

People & Places

UI researcher viewed as a bridge between U.S., Mexican spud industries

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

MOSCOW, Idaho — University of Idaho potato virologist Alexander Karasev has high hopes for Ph.D. student Arturo Quintero Ferrer, both as a future scientist and a potential potato industry diplomat.

Ferrer, a 29-year-old researcher from Jalisco, Mexico, has been helping Karasev to better understand the complex interaction between rapidly evolving potato virus Y strains and specific potato varieties.

Ferrer's ties have also opened doors in Karasev's efforts to access PVY-positive plant samples from Mexican fields for comparison with U.S. strains.

Karasev hopes Ferrer will continue researching potatoes when he returns home and help to build a better relationship between the U.S. and Mexican potato industries.

U.S. growers have long been restricted to selling their fresh potatoes within 16 miles of the U.S.-Mexican border but were briefly granted access to the entire country last summer, until the Mexican potato growers association blocked the expanded access in court. Those cases are still pending in the Mexican legal system.

"I realized there's a great divide between Mexico and the U.S.," Karasev said. "That's my expectation, that perhaps he may be the per-



Arturo Quintero Ferrer, a Ph.D. student at University of Idaho in Moscow studying potato virus Y, tours R & G Potato Co. in American Falls, Idaho. Ferrer plans to return home to Mexico to apply what he's learned.

son who may help bridge this gap between the Mexican and U.S. potato industry."

Ferrer explained Idaho and Jalisco are considered sister states and have an agreement to share technology. While attending the University of Guadalajara, he agreed to participate in a new exchange program with UI. Though he was initially interested in studying human genetics, a course Ferrer took at UI made him aware of opportunities in plant genetics. He joined Karasev and began working in PVY in 2008, and should graduate with his Ph.D. in December.

Ferrer, who has a full

scholarship from the Mexican government, has been working to map the genes of nine newly discovered PVY strains.

"It's very important to know your enemy," Ferrer said. "We need to understand how PVY evolves and where it is going."

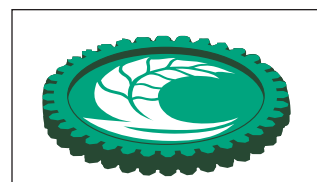
PVY, spread by aphids, reduces potato yields, and there's been a shift toward strains that also cause tuber necrosis.

For research purposes, UI maintains a collection of more than 30 PVY isolates, supported in tobacco seedlings that must be replaced with freshly inoculated plants ev-

ery few months.

Since he first set to work in PVY, Ferrer said several new strains of the disease have surfaced — including four genetically unique strains he personally cataloged from Jalisco field samples.

One of his discoveries from Mexico, PVY M3, is similar to a common U.S. strain, PVY NTN, but displays a disturbing characteristic. In tobacco plants, PVY M3 shows no visual symptoms. Ferrer believes the trait shows how easily new PVY strains could evolve that are undetectable in potatoes, making it difficult for growers to remove infected plants from fields and po-



Western Innovator Arturo Quintero Ferrer

Age: 29

Home town: Originally from Jalisco, Mexico, but now residing in Moscow, Idaho

Occupation: Ph.D. student under UI virologist Alex Karasev studying potato virus Y

Family: Mother, Claudia; father, Arturo; sister, Monica

tentially resulting in broader infections.

Certain potato varieties, such as Russet Norkotah, are already known to show little to no symptoms of some PVY strains.

Karasev said potato breeders have targeted PVY O, responsible for 26 percent of infections in 2010, and reduced its prevalence to 6 percent of infections in 2014. Strains that cause tuber necrosis now represent a quarter of infections. Karasev said PVY N Wilga, which doesn't cause tuber rot but is tough to detect in many varieties, now causes 70 percent of infections and should be a priority for potato breeders.

Agri-business leader finds new success as artist

By MITCH LIES
For the Capital Press

An unfamiliarity with the art world helped launch the art career of Corvallis, Ore., farmer Karla Chambers.

Chambers, who co-owns and helps manage Stahlbush Island Farms, said she often walked by the prestigious San Francisco art house, Gallery 444, while spending 20 years on the Federal Reserve Board, which met regularly in San Francisco.

One day, a couple of years after she took up painting, she stopped in the gallery and asked how to get artwork displayed there.

"They handed me a sheet of paper asking me how much art I've sold, what my price points are, what juried competitions and museum exhibits I've had," she said. "I said I can't fill out anything on

this piece of paper. I've never sold a dollar's worth of art, but I think my art would fit in here."

Chambers said the gallery owner politely came down and asked her to send some pictures of her art. "And so I did," Chambers said, "and she brought my work in."

"What I didn't know is the price points in that gallery," she said, "and I didn't know that 1,200 artists a year approach that gallery and that I was the only new artist in two years that they had taken in."

"I didn't realize how rare it was to get into a gallery like that," she said. "I would have psyched myself out had I known too much."

Chambers' emergence in the art world began innocently enough while on a fly-fishing trip in Montana. Cold temperatures prompted her to



Corvallis, Ore., farmer Karla Chambers, standing beside one of her pieces of art, has had her art exhibited in New York, Eugene, Ore., and at the prestigious Gallery 444 in San Francisco. Chambers portrays the colorful, nutritious and tasty bounty of Oregon's fruits and vegetables in her artwork.

forgo the fly fishing and spend time with three professional artists.

"They painted and we painted and I came away from there thinking maybe I can go home and paint," she said.

Chambers laughs that until

then her experience with paint was limited to painting houses and barns.

Soon, however, Chambers was showing in Gallery 444 with the likes of William Johns and Rafal Olbinski.

In addition to Gallery 444,

Chambers also has shown in New York and at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Eugene.

She describes herself as a colorist because of the bounty of bright colors in her paintings, a bounty inspired by the food she produces.

