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News of Interest - January 30, 2013

Report: Oregon Agriculture Lags Behind Neighboring States

A new report from Oregon's Department of Agriculture shows the state's "ag" industry lags behind those of Washington, Idaho and California. But the report also recommends ways that lawmakers can boost the industry.

Early in this report, there's a graph with red jagged line climbing like the edge of the Cascade Mountain Range. That's the value of Oregon's agricultural output over the last quarter century. Right now, it's about \$5 billion. Below that is another line that looks more like the flatter parts of Eastern Oregon. That's what farmers actually take home in pay these days.

Agriculture Department spokesman Bruce Pokarney says this report deals with the space between those lines -- namely, the increasing costs borne by farmers to get their products to market.

"That gap, if there's any way to narrow it and bring the bottom line up a little bit and get closer to that value of production, that would be a good thing," says Pokarney.

Recommendations range from supporting efficient transport systems like rail and barge, to eliminating estate taxes for the transfer of family farms.

On the Web

Click [here to view the full report](#)

<http://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-agriculture-lags-behind-neighboring-states-in-key-areas/>

Ag Dept. makes policy recommendations to Kitzhaber

Biennial report to the governor & legislature provides priority policy recommendations

By [Oregon Dept. of Agriculture](#)

[The State Board of Agriculture](#) has completed one of its primary biennial tasks and is ready to share the results with Oregon's governor and legislature. [The 2013 Oregon State of the Agriculture Industry Report](#) is now published, complete with a snapshot of Oregon agriculture's competitiveness, challenges, and opportunities. The 55-page document—also available online—provides lawmakers with priority policy recommendations as determined by the 10-member board.

"The reason we put this report together is to primarily educate our legislators on what is important to agriculture," says Board of Agriculture Chair Doug Krahmer, a blueberry farmer from St. Paul. "In some cases, the report reviews good things that have been done and in other cases, we are bringing up some things that potentially might not be so good."

The 2005 Oregon Legislature passed HB 2196, requiring the State Board of Agriculture to prepare biennial reports to the governor and legislative assembly regarding the status of the agriculture industry. The document gives an overview of many topics and issues related to, impacting, and affected by agriculture. The report features 10 key issues critical to the competitiveness of Oregon's agricultural producers and processors: water quantity, transportation, food processing, labor, energy, taxes, soil and water quality, land use, local foods and small farms, and food safety. Each section draws comparisons between Oregon and its neighboring

states of Washington, Idaho, and California.

Primary research and writing of the report was done by the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Brent Searle, special assistant to the director. The Board of Agriculture reviewed and approved the report. Speaking in one voice, the board states, "this report should help the reader understand where Oregon is competitive, and where it is not; what things are going well, and where challenges exist; and what the legislature, governor, congressional representatives, and Oregon's citizens can do to help."

The board's report is an honest, unvarnished look that avoids sugar coating the outlook for Oregon agriculture. Nonetheless, there is a lot to feel good about after reading the report, according to Krahmer.

"This is one of the more important activities undertaken by the board. When it comes to the legislative arena and getting help to solve the industry's problems, this report is what we rely on to inform our legislators what is needed."

Each board member will take with them a copy of the report to the State Capitol in early March, the date of the next quarterly meeting of the Board of Agriculture. Individual meetings are scheduled between board members and key legislators. The report will be given to each legislator as something that will hopefully be more than just a keepsake.

"We have recommendations for the legislature," says Krahmer. "We have the ability to address many of those issues, but a lot of them take money. We can't address those issues without adequate funding by the legislature. That's one of the messages we will be delivering during our meetings."

The report's executive summary succinctly boils it down to a good news, bad news declaration. "The bad news: Oregon agriculture lags behind our three neighboring states in many key areas. The good news: Oregon

policymakers can take positive actions to help us catch up.”

If legislators, the governor, and regulatory agencies don't have a chance to read all of the report, they should at least be mindful of the top 10 priority policy recommendations as listed in the executive summary:

- Ensure access to irrigation water (statewide).
- Expand markets and increase sales locally, regionally, and internationally.
- Support truck transportation, but begin to maximize rail, barging and other water modes to move product to market more efficiently.
- Provide relief from the high cost of inputs, including taxes, energy, and labor.
- Encourage management of natural resources in a way that enables farming while protecting water, soil, air, habitat, and endangered species.
- Support a land use system that protects farmland for farm use.
- Support a high quality research, experiment and extension service that enables growers to diversify cropping and capitalize on unique geographic micro-climates and soils, and to remain competitive in a world market.
- Offer assistance for food processors—as key markets for growers—with technical and financial help to address wastewater permits that incorporate recycled, reclaimed, or reused water methods and technologies.
- Help growers meet new food safety standards that are becoming more stringent and costly.
- Help young or new farmers and transitional family farmers successfully become the next generation of aspiring producers.

