



## SAVING THROUGH

**Farmers reduce expenses for equipment, personnel by setting up partnerships**

# SHARING

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

To minimize their expenses, Nezperce, Idaho, growers Nate and Steve Riggers share combines with other farmers nearly 1,000 miles away in the Corn Belt.

The brothers, who operate a diversified farm in Northern Idaho, estimate that over the years they've saved about 40 percent per machine through the joint ownership of combines with farmers in Iowa and Nebraska. After harvesting their grain and grass seed crops, they've trucked machines to the Midwest in time to harvest corn and soybeans.

Though commodity prices have ebbed lately, equipment costs continue on a steady climb. Sharing equipment — a new combine can cost as much as \$400,000 — is becoming increasingly enticing to many growers. Some, such as the Riggers brothers, even look to other regions of the country to find a willing partner with a different harvest schedule.

Agreements have been forged on simple handshakes or by establishing complex limited liability corporations. An LLC allows owners to manage while protecting them from personal liability for the organization's debt and obligations.

### A lesson learned

The Riggers brothers, who have a non-irrigated farm in the Camas Prairie, started sharing equipment in 2000, based on lessons they learned at The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers — a two-week, intensive farm management school offered by Texas A&M University.

"You get drilled into your head a lot at TEPAP about using your assets better," Nate Riggers said.

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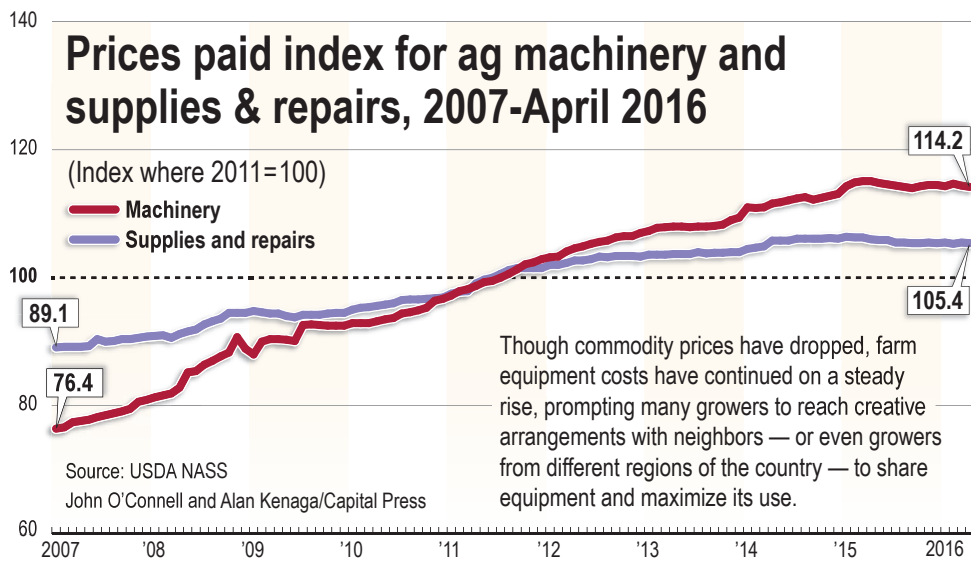


Iowa farmer Ben Riensche loads a combine on a truck to ship back to Northern Idaho for use. Riensche and Idaho farmer Nate Riggers had an agreement to share equipment. Riggers no longer shares equipment with Riensche but still shares with a Nebraska farmer. Courtesy of Ben Riensche



**"Back when farms were a lot smaller and there were a lot more farms, trading like this was commonplace."**

Idaho farmer, Sid Freeman



## Dairies buoyed by ecology's stance on CAFO permit

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

The Washington Department of Ecology on Wednesday proposed issuing permits to dairies that could limit federal lawsuits over groundwater pollution, creating a regulatory framework sought by the dairy industry and fought by environmental groups.

"We think this is a good thing," Washington State Dairy Federation policy director Jay Gordon said. "They (DOE) have done an excellent job of listening. They really have."

The proposal will overhaul how Washington regulates the storage and spreading of manure at dairies and other concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs.

Currently, DOE issues pollution discharge permits to only a small number of CAFOs. The permits combine federal and state laws and apply only to pollutants discharged to surface water.

DOE alarmed the dairy industry last year by floating a proposal to apply the state-federal CAFO permit

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Don Jenkins/Capital Press  
Cows stand behind a fence at a dairy in Whatcom County. The Washington Department of Ecology proposed new rules for how dairies and other concentrated feeding animal operations store and handle manure.

## Members of Congress tell administration to speed up H-2A applications

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

More than 100 members of the U.S. House have written to the Obama administration in an effort to speed up the processing of foreign guestworker visas.

Reps. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash.; Suzan DelBene, D-Wash.; Sanford Bishop Jr., D-Ga.; and Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., led 98 other House members in a bipartisan letter to administration officials

urging them to adhere to regulations requiring them to process H-2A-visa foreign guestworker applications in a timely manner.

Administrative breakdowns in processing are impacting growers' ability to hire legal seasonal workers in time for planting and harvest, the members wrote in a June 10 letter to U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez and Leon Rodriguez, director of

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