Chambers also creates art for the packaging of Stahlbush Island food.

"What I am showing is a connection between where these berries or vegetables are grown, whether that is with a backdrop of Mary's Peak or Mount Jefferson, and these brilliant natural colors that we are producing, which correlate directly to health and nutrition and natural sweetness," Chambers said.

"It's pretty cool," she added. "I'm one of the few artists in the world with artwork in people's freezers."

Book targets women who take up farming

Book review

By TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER
For the Capital Press

Old MacDonald has nothing on you.

He has a farm, you'll have a farm. On his farm, he has some cows and pigs and chicks, and your farm will have animals, too. The only difference is that MacDonald has had his farm since before your mother was a child, and you're pretty green on yours — but you can catch up. You can read "Woman-Powered Farm" by Audrey Levatino.

So you're getting your very own spread, or you've recently taken control of one you've

"Woman-Powered Farm"

By Audrey Levatino,
photographs by Michael Levatino

c. 2015, The Countryman Press
\$24.95 U.S./\$29.95 Canada
344 pages

lived on for awhile. Women have worked on farms for centuries, so you're joining a solid sisterhood; in fact, recent studies show that over 13 percent of all farms in the U.S. are operated by women, and that includes women who are African American, Native American, and Asian.

There's a lot to learn when you want to run a successful farm of any sort but, above all, you'll need somewhere to do it. The best advice Levatino says she got when she and her husband first began farming: "too much land is never a bad thing." And yet, finding a location may be premature if you're unsure of what direction to take. In that case, you may consider an internship or apprenticeship. Soak up all the lessons you can find, query your local farm bureau, or talk to a county agent. As one interviewee points out, to learn on a farm, all you ever need to do is ask.

It goes without saying that different kinds of farms need

different kinds of tools, but there are obvious requirements across-the-board, says Levatino. You may need a chain saw or tractor, and you'll want to know how to safely operate both. In this book, you'll learn the basics for maintaining a water system and a wood-burning stove, the overall differences in fencing, and which just-in-case items to keep in your farm truck.

You'll also learn that farming is for cities, too. And then there are the animals because, really, what's a farm without a cat or two, and a dog, at least? Levatino explains pros and cons for various livestock, how to keep them, and how she memorialized

the inevitable harsh reality.

If you know your way around a barn or you're already farm-experienced, you can stop right here. This book isn't for you.

No, "Women-Powered Farm" is more for the newbies who have no idea what they're getting themselves into, and who need the basics. Author Audrey Levatino gives them that in a no-nonsense, reassuring tone that's not condescending. She offers interviews, tips, and hints to help get many kinds of operations running, including safety reminders, ideas on bookkeeping, gardening advice, and enough info to empower even the most citized reader.

Calendar

Friday, June 26

Forestry shortcourse, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. West Bonner Library, Priest River, 208-446-1680. This 6-session program will help forest owners understand ecology, silviculture, wildlife and other topics. Register by June 5.

Saturday, June 27

Bill "Skinny" Luchs Estate Farm Auction, 9 a.m. N/A, Portland, 360-521-6610. Restored 1940 Ford cabover, 1937 John Deere tractor, 1941 Ford 9N, 1950 Chevy flatbed, plus two other vintage trucks. John Deere wagon, primitive antique furniture, way too much to list. Preview starts one hour before auction. Food

on site day of sale.

Tuesday, June 30

Poplar for Biofuels field tour, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Hayden Demonstration Site, Hayden, 253-241-5043. Join extension professionals, researchers and environmental professionals in learning about the latest biofuel and biochemical developments in the Pacific Northwest. Topics include: Growing hybrid poplar as a short rotation woody energy crop; sustainable production and environmental impacts on soil, water and wildlife; best areas to develop biofuel and biochemical industries; biomass production

tour highlighting operational and research poplar plots.

Wednesday, July 1

OSU Canberry Field Day, 1 p.m.-5 p.m. North Willamette Research and Extension Center, OSU, Aurora, 971-373-5912.

Thursday, July 2

Estate Auction, 3:30 p.m. N/A, Brush Prairie, 360-521-6610. 1980 Harley Davidson with sidecar, 1970 21' Holiday Rambler trailer, 20' drag car trailer, new truck work box, tons of new HVAC parts, tools. Way too much to list. Preview begins one hour before auction.

Friday, July 3

Forestry shortcourse, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. West Bonner Library, Priest River, 208-446-1680. This 6-session program will help forest owners understand ecology, silviculture, wildlife and other topics. Register by June 5.

Wednesday, July 8

An Introduction to Pacific Northwest Agroforestry Practices, 9 a.m.-3p.m. Willow Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant, Salem, 503-391-9927. The workshop will focus on the topic of integrating trees and shrubs into an agricultural land-use system to enhance productivity, profitability and environmental stewardship. Presen-

tations will examine hedgerows and windbreaks, landscape ecology and agriculture, an introduction to alley cropping, riparian buffers and wildlife habitat and agriculture. Please RSVP.

OSU Blueberry Field Day, 1 p.m.-5 p.m. North Willamette Research and Extension Center, OSU, Aurora, 971-373-5912.

Friday, July 10

Forestry shortcourse, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. West Bonner Library, Priest River, 208-446-1680. This 6-session program will help forest owners understand ecology, silviculture, wildlife and other topics. Register by June 5.

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EO Media Group
dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper
published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is
published weekly by EO Media Group,
1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem OR 97301.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR,
and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to
Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR
97308-2048.

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To get information published

Mailing address:
Capital Press
P.O. Box 2048
Salem, OR 97308-2048

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Index

California 10
Drought 5
Idaho 9
Markets 13
Opinion 6
Oregon 11
Washington 8

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