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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Blue Mt. Seeds Purchases Plant from Barenbrug

Blue Mt. Seeds announced Sept. 14 it has purchased a seed cleaning facility from Barenbrug USA that was damaged earlier this year in a fire.

“We needed room to expand,” said Bill Merrigan, manager of the Imbler, Ore., based company. “We were right at capacity, both cleaning capacity and storage, and we were out of land to build on. We viewed this as a good opportunity.

“If growers choose to increase grass seed acres in Union County, we’ll have the facilities to handle it,” he said.

Blue Mt. plans to clean fine-leaf fescue seed and bluegrass seed at the plant after some reconstruction, and use the facility’s warehouse for seed storage.

The plant is located about two miles south of Imbler.

The purchase includes the plant’s 4-acre lot and 5 acres of land adjacent to it – acreage that connects an existing Blue Mt. seed cleaning facility and the former Barenbrug plant.

The purchase was set in motion in part by the March 31 fire that did more than $1 million of damage to buildings and equipment at the plant, including destroying a seed-cleaning line. A second seed cleaning line was only partially damaged.

Barenbrug opted not to rebuild the 50,000 square-foot facility, but to reinvest in a seed cleaning facility it operates in Boardman, Ore., according to James Schneider, CEO and president of Barenbrug USA. The Tangent, Ore., based company has since added square footage to the Boardman plant and installed a third seed cleaning line there.

Schneider said the company will continue contracting with Grande Ronde Valley growers to produce seed.

“We’re not abandoning the Grande Ronde Valley,” Schneider said. “We still have a field man based there and we are contracting directly with growers there. But we are now cleaning that seed in Boardman.”

He added: “We are thankful that good came out of such an unfortunate event. Blue Mt. Seeds has always been a great neighbor, and we can’t think of a better outcome than for the sale to allow both our companies to continue to invest in future growth.”

Blue Mt. already has begun storing seed in the west end of the Imbler facility, which was not damaged in the fire, adding 2.5 million pounds of seed storage capacity to the company’s current capacity of 12 million pounds, Merrigan said.

Depending on how much of the facility Blue Mt. rebuilds, it could increase its storage capacity by another 2.5 million pounds, he said.

“We may not rebuild that facility the way it was,” Merrigan said. “We may put up a new building, or we may try and change the design of that building. That is something we are discussing right now.”

The sale leaves Blue Mt. Seeds as the only commercial grass seed cleaner operating in the Grande Ronde Valley.