

Lindsey recognized as Nut Grower of the Year

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

As a dentist, Bob Lindsey's professional training didn't overlap much with hazelnut farming.

Nonetheless, in the 1970s, Lindsey and his wife, Pat, bought a hazelnut orchard near Salem, Ore., to teach their six children the value of hard work and responsibility.

"It wasn't that we knew anything. We were total strangers," said Lindsey.

Roughly four decades later, Lindsey has won the title of Nut Grower of the Year, a prestigious award he received Jan. 18 at the

Nut Growers Society's 2017 meeting in Corvallis, Ore.

Though he initially saw hazelnut farming as a way to keep his four sons out of trouble, the crop soon captured Lindsey's imagination.

He eventually launched an operation for cleaning and drying hazelnuts as well as a "Hazelnut Gnome Factory," which sells several types of hazelnuts to consumers.

Though Lindsey could have lived in comfort after retiring from his dental practice, he continues to revel in producing hazelnuts at the age of 90, said Phil

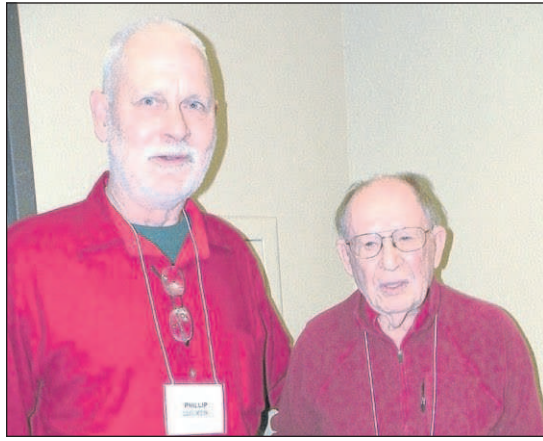
Walker, a fellow hazelnut grower who presented the award.

"Every day, he lives and breathes hazelnuts," Walker said.

The son of an oil wildcatter in Montana, Lindsey was drafted into the Army and served in the Korean War.

When his military duty was finished, he studied dentistry and eventually opened a practice in Salem.

His involvement in various civic activities, such as advocating for water fluoridation, led to Lindsey's election as Salem's mayor, a role he filled from 1973 to 1977.



Courtesy of Polly Owen
Hazel nut grower Phil Walker, left, presents the Nut Grower of the Year award to Bob Lindsey.

Dairy organization petitions for immigration reform

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

The Idaho Dairymen's Association is asking people to sign a petition to bring congressional attention to farm labor shortages and the need for immigration reform.

The organization is hoping for at least 10,000 signatures by Feb. 3.

"The purpose is obvious (and) the new administration made the need for immigration reform one of their platform issues," said Bob Naerabout, IDA executive director.

Dairymen want to make sure Idaho's delegation understands the importance of immigration reform, he said.

There is currently no visa program to bring immigrant labor to Idaho for year-round employment, and the state's low unemployment rate is keeping the available labor pool extremely tight, he said.

The damaging effects of labor shortages are being felt in the dairy industry and elsewhere in Idaho and inhibiting economic growth, he said.

The lack of labor is hampering investment in Idaho's businesses and slowing growth in the state, resulting in missed opportunities for existing and new companies, he said.

Idaho can't continue to be prosperous without immigration reform. Idaho is an agricultural state and dependent on foreign-born labor, he said.

The petition cites a "massive shortage of workers" for dairy farms in Idaho, the critical need for a consistent, legal workforce for efficient operation of dairies and the lack of a farmworker visa program for dairies.

It states: "We, the dairy producers of Idaho and supporters of the dairy industry in our state, respectfully request that the members of our congressional delegation work with other members of Congress and the new administration to develop and implement federal legislation that includes an effective visa program for dairy farmworkers as soon as possible."

Such a program would include legal status for the current experienced workforce; access to year-round workers; and an effective program for legal new workers when they are needed in the future.

The petition began with a dairy producer from the Treasure Valley who is frustrated with his lack of ability to find labor. He asked IDA to assist with getting signatures, Naerabout said.

"We're getting a pretty strong response right now, especially electronically," he said.

