

# GMO control area proposal revived

Bill would give Oregon farm regulators more authority

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

A proposal to increase restrictions on genetically engineered crops has been revived in the Oregon Legislature a month after a similar bill died in committee.

House Bill 3554 would allow the Oregon Department of

Agriculture to establish "control areas" where biotech crops — even those deregulated by federal authorities — would be subject to additional rules, such as isolation distances.

Growers who fear cross-pollination from genetically modified organisms could petition ODA to create a "market production district" in which such crops would face similar regulations.

Farm suppliers would also have to report sales of biotech seeds to the agency.

The new bill is a compromise because state officials could choose whether to des-

ignate control areas or market production districts, said Ivan Maluski, policy director of Friends of Family Farmers, a group that supports stronger GMO regulation.

"It's done in a way that gives ODA the authority without telling them what to do," he said.

Under earlier legislation, which died in the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water in April, the agency would be required to establish control areas for biotech crops.

Clarifying ODA's authority over GMOs is necessary

because the agency currently believes it loses the power to regulate once they're commercialized by USDA, Maluski said.

"Right now, they pretty much argue their hands are tied," he said.

Opponents of the bill are disappointed that the control area concept has been resurrected, even though such designations aren't mandatory under HB 3554.

"It might be scaled back in some respects, but none that are meaningful," said Scott Dahlman, policy director of the Oregonians for Food and

Shelter agribusiness group.

Subjecting biotech crops to control areas is a "draconian" idea that was previously rejected because it effectively allows some farmers to dictate what others can grow, Dahlman said.

Traditionally, farmers who signed contracts that guarantee price premiums in return for high seed purity were responsible for living up to those specifications themselves, he said.

Under HB 3554, growers can demand that the government dictate their neighbors' farming practices to ensure the

contract terms are met, he said.

Dahlman and other biotech proponents want lawmakers to pass House Bill 2509, which would create a mediation system overseen by ODA to resolve conflicts over genetically engineered crops.

Critics of GMOs, on the other hand, claim that a stronger statewide policy is necessary because lawmakers pre-empted most local governments from regulating such crops in 2013.

"There's a lot of interest in the legislature following through on that promise," Maluski said.

## PNW pear crop will be early, average size

By **DAN WHEAT**  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Pacific Northwest pear growers this year expect a record early crop but with average volume.

The 2015 crop is forecast at 20.4 million, 44-pound boxes, down 2 percent from last year's crop and 2 percent larger than the average of the past five years.

The record crop was 21.6 million boxes in 2013.

"We're pretty pleased with the amount predicted. It means there will be plenty available for export," said Kevin Moffitt, president of The Pear Bureau Northwest in Portland, the fresh pear industry's promotional arm. The crop forecast was made at the bureau's annual meeting in Portland on May 28.

Last November's freeze may reduce yields in Hood River, Ore., and there's been some hail damage in Hood River and maybe Yakima, Wash., Moffitt said.

Picking is expected to start with Starkrimson in Medford, Ore., on July 23 and with the same variety in Hood River July 27, Yakima July 28 and Wenatchee, Wash., July 29. It usually ends with d'Anjou in Wenatchee in October.

"This crop is probably the earliest ever, by five to seven days ahead of last year but seven to 14 days ahead of the historic norm," Moffitt said.

That's because of a mild winter and an early, warm spring.

The Northwest grows 85 percent of the nation's pears and provides 94 percent



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Ben Kern mows grass in his pear orchard near Ellensburg, Wash., May 28. The Pacific Northwest pear crop will be early but of average volume this year at 20.4 million boxes.

of pear exports. California grows the remainder of the crop.

California's pear crop also is five to 10 days early, with harvest starting in late June, Moffitt said.

Neither California competition nor carryover of the 2014 Northwest crop are significant issues, he said.

The Northwest had 1.6 million boxes of the 20.7-million-box 2014 crop left to sell on May 22, which was 490,000 boxes more than a year ago, he said.

"There will probably be some Anjou still available when (new crop) Northwest Bartlett hits the market but that's not entirely unusual," he said.

Imports are below where they were last year so that's a positive, he said.

As of May 15, exports were at 5.7 million boxes compared with 6.6 million a year ago. Exports will probably end up 600,000 boxes down for the season or \$12 million less due to the West Coast port slowdown last winter and closure of the Russian market, Moffitt said.

