

Ag board calls for legislative action on producer issues

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

The Oregon Board of Agriculture delivered a 55-page document to Gov. John Kitzhaber and the state Legislature asking for action on issues ranging from water and guest workers to estate taxes and labor problems at the Port of Portland.

Fixing problems and seizing opportunities in those and other areas are critical to an industry that is the state's second-largest economic sector, after high-tech, and employs

1 in 10 Oregonians, according to the report.

The report, required by state law, departs from previous versions that tended to read like crop reports. Instead, it gives lawmakers an overview of problems and opportunities in six growing regions: The Coast, Willamette Valley, the Columbia River Gorge and plateau, and Northeast, Southern and Central Oregon. In addition, the report includes a "narrative" about each region, ag board Chair Steve Van Mouwerik said.

"Once you get into the

story of ag, then you get 100 stories," Van Mouwerik said. "Then they become real to people."

The report's recommendations cover a lot of ground. Oregon should press the U.S. House of Representatives, the report says, to pass an immigration reform bill that includes provisions for ag guest workers. It calls for new infrastructure to deliver water from the Willamette River basin reservoirs to "new irrigators."

The report calls for state support in helping produc-

ers explore local, regional and national markets, while noting that Oregon exported \$2.6 billion worth of unprocessed agricultural products in 2013. The report says the estate transfer tax limit should be raised so young producers aren't penalized so heavily when taking over the family farm.

The report notes the "increasingly fragile" co-existence of diverse Willamette Valley producers. Farmers in the valley are concerned about genetically engineered crops, cross-pollination, hon-

eybee health, the impact of agri-tourism, land conversion and spray drift, in which one producer's remedy can be another's damage.

Van Mouwerik said the report's sections on water quality and quantity issues deserve attention from legislators.

"We are really working hard in getting traction on meeting water quality goals," he said. "There is a real commitment for that in agriculture."

Van Mouwerik, CEO of PacificAg, which among other things sells wheat straw to United Arab Emirates for use

as camel and goat feed, also noted how the Internet has reduced barriers to market access.

"You can match up buyer and producer, and opportunity and an entrepreneurial grower, pretty quickly," he said. "We feel like that sense of adventure and excitement we have in agriculture is communicated to our legislators."

The 10-member Board of Agriculture advises the Oregon Department of Agriculture and by statute issues the biennial report on the industry.

Public support for grazing strong in Idaho

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Livestock grazing on public lands in Idaho pulled in high marks in the latest survey of Idaho residents by the University of Idaho.

A whopping 90 percent of those surveyed approved of livestock grazing on public lands, and 82 percent strongly or somewhat agreed livestock grazing should be kept as part of the management of public rangelands.

"I feel it's really good," said Gretchen Hyde, executive director of Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission, which together with Idaho Preferred commissioned the survey. "The numbers are very strong."

A 90 percent approval rating in any survey is impressive, she said, especially for an issue that seems so controversial in the media.

The survey showed, once again, that Idaho residents value grazing and multiple use on public lands, she said.

The high rate of approval for livestock grazing was on par with approval of guided recreation on public lands and not much below the 95 percent approval of hunting and fishing and the 99 percent approval for hiking and camping.

Logging (71 percent ap-



Courtesy Bureau of Land Management

Livestock grazing on BLM lands near Price, Utah. Ninety percent of those surveyed by the University of Idaho approved of livestock grazing on public lands, and 82 percent strongly or somewhat agreed livestock grazing should be kept as part of the management of public rangelands.

proval), ATV motorized vehicle use (65 percent approval) and energy development/transmission lines (62 percent approval) were lower on the list of desirable activities on public land.

In addition, 79 percent of those surveyed stated cattle and sheep producers manage rangeland in a responsible manner, and 84 percent said private rangelands provide a large portion of wildlife habitat.

Respondents also gave ranchers an 84 percent reliability rating with respect to information about rangelands, followed closely by scientist

(83 percent) and the Bureau of Land Management (80 percent). Environmentalists received a rating of 55 percent when it came to credibility of information.

Fifty-seven percent of respondents rated the condition of Idaho's rangelands as good or very good and 6 percent rated rangelands in poor or very poor conditions. However, almost 20 percent of those surveyed were "unsure."

