

# Marijuana pesticide contamination worries Oregon farmers

By **Mateusz Perkowski**  
Capital Press

**SALEM** — Concerns about pesticide drift are nothing new in agriculture, but the issue has taken on new gravity for Oregon farmers with marijuana-growing neighbors.

Due to Oregon's pesticide testing regime for marijuana and its high value, growers of more conventional crops worry about getting blamed for contamination that renders the mind-altering flowers unsalable.

"I have neighbors growing marijuana, therefore I'm thinking about it," said Tim Winn, who farms in Benton County.

The potential problem was recently discussed during the Oregon Farm Bureau's annual convention, held Dec. 4-6 in Salem.

County representatives of the organization voted to request that its board of

directors consider possible solutions with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which is one of several state agencies involved in regulating the recreational marijuana since voters legalized it in 2014.

Marijuana remains illegal under federal law, so there are no pesticides specifically registered for use on the psychoactive crop.

Oregon does permit marijuana growers to use certain general biopesticides that aren't subject to federal residue regulations, but detection of conventional pesticides disqualifies the crop from the commercial market.

"It's a human consumptive crop so they're very strict about any impurities," Winn said.

Neighboring marijuana growers have approached Winn when looking for the source of contamination

after their product tested positive for prohibited pesticides, he said.

While Winn replied that he follows all pesticide label regulations, he said it's still possible that such chemicals can be transferred by dust storms and insects.

Another concern is that marijuana growers can submit claims to a farmer's liability insurance alleging pesticide drift, which could have serious implications given marijuana's high value, he said.

While an insurance company may not think much of paying out a claim for a few rows of organic sweet corn that's been contaminated, an acre of contaminated marijuana would be a much bigger financial hit, Winn said.

As a result, the insurance company may stop insuring the similar drift claims in the future or even cancel the

farmer's policy, he said. "You need to be risk averse, so you don't use that insurance."

It might make sense for marijuana to only be grown along the edges of "exclusive farm use" zones, as opposed to being surrounded by conventional agriculture on all sides, he said.

However, some growers are concerned about the "right to farm" implications of such proposals.

Tracey Liskey, a Klamath Falls farmer, urged Farm Bureau county delegates to vote against the resolution to discuss the issue with ODA.

"Do we want the state telling us what we can grow and what we can't?" he said.

Other attempts to resolve coexistence problems through regulation — such as canola restrictions in the Willamette Valley and the prohibition on genetically

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Cherise Kaechele / The Observer

Each of the 12 Days of Christmas has a different theme. Many of the students help prepare the gifts — including baking goodies.

## LHS

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Lara Insko, president of the LHS chapter.

The junior said everyone delivering gifts wears Santa hats to add to the Christmas spirit.

Insko and her FBLA 12 Days of Christmas team know that each of the families have three or four school-age children but have little other information about them.

One of the things Insko said she sometimes wishes she knew about the families is the type and size of their ovens. This would make it a lot easier to pick out the best food items to deliver.

Some of the children are catching on to the delivery schedule of the FBLA students.

"They are waiting for us when we arrive," Insko said. "The kids have fun with it."

The LHS junior regardless of whether or not someone is waiting, makes her deliveries quickly and scurries back to her car, trying to keep the sense of magic alive. Once back in her car Insko sometimes cannot resist taking a peek as children reach for their family's gift package.

"The children are really excited and happy," Insko said.

The LHS chapter selects a theme for each of the 12 delivery days. The theme for Day 3 is "Santa's Sleigh," which symbolizes gifts for children. LHS's FBLA chapter, in keeping with this theme, on that day will provide gifts of Play-Doh, soccer balls and basketballs.

The Day 9 theme is "Silent Night," and board games will be given. "Christmas Colors" is the

theme of Day 10, during which colored pencils, markers and coloring books are delivered.

Many of the gifts are prepared by FBLA chapter members, including baked items and clothing.

Insko said participating in the program is a way for everyone in LHS's FBLA chapter to show appreciation for what others have done for them.

"We receive so much help from the community, (and) we are trying to give back," she said.

