

# Central Oregon farmers face increasing costs

*As production expenses have continually risen over the past decade, average crop sales have gradually declined*

BY LILY RAFF  
THE (BEND) BULLETIN

BEND — Richard Macy is one of the lucky ones. That's because he continues to make a comfortable living off crops from his Culver farm.

And these days, farmers say, that sets Macy apart from an increasing number of his peers.

Scott Samsel, a farmer in Madras, said farming in Central Oregon is simply "not good. Not good at all."

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2002 agriculture census, there are fewer farms in Central Oregon now than there were just five years ago. Meanwhile, the average local farmer continues to age.

Samsel, who is a member of the North Unit Irrigation District, said a bushel of bluegrass — one of his main crops — has cost about the same since the mid-1980s. But the costs of operating his farm have risen steadily.

According to the latest agricultural census figures, Samsel is part of a larger trend. Production expenses for the average farm in Jefferson County were \$75,067 in 1997 and \$88,979 in 2002. That's an increase in expenditures of almost 19 percent in five years.

But the average crop sales per farm in Jefferson County went down during that time, from \$97,088 in 1997 to \$95,292 in 2002. That's about a 2 percent decrease in

sales in five years.

That's why farmers say it's becoming harder to afford even the basic costs of business. For example, a brand new combine — a piece of machinery that farmers drive through their fields to cut and separate grains from their stalks — could cost about \$225,000 these days.

"What people like Richard (Macy) have done is, they have a lot of acres that they can spread the cost out over," Samsel said of Macy, who farms 1,450 acres. "I'm farming about 250 acres right now. And if I had to buy a combine, I'd have to rent it out to someone else or ... do something, because I couldn't spread out that whole cost over just 250 acres."

Samsel said he is looking for ways to expand his farm, but the area's recent growth has driven most land prices way pasthis budget.

"There's about 70 acres that I'm thinking about (buying) right now, that probably could be sold on the open market for about a quarter of a million dollars," Samsel said. "I can't afford to compete with that."

The flip side of the rising realty market is that farmers suddenly see an easy alternative to farming — they can sell their land.

And even if they're not ready to give up their land, farmers have something else that, in Central Oregon, is quickly turning to gold — water.

The North Unit Irrigation District "by far manages its water better than any other district in the basin," said Jeremy Giffin, watermaster for the Deschutes Basin. "But they're kind of required to."

All of the surface water rights from the Deschutes River were doled out by 1914. That's also the year the North Unit Irrigation District received its Deschutes River water rights.

In Oregon, water rights are fulfilled on a first-come, first-served basis. That means in low-water years, North Unit is the last irrigation district to receive water.

"They rely on stored water from Wickiup (Reservoir) every year," Giffin said of the district. "They get

a good percentage from natural flow, but they still dip into the stored water every year."

The key to managing water during the low-water summer months, Giffin said, is taking careful measurements and paying special attention to factors that might affect farmers' demands for water.

When a rainstorm passes through, for example, or haying season requires farmers to dry out their fields, water use goes down.

Savvy irrigation district managers work hard to anticipate their farmers' water needs, and accommodate them with as little water to spare as possible.

That's harder than it sounds, Giffin said.

It takes 36 hours for water to get from Wickiup Reservoir to the start of the North Unit canal, in Bend. It then takes even longer for the water to navigate the canals and actually get to the farms in the North Unit district. Once water is released from the reservoir and enters the canals, it will either be used on crops or returned to the river.

So especially in low-water years, district managers want to make sure that water released from the reservoir ends up on their farmers' fields.

## Kenya: Thiong'o jailed after play success

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Stephen Wooten said. "He brings a critical perspective to campus."

Thiong'o has been called East Africa's foremost novelist, writing many acclaimed novels including "Weep Not, Child," "A Grain of Wheat," "The River Between" and "Devil on the Cross." Thiong'o has also written nonfiction works and children's books. He has taught at universities in Africa, Europe and the United States and is currently the director of the International Center for Writing and Translation at the University of California, Irvine, where he is a distinguished professor of English and Comparative Literature.

