

Commission eyes 'pulse' for name

Industry sees 'blank slate' as advantage

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The Washington Dry Pea and Lentil Commission may change its name to the Washington Pulse Crops Commission. The switch would coordinate with a year-long United Nations campaign to increase awareness of pulse crops.

The commission will propose the change during a rulemaking hearing at 9 a.m. Sept. 15 at the Whitman County Public Service Building, 310 N. Main St., Colfax, Wash.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture director will hear from producers and decide whether to move forward with the request. Growers will have an opportunity to comment before the commission moves ahead with a referendum, which requires a 60 percent majority of producers approving the change, said Todd Scholz,

Faba bean, lupine considered for list

Assessment increase to boost marketing, create endowed chair

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The Washington Dry Pea and Lentil Commission will ask the state Department of Agriculture to include the pulse crops dried faba beans and lupine, a forage and

vice president of research and member services at the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council.

The commission is changing its name to coordinate with the U.N. International Year of Pulses in 2016, Scholz said. The campaign conveys to the public a message about the healthfulness of pulses and encourages increased use.

grain legume.

The crops are already part of Montana and North Dakota commissions, said Todd Scholz, vice president of research and member services for the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council.

Faba beans could fill a market niche when pulses are ground up to make protein concentrates, flour and starch, a process known as fractionation.

"We're on the eve of that industry," Scholz said. "We wanted to make sure we're

going to be able to help out the faba bean growers we see in the future, and provide better varieties and improved end-use characteristics."

The commission's proposal includes an increase in grower assessments from 1 to 2 percent for three years to help pay for marketing. WSDA could release ballots in mid-October, Scholz said.

The assessments would also help establish an endowed chair for pulse crops at Washington State University.

"The problem with 'pulse' is it's a totally undefined term," Scholz said. "If you ask a consumer what's a pulse, probably they don't know. The disadvantage is, nobody knows what a pulse is."

However, a blank slate could be a positive, according to the advertising firm Leo Burnett, he said.

"They actually think the fact it's an undefined term for food gives us an advantage," Scholz said. "We can define the term, we can truly make pulses the future of food."

"I think this is a better description of what we do and what we raise," said Scot Cocking, chairman of the commission and a Farming-

ton, Wash., farmer.

He believes the name change is likely. He doesn't have an estimated cost, but expects it to be minimal.

"You've got to change letterhead and a sign outside the office — I just don't think it's going to be too much," he said.

Palouse, Wash., pulse grower Aaron Flansburg, a member of the commission, doesn't see a downside to the change.

"As our industry has expanded, there's more commodities to come under the umbrella," he said. "I'm also a chickpea grower, so not having that in the title, it kind of misses a large segment of our industry."

In December, the Western Pea and Lentil Growers Association will also vote on changing its name to the Western Pulse Growers Association, Scholz said.

The council hasn't discussed changing its name, too, but Scholz said it could be considered as early as November.

Montana State hires first plant science chairman

Farmers partner to raise funds for new position

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Montana State University has hired its first endowed plant science chairman, who will target the wheat stem sawfly and other priority issues for grain farmers.

Hikmet Budak begins the new position in January. He is now a professor in biological sciences and bioengineering at Sabanci University in Istanbul, Turkey.

The endowment pays Budak's salary and provides money to conduct research, MSU spokesperson Tracy Ellig said.

"When you have an endowed chair, you're really able to attract someone of incredible caliber," Ellig said, adding that the positions are highly sought after by some of the nation's and world's most prestigious faculty.

More than 60 Montana grain farmers and agricultural businesses have supported the endowed chair, with a goal of raising \$5 million, according to the university. More than \$2.6 million has been raised, and fundraising will continue this fall until the goal is met.

The Montana Grains Foundation — the educational and philanthropic arm of the Montana Grain Growers Association — led the charge for the position, said Lola Raska, executive vice president of the association.

"Those farmers got together and literally to raise the first \$2.5 million, they were going door-to-door," she said. "It was farmers around the state that said, 'Yes, I want to be part of this effort,' and contributed to get us well down the road."

Turkey and the Middle East originated cereal grain cultivation, Ellig said.

Raska said the industry was looking for a good collaborator to build a program with researchers at the university. She cited Budak's connections to the U.S. and European Union research communities.

Raska said Budak will focus on the insect pest wheat stem sawfly. According to the university, sawflies cost U.S. wheat production a total of \$350 million, with 2012 losses in Montana roughly \$80 million. Some individual Montana wheat farms lost up to \$120,000 in 2012.

The problem has extended to Idaho, Washington, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska and Canada, she said.

Raska said Budak will answer to a wheat and barley producer-led advisory board, which will convey the most pressing research needs.

Budak's work will extend beyond Montana, Raska said.

"Issues in grain production don't stop at the border," she said.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File

Cargo containers are shown being loaded on ships at the Port of Portland in this file photo. A former Japanese agricultural minister is leading a legal challenge of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement that is being negotiated by 12 nations.

Japanese group sues to stop TPP talks

By RICHARD SMITH
For the Capital Press

TOKYO — A former Japanese agricultural minister is leading a legal challenge of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement that is being negotiated by 12 nations, including the U.S. and Japan.

Masahiko Yamada is leading a group of 1,063 people that have filed a 45,650,000 yen — about \$370,000 — lawsuit against the Japanese government in Tokyo District Court.

The group aims to halt the Japanese government's participation in the TPP negotiations on constitutional grounds.

A 2005 pact between Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore, the TPP originally called for the 90

percent reduction of all tariffs between member countries by 2006. Tariffs were to decrease to zero by this year.

In the past few years, the U.S., Japan, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru and Vietnam have been negotiating to join the TPP.

The plaintiffs suing the government include eight Japanese parliament members, 157 lawyers, farmers and celebrities including writers, musicians and actors.

The group also includes journalists and individual representatives of consumer cooperatives, labor unions and farming associations.

The plaintiffs demand the Japanese government be enjoined from negotiating the TPP, a declaration

and confirmation that the government's negotiating the trade pact violates the constitution of Japan and that the government pay each plaintiff 10,000 yen, or about \$81.

Yamada was minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries from 2009 to 2010 under the Democratic Party of Japan administration.

The former rancher left the party in 2012 over then-prime minister Yoshihiko Noda's decision to participate in the TPP negotiations.

Yamada's group opposes the TPP on constitutional grounds, arguing the Diet — the Japanese parliament — is the highest organ of state power, and shall be the sole lawmaking organ of the state and that the cabinet,

upon concluding any treaty, must obtain the parliament's approval.

The TPP forces participating countries to review all their laws to determine if they are consistent with the trade agreement and to revise them if they are not.

They also argue consumers would be negatively affected by the trade pact, as it would do away with ingredient lists. This would cause problems for the 4.5 percent of Japanese children who suffer from allergies to dairy, wheat, peanuts or emulsifiers, Yamada said in an interview with Capital Press.

"If children with dairy allergies eat sweets containing cheese, they may die," he said.

Because of the TPP, sani-

tary and phytosanitary standards will also be lowered, he argues.

For example, peanuts coming in from the U.S. may have been sprayed with certain pesticides, the use of which has not yet been decided in Japan by the government, and nobody will even know, Yamada said.

"We will have to show scientific evidence that the pesticides are bad for health, and meanwhile, people will be consuming them," he said. "Putting Japanese agriculture under pressure, the TPP also goes against constitutional guarantees of Japanese people's right to a stable supply of food, as well as the right of agricultural workers to make their living through agriculture and dairy farming."

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