The perception of rangeland health is an area of educational outreach focus by the Rangeland Commission, Hyde said.

Idaho has been through some

tough drought years, and rangeland is the first to show the effects. People take notice when areas are restricted, and there seems to be a growing awareness of rangeland conditions, she said.

Public perception of wildfire as a problem on Idaho rangelands was on the low end of expectations and shows an area of education that needs work, she said.

A little under half (43 percent) of respondents ranked wildfire to be a "severe" or "significant" problem, with one-third of respondents ranking it as a moderate problem.

U.S. feeder cattle numbers, Jan. 1

(Feedlots with 1,000-head capacity or more)

Item	(1,000 head)		Percent change
	2014	2015	
On feed Jan. 1	10,590	10,690	1
Item	(1,000 head)		Percent change
	2013	2014	
Placed on feed, Dec.	1,679	1,544	-8
Fed cattle marketed, Dec.	1,736	1,655	-4.7
Other disappearance, Dec.*	77	72	-6.5

*Includes death loss, movement from feedlots to pasture, and shipments to other feedlots for further feeding.

Source: USDA NASS

Capital Press graphic

December feedlot placements down 8 percent

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

While cattle on feed numbers in large U.S. feedlots on Jan. 1, at 10.7 million, ran slightly above last year's count, cattle placed in those feedlots in December were 8 percent below December 2013 and fed cattle marketed during December were 5 percent below a year earlier.

USDA's cattle on feed report, released on Jan. 23 by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, was close to the average industry estimate that the Jan. 1 number would be up 1.4 percent and marketings would be down 4.2 percent. But placements were nearly twice as low as the average industry estimate of 4.3 percent fewer placements.

Analysts are viewing the report as somewhat bullish for cattle markets, but note price declines in cash markets last week.

"Cattle supplies in the market remain tight and this would imply near record prices for much of 2015," Steve Meyer and Len Steiner commented Monday morning in their Daily Livestock Report.

However, futures markets in recent weeks have reflected weakness in the broader commodity markets, lower exports and the risk of stagnant growth in key markets, they reported.

USDA reported a \$3.73 per hundredweight drop in the cash live fed steer price last week from a week earlier to \$159.44 and a \$6.83 per hundredweight drop in the north-central 600-700 pound feeder steer price to \$247.79. Choice beef cutout also fell, \$4.66 per hundredweight to \$256.85.

Those prices are still well above a year earlier, however, up \$11.22 per hundredweight for live fed steers, \$57.12 for feeder steers and \$18.42 for choice cutout, according to USDA.

The cattle on feed report also showed fewer heifers on feed, indicating more heifers retained for breeding, and fewer feedlot placements at lower weights than a year earlier, indicating tighter fed supplies in the summer and early fall.

Cattle on feed on Jan. 1 was up 100,000 head and 1 percent above a year ago, with increases in Texas, Nebraska, Kansas, Idaho, Washington and Minnesota, NASS reported.

December placements, at 1.54 million, were down 135,000 head from December 2013 and were the lowest for the month in the past five year, coming in just under the 1.55 million placed in December 2009.

Year-over-year placements were only up in Iowa and Idaho and were notably down 12 percent in Texas, 8 percent in Kansas, 2 percent in Nebraska, and 13 percent in Colorado.

Year-over-year marketings of fed cattle in December were down 81,000 head with an additional marketing day in December 2014. Marketings were notably down 13 percent in Texas, 4 percent in Kansas and 10 percent in Colorado, but up 5 percent in Nebraska.

Heifers and heifer calves on feed in Jan. 1, at 3.67 million head, were down 59,000 head or 2 percent year over year. Steers and steer calves on feed, at 6.94 million, were up 155,000 head or 2 percent year over year.

The number of cattle placed on feed in December weighing less than 600 pounds was down 8.4 percent year over year. Feeder cattle weighing 600 to 700 pounds were down 11.8 percent, and feeders weighing 700 to 800 pounds were down 14 percent, Ron Plain, livestock economist with the University of Missouri reported.

Placements of cattle weighing more than 800 pounds were up 2.6 percent, he said.

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