Thiong'o studied at universities in Uganda and England, writing his first novels while still a student. After studying, he became a professor at the University of Nairobi. In addition to teaching at the university, Thiong'o and his colleagues taught in the local villages, where he first began to notice the connection between language and memory.

"My books were written in English, and teaching in the village, there was the issue of which language will we use," Thiong'o said.

In 1977, Thiong'o co-wrote a play entitled "Ngaahika Ndeenda,"

meaning "I will marry when I want" in English. It was written in Kikuyu, the local language of the community.

"I chose the language because there was no other way to reach the community," Thiong'o said.

The play became so popular among the Kikuyu farmers and workers that the government banned the play, fearing political dissent. Thiong'o was arrested and taken to a maximum-security prison.

"I was taken without a name, a title, nothing, no trial even," Thiong'o said. "I was thinking about the issue of language and why I was put in a maximum-security prison for writing a play when it raised the same issues as books I had written in English."

The time in prison led Thiong'o to decide he would no longer write in English but in an African language in order to find a way of connecting with himself, he said.

During the lecture, Thiong'o explained how changing the language of a community alienates the community economically, socially and politically.

"If you get at the language of a people, you are getting at the cement of their political structure," Thiong'o said. "You control the memory of

that community. Naming is the way you identify things, and it establishes relationships."

Thiong'o used the example of "Robinson Crusoe," in which the man Crusoe met is called Friday.

"He says, 'Your name is Friday,' not, 'What is your name,'" Thiong'o said. "Then he called himself master, so wherever they went, when people asked, 'Who is that man?' Friday said, 'That is master.'"

Thiong'o also applied the concept to New England, in which the memory we have of states such as New York and New Jersey is in reference to England.

"I was writing about African history that can only be seen in an English frame of reference," Thiong'o said.

Thiong'o said part of the solution is sensitizing people to remembering that there are other languages and often the language used is not native or local.

"It is still colonialization in Africa the way we have turned away from our primary languages," Thiong'o said. "Our language is connecting us to that memory as our starting point for our engagement with the rest of the world."

abolsinger@dailyemerald.com

## Draft Senate bill seeks to modify recent Measure 37

*The new law requires landowners be compensated for decreased property value government-caused regulations*

BY CHARLES E. BEGGS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALEM — A draft Senate bill to make changes in the new voter-passed property compensation law includes one to let landowners build homes they could have built when they bought their property but were later blocked by government rules.

Sen. Charlie Ringo, chairman of the Senate Environment & Land Use Committee, said he hopes the panel will begin hearings on the new measure Wednesday.

The draft bill combines features of a number of bills that would revise Measure 37, which voters strongly approved in November.

The new law created by Measure 37 says landowners must be compensated or the land-use rules waived if government regulations imposed after the property is bought reduce its value.

Ringo says city and county officials who are grappling with the new law are looking to legislators to adopt uniform statewide standards for handling claims.

The land use watchdog group 1000 Friends of Oregon estimates more than 500 claims have been filed under the law since it took effect Dec. 2.

Ringo said Thursday the proposed Measure 37 revision bill is intended only as a starting point and is based on informal discussions with a variety of interests.

"No deals have been made and no agreements reached," said the Beaverton Democrat. "We feel we need to bring the discussion to more of a public arena."

The revision bill already is drawing criticism from both backers and critics of the property compensation law.

The provision giving property owners rights to build a single-family home on their land could reduce claims filed under Measure 37 but is contentious.

A bill to grant those rights already has passed the Republican-run House, where it had strong Democratic opposition, and has gone to Ringo's committee.

Democrats control the Senate, but Ringo backs the right-to-build language and that could attract support from fellow Democrats.

Ringo said he believes that restrictions that have prevented people from building homes on their own land "is one of the sources of discontent that caused people to vote for Measure 37."

But Elon Hasson, lobbyist for 1000 Friends, said the right-to-build provisions would further weaken land use planning safeguards for the state's best agricultural land.

