

Co-op's huge riverside terminal handles wheat harvest

By GEORGE PLAVERN
EO Media Group

UMATILLA, Ore. — A loaded semi-trailer pulls up to the Pendleton Grain Growers McNary Elevator on the banks of the Columbia River, hauling nearly 35 tons of freshly harvested wheat.

The cargo is dumped over a grated pit that drops down into the bowels of the concrete facility. From there, conveyor belts lift the crop 200 feet into large storage silos, ready and available to exporters.

With Eastern Oregon's wheat harvest in full swing, PGG is storing grain at a fast clip to sell overseas. The McNary terminal, located just above McNary Dam in the Port of Umatilla, allows the co-op to blend different varieties of wheat into one package for customers, and load the product onto barges.

The vast majority of soft white wheat grown in the Pacific Northwest is exported to countries in Asia, including Japan and South Korea. Soft white wheat is low in protein, making it ideal for products such as noodles and cakes.

Umatilla County grows by far the most wheat in Oregon, anywhere from 14 million-22 million bushels per year. PGG usually handles 12 million-13 million bushels through its 1,850 members in Eastern Oregon and Washington.

Of that total, about 90 percent of members' wheat is shipped out of McNary, said Jason Middleton, PGG's director of grain operations. Built in the

1960s, the terminal is capable of storing 6.6 million bushels at any given time.

"It definitely gives us capacity at the river, which is where we want a majority of our wheat to land," Middleton said.

After harvest, Middleton said it is up to the farmer if they want to sell their wheat to the co-op right away, or wait until later in one of PGG's 14 elevators. The pace of exporting is driven by a number of variables in marketing and price, Middleton said.

Right now, members are facing a double-whammy of difficulty. Four straight years of hot, dry weather are expected to cut into most yields, while the price of wheat is down 23 percent — at \$5.82 per bushel — compared to a year ago.

Activity hummed at McNary Thursday afternoon as truck after truck arrived for delivery. The elevator can easily handle up to 300 trucks per day, Middleton said, each carrying approximately 1,150 bushels.

Tiny kernels whoosh and rattle their way down the pit and up the conveyor system, while superintendent Adam Bergstrom mans the controls. He is responsible for knowing what type of grain comes in on every truck, and which container it needs to go to avoid accidental mixing.

Middleton works with exporters to sell a certain package of wheat to Asian millers. Once the deal is signed, it's up to Bergstrom to make sure that specific product makes it onto the barge.



The Pendleton Grain Growers McNary Terminal can store 6.6 million bushels of wheat and handles 90 percent of the wheat in Umatilla County, Ore.

"What he decides to put on paper, I have to put on an actual barge," Bergstrom said.

Bergstrom is also in charge of worker safety, no small task at such a large elevator. Dust from the grain can potentially be explosive given an ignition source, and working in tight spaces increases the risk of falls.

McNary does have a dust mitigation system, Middleton said, to reduce the danger of an explosion.

"Once that stuff gets airborne, it's like a bomb," he said.

The grain industry has come a long way from its history of

wooden elevators, Middleton said, to metal and concrete structures used today. The McNary terminal gives PGG members added strength and durability for storage.

"This is like something you'd see down on the Willamette that an exporter would operate," Middleton said.

Rick Jacobson, PGG's general manager, said McNary Elevator was built with money borrowed from the Farm Credit System and is the co-op's "crown jewel."

"It's a great story, when you think about what a co-op system can do," Jacobson said.



Gary Brown opens the gate on a grain hopper while working at the Pendleton Grain Growers McNary Terminal on Thursday at the Port of Umatilla.

E. Oregon camelina trials look more promising during persistent drought

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — After four straight years of drought conditions in Eastern Oregon, there's growing interest in camelina, which can be grown without irrigation water.

Because water has been scarce, about 20 percent of the farmland in Malheur County

has been left fallow the past two years.

Camelina won't make farmers much money, but the oilseed crop could help growers cover some of the fixed costs they have on their land, said Clint Shock, director of Oregon State University's Malheur County experiment station.

