to ship fresh and chipping potatoes to South Korea, but freight costs pose challenges for states away from the U.S. west coast, Idaho Potato Commission CEO Jamey Higham said.

"The protocols you have to follow to be able to ship fresh potatoes to South Korea are a little burdensome," he said. South Korea is not a major growth market for IPC because of the protocols, though "we would welcome more business."

Washington State Potato Commission executive director Chris Voigt worked for the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee years ago, when the Colorado committee initiated the earlier South Korea agreement.

"It's good competition," he said of the new agreement to add states. And there are times of year when Washington or another state does not have a full array of products, and a buyer in South Korea wants certain late-season varieties.

"It's great to have more states getting into the export game," Voigt said. More states involved in exporting potatoes brings more voices to the table "as we continue to try to open up more markets" in other countries.

Washington growers are accustomed to South Korea's protocols, and some growers will certify additional fields in case they have additional sales, he said.

Getting into the South Korea market can difficult but is manageable with experience, Voigt said. "It's a challenging market because customers want to provide the best quality and are really good negotiators."



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Washington nonprofit hiring out farmworkers as consultants

Capital Press staff

A Kennewick, Wash., nonprofit organization has farmworkers to hire out, as consultants.

Semillero de Ideas (Nursery of Ideas) recently launched the program to advise farms on "pretty much anything that happens on the farm," Semillero executive director Erik Nicholson said.

"Farmworkers are knowledge workers," he said. "Unfortunately, there are few to no opportunities currently to bring this knowledge into the production process.

"All too often, we look to 'experts' who have little to no lived experience actually working in the fields for solutions to problems facing growers," Nicholson said.

Nicholson credited Washington Tree Fruit Association President Jon DeVaney with suggesting employing farmworkers as consultants. "I said, 'Oh, my gosh, that's brilliant,' " Nicholson said.

DeVaney said the idea began with Semillero's annual contest inviting farmworkers to submit ideas for improving workplace efficiency. Farmworkers had ideas, but maybe not way to financially capitalize on them, he said.

By being consultants, the farmworkers will profit by offering practical solutions to problems, DeVaney said.

He said he's not sure how farmers will use the program, though growers are always looking to harvest faster without damaging fruit or trees.

The demand for farmworker consultants is unknown, he said. "It's not a model that's been done much in the past, formally," he said.

Nicholson said he knows of no other enterprise in the U.S. or Mexico that employs farmworkers as consultants. About 10 farmworkers attended training on being a consultant. The Equitable Food Initiative led the training.

Farm employers await legislation to ease labor shortage

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Farm groups likely will soon see legislation to increase the labor supply by reforming the H-2A guest worker program, National Council of Agricultural Employers President and CEO John Hollay said.

A key issue will be whether undocumented domestic farmworkers will be eligible to participate in the program, he said in an interview Feb. 4. "I think that is going to absolutely be part of the conversations," he said.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman G.T. Thompson, R-Penn., said at the American Farm Bureau national convention last month that he hoped to introduce a bill before the end of March.

A bipartisan congressional task force laid the foundation with recommendations for reforming the H-2A program. But Thompson said he wants legislation to also cover farmworkers



The U.S. House may take up legislation to increase the supply of farmworkers.
(Don Jenkins/Capital Press)

in the country illegally.

"It is time to break that gridlock that we've had since the 1980s," he said. "In the past, people always told us we couldn't do something because the border wasn't under control. … That excuse is gone."

The House Judiciary Committee has jurisdiction over immigration bills, making it the first stop for legislation to expand the agricultural workforce. The committee is presumably less attuned to agriculture's need for workers than is Thompson's committee.

While U.S. farms filled 398,258 jobs last year with H-2A workers, some 680,000 farmworkers were in the country illegally, the Congressional Research Service estimated. Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall said last month Congress needs to do something for those workers — and "fast."

It's been five years, however, since the House last passed the Farm Workforce Modernization Act. The bill, which never passed the Senate, would allow undocumented farmworkers to register as "certified agricultural workers."

U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., reintroduced the bill last year, but it hasn't moved. Hollay said he doubts it has enough political support to be the vehicle for reform.

Prospects are better for Congress to expand who can be a guest farmworker, he said. "I think concerns about economic security and food security are what is popping through," he said.

Worker and Farmer Labor Association CEO Enrique Gastelum said he thinks Congress may look at H-2 reforms, but immigration reform is a step too far.

"It's too polarizing an issue, unfortunately, for our elected officials to get their heads wrapped around," he said.

The conflicts in Minnesota have emboldened extremists on both sides, he said. "I think it's really destroying the chances for something rational, which I think our country has needed for some time."

The congressional task force unanimously agreed to 15 recommendations, including allowing H-2A workers to do year-round jobs. That would allow dairies and ranches to hire H-2 workers. Currently, H-2 workers are limited to seasonal jobs.

The task force also unanimously agreed to limiting increases to H-2A minimum wages to 3.25% a year.

Six other recommendations received support from a majority of the task force. The recommendations included giving H-2A workers three-year visas.

The Biden administration issued thousands of pages of H-2A regulations. Courts rejected some of the rules, and the Trump administration reversed others. Federal lawmakers could bring stability by reforming the program, Hollay said. "It's critical to get something through Congress."



Farmers turn pessimistic, worried about bad times ahead and exports

By KYLE ODEGARD
Capital Press

The Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer plummeted to 113 in January, down from 136 in December, with producers fearing bad times ahead in the next five years and expressing greater concerns about exports.

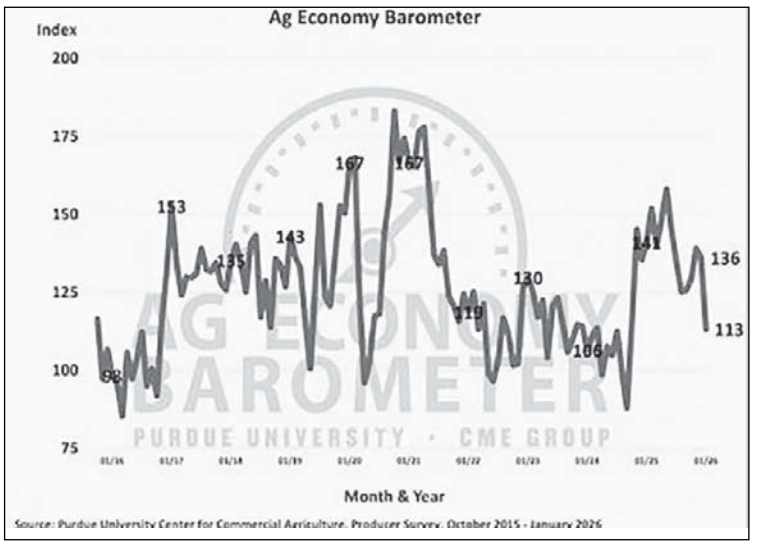
The score showed a sharp pessimistic term after generally optimistic readings for the ag barometer in 2025 under President Donald Trump — the mark was the lowest since September 2024.

"This was a pretty big shock in terms of sentiment," said Michael Langemeier, director of Purdue's Center for Commercial Agriculture, in an online analysis.

