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Oregon faces summer with little water to spare

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

If there were any doubt, the final snowpack report of the year from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service shows Oregon has little water to spare going into the height of summer.

Sixty percent of the NRCS's automated measuring stations, called SNOTEL for snow telemetry, recorded their lowest snowpack on record. As of June 1, only one of the 81 SNOTEL sites in Oregon had any snow left.

Water forecasters and researchers have been repeating the same refrain for months: While the state's precipitation totals were near normal over the winter, it fell as rain rather than snow and won't be available to melt and feed streams as the weather warms.

In Western Oregon, the snowpack was 60 to 90 percent below normal. On the east side of the Cascades, the snowpack ranged from 30 to 80 percent of normal, according to NRCS.

In May, NRCS reported the snowpack wasn't just meager, it was already gone. In many streams, the peak flow from melting snow occurred in February.

"Snowmelt in February is months too early to synchronize crop planting and irrigating," NRCS Portland snow survey supervisor Scott Oviatt said in a news release.

The melt and runoff also came too early for Oregon reservoir operators to capture and store. Reservoirs were designed for flood control and late season irrigation, and operate under rules that govern spring water releases.

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FALLING PRICES PUT PRESSURE ON BOTTOM LINES OF FARMERS, RANCHERS

Prices paid and received indices

From 1995 to 2014, prices paid increased at a faster rate than prices received, based on research presented by University of Idaho Extension economist Paul Patterson.

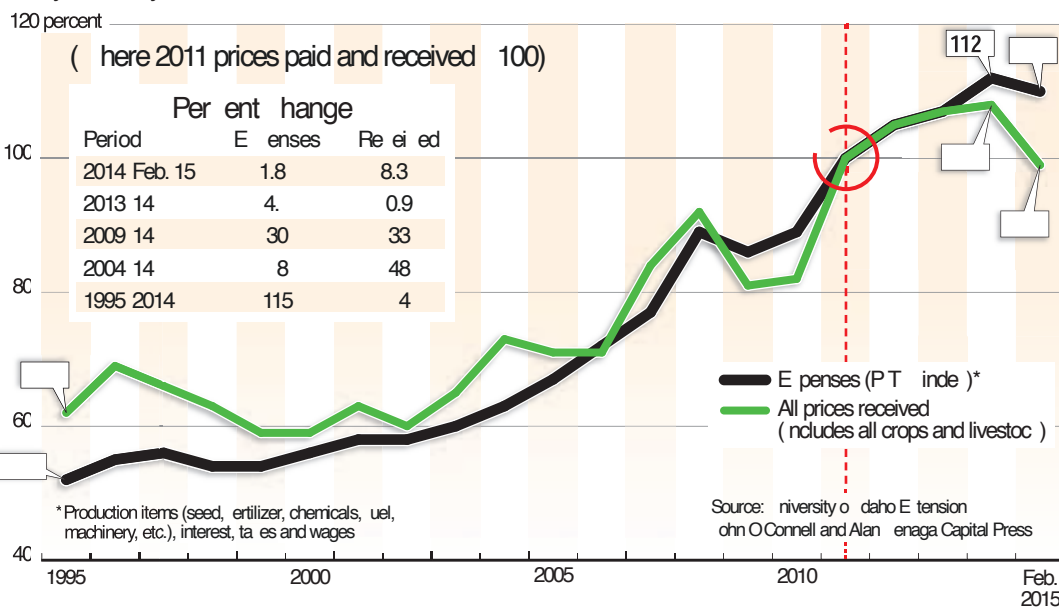


Photo illustration and graphic by Alan Enanga

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Paul Patterson is worried.

The University of Idaho Extension economist believes U.S. agriculture is at a turning point. After eight profitable years for most farmers, he sees a return to an all-too-familiar trend that has been gaining steam. The prices farmers receive for the crops they grow aren't keeping pace with production costs, including inputs, wages, loan interest and taxes.

Economists call it the "cost-price squeeze."

And, they say, surviving the squeeze will require farmers and ranchers to find more efficiencies or grow their operations so they can spread production costs over more land.

Agriculture's recent period of abundance has been the exception to the rule. Patterson, who retires at the end of June after a 34-year career, said the cost-price squeeze has been the norm, dating back to World War II.

"The last seven or eight years have been some of the best in agriculture, certainly going back at least



Patterson

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Proposed Monsanto-Syngenta merger spawns antitrust concerns

Fewer biotech rivals could mean higher prices, experts say

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Syngenta has so far spurned takeover advances by rival agribusiness giant Monsanto, but the possible union has raised concerns about diminished competition, experts say.

The merged company would combine Syngenta's powerful pesticide operations with Monsanto's supremacy in biotech traits, likely triggering scrutiny from U.S. antitrust regula-

tors, experts say.

"If there were further concentration, they may dominate the market in a way that's not desirable," said Jean-Paul Chavas, an agricultural economist specializing in the biotech industry at the University of Wisconsin.

Monsanto is seeking to buy Syngenta in a stock-and-cash deal worth nearly \$45 billion and recently upped the offer with a \$2 billion break-up fee if the deal is nixed.

Subject to negotiations, the new company would be re-named and registered outside the United States, perhaps in the United Kingdom,

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At a glance



Na e Monsanto Company
Ty e Public (NYSE: MON)
Industry Ag biotechnology, crop protection chemicals
ounded 1901
H St. Louis, Mo.
Chair an CEO Hugh Grant
Re nue \$14.9 billion*
Net in o e \$2.48 billion*
E oyees 21,900 globally*
a ities 404 in 66 countries
We site www.monsanto.com
*FY 2013



Na e Syngenta AG
Ty e Public (NYSE: SYT)
Industry Ag biotechnology, agrochemicals and seeds
ounded Nov. 13, 2000
H Basel, Switzerland
Chair an Michael Demaré
Re nue \$15.1 billion*
Net in o e \$1.62 billion*
E oyees 29,340 globally*
a ities 252 in 90 countries
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