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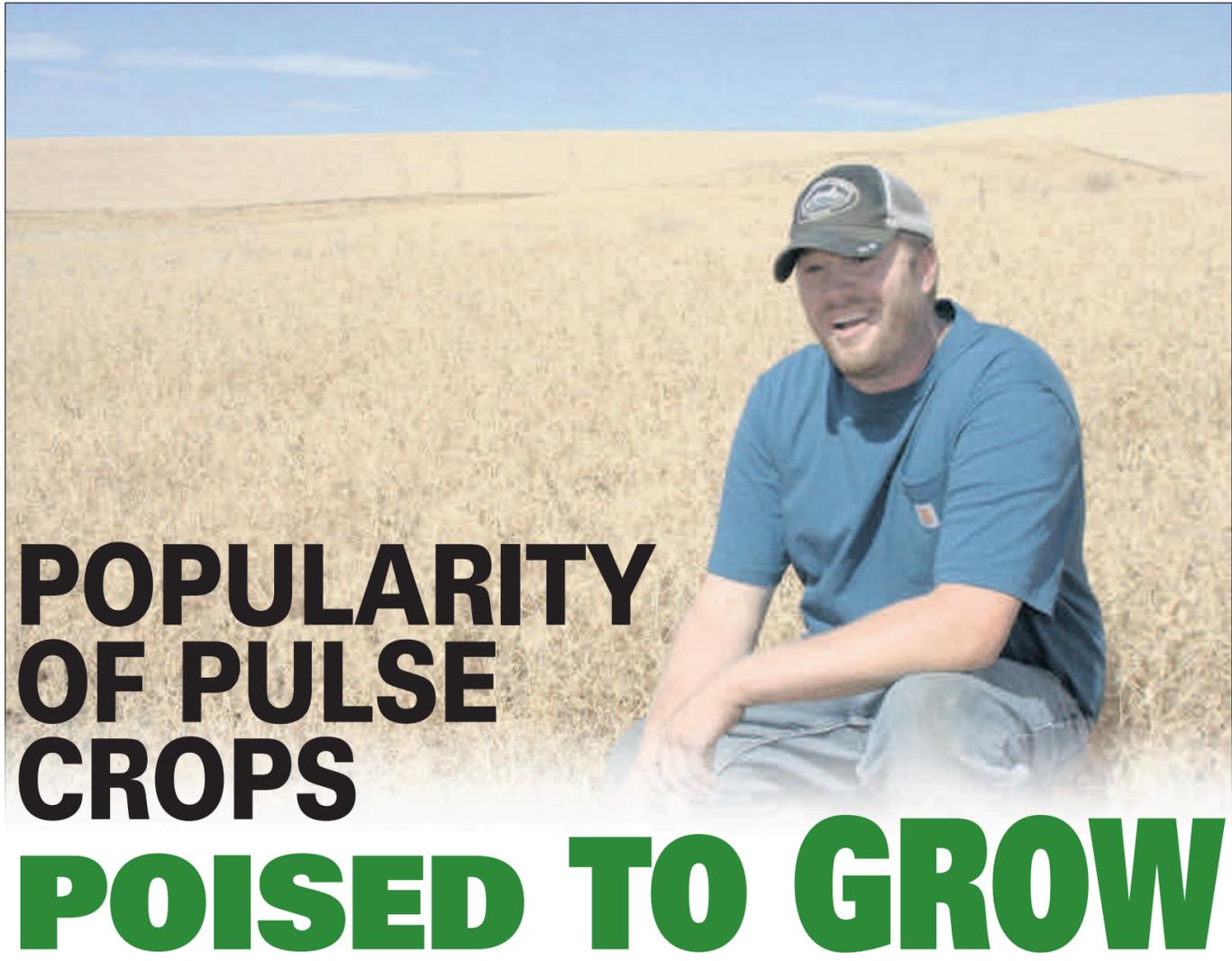
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POPULARITY OF PULSE CROPS

POISED TO GROW

Peas, chickpeas, lentils have what it takes to gain wider acceptance, industry believes

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

COLTON, Wash. — Allen Druffel wants to spread the good news about pulse crops. The Colton, Wash., farmer grows peas and chickpeas in rotation with wheat.

Pulses are good for the soil and weed control, he says, and they diversify his income.

This year, Druffel's pulse crops came through the hot, dry summer well. The peas are below average but chickpeas, also known as garbanzo beans, are about average.

"The beans, this year in this hot spell, have handled it better than anything else," he said. "They're kind of a bright spot in an otherwise kind of poor spring cropping cycle we're having."

But pulses have a problem, Druffel says: A lot of consumers are yet to embrace them for their nutritional benefits, mainly because they just don't know how to cook them.

"I've seen this with my in-laws from the East Coast — they don't understand how to cook with pulses," he said. "There's not a lot of good recipes out there, and it's not shown on any of the popular TV shows. There is a general understanding of how nutritious they are, but they're an intimidating little thing to cook if you don't know what you're doing."



