

Idaho ag exports decrease for first time in 4 years

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — For the first time in four years, Idaho agricultural exports are not on a record pace.

The value of Idaho ag exports during the first quarter of 2015 totaled \$228 million, down 23 percent compared with the \$295 million total during the same period in 2014.

Idaho set records for total value of ag exports from 2011-2014.

This year's first-quarter

total was in line with 2012's first-quarter total of \$226 million.

A sharp decline in dairy exports was a major reason for the slowdown during the January-March time-frame. The value of Idaho dairy exports totaled \$60 million during the first quarter, down 40 percent from 2014's \$100 million total.

Derik Robinson, chief financial officer of High Desert Milk, a milk cooperative based in Burley, said competing on the world market was a struggle during the first

quarter.

"There is a lot of outside competition; the strong dollar doesn't help," he said.

According to the U.S. Dairy Export Council, U.S. dairy exports during the first quarter were down 15 percent by volume and 27 percent by value compared with the first quarter of 2014.

The strong U.S. dollar and West Coast port disruptions were also major factors in the first-quarter slowdown, said Laura Johnson, who manages the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's market de-

velopment division.

While dairy had the biggest impact on the first-quarter total, other product categories were down as well, including vegetables (down 15 percent to \$41 million), "miscellaneous seed and grain" (down 23 percent to \$40 million) and "milling, malt and starch" (down 4 percent to \$25 million).

The sugars category, which is dominated by dairy lactose, was down 51 percent to \$6 million.

But "preserved food" was up 9 percent, led by french fry

sales, which climbed 7 percent to \$14 million.

Another bright spot was the sale of live animals, which totaled \$6 million, a 651 percent increase over 2014.

The value of Idaho farm product exports were down to seven of the state's top eight markets during the first quarter.

Ag exports to Canada, the state's top market for farm products, totaled \$58 million during the first quarter, down 17 percent from 2014.

Exports to Mexico were down 5 percent to \$40 mil-

lion, and they were also down 7 percent to South Korea (\$23 million), 43 percent to China (\$11 million), 25 percent to the Netherlands (\$10 million), 54 percent to Japan (9 million) and 31 percent to Spain (\$6 million).

Idaho ag exports to Indonesia, the state's sixth largest market, increased 27 percent to \$9.5 million.

Rounding out the top 11, exports were down 116 percent (\$4.5 million) to Israel and 70 percent (\$4.4 million) to Peru.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Owners of the Great Western Malt plant in Pocatello, Idaho, have announced plans for an expansion that will more than double the facility's production capacity. Experts say it's good news for the Idaho barley industry.

Great Western plant to expand

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — GrainCorp has announced plans to build an addition to its local Great Western Malting plant that will more than double production capacity, to better serve the growing craft beer sector.

The expansion, which will entail building a stainless steel "international style" malting house by the existing concrete towers, will increase the facility's malt capacity by 120,000 metric tons, bringing the total annual capacity to 220,000 metric tons.

Construction on the \$75 million upgrade is scheduled to commence in the third quarter of this year, with completion planned for mid-2017.

GrainCorp Managing Director and CEO Mark Palmquist said in a press release much of the increased production will be "underpinned by longterm

supply agreements and relationships with major customers.

Though overall beer sales have been flat, Great Western is a major supplier of the craft sector, which industry sources estimate is seeing 10 to 15 percent annual growth.

"We are very excited about the opportunities for GrainCorp malt arising from the ongoing growth in demand for malt, particularly from craft brewers," Palmquist said.

Bart Watson, chief economist with the Brewers Association, said craft beer represented 19.3 percent of beer market revenue and 11 percent of sales by volume in 2014.

He said craft beers use three to four times more malt than mass-produced lagers, which blend supplemental sugars with malted barley.

"Given the higher malt usage of craft breweries, you can have a flat or down beer industry that requires

a lot more malt — may be as much as 20 percent more demand for malt by 2020 if the craft sector keeps growing," Watson said.

Jay Hamacheck, GrainCorp's global director of corporate and social responsibility, said the plant currently employs 35 workers and will add seven to 10 more staff members to accommodate the expansion.

Local economic development officials said incentives for the project have yet to be finalized. Matt Hunter, president and CEO of the Pocatello-Chubbuck Chamber of Commerce, said the project has been discussed for several years, but discussions became more serious during the past few months.

Hunter credited Tevis Vance, manager of the local Great Western plant, for selling his company on the benefits of expanding in Pocatello.

"This is real economic

development," Hunter said. "It takes a lot of work over time."

University of Idaho Extension economist Paul Patterson emphasized malt barley is traded on a global market, and companies seek to buy from multiple sources to avoid "putting their eggs in one basket." But he believes area growers and their banks will benefit from the stability of malt barley, which is sold under contract. Though he doesn't anticipate a "full-fledged bidding war," he predicts increased competition for local barley acres will help stabilize prices.

Patterson also predicts regional growers will shift some acres to barley from other crops, such as wheat.