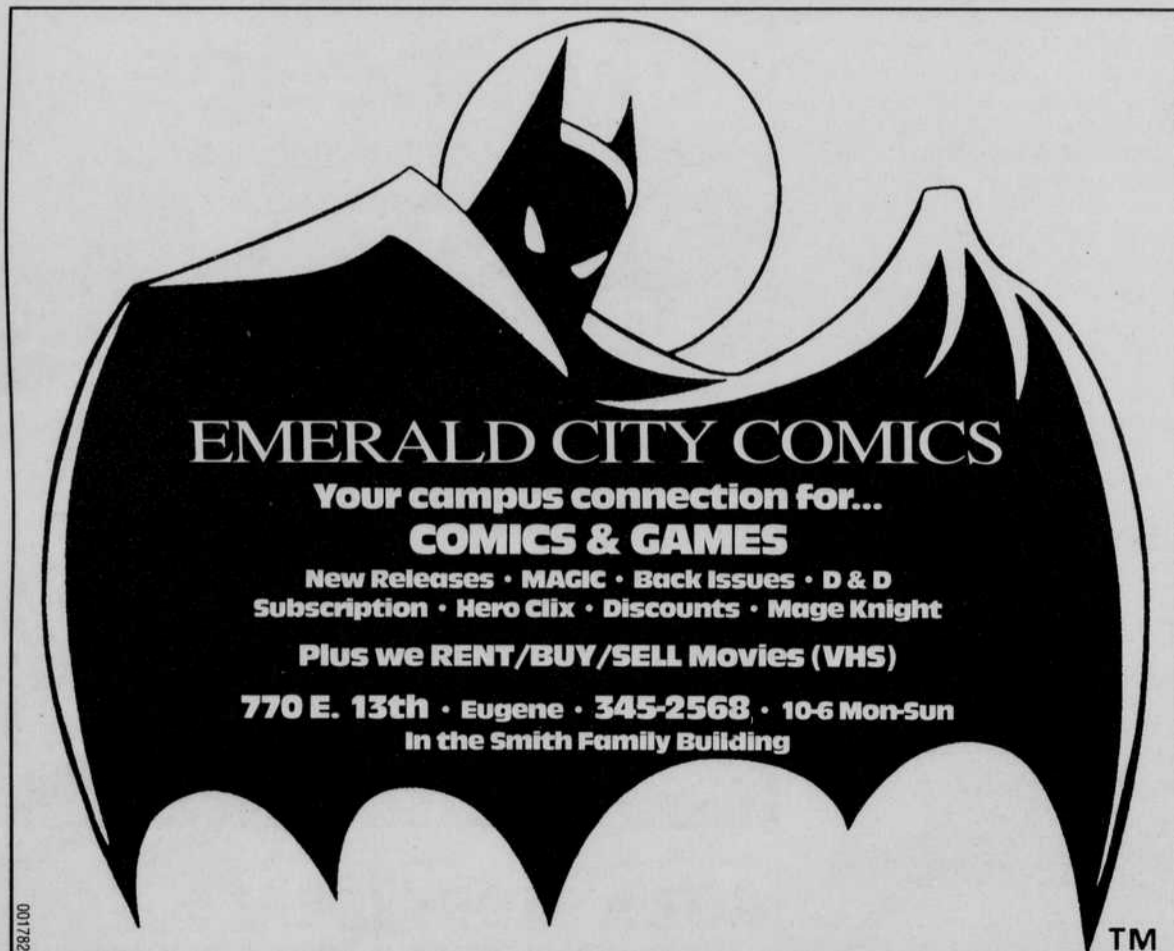
"People voted for a fair land use system. They didn't vote to waive protections on the highest value farm land," he said.

Dave Hunnicutt, director of Oregonians in Action, which led the campaign to pass Measure 37, favors the right-to-build provision and said many backers of the ballot measure don't seek compensation but want the right to build on their land.

Hasson said voters intended that people be paid when government actions reduced property value, though, and that the main thing missing in the revision bill is a compensation system.

"We can't look at any Measure 37 legislation in isolation," he said.

Ringo said he is working on ideas for how to pay claims but wasn't yet ready to disclose details.



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