Online

The petition is available at www.idahodairymens.org

Beware of intentional food adulteration, expert says

Front-line workers offer chance to prevent contamination

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

For a decade, food defense expert Rod Wheeler signed into visitor log books at food processing plants with a fake name: Osama Bin Laden.

The notorious terrorist's signature never aroused any interest, other than from one receptionist who dutifully asked what to write on his name tag.

"Just call me 'Bin' for short," Wheeler replied.

The incident highlights an unsettling fact about safety procedures at many food processing facilities — the sense of security is often illusory, he said during the Northwest Food Processors Association's recent conference in Portland, Ore.

"It only takes one incident. They use the element of complacency," said Wheeler, CEO of the Global Food Defense Institute, which advises food companies on security.

Large processing facilities must already protect themselves from intentional adulteration under the Food Safety Modernization Act, which requires them to develop vulnerability assessments and mitigation strategies.

While farms aren't covered by these rules, Wheeler



Photos by Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press
Participants at the Northwest Food Processors Association's recent conference in Portland, Ore., examine food processing equipment. Food companies were advised to guard against intentional adulteration by terrorists or disgruntled employees.

said growers shouldn't ignore food defense concerns.

Consumers want more food security oversight so processors — through third-party food safety auditors — will scrutinize their suppliers more closely, he said.

"They're going to have to pay more attention if they want to stay in business," Wheeler said of farmers.

Companies conducting their first vulnerability assessment should hire an outside expert because it's easy to overlook shortcomings that have grown as familiar as "wallpaper in your kitchen," he said.

For example, areas containing finished product that's yet to be packaged are particularly vulnerable.

"If they're going to hit you, that's where they're going to hit you," he said.

Cameras are a common feature of security systems, but it should be remembered they're generally used to figure out what went wrong after the fact, Wheeler said.

Front-line workers, on the other hand, offer the greatest opportunity to prevent an intentional adulteration incident, he said.

It's critical to train these

employees to be aware of the risks, he said.

In one case, Wheeler easily slipped into a processing facility without drawing an objection from security guards, only to be stopped by an elderly female worker.

Due to a lack of training, though, she simply made Wheeler put on a hairnet rather than demand to know what he was doing.

"I will take that little old lady over the \$200,000 camera system you can buy," Wheeler said. "They're our greatest assets."

Companies should brainstorm various scenarios of



Rod Wheeler, CEO of the Global Food Defense Initiative, recently advised companies on food security at the Northwest Food Processors Association's annual conference in Portland, Ore.

potential food contamination and how they'd react, he said. How should a threat be assessed? In what situations should production or shipping be halted? Which law enforcement agencies and employees should be notified?

"You don't want to wait until it occurs to figure out how to deal with it," Wheeler said.

Though it's a common assumption that outside terrorists would be likely culprits in intentional food adulteration, disgruntled employees or political activists also pose a hazard, he said.

Food companies are also at risk from "subversives" — workers who don't personally have a beef with their employer but are paid by outsiders to carry out nefarious activities, Wheeler said.

"One of our biggest concerns are insider threats," he said.

Shippers, truckers prepare for FSMA transportation rule

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — A local agricultural attorney anticipates forthcoming federal food-safety transportation regulations will require a cultural shift for many in the trucking industry.

The final rule governing Sanitary Transportation of Human and Animal Food under the Food Safety and Modernization Act takes effect March 31, with some exceptions.

Lance Schuster, with Beard St. Clair Gaffney, believes trucking companies will face the greatest changes

under the rule, which places the legal burden of "stopping the train" once a potential food-safety hazard is discovered on everyone in the supply chain.

The rule applies to food that is transported by truck or rail in bulk, not food fully enclosed by another container or requiring temperature control. Transportation on farms or from farms to fresh sheds is excluded.

"I think the biggest challenge about this rule is having individuals who haven't typically been subject to the (federal Food and Drug Administration) requirements recognize they have responsibility to take action under the law," Schuster said. "Trucking companies typically don't think of themselves as having responsibility to make certain food is safe."