Mexico remains the leading export market at 2.6 million boxes, followed by Canada at 1.2 million. China, which opened in February 2013, is fifth.

China bought 227,900 boxes of U.S. pears this season and would have purchased more without the port slowdown, Moffitt said. It bought 185,000 the prior year. "We are certainly very bullish on China still," he said.

In general pear prices held

up much better than apple prices this season, said Jeff Main, USDA Market News reporter in Yakima.

U.S. No. 1 d'Anjou, size 70s to 90s, were \$24 to \$26 per box as of June 2, the same as a year ago, he said.

The Pear Bureau renewed grower assessments at 38.5 cents per box for promotions, 3.1 cents for research and 3.3 cents for Pear Bureau administration and funding the Northwest Horticultural Council.

The bureau adopted a preliminary \$8.3 million domestic and foreign promotions budget.

The forecast by district in boxes: Wenatchee, 9.4 million; Mid-Columbia, 7.6 million; Yakima, 2.5 million; Medford, 877,550.

## 106-year-old pear trees still producing

By **DAN WHEAT**  
Capital Press

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — There was a time, when he was young, that Ben Kern planned to cut down the oldest pear trees in Kittitas Valley and replant the ground to apples.

Kern had purchased the orchard from his father and the trees hadn't been pruned for several years.

"Even with 14-foot ladders you couldn't reach the tops. I was going to cut them down," said Kern, now 65.

"Dad said, 'You'd better think twice. Cut the tops but keep them because you'll need the income.' Sometimes Dads know more than we think they do," Kern said.

He kept the trees, topped them and many years lat-

er they're still producing good fruit. Some of them yield two bins.

"That's real good," he said.

The trees are Green Anjou, known as d'Anjou. They cover about seven acres. Their trunks range from 2 to 3 feet in diameter. They were planted in 1909. Kern isn't sure by whom, but he says water was hauled to them before Cascade canal was built.

His great uncle purchased the farm and then sold it to his brother, Kern's grandfather.

Kern isn't sure what the future holds. His three daughters aren't interested in farming and his oldest grandson is 6. He has 80 acres of pears, 20 acres of apples and the oldest pear trees in the valley.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Ben Kern shows a green d'Anjou pear on one of his 106-year-old trees near Ellensburg, Wash., on May 28. He says they are definitely the oldest pear trees in the Kittitas Valley and among the oldest in the state.

## Entrepreneurs chirp about food ideas at market event

By **ERIC MORTENSON**  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — If the products on display at a market showcase event are true indicators of future food trends, farmers ought to get busy raising new livestock and crops.

Such as crickets and seaweed.

The annual market event at Oregon State University's Food Innovation Center features products developed by graduates of a Getting Your Recipe to Market program. Vendors taking part hope to attract the attention and shelf space of store buyers.

Most of the products are variations of the familiar, such as new lines of granola or salsa. But some are more exotic.

World, meet brothers Ebin Barnett, Ben Prindle and Matthew Prindle, makers of Thinksect cricket flour and the Entobar, a protein bar made from the former and flavored with peanut butter-chocolate, cherry-chocolate or coconut-almond.

"That gets you over the ick

factor," Barnett said.

Yum. Or, as the smiling brothers noted on fliers they handed out at the June 2 market event: "Cricket. It's what's for dinner."

Why? Because crickets and other insects are high in protein and can be raised using less water and feed than it takes to raise an equivalent amount of beef or chicken, according to the brothers. With the world population projected to hit 9 billion by 2050, they say sustainable food production is crucial.

The brothers raise crickets in Portland. To make their FDA-approved flour, they boil the crickets twice, roast them and pulverize them into a finished product.

"It's the highest quality cricket flour on the market, we believe," Barnett said.

For now, it's an expensive proposition. It requires 132 crickets to produce enough flour to make a 60 gram coconut-almond Entobar, for those keeping score. A 1-kilogram bag (2.2 pounds) of Thinksect



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Brothers Ben Prindle, left, and Ebin Barnett show samples of their high-protein Entobar, made with cricket flour. The brothers were among entrepreneurs displaying products June 2 at OSU's Food Innovation Center in Portland.

flour sells for \$79.95, according to the company website.

Ben Prindle came up with the idea, approaching his brothers with a PowerPoint presentation, providing samples and urging, "We need to get into this business."

The product line invokes the memory of the brothers' late

grandfather, Ellis MacLeod, a University of Illinois entomologist who instilled an appreciation of bugs in the boys.

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