Only 62% of producers said the U.S. was headed in the right direction in January after 75% indicated that the previous month.

That came despite the announcement of the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program in late December.

The survey for the latest edition of the ag barometer took place from Jan. 12-16. That was just as the USDA released the January World Agricultural Supply and Demands Estimate, which probably had a negative impact, Langemeier said.



The ag barometer survey of 400 farmers and ranchers included corn, soybean, wheat and cotton growers, and producers of beef cattle, hogs and dairy.

Expecting worse times for ag

Half of producers surveyed said their farm operations were worse off than a year ago.

About 59% said they expected bad financial times in the next year, up from 47% in December.

The percentage of producers who thought U.S. agriculture would have widespread bad times during the next five years hit 46% in January, up from 24% the previous month.

About 75% of respondents said it was a bad time to invest in farm machinery.

The percentage of respondents who expected to have a larger operating loan this year compared to a year ago rose to 21%, up from 18% in January 2025.

This January, 31% of producers who expected their loan size to increase said it was because they were carrying over unpaid operating debt from the prior year, up from 23% in 2025, 17% in 2024 and only 5% in 2023.

"That's probably a signal that we're seeing more financial stress here in early '26," Langemeier said.

Respondents remained optimistic about short-term farmland values in January, but optimism regarding long-run land values waned after reaching record highs.

"There would be a lot more financial stress if land values started to weaken," Langemeier said.

How Bridge payments will be spent

This month's survey included a question to corn and soybean farmers about how they would use Farmer Bridge Assistance Program payments.

Nearly 54% said they would pay down debt and 25% said they would use payments to improve working capital.

About 12% said they would invest in farm machinery and 10% said bridge payments would be used for family living.

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Experienced Nevada official appointed to lead Oregon Department of Forestry

By KYLE ODEGARD
Capital Press

A Nevada forestry official with more than 25 years of experience has been named to lead the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Kacey KC has been appointed state forester and director of ODF by Gov. Tina Kotek, who announced the decision Jan. 22.

KC would be the first woman appointed on a permanent basis to lead the agency, pending Oregon Senate approval in February. Her effective start date will be March 1.

"Kacey KC brings tenacity and a get-it-done style to her management approach and knows how to build strong partnerships across all levels of government to tackle complex challenges," Kotek said, in a news release.

KC said she was excited to join the agency.

"While I am not from Oregon, my experience at both the national and state level equips me to deepen key relationships while leading and supporting the strong work and mission of the department," she added, in the news release.

Since 2018, KC has served as the state forester firewarden for the Nevada Division of Forestry.

In 2021, she was assigned to the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission established by Congress to advance the nation's wildfire protection system.

KC was appointed president of the National Association of State Foresters in 2023.

According to the news release, KC has experience modernizing policies and practices and embedding science-based decision-making across forestry and wildland fire programs.

She also has led strategic planning, managed complex budgets and grant portfolios.

"KC is widely recognized for her ability to align public agencies, elected leaders and partners around shared



Kacey KC

stewardship goals that protect forests, rangelands and watersheds at scale," the news release stated.

'She seems like a great fit'

The Oregon Forest Industries Council, a trade association representing nearly 50 Oregon forest landowners and forest products manufacturers, was involved in a stakeholder panel that interviewed candidates for the job. The organization is optimistic about KC's leadership.

"OFIC is pleased the governor's office was able to recruit a new state forester who not only brings a background leading a state forestry agency but also has experience in forest and wildfire management in the west and the skill of marrying active management forestry with conservation," wrote Sara Duncan, communications director, in an email.

"She seems like a great fit and we are eager for her to begin her onboarding well in advance of the 2026 wildfire season," Duncan added.

Previous ODF director resigned

KC's appointment follows the resignation of Cal Mukumoto, who left the position in January 2025. According to industry group Associated Oregon Loggers, Mukumoto's resignation was driven by undue political pressure.

He faced calls to resign following the record-breaking 2024 fire season.

Costs that year far exceeded the funds ODF could muster, resulting in significant delays in payments to companies that provide critical resources such as firefighting crews, aircraft and heavy equipment.

In December 2024, Mukumoto said Oregon's wildfire response and mitigation funding were inadequate to address the growing complexity and costs of blazes the state faces.

After his resignation, Kate Skinner served as the acting state forester.

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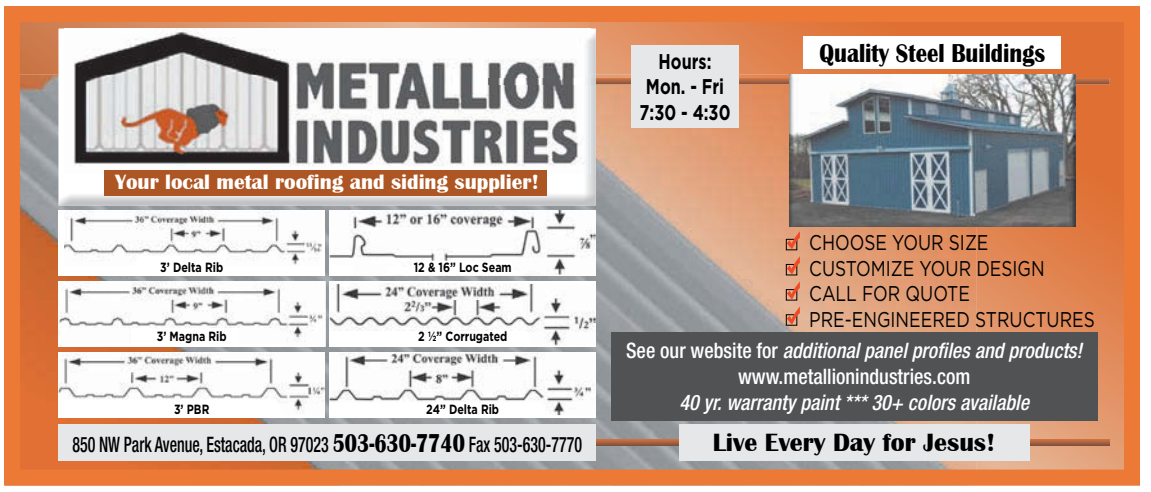
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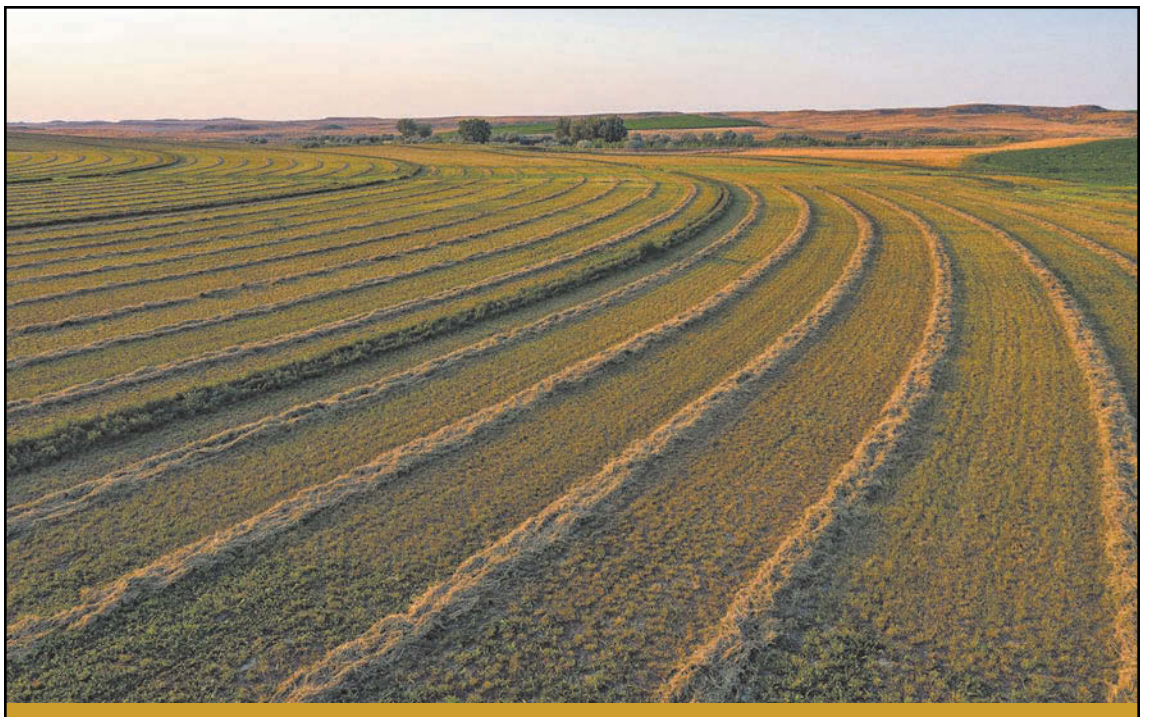
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Malting barley association releases annual variety list

