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# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# Pulses: The heartbeat of a healthy family diet

Welcome to 2016, which, in case you didn't already know, is the International Year of the Pulse.

That means the United Nations and its affiliated organizations are taking up the cause of promoting pulse crops around the world.

While we're glad to see any sector of agriculture get a public relations boost — quinoa was similarly spotlighted three years ago — pulses are special because they are the Rodney Dangerfield of crops. They get no respect.

Pulses are part of the legume family and are the dried seeds of the pea, bean, chickpea and lentil plants. They are high in fiber and protein and low in fat. They are

unique among most crops because they help add nitrogen to the soil, are drought tolerant, water efficient and have a small carbon footprint.

So if pulses are so good to eat — and good for the environment — why are they the best crop no one has ever heard of?

That's one of the questions the pulse industry hopes to address during the upcoming year. It won't be easy. In a marketplace cluttered with fads and misconceptions about what's good to eat and good for the environment, the public seems to be easily confused. Chatter about foods often degenerates into screeds against modern agriculture based more

on Facebook "factoids" than on reality.

In this atmosphere, pulse proponents will need to cut through the clutter.

Chickpeas — also known as garbanzo beans — have been gaining attention in recent years because they are the major ingredient in hummus, a dip that is popular because of its versatility.

Other pulse crops, however, need to gain the attention of consumers. They are already trying to do that by concentrating on education about what makes pulse crops so special and asking consumers to take the American Pulse Association "Pulse Pledge," in which they say they will serve

a pulse dish once a week for 10 weeks. In return they will receive pulse recipes and other information.

They are also working with food manufacturers to place "Pulse Inside" labels on food products that contain pulses.

The industry is sponsoring promotional events around the world to get more people thinking about — and eating — pulses.

This is all good. The more people learn about pulses, and the more they eat them, the more growers and consumers will benefit.

To help out, we have some suggestions. While social media such as food bloggers will be included in the conversation,

we suggest aiming most of the communications at mothers or whoever does the cooking in the household. Most families rely on them to choose which foods come into the kitchen. If pulse growers can convince them to buy and cook with pulses, they will have won the battle.

All parents want the best food for their families. The fact that pulses are tasty, affordable, easy to cook and nutritious is all most mothers and fathers need to know.

If pulses are properly promoted the industry will gain respect among consumers. That will elevate them from "the best food no one has ever heard of" to the "heartbeat of a healthy family diet."

## OUR VIEW

# Armed occupation will only hurt the cause

The armed militia groups who failed to provoke a shooting war with federal agents during a standoff at a ranch in Nevada have brought their show to Oregon's Harney County. Local residents — many with legitimate beefs against the way the government manages public lands — are rebuffing their militancy.

So should the rest of rural America.

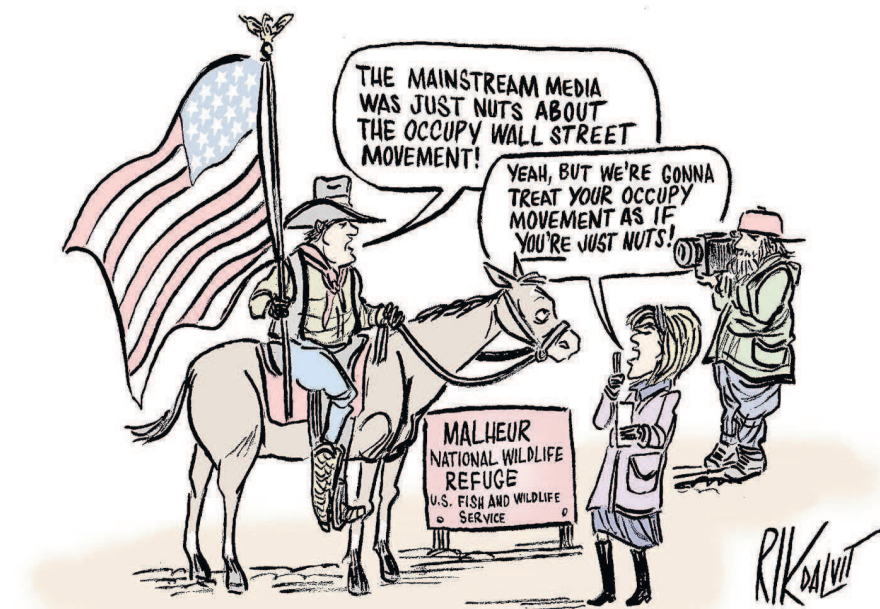
Militia members supposedly came to town to support two local ranchers convicted of setting fire to federal land. When they failed to whip the ranchers and the townspeople into a revolutionary frenzy, a splinter group took over facilities at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