Growing camelina on farmland that otherwise would be

left fallow would also help keep the ground from eroding, Shock said.

"We need to be thinking about what we're going to do without water," he said. "This is not a big money maker but it is a way of taking care of your farm ground. Also, consider that the return on the land will be negative without a crop."

If the drought continues,

more farmers are going to be taking a serious look at camelina, said Owyhee Irrigation District Manager Jay Chamberlin.

"If this is a trend we're stuck with for awhile, camelina could be something that brings in some income and protects your soils," he said. "The whole mind-set of growers needs to change; the traditional things aren't going to continue to work."

A camelina field trial at the OSU experiment station yielded 1,500 pounds of seed per acre, Shock said. No irrigation water was applied to the field and the crop received 4.17 inches of precipitation between the time it was planted in late January and harvested in late June.

With camelina seed currently selling for 20 cents a pound, the field would have brought a grower about \$300 of income per acre, Shock said.

By comparison, onions, the region's main cash crop, are worth more than \$4,800 an acre.

The crop wouldn't fetch nearly as much as onions would, "but if the drought continues, perhaps it may help you to hold the farm together," said Oregon



Monty Saunders, farm foreman of Oregon State University's Malheur County experiment station, stands in a camelina field near Ontario. The field trial produced 1,500 pounds of seed this year, which would have fetched a grower about \$300 per acre of income.

farmer Bruce Corn.

If camelina is grown on a large scale in this area, farmers would have a buyer in Willamette Biomass Processors, which is near Salem.

The company, which crushes camelina into oil and sells the high-protein meal as feed to the beef and poultry industries, currently gets most of its product from Montana and Canada.

"We'd absolutely be interested in buying camelina from Eastern Oregon," said Tomas Endicott, WBP's vice president

of development.

Bill Buhrig, an OSU cropping systems extension agent in Ontario, estimates it would cost a farmer in this region about \$150 an acre to produce camelina.

Even though the net for camelina would be small compared to what farmers can make from some other crops, it would still provide growers a little bit of income, Corn said.

"Ground doesn't just sit there idle without costing anything," he said.

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 Case IH STX325, 5813 hrs 325hp, 4WD, PS trans, 3pt, 4 remotes, 14.9R-46 duals.....**\$142,900 \$96,000** Tekoa, #107500
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 MF 180, 6436 hrs, 2WD, Multi-Power, 540 PTO, 2 Remotes, 15.5-38 Rear Tires.....**\$6,800** Donald, #37630
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 JD 6190R, 200 hrs, IVT Trans, TLS Axle, 4 Remotes, 710/70R-38 Singles.....**\$149,200** Donald #2325
 JD 9300, 9631 hrs, 4WD, 24 spd Trans, 3 PT, No PTO, 4 Remotes.....**\$61,500** McMinnville, #40643