Capital Press staff

The American Malting Barley Association has added ABI Montana to its annual list of recommended varieties for growers for the upcoming crop year.

The list provides farmers with guidance as to what varieties the industry may be contracting or purchasing in the coming year.

Some varieties will be used in large quantities and others only in niche markets, according to an association press release. Farmers are encouraged to contact their local elevator, grain handler or processor to gauge market demand for any variety grown in their region.

ABI Montana is a spring, two-row malting barley variety intended for adjunct brewing. It is primarily adapted to dryland and low-irrigation production systems in northwest Montana. The variety was brought forth for recommendation from ABInBev.

Three varieties were removed from the list due to declining acreage, all released by ABInBev: spring six-row Celebration and two spring two-rows, Conrad and Merit 57.

The association is a nonprofit trade organization representing the interests of malting barley end users, including maltster, brewers, distillers and food processors.

The complete list of recommendations:

Recommended spring varieties:

AAC Connect
AAC Energy
ABI Cardinal
ABI Eagle
ABI Montana
ABI Raptor
ABI Voyager
AC Metcalfe
BC Leandra
Bill Coors 100
CDC Churchill
CDC Copeland
CDC Fraser
Expedition
Explorer
Firefoxx
Hockett
Lacey (six-row variety)
LCS Genie
LCS Odyssey
Legacy (six-row variety)
Mayflower
Moravian 69
Moravian 164
Moravian 165
Moravian 170
Moravian 179
ND Genesis
Newdale
Tradition (six-row variety)

Recommended winter varieties:

Avalon
Endeavor
Flavia
KWS Donau
LCS Violetta
Puffin
Regina
Thunder
Thoroughbred (six-row variety)
Wintmalt





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Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers' new director hopes to bring more hope and stability

By KYLE ODEGARD
Capital Press

Organization coming off tough year, challenging times for farmers

Annika Forester, the new executive director for Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers, has spent her first month on the job introducing herself to farmers, visiting packing houses and familiarizing herself with the organization.

She's also led a weather monitoring training and is planning first aid classes for farmers.

"There's a lot of things I get to drop into and get involved with," Forester said.

That variety plays to Forester's strengths.

She has a wide range of agricultural production and practices knowledge — including food safety, pest management and irrigation — as well as plenty of experience with outreach and education.



Forester

Forester joined Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers, headquartered in Hood River, Ore., as its farmers are experiencing tough times.

"The playing field for agricultural producers is very difficult and has been for such a long time," Forester said.

She listed pressures such as competition from foreign fruit, increasing costs of inputs and materials, and labor supply, which is becoming more difficult.

"What we saw last year with the harvest crews getting scared to move around and not even coming north, that's kind of endemic everywhere," Forester said.

She wants to bring more hope and stability for the organization, provide additional services for growers, unify membership and advocate for agriculture.

"One of my challenges will be to improve the perception of tree fruit growers in the region, among not just consumers but also our neighbors," Forester said.

Plenty of agricultural experience

Forester grew up in Oakland, Calif., but fell in love with farming, finding the process of growing food "magical and awe-inspiring."

She has spent her entire career in agriculture, often training workers.

While she has more experience with crops such as strawberries, other berries, citrus and leafy greens, she isn't a newcomer to tree fruit that's prominent in the Gorge.

Her first industry position was with Harry & David in Southern Oregon.

Forester's most recent job has been working remotely for the Center for Land-Based Learning, training beginning farm managers in California in both English and Spanish.

She has lived in Hood River, Ore., for three years because she wanted to return to the Pacific Northwest.

Forester hoped to find local work when the Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers position became available.

Bilingual fluency wasn't required, but she's already put those skills to use with training sessions.

Previous executive director fired

The past year has been tumultuous for Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers.

In March, the organization fired its previous executive director Michael Doke after financial irregularities were discovered.

An alleged theft of tens of thousands of dollars spanned multiple years. Authorities began a criminal investigation, but no charges have been filed.

"The matter has been settled to the satisfaction of both parties," said Lesley Tamura, Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers chairwoman.

Forester said getting to know local farmers, and especially Tamura, convinced her of the group's stability.

"I was impressed with the overall satisfaction and trust with the organization that the growers expressed," Forester said.

She added that making a budget won't be challenging or new for her, and Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers has instituted more financial safeguards.

Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers represents more than 200 commercial pear, cherry and apple growers in the Mid-Columbia region of Oregon and Washington.

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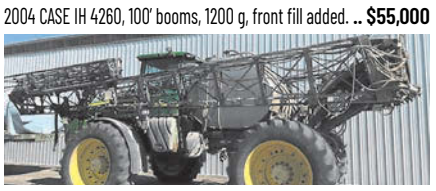
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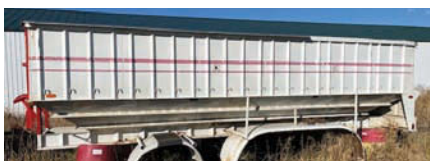


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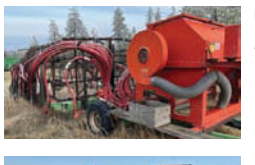
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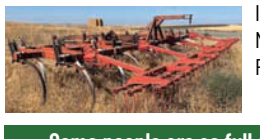
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Regenerative practices gain traction

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

WILDER, Idaho — Tim Bryan's cows got him into regenerative agriculture, a key driver of growth in his input supply and on-farm consulting business.

