

Summer jobs on the farm offer more than a paycheck

By MITCH LIES
For the Capital Press

HARRISBURG, Ore. — Agriculture's influence in Oregon apparently goes well beyond the food it brings to people's tables and the positive impact it has on the state's economy.

Agriculture, according to farmers and the youths they hire, has a positive impact on high school and college students across the state who help farmers harvest their crops each summer.

Mikayla Sims, who has spent the past eight summers driving combine for Tydan Farms in Harrisburg, Ore., characterized the experience as "invaluable."

"It has taught me so much," said the 21-year old. "Especially being a girl and being able to drive big equipment, knowing how to fuel a combine and stuff like that is really cool."

"And the long hours helped me pay for school," Sims said.

"For me this is more than just about the money," said Ethan Brock, 17, who works alongside Sims on Tydan Farms. "Farming is what I want to do, so I am learning as much as I can."

According to the Oregon Employment Department, farmers hire the 14- to 18-year-old age group at a much high percentage than the rest of private industry. The age group represented 6.2 percent of agricultural workers in the third quarter of 2014, compared to just 2.9 percent for all private industries.

Farmers also frequently apply for permits that allow their young workforce to work more than 44 hours a week.

The Bureau of Labor and Industries issues more than 40 such permits annually, with 42 issued in 2015 and 48 in 2014, according to BOLI statistics.

Even permitted employees under the age of 18 are limited to 14 hours a day and 72 hours a week, limitations that can become an issue during harvest, when long hours are the norm.

Nevertheless, farmers said they are willing to abide by the hour limitation and the extra paperwork involved in bringing youthful workers on board.

"When you have seasonal labor requirements, it almost requires you to go to somebody who frees up during summer months, and that is basically your high school and college kids," said Harrisburg farmer Wayne Kizer.

"We're looking for a quality seasonal person," he said, "and most quality adults are not looking for seasonal work. They're looking for full-time work."

Seasonal student workers often start with little to no farm experience, Kizer said.

"You have to do a good job of training and educating them," he said.

Once trained, however, students, particularly those who return to the farm year after year, are excellent workers, said Nick Bowers of Tydan Farms.

"After a while, I can turn them loose on certain



Pictured at Tydan Farms in Harrisburg, Ore., Mikayla Sims, 21, and Ethan Brock, 17, say seasonal farmwork has provided them with an invaluable learning experience. "It has taught me so many things that I can use throughout my life," Sims said.

projects and they know what to do, and that allows me to be more efficient with my time, because I don't have to micromanage them," Bowers said.

Most students that work seasonally on farms aren't looking to make agriculture their career, Kizer said. But the lessons they learn on a farm can last a lifetime.

"It has taught me so many different things that I can use throughout my life," Sims said.

"Long hours. Hard work. Problem-solving. It is all stuff you use in life," Brock said.

"I've had some kids come in that had academic problems in school," Kizer said. "One year on the farm and they went back and hit the books hard. They decided they didn't want to do this type of work for the rest of their life."

Occasionally, Bowers said, former employees come up and thank him for providing them an invaluable

working environment.

"They grow up to be adults and raise their own families and establish their own careers, and they say, 'Thank you for the experiences that I had on the farm,'" Bowers said, "and it makes you feel good."

Some employees even stick around after finishing their schooling. Kizer has one seasonal employee, Stephanie Sather, a teacher at Harrisburg High School, who has worked with him for 19 years.

"She started working when she was 15 and she's still here," Kizer said. "She has more time in the combine than I do."

Sims, who graduated from George Fox University this past spring and will be teaching at an elementary school in Junction City next year, could follow Sather's path.

"I'm going to have summers off," she said when asked if she'll return to Tydan Farms. "So why not come back and work."

Late blight continues to spread in S. Idaho

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

RUPERT, Idaho — Late blight, the fungal disease responsible for the Irish potato famine of the mid-1850s, is beginning to spread in Southern Idaho.

This season's first infection was reported July 10 in a Bingham County field near Blackfoot. Samples from three additional fields in Minidoka County were confirmed as positive on July 21, and another Bingham County field, located in the Aberdeen area, tested positive on July 24, said crop scientist Jeff Miller, with Rupert-based Miller Research.

Miller ran a model early this season that predicted a high likelihood of late blight infections throughout Idaho potato country this season, based primarily on wet May weather and the presence of spores last fall in the Blackfoot area. Those spores may have survived the winter on volunteer potatoes or cull piles.

Testing revealed the Bingham County sample was the US23 late blight strain — the most common type and the same strain that surfaced in the area last fall.

Miller said samples from the other late blight outbreaks have been sent to Cornell University,



Submitted by Jeff Miller
Late blight lesions are visible on potato plants in Minidoka County, Idaho. The fungal disease has been confirmed in three fields in the northern area of the county.

where the strain of late blight will be tested. He said the results are important because US23, unlike some other late blight strains, is sensitive to menoxam, the active ingredient in the fungicide Ridomil.

Miller said afternoon showers throughout July have been ideal for spreading late blight, as high winds can carry spores great distances and moisture helps the fungus establish. He fears late blight may already be widespread in northern Minidoka County, where a large storm swept through the area the day after samples were confirmed as positive.

NW cherry exports to Japan down this year

By RICHARD SMITH
For the Capital Press

TOKYO — Northwest Cherry Growers had a simple promotional strategy in Japan this year — focusing on in-store promotions with key retailers.

"The crop has been very early, so we're promoting earlier than usual," said Salem, Ore., native Scott Hitchman, president of Tokyo marketing firm, Milton Marketing.

Milton markets the cherry growers' product here for the Washington State Fruit Commission.

It also represents the Cherry Marketing Institute of America and the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

NGC's international marketing director, Keith Hu, warned that exporters should not expect to send record volumes here this year.

With the early start of the season, NCG had been antici-

pating a strong Japan market, Hu said.

"However, the situation changed due to the strong U.S. domestic demands and some weather issues in the growing region," he said. Drought has been a problem for many Northwest growers.

Exporters had shipped approximately 2,000 tons of product to Japan as of July 12, Hu said.

NCG had projected in May that 3,000 tons would go to the Japanese market. Exporters shipped somewhat more than that amount last year, Hu said.

Milton conducted promotional activities in about 200 stores nationwide, including the Aeon Group, Japan's largest retail conglomerate; the Ito-Yokado supermarket chain; and Costco Japan, Hitchman said.

"The quality of the cherries coming to Japan has been quite good, so the promotions have been going quite well," he said.

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