

Small-business & Ag

HAPPENINGS

Pamela Glenn of Summerville elected to FSA Union County Committee

SALEM — The Union County U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency announced Pamela Glenn of Summerville was elected to represent the local administrative area (LAA) 2 on FSA's Union County Committee. Glenn and other recently elected county committee members will take office in January. Every FSA office has a county committee made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters who are elected by local producers.

County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. Committee members impact producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. They monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of FSA programs.

For more information, visit the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov/elections or contact the Union County FSA office at 541-963-4178.

Walden terms USMCA 'a big win'

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) in a news release lauded the recent House passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement, calling it “a big win for Oregon’s businesses and ag producers.”

According to the release, Oregon businesses export \$3.7 billion in goods to Canada and Mexico, supporting 7,421 jobs in the state, and the USMCA “expands and solidifies the market opportunities that make that possible. USMCA will especially help Oregon wine, wheat and dairy producers and provides improved market access for our agriculture products,” Walden said. “I look forward to the Senate passing, and the President signing this agreement so that we can continue to grow our economy and expand access to markets abroad.”

SAIF offers free ag safety seminar in Hermiston

SALEM — SAIF will give a free seminar on agriculture safety and health in Hermiston from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Jan. 14 in English and Jan. 15 in Spanish. The seminars are designed primarily for people working in agriculture but are open to anyone interested in ag safety and health. The seminar, which includes lunch, will take place at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Webinars in English and Spanish will be offered in March.

“We purposely hold these in the off-season to encourage attendance,” said Courtney Merriott, senior safety management consultant at SAIF and presenter at this year’s seminars. “Our goal is to provide the latest safety content for the industry, so that every ag worker goes home safe and healthy each night.”

Registration is required. More information and registration details can be found at www.saif.com/agseminars.

Oregon DMV seeks qualified CDL testers

SALEM — Oregon DMV is looking for more skills test providers for commercial driver licensing across the state. DMV encourages businesses and organizations that can administer CDL skills tests to apply with the Oregon Department of Transportation for the CDL Third Party Testing Program. Once ODOT awards providers with a contract in this program, they will be authorized to administer CDL skills tests on behalf of DMV. A Request for Proposal (RFP 730-34080-19) is available for download on the Oregon Procurement Information Network system. Any entities wishing to submit a proposal — the first step toward a contract — must be registered on the network. Registration is free. More information on ORPIN, including how to register as a supplier, is available at <http://orpin.oregon.gov/open.dll/welcome>.

If you are new to Oregon public procurement, or would like training or assistance with how to compete in the government marketplace, the Government Contract Assistance Program has free tools available at www.gcap.org.

All questions related to this program and the RFP must be directed to Stephanie Lehman at stephanie.k.lehman@odot.state.or.us.



Photo by Lynn Grooms/Agri-View

Cows feed on corn silage in this file photo. A group of scientists with Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences and farmers in northern New England are working on a plan to feed seaweed to cows to gauge whether it can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

Seaweed as cow feed?

By Patrick Whittle
The Associated Press

FREEPORT, Maine — Coastal Maine has a lot of seaweed, and a fair number of cows. A group of scientists and farmers think pairing the two could help unlock a way to cope with a warming world.

The researchers — from a marine science lab, an agriculture center and universities in northern New England — are working on a plan to feed seaweed to cows to gauge whether that can help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to

climate change.

About a quarter of the methane in the country comes from cattle, which produce the gas when they belch or flatulate.

The concept of feeding seaweed to cows has gained traction in recent years because some studies have shown its potential to cut back on methane. The reduction might be because the seaweed interrupts the process of production of the gas in the animals’ guts.

One of the big questions is which kinds of seaweed offer the highest benefit to farmers

looking to cut methane, and the researchers hope to find out, said Nichole Price, a senior research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay, Maine, and the project’s leader.

“What on that list has the ability to do two things — not just reduce methane emissions, but have some health benefits for the cow that have a cost savings or cost efficiency for the farmer?” Price said.

The researchers plan to conduct feeding trials with cows in Maine and New Hampshire

in 2020 and 2021 to see whether seaweeds that can be used as cattle feed will cut the methane. They also intend to screen seaweeds for compounds that make them useful as cattle feed additives.

The lab work to determine whether the seaweeds succeed in reducing methane will take place at University of Vermont.

The research team has received a \$3 million grant from the Shelby Cullom Davis Charitable Fund toward the work.

Studies involving some seaweeds

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Wheat prices ‘fairly firm,’ could go higher

By Matthew Weaver
Capital Press

SALEM — Wheat prices are trending higher, and market experts say there’s room for them to grow.

Prices for soft white wheat, primarily grown in the Pacific Northwest, ranged from \$5.90 to \$6.10 per bushel on the Portland market.

Prices will remain “fairly firm,” said Byron Behne, grain marketer for Northwest Grain Growers in Walla Walla, Washington.

“I don’t know that we’ll get to \$6.50 like we did last year, but I don’t really see a lot of downside, either,” he said. “I think we’re going to be in OK shape.”

“It’s been so many years since I’ve been able to say this, but we actually have a bullish fundamental situation going on in wheat right now,” said Darin Newsom, a market analyst in Omaha, Nebraska.

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EO Media Group file photo

Wheat is harvested near Lexington. Analysts say wheat prices could increase in the coming months.

Why create an employee handbook?

By Greg Smith

Employers of any size will benefit from a straightforward, well-written employee handbook. This document clearly spells out company policies and expectations as well as provides employees with a tool of reference should questions arise.

When drafting an employee handbook, it is essential that all federal and state employment laws are adhered to and be written in simple language, rather than legalese. It should always contain an employee and manager signature line and date documenting the handbook has been carefully reviewed by the employee and any questions answered by a supervisor.

While it will take time to create the handbook (and keep it updated), there are many benefits to both employer and employee. By creating uniform expectations, it can lessen

workplace strife and streamline the hiring process. The handbook documents company procedures and specific rules regarding dress code, any permitted use of personal electronic devices, non-discrimination, harassment (and how to file a complaint), compensation and benefits, company holidays, sick leave information, scheduling, etc., and consequences for violating these expectations. It may also offer a level of employer protection in the event of an employee lawsuit.

Helpful content to include in an employee handbook may include:

- Welcome to Our Team statement
- Company history
- Explanation of “at-will” employment
- Office conduct
- Probationary period
- Specific cell phone and social media usage rules
- Safety policies
- Payroll schedule/timecard completion

- Performance reviews
- Company benefits and enrollment
- Exit interviews in the event of resignation or termination

Employers should review the handbook on a regular basis and make changes as needed. Additions or revisions may be necessary, and it is also important to remove any policies that are not enforced.

While it is tempting not to have an employee handbook in place when there is a small team, it is well worth the time to avoid aggravation and ensure standards for the business are being met.

Greg Smith is the director of the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center located at 1607 Gekeler Lane #148 in La Grande, Oregon. You may schedule a free, confidential business advising appointment by calling 541-962-1532 or emailing eousbdc@gmail.com.