The 12 Days of Christmas program is one of many community service projects the LHS FBLA chapter is involved in. The others include a fundraising campaign for the March of Dimes and the baking and distribution of Thanksgiving pies to families in need.

"The FBLA is dedicated to serving. We do a lot of things to help the community," Insko said.

Carollo is impressed with the initiative the members of his FBLA chapter are showing in running the annual gift-giving program.

"When you give them some direction, they run with it. It is awesome," Carollo said.

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## EOU

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Insko told The Observer that Brown held a meeting with all of the public university presidents in the state, along with a representative from the respective universities' boards of trustees, the day she released her budget.

"I appreciate (the governor's) recognition of the value of higher education," Insko said of the meeting. "This was a clear signal, from my standpoint, of that importance. She made it clear her desire (is) to work with us to design an acceptable path forward."

While the flat budget from the governor will certainly hurt EOU if the investment package is not passed, Insko said, "Eastern is not in a crisis



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— Eastern Oregon University President Tom Insko

situation even with the governor's flat budget. We have made significant progress in the last number of years in improving our financial health and situation."

Insko also said he is trying to communicate with lawmakers the effects of flat funding.

"(All legislators) recognize that flat funding is not consistent with the objectives of the state," he said.

While Insko told The Oregonian he was worried about a double-digit

tuition increase, in his interview with The Observer, he said he was confident the tuition increase wouldn't be that significant.

"I'm optimistic that Eastern Oregon University next year will identify a pathway that will allow our tuition increases to be less than 5 percent," Insko said. "I'm optimistic about that because of what the team has accomplished the last several years, as well as the relationships we have established in Salem."

## FRACTALS

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cards and ordered 20 to sell in the gallery. A couple months later, Lind said she got a call asking her to show her work.

"I couldn't believe that someone wanted to show my art," she said. "It was so awesome to be recognized as an artist."

The show got a lot of positive feedback, Linda said, noting a woman from Lewiston, Idaho, had come to see the show because she was drawn specifically to fractals.

"She said fractals calm her. It was a 'wow' moment for me to hear how people interpret my work," Lind said. "If you see more than just a butterfly — that's what is inspiring to me."

While her images dictate the designs she makes, she said she looks to Kristy Ath-



Submitted photo

Wallowa County photographer Debbie Lind's "Butterfly Blooms" won a blue ribbon at this year's Wallowa Valley Arts Festival in Joseph.

ens at the Small Business Development Center in Enterprise for help directing her business.

"Kristy's been giving me guidance, and I have been getting confidence where to take

my business next with branding, financing and how to keep my records," Lind said.

Lind's work can be purchased at The Bookloft in Enterprise, The Dog Spot in Joseph and in the summer

months at the Wallowa County Farmers Market in Joseph. To view her display at the Wenaha Gallery visit <https://wenaha.com/fractal-photographic-art-debbie-lind/>.

## WEATHER

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mountains, rain in the valley) will continue this week. After that's it's up in the air," he said.

Slagle said there is another system moving its way through Union and Wallowa counties, which may drop the temperature, but "it's not looking too impressive right now."

He said the area has been a little drier than average, but he expects that will be made up for over the next week with the precipitation predicted.

"We're just slightly below average," he said.

Slagle said the average amount of precipitation that falls during the winter in the Grande Ronde Valley is approximately 15 to 17 inches.

La Grande receives about three to four inches of snow in December on average. So far, the city has received three-tenths of an inch of snow. The City of Joseph has received more than half an inch, and the City of Union received just over a quarter of an inch.

The meteorologist added the record snowfall for Dec. 25 was in 1974 when four inches of snow fell on Christmas Day in La Grande. The record depth of snow was in 1971 with 11 inches.

Joseph had eight inches fall in 1915 on Christmas Day and a depth of 10 inches in 1927. Union received four inches of snow on Christmas Day in 1971, which contributed to its record-breaking depth the same day of 10 inches.

Slagle said although the forecast does not call for snow right now, that may change.

"Always check the weather before traveling during the holidays," he said. "Heading into Christmas, it may turn colder and snowfall may catch some people off guard. There is no real concern for a snowstorm right now but it's still (a week away)."

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