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EXTENSION SERVICE



Clare Sullivan, OSU Extension field crops Faculty for the mid-Willamette Valley, examines the field health of perennial ryegrass, checking for the presence of aphids and weeds.

Courtesy of OSU Extension

A NEW

ROLE

At universities across the U.S., leaner Extension programs are reshaping themselves for the 21st century

By **Mateusz PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

“They don’t see directly the benefits of Extension like their grandfathers did.”

Ben West regional Extension director at the University of Tennessee

When the first crop of university Extension agents took to the fields a century ago, U.S. agriculture was relatively primitive.

Farm power was still mostly generated by horses and mules in 1914, and fertilizer came in the form of manure and crushed livestock bones.

The human landscape was also much different — roughly 1 in 3 Americans were employed in agriculture back then, compared to fewer than 1 in 60 today.

The population shift away from farming is one of the reasons university research and Extension is struggling to remain relevant to modern Americans, said Ben West, regional Extension director at the University of Tennessee, who has studied the issue.

“They don’t see directly the benefits of Extension like their grandfathers did,” he said.

As university researchers and Extension agents look to the future, they’re contemplating how to deploy limited resources to stay useful to farmers as well as the trade-offs such decisions involve.

Within agriculture, the role of Extension has changed in the past hundred years.

Not only do Extension agents have fewer farmers to educate, but those growers are now more likely to have college degrees themselves, West said.

At the same time, suppliers of seed, fertilizer and other inputs have hired cadres of agronomists who are sometimes seen as supplanting the role of Extension, he said.

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Courtesy of OSU Extension

OSU Extension forestry specialist Chal Landgren works with Christmas tree growers to keep them competitive in the market by developing new tree varieties and solving pest and disease challenges.

WSU Extension changes with the times

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Years of recession-related state and county budget cuts have forced the Washington State University Extension to transform the way it serves the state’s farmers and ranchers.

The result is a WSU Extension that looks far different today compared with a decade ago.

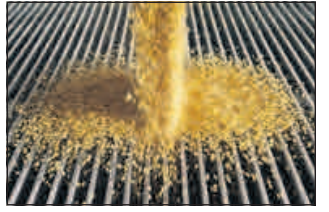
“County agents are a thing of the past,” said Rich Koenig, director of WSU Extension and associate dean of the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences.

Instead of having generalists in each county, Extension has become more focused. Fewer faculty members remain but they leverage their

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Koenig



AP Photo/Nati Harnik

Corn is unloaded from a truck in this file photo. Much of the feed corn grown in the U.S. is genetically modified to resist specific types of herbicide or to resist pests.

USDA seeks input on new GMO rules

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

The USDA wants the public to weigh in on its authority to regulate biotech crops, possibly setting the stage for newly proposed genetic engineering rules.

Earlier this year, the agency’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service withdrew proposed biotechnology rules that had languished for about seven years without being enacted.

APHIS now plans to hold webinars — scheduled for May 12 and 20 — to solicit feedback on “alternative policy approaches,” with the goal of informing “future regulatory activities.”

The agency is asking for input on when biotech regulations are justified, whether genetically modified crops should be regulated as noxious weeds and what other authority it has to regulate genetic engineering beyond the Plant Protection Act.

The USDA’s actions have drawn a mixed response from the Center for Food Safety, an environmental group involved in several prominent lawsuits over genetic engineering.

“Updating and revising their regulations is far overdue,” said George Kimbrell, senior attorney for the group.

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Frost worries fade to surplus apple worries

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

WENATCHEE, Wash. — It looks like apple growers in Washington, New York and Michigan will make it through spring frost season without much, if any, damage.

Three years ago, spring freezes devastated the crops in New York and Michigan, leaving Washington in the enviable position of producing a huge crop with little competition. It made for a stellar sales season for Washington and a poor one for New York and Michigan, the largest U.S. apple producers after Washington.

Three years later, as the potential for spring freezes



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Workers tie the limbs of Kanzi apple trees, preparing them for optimal apple growth in Mt. View Orchard, East Wenatchee, Wash., on May 1. The apple industry nationwide is concerned about the size of carryover from the 2014 crop as it prepares for the 2015 crop.

and frosts dissipates the greater concern is the size of carryover from Washington’s huge 2014 apple crop and the earliness

of its 2015 crop. With an early spring, Washington’s harvest of Gala apples may start in the end of

July instead of early August. Other varieties may well follow earlier than normal.

“It would compete with our entry and could negate our ability to move some of our early varieties,” said Don Armock, president of Riveridge Produce in Sparta, Mich., one of that state’s largest apple growers.

Too big a carryover of 2014 Washington apples into the new season is also a concern because it will keep prices down, Armock said.

“There probably would be two levels of pricing (old crop and new crop),” said Jim Allen, president of the New York Apple and Cherry Growers Association in Rochester, N.Y.

“Marketers would have to determine which level to push. Retailers have been getting a good bargain all year and will want to continue that. It will be difficult to increase the price on new crop when there’s plenty of old crop left to go, unless the industry decides not to push old crop,” Allen said.

“U.S. retailers come August will be hard put to buy old Red Delicious at any price if new Gala are available,” said Keith Matthews, CEO and general manager of First Fruits Marketing of Washington in Yakima.

How much fruit is diverted from packing on size and

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