Before he and his wife, Jen, moved to southwest Idaho in 2021, they had a small hay farm and cattle operation near Ellensburg, Wash.

"We used regenerative-like practices," Tim Bryan said.

The Bryans, now owners of Regen Ag Nation, wanted to expand their involvement with regenerative agriculture to include vegetables and hops. On moving to Idaho, they sold inputs and provided agronomic support — first as franchisees, then as owners of the independent Regen Ag.

"We saw the need to blend regenerative practices with conventional practices as a start, as a means for entry," Tim Bryan said.

Around for decades, regenerative agriculture continues to grow but remains a small part of production agriculture's agronomy industry.



Regen Ag Nation owner Tim Bryan, agronomist Trey Reid at the Regen shop and yard near Wilder, Idaho, Dec. 23, 2025. (Brad Carlson/Capital Press)

"We are a very small rudder steering a big ship," Bryan said.

Blended approach

Conventional inputs produce around 95% of agronomy product and service revenue industrywide, Regen Ag agronomist Trey Reid said. The future is "blending some of your regenerative fundamental practices with responsible inputs that build soils."

Regen Ag offers conventional and regenerative products and services.

"When we blend soil health and plant health with conventional practices, we are reestablishing farmer legacy and creating a resilient system," Bryan said. He looks at the blended approach as "using regenerative practices that make conventional systems more efficient. We are optimizing the system."

Reid says 2026 could be a "Goldilocks" year for Regen Ag in the enterprise's business mix and in what clients want to accomplish as most crop prices stay low and many input costs stay elevated.

"We are looking for 'just right,'" he said. "We want to put on just the input we need to maximize output without any waste in the system."

Some conventional ag input suppliers are getting busier on the regenerative side.

"I feel like, year to year, my sustainable and regenerative practices are increasing," said Hayzen Corder, a Nutrien agronomist based in Parma, Idaho. "There are more conversations and there is more interest."

While opportunities to increase these practices on a per-acre basis are increasing, the percentage is hard to quantify and varies year to year and customer to customer, he said.

Return on investment drives producer decisions, a key reason for mixing conventional and regenerative approaches, Corder said. Tariffs, product availability, and prices of inputs from chemicals to compost are on producers' minds.

Looking ahead, he expects "a balance between where we've been and where we need to go to be sustainable," he said. "The opportunity for those conversations and those practices is going to happen more frequently and continue to grow."

See Regen, Page C4

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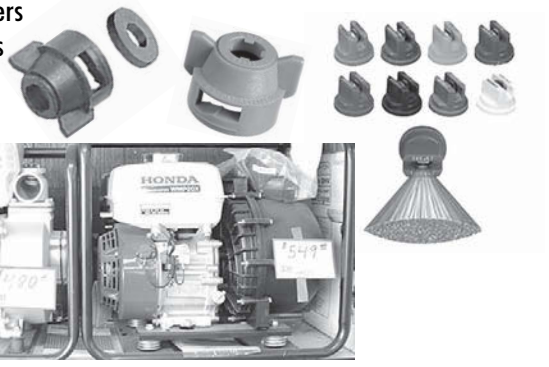


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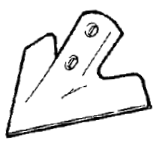
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Regen

Continued from Page C3

Valent territory manager Alex Trudel, based in southwest Idaho, said his company is "investing heavily in the future of sustainable products. It's definitely trending up — starting in California, then it became mainstream in tree fruit and permanent crop across Washington and Oregon."

Sustainable products are starting to gain traction in row crops, he said. Selective insecticides that target a single insect are an example.

"Growers are starting to focus on selective chemistries to curate a specific problem" such as thrips in onions, spider mites in corn and cabbage loopers in sugar beets, Trudel said. Seven of Valent's 13 insecticides are selective.

"We used to use non-selective insecticides and wipe out the entire population including the beneficials," he said. "Now we're using selective insecticides to keep things in balance."

For Valent, sustainable products generate most of the revenue in California, and the segment's contribution to total revenue is growing, he said. Conventional products are still used for outbreaks in Idaho and Oregon.

A sustainable product may be a bit more expensive up front but cheaper in the long term as beneficials stay alive to keep targeted pests in check, Trudel said.

"The first step in sustainability is profitability," he said. "Growers are doing everything they can to keep the farm going. Although we can't lose focus on sustainability and separate sustainability from prices and costs, if something is too expensive, it just won't get adopted."

Trudel sees "notable increases" in attendance at customer support meetings that feature stewardship training, he said.

"It's not just about the products, but how they're used, how they're supported and how they fit into a whole system," he said.

Biostimulant industry sizable

A recent expansion at Redox Bio-Nutrients headquarters in Burley, Idaho, includes a state-of-the-art lab. Redox has clients around the U.S. and internationally. Biostimulants stimulate natural processes in plants.

"The biostimulant market has seen steady growth, as more growers are interested in the latest technology to bolster plant performance, including nutrient efficiency and stress defense," Redox president Colton Moon told Capital Press.

New comprehensive industry analysis by market research firm DunhamTrimmer "indicates biostimulants are a $4.5 billion global market, with a compound annual growth rate of nearly 10%," he said.

For biostimulants, the big-

See Regen, Page C5



Regen

Continued from Page C4

gest challenge is to deliver consistent performance with measurable, proven benefits, Moon said.

Redox — which has ISO 9001 and Fertilizer Institute certifications — puts its products through rigorous internal research and extensive third-party testing with universities and contract research organizations.

The ISO certification, from the International Organization for Standardization, "ensures controlled, consistent processes and verifies that every product contains exactly what we claim" while the Fertilizer Institute certification "further reinforces that commitment," Moon said.

"Biostimulants are a powerful tool for successful farming, including sustainability," he said. "When effective technology is used, we can do more with less to achieve desirable yield and quality.

"Growers deserve confidence in the products they use," Moon said. "With so much at stake each season, relying on proven science and clearly quantified results isn't optional— it's essential."



Redox Bio-Nutrients president Colton Moon. (Courtesy Redox Bio-Nutrients)

Long game

Jim Zamzow's family owns a southwest Idaho chain of 12 lawn, garden and pet supply stores. The business dates from 1933.

Zamzow, long known for his interest in improving garden soils, in late 2018 launched Dr. JimZ. The business provides "biologically correct" fertilizer products to gardeners and farmers.

Revenue growth has been substantial from year to year, and the growth rate has been about the same in garden and agriculture segments. The ag segment remains smaller.

Compared to conventional, the agronomy industry's regenerative segment is not getting big, but "opportunities are increasing," Zamzow said.

Any industry-changing shift from conventional to regenerative figures to be a long haul, he said.

"It's 50 miles into the woods and another 50 miles out," said Zamzow, 78.

He suggests producers leave their per-acre fertilizer spending the same, divide it roughly equally between conventional and regenerative products and evaluate yearly if the regenerative percentage can be raised.

Leaving total fertilizer spending unchanged is key in that "most of these guys if they don't make a profit this year will lose the farm," particularly if they lease most of their ground, Zamzow said.

