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# ORGANIC'S POPULARITY IS GROWING

As consumers buy more organic food, farmers and processors struggle to keep up with demand

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

**S**urging demand from consumers and processors has created a golden era for organic farmers across the nation. Fred Brossy and his wife, Judy, have farmed 300 acres organically near Shoshone, Idaho, for 40 years and have seen that demand multiply. "We have more calls for organic beans than we could possibly meet," he said.

The price premium for organic depends on the crop, he said. While the price he's getting for his wheat is double that of conventional wheat, his potatoes and hay bring a smaller premium.

The cash price of organic hard red winter wheat this week is about \$19 per bushel, compared to about \$6 a bushel for conventional hard red wheat at Portland, according to USDA.

Organic producer Nate Jones in King Hill, Idaho, farms 680 acres of crops, pasture, cattle and a truck garden. He converted to organic production in 1987 and became certified in 1990.

"These are some of the best of times in farming for me," he said. "Buyers are calling wanting to know what you're growing and asking, 'What's it going to cost me?'"

## Organic market grows

Organic foods have grown from novel to niche during the 13 years the USDA has officially certified organic production. As more consumers include organic fruits, vegetables and processed foods on their shopping lists, production has struggled to keep up with demand.

While organic foods represent nearly 5 percent of the total U.S. food market, less than 1 percent of the 914 million acres of U.S. farmland is certified for organic production.

Organic imports also continue to grow.

While some imported foods such as coffee and tropical fruits are not grown in the U.S. — with the exception of Hawaii — the import of grain for food and feed is a different story. The U.S. is the world's largest producer of soybeans and corn, yet \$219 million of organic soybeans and corn were imported in 2014, according to the Organic Trade Association.

Turn to **ORGANIC**, Page 12

## Ag school graduates will have bright job prospects

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

Job openings in agriculture and related fields far outpace the number of college graduates available to help fill them, according to a USDA study released this week.

The result is a "seller's market" for students with ag, food, renewable natural resources and environmental degrees, said John Foltz, dean of University Of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

The job market is especially strong in business and management fields and for positions requiring STEM expertise — science, technology, engineering and math, said Foltz, a consultant on the USDA's 2015-2020 employment opportunities report.

The report estimates 60,000 openings annually through 2020 and only about 35,000 U.S. graduates per year to fill them.

The strongest job market will be for plant and food scientists, biomaterials specialists, water resource scientists and engineers, precision agricultural specialists and veterinarians who treat farm animals, according to the report.

Officials at agricultural universities say the report reflects what they're seeing on campus.

At Washington State University this spring, many graduates had multiple job offers and some had been offered full-time employment before the first of the year, said Kimberlee Kidwell, executive associate dean at WSU's College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences.

"The industry demand for employees is very high, so companies are initiating recruitment efforts earlier in the fall to secure top candidates into their company's work force," she said in an email.

"Any degree in an agriculture-related field seems to be hot these days," Kidwell said.

Turn to **JOBS**, Page 12

The price premium for organic depends on the crop, Fred Brossy said. While the price he's getting for his wheat is double that of conventional wheat.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press  
Judy and Fred Brossy farm about 300 organic acres near Shoshone, Idaho. They bought the farm after managing it for many years.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press  
Nate Jones of King Hill, Idaho, is shown at his organic farm.

## West's snowpack disappeared early, hydrologist says

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

The western snowpack this year isn't just low, it's already gone, a regional hydrologist says.

Adding to the drumbeat of drought worries throughout the West, David Garen of the

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Portland said much of the snow that should feed streams this summer has already melted.

Garen said it's too late to catch up with a spring snowstorm.

"It already being into May, we're well past the snow accu-

mulation season now," he said.

Snow remains in higher elevations in isolated parts of the West, including the northern Cascades, northern Colorado, western Montana and southern Wyoming, Garen said, and snow in British Columbia

Turn to **SNOW**, Page 12



The Elkhorn Mountains west of Baker City, Ore., shown May 5, are snow-free except at the highest elevations.

Kathy Orr  
The Baker City Herald  
via AP

### THIS WEEK IN THE CAPITAL PRESS



**WASHINGTON**  
Export, import picture helping apple sales  
Apple exports are up and U.S. apple imports are down

Page 4



**OREGON**  
National Farm Mom of the Year  
Oregon's Shelly Boshart Davis prevailed in 11 days of online voting and is 2015 National Farm Mom of the Year.

Page 10

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