COMBINES

Case IH 2188, 4024 hrs, Small grain, BPU with rakeup head.....**\$45,500 \$30,000** Tangent #191732
 JD 9860 2794 hrs, Hillico Leveler, Duals, 4WD.....**\$200,000** Moscow #710792
 Case IH 7010, 1120 hrs, Level Land, 2016 BPU platform.....**\$199,999 \$140,000** Tangent #202887
 JD 9650ST5, 3343 hrs, Small Grain, 914P BPU Platform, straw chopper.....**\$87,000** Tangent, #685747
 JD 9650ST5, 2241 hrs, Small Grain, 914P BPU Platform, straw chopper.....**\$92,500** Salem, #685945
 JD 9650ST5, 3456 hrs, Small Grain, 914P BPU Platform, straw chopper.....**\$80,000** Tangent, #686102
 JD 9650ST5, 3557 hrs, Small Grain, straw chopper.....**\$99,950** Harrisburg, #686910
 JD 5680, 695 hrs, 35% Rahco Leveler, 635F Platform, Stoess Cart.....**\$455,200** Tekoa, #755668
 JD 5680, 1017 hrs, Rahco Leveler, 4WD, 635F Platform & Cart.....**\$504,700** Colfax, #746303
 JD 5690, 666 hrs, 35% Rahco Leveler, 635F Platform, Stoess Cart.....**\$583,200** Colfax, #745738
 JD 9750ST5, 2500 hrs, Hillico Leveler, Small Grain, Button Tread Duals.....**\$132,400** Colfax, #686502
 Case IH 2588, 1809 hrs, small grain, hillside, 30" cutting platform.....**\$245,000 \$210,000** Walla Walla #303583
 JD 9750ST5, 3230 hrs, Rahco Leveler, 4WD, 930R Platform and Cart.....**\$130,000** Colfax, #691057
 JD 9770ST5, 1462 hrs, Rahco 35% Leveler, 30' 630R Platform, Stoess Cart.....**\$325,000** Colfax, #730456
 JD 9860ST5, 2727 hrs, Rahco 35% Leveler, 30' 630R Platform, Stoess Cart.....**\$255,000** Colfax, #710739
 JD T670, 1169 hrs, Small Grain, BPU, Rasp Bar Cylinder, straw chopper.....**\$197,500** Salem #84492
 JD T670, 1138 hrs, Small grain, BPU, Rasp Bar Cylinder, straw chopper.....**\$197,500** Donald #84498
 JD T670, 1127 hrs, Small grain, BPU, Rasp Bar Cylinder, straw chopper.....**\$197,500** Salem #85401

HAY EQUIPMENT

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 Allen 8803, 29' Folding Hydraulic-driven Rake, Electro-Hyd controls.....**\$14,000** Merrill #913
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Oregon Board of Forestry punts on no-logging buffers

Decision on expanding buffers around streams will come in autumn

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — The Oregon Board of Forestry has punted its decision whether to expand no-logging buffers around streams to prevent water temperatures from rising after harvest.

After hearing testimony from timber and conservation groups on July 23, the board formed a subcommittee that will narrow the range of possible options for consideration during a future meeting in September or October.

Supporters and opponents of expanding Oregon's no-cut buffers, currently set at 20 feet from either side of a stream, didn't seem to have appetite for compromise during the recent hearing.

Representatives of environmental and fishing groups claimed that buffers of 90-100 feet would not always be adequate for protecting fish, while small woodland owners and commercial timber

operators said that increasing buffers to 70 feet would be economically devastating.

Proponents of enlarging buffers argued that temperatures in many of Oregon's rivers and streams are already elevated and the problem will only grow worse in years to come.

Opponents countered that logging only causes minimal, temporary increases in water temperature that don't justify hundreds in millions of dollars in lost revenue for forestland owners, particularly those who have small parcels. Openings in the forest canopy may actually help fish, as they increase the vegetation that insects depend on, according to some proponents.

The legal implications of increasing forestry regulations were also discussed.

Under Measure 49, a ballot initiative passed by Oregon voters in 2007, state and local governments must either waive new regulations or compensate landowners for lost land value in many circumstances.

That would not apply to expanding no-cut buffers because the rule change pertains to meeting federal water quality standards, said

Richard Whitman, natural resource advisor to Gov. Kate Brown.

State regulations that are required by federal law are exempt from Measure 49, he said.

Dave Hunnicutt, executive director of the Oregonians in Action property rights group, disagreed with this assessment.

Measure 49 only exempts state regulations that are mandated by the federal government, but not those that would merely cause the state to lose some federal funding, he said.

In this case, the buffers aren't required by federal statute and they clearly reduce property values, said Hunnicutt.

"Those are the triggers for a Measure 49 claim," he said. Hunnicutt said that enacting the buffers virtually guarantees the state will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars litigating the issue.

Sybil Ackerman, a board member and advisor to the board, said that any regulations the board does impose must adhere as closely as possible to achieving federal water quality standards rather than meeting other objectives.