Farmers devoting a single-digit percentage of fertilizer spending to regenerative products is common because the regenerative side "tends to pull in a lot of really boutique products, meaning they're really small volume," said Dave Lister, Nampa, Idaho, plant manager and crop consultant with BioWest Ag Solutions.

"To have a sustainable, intentional approach in the regenerative category, it needs to be closer to 50-plus percent," Lister said. "I need to make that soil way more efficient than it has been."

BioWest blends and distributes from all four of its locations and manufactures at two — partly to keep volumes up so farmers can pay less and afford to use more.

Agronomy is moving more toward the regenerative side partly because "the cost of the conventional approach keeps increasing and we haven't been able to match that with crop quality, yields and markets," Lister said.

Regen Ag outlook

Bryan expects Regen Ag to grow revenue this year, with increases in consulting and acreage served.

"It really comes down to partnering with growers and increasing their net returns," he said.

The transition to regenerative practices can feel daunting, but the right guidance helps growers "stack wins, starting with quick, low-risk adjustments like incorporating cover crops, optimizing nutrient management or shifting to softer inputs," Reid said.

As for the regenerative industry, "for now, it's a bit of a groundswell," he said "It's no longer a fad."

Like building soils, "it's going to take time," Reid said.





USDA appoints Oregon, Idaho FSA state committee members

Capital Press staff

The USDA Farm Service Agency has appointed Oregon and Idaho agricultural leaders to serve on state committees that help oversee programs and inform producers.

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins named the committee members, who come from a variety of agricultural backgrounds and regions in each state.

Oregon

Roger W. Beyer of Molalla is chairman of the Oregon FSA state committee.

Beyer manages Christmas tree production and agricultural association services. He was executive director of the Oregon Seed Council where he represented more than 1,200 producers and over 50 seed dealers.

Other Oregon state committee members include:

Joshua Macnab, who owns and operates a wheat farm in Wasco, Ore. He previously worked for a farm operation where he was responsible for planting, spraying, harvesting and equipment maintenance.

Matt McElligott, who ranches near North Powder and Long Creek, is immediate past president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, helping lead that organization to recent successes in the Oregon Legislature.

Denver Pugh of Shedd is a sixth-generation farmer who produces grass seed, wheat, meadowfoam, clover, radish and hazelnuts for domestic and international forage, cover crop and turf markets. He oversees two custom seed cleaning facilities and a wholesale seed company.

Genevieve Rossi of Portland is a fifth-generation farmer who oversees land stewardship, operations and producer advocacy. She is a Multnomah County Farm Bureau board member where she contributes to policy discussions on land use, program access and agricultural resiliency.

Oregon Farm Bureau President Angi Bailey welcomed the appointments of the new members.

"Their contributions to Oregon agriculture and to the families who feed our state and nation are already evident," Bailey said, in a news release.

"In these positions, they will have an even greater opportunity to strengthen our industries, enhance relationships and drive lasting, positive change across the full breadth of our farming and ranching communities," Bailey added.

Idaho

Roy Bunderson of Bloomington was named chairman of the Idaho FSA state committee.

Bunderson has owned and managed a large-scale farming operation for more than 50 years. He has served multiple terms on an FSA county committee and as chairman of the Idaho FSA state committee. He also has served on multiple regional water, cattle and grazing agricultural boards.

Other Idaho state committee members are:

Glen Dalling of Hamer is a rancher operating a large sheep, cattle and forage operation since 1980. He previously partnered and managed a dairy operation and has decades of experience in livestock and forage production.

Brian Jemmett of Caldwell manages office and farm operations overseeing production of seed wheat, sweet corn seed and sugar beets across multiple farm locations. He has extensive experience in agricultural management and currently serves as chairperson of a FSA county committee.

Marie Linehan of Genessee is a fifth-generation farmer managing a dryland operation that produces wheat, chickpeas, peas and grass varieties for seed. Linehan has also served on FSA county and state committees, contributing to agricultural policy and farm program delivery.

Kenneth Roberts of Donnelly has owned and operated his family farm for more than 40 years. He currently serves as an FSA county committee member.





Washington lawmakers mull ban on rodenticides

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Pest exterminators told Washington lawmakers that if they ban rodenticides, there will be more rodents.

Several Washington State Pest Management Association members turned out Jan. 27 for a hearing on a bill that calls for a two-year moratorium on widely used rodenticides.

Bill advocates said the legislation would protect wildlife and birds that feed on poisoned rodents. Disease-carrying rats are a human health problem, Olympia pest control specialist Billy Olesen said.

"We don't have a rodenticide problem, we have a rodent problem," he told the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. "We go into homes and see people suffering from severe rodent infestations."



Washington House Bill 2516 proposes a two-year moratorium on widely used rodenticides. (Photo courtesy of USDA)

Rodenticides defend food supply

House Bill 2516, introduced by Rep. Lisa Parshley, D-Olympia, would prohibit exterminators from using anticoagulant rodenticides and rodenticides containing bromethalin for at least two years.

During the moratorium, the Washington State Academy of Sciences would study whether there are alternatives to rodenticides. Options include oral contraceptives and carbon dioxide canisters that deprive rodents of oxygen, bill advocates said.

Olesen said in an interview the bill targets the most effective and most affordable options for rodent control. "They are tried and true and have been working," he said.

"Everybody says, 'We don't want to hurt wildlife.' Then they see a rat in their house, and they want you to use everything you have," he said.

Anticoagulant rodenticides kill rodents by causing internal bleeding. Bromethalin kills by damaging the nervous system.

"This legislation represents a science-based, practical measure to reduce needless suffering and prevent wildlife deaths," Progressive Animal Welfare Society lead veterinarian Nicole Rosenhagen said.

Agriculture lobbyist Ben Buchholz, representing several farm groups, said rodenticides protect the food supply.

"There's quite a bit of rats and mice around grain areas," he said. "Feedlots, beef ranches, they get a lot of rats. … The last thing we want to do is take away a tool and injure the supply of beef to the region."

The Environmental Protection Agency has registered one oral contraceptive for rodents. It doesn't kill rodents, only temporarily limits reproduction and is more expensive than rodenticides, Olesen said.

Traps also cost more than rodenticides, and carbon dioxide canisters only work in confined spaces, he said. If the bill passes, one rodenticide product would still be available, but it's not as effective as bromethalin or anticoagulant rodenticides, he said.

"We'd have a lot of angry customers," Olesen said.

It's unlikely the bill will pass this year. Too many people raised too many points at the hearing. Olesen said he expects interested parties will talk between now and next year.

Any bill should at least exempt pest control on farms and in buildings, he said. It would be better if the bill didn't see the light of day, he said.

Educating people about how to keep from attracting rodents would help, Olesen said. For example, the open garbage cans on the Capitol Campus are a draw and could be rodent-proofed with slicker sides, he said.



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Northwest facing power crunch in 'all scenarios'

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Pacific Northwest will be vulnerable to energy shortages as the region turns to windmills, solar panels and batteries to power data centers, heat homes and fuel vehicles, according to the Western Electricity Coordinating Council.