The report from the Board of Agriculture is designed to not just sit on a shelf and gather dust. Board members are confident it can foster a better understanding and appreciation of Oregon agriculture, and a chance for all Oregonians to join together to address key issues.

"The last couple of reports have been well received by our lawmakers," says Krahmer. "I believe our legislature is starting to take notice of these reports as they receive them."

If this year's edition results in at least some policy decisions favorable to Oregon agriculture, it's all been worth the effort.

<http://naturalresourcereport.com/2013/01/ag-dept-makes-policy-recommendations-to-kitzhaber/>

EPA Air Sampling Grant in Oregon

Below is an excerpt from a recent newsletter from Senator Floyd Prozanski's (D-Eugene) regarding herbicide testing in the Eugene area.

Air Sampling Update from the Highway 36 Exposure Investigation

As you may know, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10 has been seeking funding to develop passive air samplers that could be used in the Highway 36 Exposure Investigation. Their grant proposal, titled "Refinement of passive sampling techniques to determine air concentrations of volatile-phase herbicides," was accepted and they will soon be awarded funding.

EPA applied for what is called a "Regional Methods" grant. These grants, funded by EPA's Office of Research and Development, focus on developing scientific methods necessary for the regions to meet their monitoring and enforcement objectives. EPA plans to begin developing the passive air samplers this summer, and expects it will take a few months before they have a usable sampling device.

I have uploaded and created a web page link to the grant proposal: www.leg.state.or.us/prozanski/RM_R10PassiveAirSamplingHerbicides2012-10-17.pdf. You can also visit EPA's Office of Research and Development web site for more information on the program that provides this type of

funding: www.epa.gov/osp/regions/rm.htm.

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J. R. Simplot Company Acquires Grass Seed Production Operation in Washington State

The J. R. Simplot Company announces the acquisition of Scootney Springs Seed, a production and seed-cleaning facility near Othello, Wash. This facility includes a warehousing location and seed cleaning operations, and will be part of Jacklin Seed, a subsidiary of Simplot.

Over the next three years, this purchase will result in closing the existing Jacklin Seed facility in Post Falls, enabling the production operations to be closer to Jacklin's main production areas in Washington.

"Founded in 1936, Jacklin Seed was the first company to start growing Kentucky bluegrass in the Columbia Basin over 30 years ago," said Chris Claypool, general manager of Jacklin Seed. "People said it couldn't be done there, but with the help of dedicated growers and the best staff, it became a success. The growing area for the bluegrass industry in the Pacific Northwest has shifted, and this new location near Othello will keep Jacklin Seed in the midst of the market."

Simplot bought the Jacklin Seed business in 1997, and has seen tremendous growth in the turf grass business since that time. Jacklin Seed is the industry's leading producer and wholesale marketer of cool- and warm-season grasses with distribution in more than 70 countries.

"We are committed to our turf and horticulture business, the growers, and our distributors," said Jeff Roesler, vice president of the Simplot AgriBusiness Group. "This facility represents new opportunities for us and our customers, with a real foundation for sustainability and future growth within our core competency in the grass seed and turf marketplace."

There will be a transition phase in moving the operations from one location to another, and bluegrass seed grown in Idaho and Oregon will be brought to the Othello location for cleaning. Once the Post Falls facility closes, approximately 20 to 25 positions will not be transitioned to the new facility.

“We struggled with this very difficult decision knowing the closure would have an impact on employees and their families,” said Garrett Lofto, president of the Simplot AgriBusiness Group. “We will be doing what we can to ease the transition as it occurs, including providing separation packages, onsite counseling, out-placement services, and other forms of assistance. We are committed to providing transitional support for our employees, and we hope that making this announcement so far in advance of the closure will help them to adequately plan for their futures.”

Simplot remains committed to the Pacific Northwest with operations throughout the area, Lofto added. When the Post Falls site closes, Jacklin Seed has plans to open an office in the Spokane area for sales, research, and development, and other positions necessary to operate the business from that area. Only the production operations of Jacklin Seed will move to the Othello plant, joining other Simplot operations already in the Columbia basin area of central Washington.

About Simplot:

The J.R. Simplot Company, a privately held agribusiness firm headquartered in Boise, Idaho, has an integrated portfolio that includes phosphate mining, fertilizer manufacturing, farming, ranching, cattle production, food processing, food brands, and other enterprises related to agriculture. Simplot’s major operations are located in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and China, with products marketed in more than 40 countries worldwide. The company’s mission statement is Bringing Earth’s Resources to Life.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES: Summer Convention - June 26-29, 2013

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