The occupation is led by Ammon Bundy, son of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy. Bundy's dispute with the Bureau of Land Management led to a tense standoff between federal agents and militia in 2014.

We struggle to understand what they hope to accomplish. Their action does nothing for the ranchers they allegedly came to town to support. Their stated goal of holding their position until the federal government returns the land to private ownership is at best a delusional hope, and does nothing to resolve the real issues.

This desperate action hands critics the ammunition they need to describe these complaints to urban America as the farcical rants of armed yahoos.

The federal government holds title to massive parcels of public lands throughout the West. That's been settled law for a hundred years. Many would like that land turned over to the states, as was the case with much of the federal land east of the Rockies.



Rik Dalvit/For the Capital Press

The real question is how that land should be managed and how grazing and natural resource extraction will remain viable and part of the multiple use doctrine that historically governed public lands.

Government policy once fostered the timber, livestock and mining industries that became the economic lifeblood of rural Western communities. Current policy — the result of environmental lawsuits and regulatory and legislative changes — is largely responsible for draining that lifeblood.

At the same time, private property rights have been eroded by the same forces. Businesses have suffered under heavy-handed regulatory enforcement that at times borders on despotism.

These conflicts dovetail nicely with the frustrations of many Americans who feel economically and politically displaced.

Enter the militia groups.

We understand their frustration

with the federal government. We recognize their right to peacefully protest and lawfully exercise their 2nd Amendment rights.

But we disagree with their interpretations of the Constitution and these tactics.

The remedy to these grievances will not come from armed confrontation, or other extralegal means justified by specious constitutional theories.

Instead we trust the tools provided by the Founders — the ballot box, the legislative process, the courts.

The constraints on ranchers, timbermen and miners are real. Any hope of getting a legislative solution that accommodates both conservation goals and traditional livelihoods will require reasoned debate and the empathy of urban voters and legislators.

The armed occupation of a lonely federal wildlife refuge in the wilds of Oregon will only hurt that effort.

## OUR VIEW

# Clemency for the Hammonds

The case of Dwight and Steven Hammond is a tragedy, both because of what they did and how they have been treated since.

Ranchers in Oregon's Harney County, father and son have a long history of disputes with the Bureau of Land Management over grazing allotments. Dwight Hammond was convicted of one count related to a fire that burned 139 acres of BLM land in 2006. Steven Hammond was convicted of one count related to the 2006 fire, and a separate count related to a fire in 2001.

The Hammonds received a fair trial and were found guilty. Many believe they had just cause to start the fires and deserved no punishment even if they had technically broken the law. The jury found otherwise, and the original trial court handed down fair, and lenient, sentences.

In addition to lengthy probation, Dwight Hammond received six months in prison, his son one year. The original prison sentences have been served.

But those sentences ignored the minimum mandatory five-year

sentence prescribed by the federal arson statute. The government appealed, the sentences were overturned and the trial court ordered the Hammonds to serve out the remainder of new five-year sentences.

We are not fans of mandatory sentencing guidelines that deny judges discretion in considering circumstances when fixing punishment. Resentencing the Hammonds to serve the five-year mandatory sentence, though unquestionably legal under statute, was an injustice.

