



Capital Press File

Workers bale Christmas trees during a recent harvest. The number of growers has shrunk during the past decade as supply and demand have equalized, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

## Christmas tree production down as market stabilizes

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

Oregon's 2015 Christmas tree sales were down 26 percent from 2010, but an industry representative said supply and demand appear to be balancing out and he expects 2016 to be a good year.

Oregon growers cut and sold 4.7 million trees in 2015, compared to 6.4 million in 2010, according to a report from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service in Portland. The 2015 harvest was valued at \$84.5 million, down from \$91 million in 2010. The number of growers

has dropped dramatically as well, from 1,633 in 2010 to 690 in 2015.

Bryan Ostlund, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association in Salem, said the industry went through a growth cycle and reached a "significant oversupply." Since then, many growers have retired or otherwise gotten out of the business, he said.

Oregon leads the nation in Christmas tree production. North Carolina, the second leading state, also went through growth problems, Ostlund said. More than 90 percent of Northwest trees are

sold outside the region, with California the biggest domestic buyer. Export markets include Mexico, Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Oregon growers ship more than 900,000 trees to Mexico alone.

The drop in production has been met with increased demand. Ostlund said orders are already arriving from tree lots and importers. "A lot of growers, if they wanted to be sold out, they could be sold out," he said. "The phones are ringing."

He said the industry probably will ship fewer trees overseas this year, because domestic demand is strong.

## Friends of Family Farmers wants 'shift' in ODA direction

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

Don't count Friends of Family Farmers among the groups praising the legacy of Katy Coba, the departing director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

In a prepared statement, the Salem-based advocacy group said Coba has overseen a "growing shift towards promoting large, corporate, factory-scale farming operations in Oregon even as the state has been losing small and mid-sized family farms in large numbers."

The group called on Gov. Kate Brown to "pro-actively shift the agency in a direction that better represents the strong commitment that Oregonians have to supporting sustainable, family-scale farms and agriculture."

Brown's office announced Aug. 24 that Coba has been appointed the state's chief operating officer and director of the Department of Administrative Services, the state's top administrative agency. The appointment is effective Oct. 1, pending confirmation by the Oregon Senate in September. Coba has been ag director since 2003.

Ivan Maluski, Friends

of Family Farmers policy director, said Coba's experience in state government should serve her well, and said the group appreciated being able to raise issues and make its points during her tenure.

But he noted several disagreements with Coba's administration over the years.

He said the department was unwilling to support regulations that would protect farmers from genetically engineered crops and the growth of "factory farms."

He said the department tried to expand canola production areas in the Willamette Valley in 2012. Specialty seed producers and food safety activists filed suit to stop the action, and the state

Court of Appeals sided with opponents. The Legislature eventually allocated money for Oregon State University to set up canola test plots and report back by November 2017.

In the past, the group criticized the appointment of Marty Myers to the Oregon Board of Agriculture, which advises the director and the department. Myers is general manager of Threemile Canyon Farms in Boardman, which describes itself as one of the nation's largest dairy operations. It has 24,000 dairy cows that produce an estimated 170,000 gallons of milk daily. The operation also maintains a herd of 25,000 replacement heifers, according to the company website.

## ODFW says wolf attack was probable cause of sheep's death

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

A ewe was killed and eaten in northeastern Oregon's Umatilla County in what the state Department of Fish and Wildlife has labeled a probable wolf attack.

The attack happened about 4 p.m. Aug. 16 on public land in ODFW's Mount Emily wildlife management unit. A

sheep herder heard a noise near his camp and found one of his guard dogs fighting with a black wolf. The herder fired his rifle into the air three times, scaring off the wolf. He found the ewe dead near where the dog and wolf were fighting.

The herder told a U.S. Wildlife Services agent about the attack two days later, and ODFW joined in a follow-

up investigation. By then, the sheep carcass had been nearly consumed with only the skeletal system, small amounts of connective tissue, hide, rumen, and wool remaining, according to an ODFW report.

No evidence of a wolf

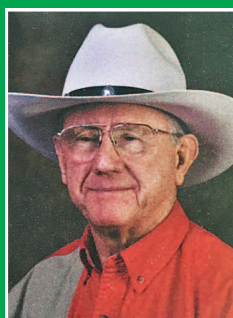
attack could be found at the site, but trail camera video and tracks show a single wolf had used the area, according to ODFW. Coupled with the herder's statement, it was enough for ODFW to declare the incident a "probable" wolf attack.

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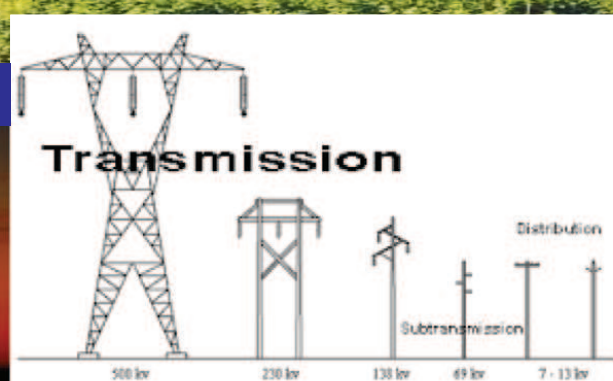
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