So-called "loss of load events," in which the demand for electricity exceeds the supply, could start as soon as 2028 and last as long as five days by 2035, according to an assessment released Jan. 22.

The number and length of power crunches will depend on load growth and the addition of new energy sources. The council, however, foresees energy shortages in the Northwest under all scenarios.

"I think that's an important message," Northwest Public Power Association executive director Kurt Miller said. "I'd say something has to give — either the clean-energy laws or the grid's reliability."

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission charges the coordinating council with ensuring an adequate supply of electricity in the Western Interconnection.

The interconnection covers 14 states, two Canadian provinces and Northern Baja California. Some 90% of the planned new energy sources in the coming decade are weather-dependent, making the future energy supply uncertain, according to the council.

The council's Northwest subregion encompasses Oregon, Washington, Montana, Northern California and the Idaho Panhandle. The Northwest stands out by far as the subregion most likely to have power outages in the next decade.

The council categorizes 80% of planned energy projects in the Northwest as "speculative." Even if every one is built on time, the Northwest will not have enough electricity for 445 hours over the next 10 years, according to the assessment.

By comparison, the Basin subregion — Utah, southern Idaho and western Wyoming — ranks as the second most vulnerable region. But it's projected to have an energy shortage for only 18 hours over 10 years.

"The Northwest is unique in that it experiences loss of load in the summer and winter in all scenarios," the assessment states.

Lengthy power crunches predicted

Here are other key points in the assessment:

— If only two-thirds of the planned power projects are built, the Northwest will be short of electricity for 1,294 hours over the coming 10 years. That's 54 days.

— By 2030, the region could have a power shortage lasting 48 hours in January, assuming a large growth in the demand for electricity. "Given the cold weather during January and the signif-

See Power, Page C12

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CASE IH AGRICULTURE

Nursery industry chief navigates politics as 'friend accumulator'

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

As the Republican scion of Democrat parents, Jeff Stone is no stranger to political debate — nor to to reaching across the aisle.

Though his parents were both "hardcore Ds," their son caught the political "bug" during the Reagan Revolution of the 1980s, intrigued by the principles of limited government.

Stone said he fundamentally agreed that money belonged in people's pockets, rather than the government's, but he was also drawn to dissecting political arguments to form his own opinion.

"It forced me to think critically and be able to defend myself," he said.

After graduating from college with a political science degree, Stone had no inkling that he'd eventually take the helm of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, where now the organization's longest-serving executive director.

Working in politics

Instead, he flung himself into Congressional politics as a staff assistant to Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., helping Oregon residents navigate problems involving tax issues, federal benefits and immigration rules.

Though his time was often devoted to such "constituent services," Stone said he was also involved in policy decisions, as Packwood wanted to avoid "D.C. think" to best represent the views of regular Oregonians.

"The field office would work on policy along with the legislative assistants in D.C to make sure that what they were considering resonated at home," he said.

While Packwood was known as a "brutal street fighter" in Congress, this was also an era when political adversaries would "yell at each other all day" on the Senate floor, then go out for beer together after work, he

See Stone, Page C11



Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, began his career in politics as an aide to Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., and then moved on to the Metro regional government, where he was introduced to the nursery industry. (Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press)

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Critics assail Oregon 'farm store' bill

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A bill meant to clarify legal ambiguities surrounding Oregon "farm stands" would instead create rules for "farm stores," but it's already under fire for being too permissive.

Last year, an attempt to clear up what activities and products can be offered at "farm stands" fell apart as critics claimed the proposed regulations would be overly restrictive.

The controversy has given rise to House Bill 4153, which intends to more explicitly delineate what allowable for "farm stores" — replacing rules for "farm stands" that counties argue are too ambiguous to straightforwardly enforce.

"If we are going to try to encourage the public to buy directly from farmers and to buy those processed goods that are grown in Oregon, you have to encourage them to go out there instead of just opting to go to Costco," said Samantha Bayer, general counsel for the Oregon Property Owners Association, which supports HB 4153.



Critics say a bill meant to clarify legal ambiguities surrounding "farm stands" are too permissive. (Courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation)

On the other hand, opponents allege the bill will open the door to a variety of "roadside attractions" that have little or nothing to do with agriculture, disrupting the legitimate farming activities of surrounding properties.

"This bill makes 'exclusive farm use' utterly meaningless," said Chris Robuck, co-president of Thrive Hood River, a farm and forest preservation nonprofit.

Supporters of the legislation argue it will set limits on farm stores to ensure agricultural production remains the primary purpose of "exclusive farm use" properties, while resolving the confusion that county governments have faced in enforcing farm stand permits.

"We have seen some really difficult local interpretations of those regulations that I think have created some unintended consequences, which is the impetus for this bill," Bayer said during a recent legislative hearing. "Maybe these were well-intentioned at the beginning, but are actually not playing out in a way that's very supportive of agriculture."

For example, some counties have decided that canopies, tents and arrangements of hay bales are impermissible "structures" on farm stands, if they're used for sheltering visitors or offering activities for children, rather than strictly selling farm products, she said.

Also, the existing rules allow only 25% of farm stand revenues to be derived from "incidental items," such as non-farm merchandise, souvenirs and snacks, which supporters of HB 4153 say is difficult for counties to enforce short of financially auditing such operations.

At a time that crop prices are low and farms are having trouble making ends meet, the 25% threshold also limits revenues that growers need to diversify their operations or simply stay afloat, said Bayer. "We believe there's a better way to do this that doesn't cap their income."

Under HB 4153, "farm stands" would be renamed "farm stores" to better reflect what is already allowed by such permits and explicitly allow barns, tents and covered spaces to host promotional activities, she said.

Instead of the 25% limit on revenues from incidental items, the bill would impose a 25% limit on a farm store's floor space dedicated to retail merchandise, such as gifts or souvenirs, while prohibiting such structures from exceeding 10,000 square feet.

At least half of the property that includes a farm store would have to be devoted to active agricultural production and the operations would have to be run by the grower, not leased to a third party, among other limits.

The proposal has won the support of a powerful backer: Gov. Tina Kotek, who decided to suspend the farm stand rule-making last year and now believes HB 4153 offers a solution to the controversy over such operations.

"We think that this is a very pragmatic, very practical approach," said Geoff Huntington, Kotek's senior natural resources adviser. "It is, in my humble opinion, the best you're going to see as a way to navigate our way through to a durable framework for addressing what has been a really difficult conversation."

However, the bill has come under attack from 1000 Friends of Oregon and other farmland preservation nonprofits, who believe the new regulations could easily be subverted to allow for uses that are inappropriate in agricultural zones.

Opponents of HB 4153 say the language could be construed to allow gas stations, amusement parks, roller coasters, clothing boutiques, BMX shops, paintball venues or even strip clubs or swinger's clubs that sell "lingerie and adult toys."

"The principal problem is there's no real connection to farm crops growing on the farm in this bill," said Mike McCarthy, president of the Ag for Oregon conservation group and an orchardist in Hood River County.

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Stone

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said.

An important lesson instilled by Packwood was to "never burn a bridge because you never know when you're going to need it," which has consistently informed Stone's political approach.