On the shipping and receiving ends, businesses with fewer than 500 workers and earning less than \$27.5 million annually are granted until April of 2018 to comply. Furthermore, transportation operations with average annual revenues under \$500,000 over a three-year cycle — such as individuals with their own trucks — are exempt from the rule.

Idaho Trucking Association President and CEO Julie Pipal said her organization lobbied for all truckers to be regulated, concerned smaller operators who aren't compliant will risk losing contracts.

She said some of her companies are implementing their own transportation rule training programs. She believes the rule should make carriers more vigilant, but added most trucking companies don't view themselves as a "weak link" and are already expected to comply with customers' safety practices.

Shippers must provide written specifications to the carrier for safe transportation of the food. Carriers must maintain documentation that

temperature requirements were met, trailers were pre-cooled, sanitized and inspected and keep records of previous cargo to prevent allergens or cross-contamination.

Lynn Fuhrman, vice president of sales with Doug Andrus Trucking, said his company has been compliant with the forthcoming rules for six months, and he believes most big transportation companies are well positioned for the transition, thanks to their transportation management software. The rules will require his company to offer and document training programs for drivers, he said.

Citrus industry hopes HLB grants coax state into funding research

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — A citrus group is hoping that the USDA's latest round of grants totaling \$13.1 million for huanglongbing research will spur the state into finally chip in money toward the potential crisis.

In one of the last acts of President Barack Obama's administration, the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture announced four grants — including \$5.1 million for the University of California-Riverside — aimed at tackling the deadly citrus tree disease.

The money is the latest in specialty crop funding under the 2014 Farm Bill and brings the total to more than \$57 million issued through the Citrus Disease Research and Extension Program since 2014.

The latest funding comes as California Citrus Mutual is trying again to get money includ-



Courtesy Calif. Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program
Grace Radabaugh, a researcher from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, points out an Asian citrus psyllid in a California Polytechnic University-Pomona greenhouse. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture has announced \$13.6 million in research grants from the 2014 Farm Bill to target huanglongbing, the deadly citrus tree disease that the psyllid can carry.

ed in the state budget for HLB after failing the last two years.

"We're always looking for ways to show the Legislature and (Gov. Jerry Brown's) administration that investing in the citrus industry is something California should be doing,"

said Alyssa Houtby, CCM's director of public affairs.

Brown's initial 2017-18 budget does include \$6.15 million for a pest and disease prevention program and an emergency exotic pest response unit. Some currently seasonal



Courtesy of USDA ARS
An adult Asian citrus psyllid is shown on a young citrus leaf. Researchers in California are targeting huanglongbing, the deadly citrus tree disease, which is also known as citrus greening, that the tiny insect can carry.

employees would be switched to full-time to address the citrus issue, state Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross said earlier this month.

But that money isn't dedi-

cated solely to huanglongbing or the Asian citrus psyllid, which can carry the disease, Houtby said.

"The state of Florida has put \$8 million from their general fund toward their ACP and HLB program," she said.

Since 2009, the USDA has spent more than \$400 million to address huanglongbing, also known as citrus greening, according to a news release. First detected in Florida in 2005, huanglongbing has caused a 75 percent decline in that state's \$9 billion citrus industry and has led to full or partial psyllid quarantines in 15 U.S. states and territories, including California.

The \$5.1 million given to UC-Riverside will be used for bacteriophage research, Houtby said. Others receiving grants in the latest round are Clemson University in South Carolina (nearly \$4.3 million), Iowa State University (nearly \$2.5 million) and a USDA Agricultural Research Service facility in Geor-

gia (\$1.8 million).

California's citrus industry has devoted \$15 million toward HLB research and education and had received \$11 million from the federal government before this grant, but two previous attempts to get funding included in the state budget failed.

While last year's request for \$5 million was lined out of the budget, industry officials haven't yet determined how much to ask for this year, Houtby said. In all, 32 trees in Southern California have been found with the disease, but none in agricultural areas.

Houtby said industry leaders may try to appeal to Brown's concerns about climate change.

"If we don't have a citrus industry here, that would be a problem for air quality," she said. "Those are the types of messages we want to share with legislators. Climate change is a priority for this governor, so we need to insert ourselves into that conversation."