Photos by Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

TOP: Allen Druffel checks a field of peas ready to be harvested the morning of July 20 south of Uniontown, Wash. Druffel says he has high hopes for increasing consumer awareness of the nutritional value of peas and other pulse crops. ABOVE: Tim McGreevy, CEO of the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council in Moscow, Idaho, says transportation is the biggest need for the pulse industry in the next five years.

Benefits of pulses

There's a lot to like about pulse crops. Dry peas, lentils and chickpeas are "nutrition powerhouses," according to the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council in Moscow, Idaho. They're high in

vegetable protein, iron, potassium, magnesium and dietary fiber, council CEO Tim McGreevy said.

Farmers who raise them cite their ability to break up disease pressure in crop rotations for wheat production and put much-needed nitrogen back into the soil.

Pulse roots attract microbes in the soil that pull nitrogen out of the air and put it into the ground to feed themselves, which also feeds the plant, said Todd Scholz, vice president of research and member services for the council.

"The end result is there's more nitrogen put in the ground than the plant utilizes, so the next crop benefits," Scholz said.

Winter wheat crops are improved when they follow a pulse crop, said Kevin Meyer, a Moscow, Idaho, farmer and first co-chair of the Western Pea and Lentil Growers Association.

"It gives us the ability to raise a crop every year, where in the old days they would summer fallow and then go to winter wheat," he said. "It helps us being able to have a crop on the ground all the time."

According to the council, U.S. lentil acreage increased this year by 45 percent, from roughly 266,000 in 2014 to 385,000 acres. Most of the added acres — 75 percent — were in North Dakota. Montana's acreage was up 38 percent and Washington state's was up 7.8 percent.

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GMO label debate a 'wicked' problem

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

ST. LOUIS — The national debate over labeling food that contains genetically modified organisms is a "wicked" problem that cannot be solved or arbitrated by science, an Iowa State University sociology professor said.

Carmen Bain, speaking July 22 to 20 journalists attending the National Press Foundation's



Bain

"Food, From Farm to Table" fellowship in St. Louis, said GMO labeling is inherently a political and social issue. Science is either ignored or embraced in the debate, depending on which side it appears to substantiate.

Bain has an unusual vantage point in the argument. Although not a crop scientist or biologist, she is part of an interdisciplinary team at Iowa State that is developing new transgenic soybean cultivars. Her role is to study the issues surrounding consumer, business and social acceptance of GMOs.

The work has led her to conclude GMOs and GMO labeling are "proxy" issues for broader political, economic and ethical concerns such as pesticides, sustainability and corporate control of agriculture. And for some GMO opponents, labeling is a matter of political opportunism, she said.

"Many of them had other issues, but GMOs resonates with a broader public, and they want to take advantage of it," Bain said.

Anti-GMO activists frame the issue in "rights-based language" such as choice and transparency, which "resonates with key American values, cultural norms and trends," Bain said.

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More inside

Read how distant scientists and the public are on safety of GMO food on Page 4

'The beans, this year in this hot spell, have handled it better than anything else. They're kind of a bright spot in an otherwise kind of poor spring cropping cycle we're having.'

— Allen Druffel, Colton, Wash., farmer who grows peas and chickpeas in rotation with wheat

Washington agriculture weighs impacts of piece-rate court ruling

Back pay, accounting issues, competitiveness among concerns

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

PASCO, Wash. — A recent state Supreme Court ruling makes it more expensive for labor-intensive agriculture to operate and threatens piece-rate pay, a useful competitive tool, growers and packers say.

While complying with the ruling will be difficult, the greater nightmare for employers would be a lawsuit making rest-break pay retroactive three years. That

could cost the industry \$100 million or more, Dan Fazio, director of the agricultural employer group WAFLA, has previously estimated.

"Most growers would see that as unfair because they were complying with the law as they understood it," said Jon DeVaney, president of the Washington State Tree Fruit Association in Yakima.

For 25 years, the Department of Labor and Industries said rest breaks could be included in piece-rate pay, not paid separately, Fazio said.

"Now the Supreme Court has told us we have to calculate rest breaks separately and we have one day to do it. That's ridiculous," he said, referring to immediate implementation of the ruling.

The ruling amounts to writing a new regulation, which is the job of the Legislature, not the court, he said.

The court issued a unanimous ruling July 16 that requires piece-rate workers be paid for 10-minute rest breaks for every four hours of work based on what workers would have earned if they worked through the breaks. The alternative is paying an hourly wage, at least minimum wage, with rest breaks.

What piece-rate pickers make varies by the day and it "becomes quite onerous in bookkeeping to keep track of it all," said Denny Hayden, a small apple and cherry grower north of Pasco.

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Dan Wheat/Capital Press

Dianeli Avila packs Red Delicious apples with amazing speed by tossing and catching them at Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers in Wenatchee, Wash., on March 10, 2014. Often such packers are paid on a piece-rate basis as an incentive to work fast.



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