"I've always been a friend accumulator," he said.

Stone said he was also influenced by Packwood's strategies for problem-solving and goal-setting.

"He always believes you build to figure out where you want to be, and then you build the road to get there. So what is your objective, and then what are all the things you need to do in order to achieve that objective?" Stone said. "I can't tell you how many times over my career I've utilized that."

The final lesson that Stone learned during his tenure at Packwood's office also marked the end of it: "It gave me a true perspective on how power is fleeting," he said.

After a sexual misconduct scandal that unfolded over years, Packwood ultimately announced his resignation from the Senate in 1995 under threat of expulsion.

As an ex-staffer of the senator's, Stone found that his experience didn't necessarily work in his favor as he began searching for a new job.

"Coming out of that, Packwood people were fairly radioactive," he said. "There weren't people lining up at the door."

Through the recommendation of a friend, Stone was hired on by the council of the Metro regional government, which manages planning and systems across several counties in the Portland area.

The institution wasn't very popular at the time, particularly among people who considered it an unnecessary "extra layer of government," he said.

As someone on the "right center side of the equation," Stone found himself defending Metro against legislative efforts to abolish the regional government, even though he agreed with many of the criticisms.

"I'd have to go down there and say, look, 'I'm one of you guys. I understand, but it's gonna get better," he said.

JEFF STONE:

Occupation: Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries

Age: 62

Hometown: Portland, Ore.

Family: Wife, Jennifer, and two adult daughters

Education: Bachelor's of Science degree in Political Science from the University of Oregon in 1987

Eventually rising to the council's chief of staff, Stone said he helped reorganize the governance structure to reduce conflicts between council members and the administration.

Joins OAN

During his time at Metro, he was also introduced to the Oregon Association of Nurseries, which hired him on as government relations director in 2005 and then the executive director position five years later.

Though he didn't have much involvement in the nursery industry growing up or in his early career, Stone said he's found the OAN to be a "good match" for his skills and personality.

"They are really a group that looks to solve problems and that was a natural fit," he said.

When he became the organization's top administrator, the nursery industry was hitting rock bottom economically, after the Great Recession had dried up demand for plants and landscaping.

As dues-paying members went out of business, OAN also suffered financially, forcing him to make difficult decisions to balance its budget, such as cutting the staff from 16 employees to 7.

"I came in and we lost a third of the nurseries in the state during that time," Stone said. "Talk about a tough introduction into leading an organization through change."

More recently, the early COVID outbreak also resulted in economic upheaval: Though the pandemic ended up boosting nursery sales as consumers spent more time at home, the uneven response among state governments initially created tremendous uncertainty for the industry, Stone said.

In some states, garden centers were required to close to avoid spreading the disease, while in others, they remained open because agriculture was considered an essential industry.

In cooperation with other nursery associations around the country, OAN helped develop an online map that allowed nurseries to quickly

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Power

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icant electrification of heating in the Northwest, this is a noteworthy risk," the assessment states.

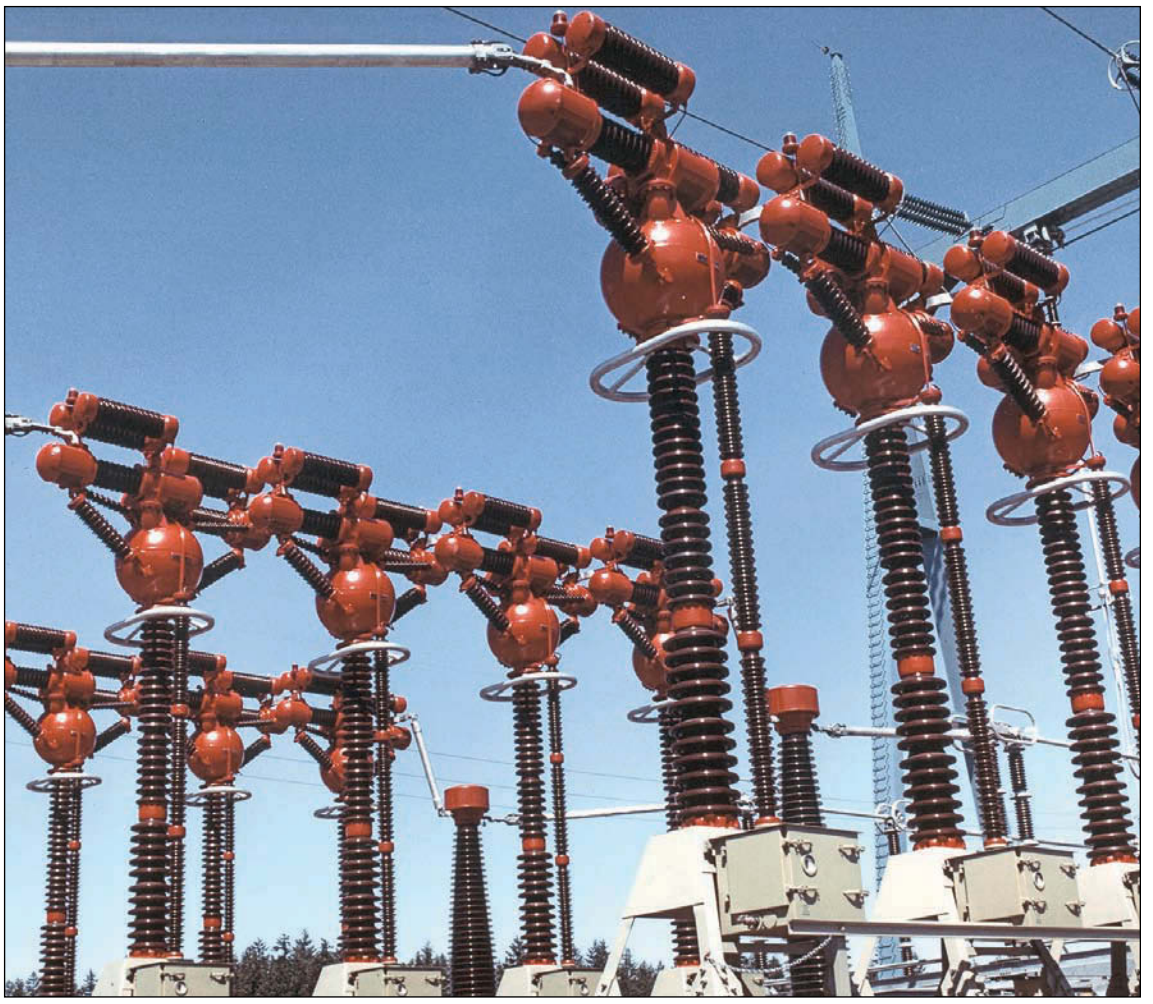
— By 2035, the council projects the maximum duration for a power shortage could be 128 hours, or five days and eight hours.

— Assuming high load growth, the demand for electricity will exceed the supply 149 times in 2035. The loss-of-load events will total 714 hours.

— The Northwest currently gets 16% of its electricity from windmills. The council projects the percentage by 2035 will be 27%. Wind is the most variable of energy sources, according to the council.

