



Capital Press

The West's Ag Weekly

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2015



VOLUME 88, NUMBER 3

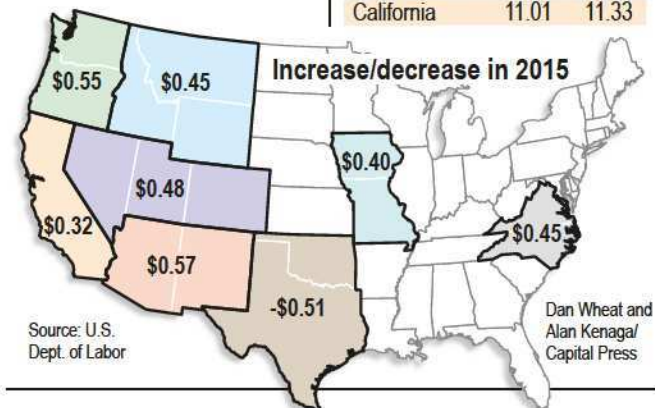
WWW.CAPITALPRESS.COM

\$2.00

H-2A hourly wage changes for 2015

The mandatory minimum, also known as the adverse effect wage rate, is determined by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Wage rate by select region		
Region	2014	2015
Appalachian I	\$9.87	\$10.32
Cornbelt II	12.22	12.62
S. Plains	10.86	10.35
Mountain I	10.69	11.14
Mountain II	10.89	11.37
Mountain III	9.97	10.54
Pacific	11.87	12.42
California	11.01	11.33



Wage hike won't stop increase in H-2A workers

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

The number of H-2A visa foreign guestworkers on West Coast farms will continue to increase while at a slower pace because of a large uptick in their mandatory minimum wage, says the director of the Washington Farm Labor Association.

The mandatory minimum, known as the Adverse Effect Wage Rate or AEWR, has gone up significantly throughout the West.

The rate, set by the U.S. Department of Labor, went from \$11.87 to \$12.42 per hour in Washington and Oregon for 2015. That's a 55-cent jump. Only Hawaii's is higher at \$12.98 per hour and Arizo-

na and New Mexico increased the most, up 57 cents.

California's AEWR increased 32 cents to \$11.33 per hour and the minimum rose 45 cents to \$11.14 in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

The AEWR is based on Department of Labor surveys of agricultural wages by region. It is above state minimum wages in Washington and Oregon and is intended to prevent wages of similarly employed U.S. workers from being adversely affected by the importation of foreign workers.

"We're going to have fewer new H-2A workers because of it (the AEWR increase," said Dan Fazio, WAFLA director.

Turn to H-2A, Page 13



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

H-2A foreign guestworkers clear roots and branches for replanting of fruit trees at Zirkle Fruit Co.'s CRO Orchard near Rock Island, Wash., Oct. 8. The H-2A crew returned to Mexico in November. It will come back this spring.

FARM BUREAU HOLDS STEADY



Courtesy of American Farm Bureau Federation

A show of hands during the general session of AFBF's annual meeting in San Diego, Calif.

Technical, social, environmental, issues swirl around convention

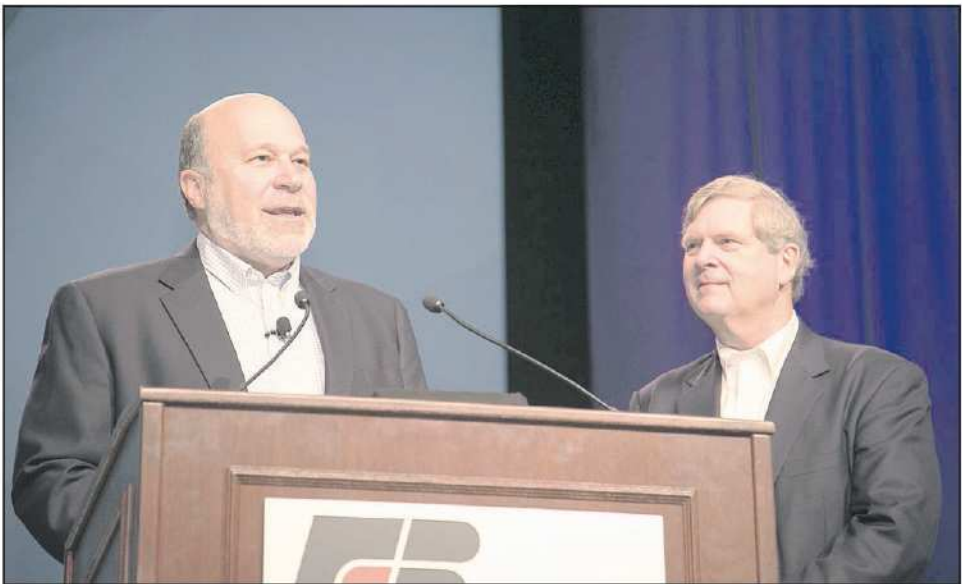
By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

SAN DIEGO — The topic was "big data" and who owns the seed, input and yield information collected by modern farm equipment. The speaker, Jason Tatge from Kansas, was telling farmers gathered for the American Farm Bureau Federation's national convention about his "plug and play" device that will keep data safe.

And Jerry Reeves, a 74-year-old corn and soy farmer from Ohio, was shaking his head when it came time to ask questions.

"I'm all for technology. I always have been, but it's getting over my head," he said with a smile. "I can't even drive my equipment any more, because it drives itself."

And that, as much as anything, might sum up the Farm Bureau's 96th annual convention. Producers are hanging in there and they know what they want, but sometimes find themselves swept along by the



Courtesy of American Farm Bureau Federation

Farm Bureau president Bob Stallman (left) introduces Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack during the AFBF General Session.

actions and beliefs of others.

Consumer trust

Case in point: One of the best attended workshops of the convention was "When Consumers and Science Collide," in which speaker Char-

lie Arnot said farmers must engage consumers alarmed by GMOs or the use of antibiotics on livestock. Arnot said providing trusted sources to speak on complicated food safety issues is crucial. He said many consumers de-

velop heir beliefs by surfing the Internet, and half-joked that agriculture's ideal counter-messenger is a scientist who's also a mom and a farmer.

Turn to AFB, Page 12

WSDA sets up quarantine around bird flu flocks

Officials seek to keep virus from spreading to commercial poultry

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Washington Department of Agriculture has established a quarantine zone that includes parts of Benton and Franklin counties in

south-central Washington to prevent bird flu from spreading.

The zone is roughly 20 miles at its widest point and encircles two residences where backyard flocks of ducks, chickens and turkeys

were exposed to highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza, according to WSDA.

The quarantine will be in place for up to 240 days and restricts the movement

Turn to FLU, Page 13



Stephen R. Ausmus/USDA-ARS

Chickens are raised in an indoor facility in this file photo. The Washington Department of Agriculture has established a quarantine zone that includes parts of Benton and Franklin counties in south-central Washington to prevent bird flu from spreading.

THIS WEEK IN THE CAPITAL PRESS



Low snowpack a worry in Washington

The mountain snowpack is 49 percent of normal in Washington compared with 44 percent a year ago.

Page 7



OREGON

Proposed bill would boost Oregon juniper harvests

Page 11



7 29467 70125 0