The Hammonds have reported to prison. They intend to ask President Obama for clemency.

We think they should receive it.

In recent months the president has moved to free federal prisoners convicted of drug charges and serving lengthy mandatory sentences that he has deemed unjust and overly punitive given the circumstances of their crimes.

That's the same standard the original trial judge used in the case of the Hammonds. The punishment does not fit the crime.

Mr. President, free the Hammonds.

# Open source seed — where the past meets the future

By JONATHAN SPERO  
For the Capital Press

Not long ago, all seed was in the public domain. If you bought seeds, you owned them outright. No longer.

While there have been steady improvements in yields and shipping qualities in many crops since those "good old days," there have been losses, too. The biggest loss may be in the package of rights farmers purchase along with the seed. In recent decades the balance between the power of seed companies and the rights of those who grow out the seeds has shifted sharply against the grower.

In 1970 the Plant Variety Protection Act (PVPA) was passed. This law gave protection to those who bred or selected improved varieties. At the same time, it protected farmers in

**Guest comment**  
Jonathan Spero



that it permitted brown-bagging (saving seed for on farm use) and kept the wheels of crop improvement turning by allowing use of PVP'd varieties for further breeding.

In the 1980s it became legal to patent seeds as inventions. With a patent, saving the seeds becomes a crime. Breeders are stopped from making continued improvements. Patents, intended to reward and thus foster innovation, instead become an impediment to farmers and plant breeders alike. Together with seed industry consolidation, intellectual property restrictions have led to less choices for growers. A company can buy, and remove from production,

a line that might compete with its profitable line. The control farmers once had has declined rapidly. The farmer, once the heart of an independent society, is now at risk of becoming only a cog in someone else's food system.

## Open source alternative

As new varieties are developed, the breeders, be they public or private, professional or amateur, have a new choice. Many want their new introductions to be widely shared. They want the varieties they have created to improve lives for both farmers and consumers. If the breeder does nothing to protect their cultivar, the fruits of their labor are at risk of being restricted by someone else. Lock it up or leave it vulnerable.

An alternative is emerging — pledge the new cultivar to

open source. The concept of open source software says that if you create coding, you can "free" its use and commit it to be open source. If you use a sequence of open source coding in creating something new, you owe no one, but you commit that new software to likewise be available. The "free" carries forward.

Applied to seed, if you use an open source-pledged seed variety to create something new, the new variety also must be open to being freely used, shared or improved by others.

The Open Source Seed Initiative — OSSI — was formed to document varieties pledged to open source and to create a database where growers can find open source seed. Seed company patents are unaffected. Farmers maintain the option of buying patented or otherwise restricted seeds. But as an alternative, a

body of protected-commons genetics, good quality seeds freed of restrictions, is being created.

In less than 2 years, more than 250 varieties from more than 20 breeders have been pledged to open source. That number is growing and is creating a new choice for farmers, a choice where the farmer once again is in control.

## Open source pledge

You have the freedom to use these OSSI-pledged seeds in any way you choose. In return, you pledge not to restrict others' use of these seeds or their derivatives by patents or other means, and to include this pledge with any transfer of these seeds or their derivatives.

There are now more than 20 seed companies that carry and promote varieties pledged to open source. The OSSI da-

tabase links seed buyers to these varieties and the companies that offer them for sale. OSSI invites other seed companies to partner in promoting these unrestricted seeds.

OSSI also partners with businesses from other areas of the food industry. Food producers, retailers, processors, restaurants and others who wish to join in growing and promoting open source seeds and foods are invited to partner with OSSI.

This is the OSSI alternative — seed owned by the grower and cannot be restricted. To learn more, visit the Open Source Seed Initiative on the web at [www.osseeds.org](http://www.osseeds.org).

*Jonathan Spero is a vegetable seed breeder in Grants Pass, Ore., and a member of the board of directors of the Open Source Seed Initiative.*

## Letters policy

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**Letters policy:** Please limit letters to 300 words and include your home

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