Idaho Falls grower Matt Gellings said Great Western contracts are competitive with other malt companies and he'd be glad to grow for them.

"I don't think it will be dramatic, but I think there will be a few more people looking at some barley acres," Gellings said.

Great Western, founded in 1934, also has a plant in Vancouver, Wash.



Courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

OR 22, a male wolf that separated from the Umatilla River Pack in February, is pictured walking through a Northeast Oregon forest on Jan. 26. The lone wolf spent several weeks near Adrian in Malheur County. It is now in Grant County.

Wandering wolf leaves Malheur County

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ADRIAN, Ore. — A lone wolf that inexplicably spent more than five weeks in an area of Malheur County not considered typical wolf habitat has moved on.

The wolf, known as OR22, moved into Grant County over the weekend, said Philip Milburn, a district wildlife biologist in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Ontario office.

The male wolf, which separated from a Northeast Oregon pack in February, moved into Malheur County on April 10 and bucked conventional wisdom by spending much of its time here in sagebrush country west of Adrian and south of Vale.

OR22, which has a tracking collar, even made a brief foray into farm country near Adrian, where it was seen by several farmers napping in a wheat field and by ditch workers as it swam across a canal.

Before OR22, no other wolf was known to have spent more than a brief period in the county, Milburn said. "I don't know why he took a month-long break in Malheur County, but he did," Milburn said. "He's been a little unique. There's probably no telling where he will ... move to."

The wolf was moving 10-plus miles a day in recent days and is now south of Prairie City.

Malheur County is the state's top cattle producing county and ranchers here were happy to hear the wolf had left.

"We're pretty happy he's moved on," said Malheur County Cattlemen's Association president Chris Christensen. "Ob-

viously, he didn't like Malheur County and that's a good thing."

Fish and wildlife biologists found two cow carcasses the wolf had been feeding off and believe they played a major factor in the wolf's decision to hang around so long. Both died before OR22 found them and the wolf started moving West after they were removed, Milburn said.

Milburn and Christensen said one of the biggest lessons learned from OR22's visit to the county is that dead livestock carcasses are an enticement to keep wolves around and should be removed quickly.

Milburn said OR22 stopped his movement pattern after finding the cow carcasses.

"Having a readily available food source ... can really hold these animals in non-typical wolf habitat," he said. "That's a pretty good lesson."

When the wolf moved into an area where cattle were grazing on public land, Milburn said biologists had a difficult time notifying the permit holders.

"When it came to a public land situation, it was not easy figuring out who needed to be notified," he said. "The names of permit holders aren't something that is readily available from agencies."

He said the county's wolf committee will work on that issue. Milburn said communicating with people during the wolf's stay here turned out to be helpful.

Milburn used emails to update media, local officials and the livestock industry on the wolf's movements and notified producers who were directly impacted through text messages and phone calls.

WESTERN PACKAGING

Your Future is Our Future...

WE SPECIALIZE IN BULK BAGS!

BAGS:

- Seed Bags
- Fertilizer Bags
- Feed Bags
- Potato Bags
- Printed Bags
- Plain Bags
- Bulk Bags
- Totes
- Woven Polypropylene
- Bopp
- Polyethylene
- Pocket Bags
- Roll Stock & More!

HAY PRESS SUPPORT:

- Hay Sleeves
- Strap
- Totes
- Printed or Plain
- Stretch Film (ALL GAUGES)

WAREHOUSE PACKAGING:

- Stretch Film
- Pallet Sheets
- Pallet Covers

LOCATIONS:

Albany, Oregon (warehouse)
Ellensburg, Washington

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Phone 855-828-3858
Fax 541-497-6262
info@westernpackaging.com

**CUSTOMER SERVICE
IS OUR TOP PRIORITY!**

www.westernpackaging.com

High winds whip fires at ag byproducts plant

TRACY, Calif. — An agricultural byproduct storage and solar drying plant has hired a private contractor to extinguish the smoldering remains of a wind-driven fire that began burning green waste and orchard plantings on May 17.

Fire crews used more than 500,000 gallons of water to extinguish flames over

a two-day period at Agra Marketing LLC in Tracy as high winds whipped flames that burned the materials and sparked another fire in open space next to the plant, according to a city news release.

No structures or property were lost as a result of the 40-acre open space fire, the city reported.

Fires involving agricultural byproducts are difficult to put out because of their density and heavy volume, the city explained. Although smoldering piles remain, the amount of burning material has diminished significantly.

The material is also continually being taken to a biomass energy facility in Stockton, the city reported.

Agra Marketing hired a private company, LR Varwig and Sons, to help douse the remaining smoldering areas.

Smoke from the fires filled the air in parts of San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The fires were expected to be completely extinguished by May 23.

BERRY BASKETS

NURSERY TRAYS

15-5/16 x 10 x 2
18-3/4 x 14-3/8 x 3

ROP-21-2-2/17

CALL FOR PRICING AND AVAILABILITY.

Delivery Available **503-588-8313**
2561 Pringle Rd. SE
Salem, OR

ROSE PAPER PRODUCTS, INC.