— California, British Columbia and Alberta send power to the Northwest. But transmission lines limit the supply. Besides more power plants, more transmission lines would help prevent energy shortages.

— The sun, even when shining, makes less electricity in the winter. Windmills are even more variable. The demand for heat and the timing of solar and wind power are the main reasons for energy shortages in the winter, according to the assessment.



The Western Electricity Coordinating Council projects the Northwest will have energy shortages as early as 2028. (Courtesy U.S. Department of Energy)

Stone

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check the regulations in different states. That way, they could confidently ship nursery stock without fearing the trucks will be turned away at their destination.

"That was a lesson of how relationships matter and how you can collaborate," Stone said.

After 20 years at the OAN and 15 years of leading the organization, Stone said he's come to expect the periodic emergency that disrupts the industry.

How people behave during a crisis truly defines their character, and based on how nurseries have coped with past predicaments, Stone said he's learned to trust in the nursery industry's resilience.

"Even through the worst of it, they still collaborate with one another as competitors and as nursery operations," he said.





Countersuit against Idaho cattle company seeks $11.6 million

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Separate suits by buyer and seller seek millions from one another

A livestock supplier in Utah has filed counterclaims against an Idaho cattle company in a federal lawsuit over alleged violations of a cattle purchasing agreement.

Late last year, Roman Cattle Co. of Idaho Falls, Idaho, filed a complaint claiming it was charged excessive sales commissions by the Producers Livestock Marketing Association of North Salt Lake, Utah.

The lawsuit also sought to withhold about $10.8 million in payments from the Producers Livestock Marketing Association, alleging it failed to abide by other terms of an agreement to buy cattle for the Roman Cattle Co.

Producers Livestock Marketing Association has now filed an answer in Idaho federal court denying those allegations, as well as a countersuit accusing Roman Cattle of repeatedly failing to pay the full amount it owed for delivered cattle.

In the countersuit, Producers Livestock Marketing Association seeks to recover roughly $11.6 million it claims to be owed by Roman Cattle Co.

The countersuit argues the sales commissions charged by Producers Livestock Marketing Association were permitted to fluctuate between $1.00 and $1.50 per hundredweight of live cattle procured for Roman Cattle Co.

The change in the commission rate reflected the deduction of certain expenses or the purchasing of cattle on an expedited basis, but in all instances, Roman Cattle agreed to the price, commission, number of livestock and other terms, according to the countersuit.

Producers Livestock Marketing Association also alleges that Roman Cattle Co. is a "mere shell" that is actually "dominated and controlled" by another company, American Farmers Network, owned by Sanin Mirvic, who is named as a defendant in the countersuit.

Mirvic did not respond to requests for comment as of press time.

Fraud alleged

According to the countersuit, Mirvic repeatedly promised to send wire transfers worth millions of dollars to Producers Livestock Marketing Association as compensation for delivered cattle throughout 2025.

However, the countersuit alleges those wire transfers were consistently lower than the amounts promised by Mirvic, or that he didn't end up wiring the money at all, resulting in a net unpaid balance of $11.6 million owed to Producers Livestock Marketing Association.

The countersuit alleges that Mirvic's alleged misrepresentations amount to "fraud," which was meant to induce further livestock deliveries, while the insufficient payments by Roman Cattle and American Farmers Network represent violations of the federal Packers and Stockyards Act, among other claims.

According to the countersuit, Mirvic purchased a controlling interest in the Intermountain Packing Co., a slaughter facility in Idaho Falls, Idaho, toward the end of 2024.

In a press release, American Farmers Network, of which Mirvic is CEO, announced the acquisition of the Intermountain Packing facility for undisclosed terms in mid-2025.

In 2024, Intermountain Packing was accused in a separate complaint of failing to pay about $2 million worth of culled dairy cows sent for slaughter by several dairies in Idaho and Washington.

That lawsuit remains pending in federal court, with a status conference scheduled in the case for May 19 following an "alternative dispute resolution" process.







Slump in new farm machinery sales accelerates

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The slump in new farm machinery sales accelerated in 2025 as growers continued to endure economic pressure and high production expenses, experts say.

In 2025, unit sales decreased about 22% for new tractors over 100 horsepower, 41% for new four-wheel-drive tractors, and 35% for self-propelled combines, according to the Association of Equipment Manufacturers.

Sales of large farm machinery had already taken a steep tumble in 2024, but AEM's statistics indicate the rate of decline only became more precipitous last year. In the case of four-wheel-drive tractors, for example, the dive in unit sales increased tenfold, from about 4% to more than 40%.

"Farmer attitudes are certainly putting a pretty big damper on capital equipment sales, and that's closely tied to commodity prices, interest rates, total farm returns — you can add all of those factors into it," said Curt Blades, AEM's senior vice president of agriculture services and forestry.



In 2025, unit sales decreased about 22% for new tractors over 100 horsepower, 41% for new four-wheel-drive tractors, and 35% for self-propelled combines, according to the Association of Equipment Manufacturers. (Courtesy Oregon Department of Agriculture)

Blades said the sales results are "disappointing" but not "shocking" for manufacturers, as the decline in 2025 follows a trend that began a couple of years ago and is in line with a broader recession in the agricultural economy.

The hope is that after 2025's dismal sales performance, the market for new machinery will begin to recover, especially as the federal and state governments intervene with financial help for growers, he said.

"I can't help but think that we're sort of at that bottom point," Blades said.

The sales decrease is most pronounced with large machinery, which is to be expected, since the market for commodity crops is in rougher shape than the livestock market, said Michael Langemeier, an agricultural economist who tracks machinery at Purdue University.

"There's a lot more people that think it's a bad time to invest in machinery than that it's a good time, and that's particularly the case with crop producers," he said. "Livestock producers, I wouldn't say are optimistic in terms of it being a good time to buy machinery, but they're not near as pessimistic as the crop producers."

In light of the attitudes expressed by farmers in economic surveys, it's likely the machinery market will remain depressed through 2026, particularly as the break-even point for major commodity crops like corn has risen as farm expenses remain elevated, Langemeier said.

"We're just going to be in the situation where they're going to focus on just paying bills and paying down debt or paying off debt," he said.

While markets for new and used machinery are linked, it does appear the demand for used machinery is stronger, Blades said. Meanwhile, farmers are focused on keeping their existing equipment running as well as possible, including by upgrading it with after-market components.

"Farmer attitudes are like, 'Hey, times are a little bit tough. We want to tighten the belt a little bit, but we want to take advantage of the latest and greatest technology. How do I take my tractor, my sprayer, planter, or whatever it might be, and get a little bit more out of it?'" he said.

Growers who were on a five-year cycle for replacing machinery may extend it to six or seven years, but ultimately there will come a time when they decide to invest in new equipment, Blades said.

"My heart goes out to the farmers that are struggling right now financially," he said. "But also know that the job that they're doing is noble and that, you know, this too will pass."





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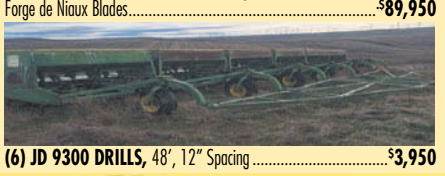
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