

PNW gets new refrigerated rail service

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

A new refrigerated rail service connecting the Pacific Northwest, the Midwest and East Coast has been announced by an Atlanta, Ga., company.

Infinity Transportation Logistics, a subsidiary of Infinity Management Partners, Atlanta, announced Aug. 24 that it will provide door-to-door temperature-controlled intermodal service from Washington and Oregon to the greater Chicago area and farther east.

Destinations include western Michigan, southern Wisconsin, northern Indiana, Buffalo and New York City. They also include: Boston and Springfield, Mass.; Philadelphia, Chambersburg and Harrisburg, Pa.; Baltimore, Md.; Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa Bay, Fla.; and Atlanta.

Intermodal ramps in Seattle, Spokane and Portland will provide pick-up and delivery service to a radius of about 160 miles. Pick-up and delivery extends to the Willamette Valley, Hood River and Bend, Ore., and to Puget Sound, Skagit Valley, Yakima, Wenatchee, Columbia Basin and northern Idaho.

ITL has operating agreements with major Class 1 railroads and owns 200 state-of-the-art Hyundai, 53-foot refrigerated containers,

according to an ITL news release. Transit time is approximately five to six days to the Midwest and seven to eight days to the East Coast.

Service is intended for frozen foods including fish, french fries, vegetables and juice concentrate. It's also intended for fresh produce including apples, pears, potatoes, onions and carrots. Frozen foods and beverages will be transported from the Midwest and East Coast to the Northwest.

An ITL spokesman could not be reached for comment, so it is unknown if the service involves the acquisition of the defunct Cold Train refrigerated rail service that operated between the Northwest and many of the same Midwest and East Coast locations from April 2010 to August 2014. Cold Train grew to about 700 refrigerated containers per month carrying apples, produce and frozen goods. It was increasingly used by Washington apple shippers and mainly operated from Quincy, Wash., and Portland.

Service terminated when BNSF Railway reduced service. The owner and president of Rail Logistics, Overland Park, Kan., that owned Cold Train, sued BNSF for \$41 million or more for breach of contract. The Wenatchee, Wash., attorney who filed the lawsuit could not be reached for an update.

Smaller wheat seed may impact planting decisions, expert says

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

This year's hot weather has resulted in smaller wheat seed, and a Washington State University expert says farmers may want to consider that when deciding which varieties to plant this fall.

"Seed size and test weight would likely be lower across the board," Ryan Higginbotham, who oversees WSU's cereal variety trials, said. "If they're planting wheat based on pounds per acre, they'll end up with more seed than they normally would, because seed sizes are smaller."

Smaller seed has less energy to germinate and emerge from a deep planting in the soil than larger seed. Farmers planting late and dusting seed into shallow moisture would



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Washington State University spring wheat breeder Mike Pumphrey looks on as Ryan Higginbotham, director of the university's variety testing program, addresses farmers during the Lind Field Day on June 11 in Lind, Wash. Higginbotham advises growers to carefully consider which wheat varieties they choose to plant this year. All seed will be smaller than normal.

see little difference, Higginbotham said.

"But if they're out in that dry country, they might want to consider planting based on seeds per square foot or seeds per acre to account for that dif-

ference in seed size this year," he said.

Higginbotham says farmers would be well-served to consider which varieties have done well in the past in similar circumstances and have several

options in mind when meeting with their seed dealer.

Farmers should consider several years of data as they decide which variety to plant, he said.

"I always recommend people look at multiple years of information, so they can see how things perform over different years" Higginbotham said. "I would recommend something that has done well over years and even over locations."

"It has been a crazy year," Higginbotham said. "It depends where you were, when you planted, what you planted, whether you got hit with the cold snap, whether you got rain — there were so many factors that played into it."

In some locations, the expected varieties did well. In other locations, unexpected varieties came out on top, he said.

Former USDA inspector loses whistleblower lawsuit

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A former USDA inspector who accused the agency of retaliating against her for blowing the whistle on unsafe food practices has lost her lawsuit.

In 2011, several schoolchildren were sickened by applesauce from a Snokist food processing facility in Yakima, Wash., which prompted an investigation by the U.S. Food

and Drug Administration.

When FDA investigators showed up at the plant, Wendy Alguard — an inspector for USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service — told them that facility employees regularly scraped mold from bins of old applesauce and mixed it with fresh product.

While the practice wasn't ultimately found to have caused the illnesses, ensuing financial problems led to the company's bankruptcy and closure.

Alguard claimed the USDA then retaliated against her for costing the agency inspection revenues by relocating her to a distant facility and terminating her employment when she refused the assignment.

The USDA contended that Alguard's boss approved of her disclosing the problem to FDA but later reassigned her simply because there was no longer enough inspection work in the Yakima area.

A federal judge has thrown out the case, finding that it was plausible that USDA relocated and fired Alguard for legitimate reasons, not as a form of retaliation.

Terminating inspectors who will not relocate is standard practice at USDA and "such disciplinary action is consistent with other agency employees who had refused a directed reassignment," according to U.S. District Judge Thomas Rice.

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IDAHO 4-H PROMOTES HEALTHY LIVING

Teen Advocate, Royce Collinsworth, teaching how to make healthier decisions at the grocery store.

4-H Food Smart Families Program Coordinator, Madison Crookham, playing 'The Price Tastes Right' with children from Boise.

Eat Smart Idaho Nutrition Advisor, Brandi Vega, teaching how to read a recipe.

By Amber Bucknell

Healthy living is a 4-H national mission mandate focused on engaging youth and families to be physically, socially, and emotionally healthy. Idaho is one of seven states nationwide to take part in a community healthy living initiative called 4-H Food Smart Families. To implement the initiative, 4-H has partnered with University of Idaho's Eat Smart Idaho program.

Funding for 4-H Food Smart Families and Eat Smart Idaho is provided by the National 4-H Council, the ConAgra Foods Foundation, the Albertson's Corporation, the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food and Nutrition Services, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, and the University of Idaho.

4-H Food Smart Families has a special interest in reaching limited income families and communities. To do so, college interns and Eat Smart Idaho Nutrition Advisors have partnered with community organizations and migrant education programs to teach 10 hours of healthy living lessons. Topics covered include: handwashing and food safety, eating more fruit and vegetables, making half of your grains whole, eating low-fat dairy, budgeting, the USDA's MyPlate, and the importance of being physically active.

Teen advocates have been trained to co-teach lessons and lead physical activities alongside the interns and nutrition advisors. In June teens attended a week-long 4-H conference at the University of Idaho Moscow campus to learn more about leadership, public speaking and community service. Lorena Rivera, of Caldwell, Idaho says she has learned "time management, and how to teach kids to help their families make better decisions."

During each lesson youth learn how to make easy-to-prepare nutritious snacks that highlight locally grown produce such as fruit parfaits with in-season strawberries. Youth also learn how to read nutrition fact labels and chose snacks with less sugar, sodium and fat. At the end of the program participants receive a recipe book and a bag of groceries to make two snacks at home with their families.

4-H Food Smart Families can be found on Facebook and Twitter at facebook.com/UI4HYD or @UI_4HFSF.
Eat Smart Idaho can be found online at www.eatsmartidaho.org.

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