

## Oregon

# Oregon, Idaho onion farmers inducted into hall of fame

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — Two long-time leaders of the Idaho and Oregon onion industries who worked side by side on many issues important to onion growers in both states have been inducted into the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Hall of Fame together.

Reid Saito, past president of the Malheur County Onion Growers Association, and Ron Mio, past president of the Idaho Onion Growers Association, were inducted into the group's joint hall of fame on Feb. 2.

Both farmers said it was appropriate they entered the hall together since they worked together on issues important to the onion industry for almost 14 years while they served as presidents of the states' respective onion grower associations.

"It was an honor to go into the hall of fame with Reid," said Mio, who farms in the Fruitland, Idaho, area. "We worked side by side for so many years and I really appreciated going into the hall of fame with him."

"I was really honored to be considered for the hall and going in with Ron made it even more special," said Saito, who farms in Nyssa, Ore.

Saito, who grew up on his family's farm, plans to retire from farming this year.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Reid Saito, second from left, and Ron Mio, second from right, are inducted into the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Hall of Fame Feb. 2, and receive plaques from Malheur County Onion Growers Association President Paul Skeen, left, and Idaho Onion Growers Association President Clinton Wissel.

Mio stopped growing onions in 2013 because pressure from the iris yellow spot virus, an onion disease, has greatly reduced onion acreage in that area, but he still grows mint, seed beans and wheat.

Saito said the two worked closely on several issues critical to the industry, including a successful effort to bridge the once wide communication gap between onion growers and shippers.

That paid off in a major way nine years ago, he said, after several growers in the area were investigated and fined for using carbofuran, a pesticide that controlled onion

thrips but wasn't approved for onion use.

"Growers worked with shippers, the state and EPA and got that worked out," Saito said. "The way we worked that out, it was the best outcome for consumers, for growers and for shippers."

More recently, onion growers and shippers worked together to provide input to the Food and Drug Administration on the agency's proposed produce safety rule. Onion industry leaders said the rule's strict agricultural water standards would put many onion farmers in the region out of business.

But the FDA altered those rules after hearing the outcry from onion farmers and shippers in the region and visiting the area in 2013 and the rules are now something the industry says it can live with.

Paul Skeen, current president of the Malheur County Onion Growers Association, said Saito's and Mio's practical and forthright leadership skills were most evident during the carbofuran crisis.

"They are real leaders who stood up and called a spade a spade and did what we had to do," Skeen said. "On top of that, they are both really good farmers."

## Affordable housing bills encounter objections

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

SALEM — With advocates for the poor lamenting Oregon's "affordable housing crisis," lawmakers are considering altering land use laws to allow more home-building.

The proposals have encountered resistance from agriculture and conservation groups, which claim cities should focus on building within existing "urban growth boundaries" rather than expanding onto farmland.

Young and beginning farmers face a problem similar to that of urban residents who can't find affordable housing, as farmland ownership is often financially out of reach, said Peter Kenagy, a farmer from Benton County.

"We also have an affordable farmland issue," Kenagy said during a Feb. 8 hearing on Senate Bill 1575.

### Bill would expedite UGB expansions

Among other provisions, SB 1575 would "expedite" the process of expanding urban growth boundaries to create more affordable housing, which critics say would create communities without readily accessible services and transportation.

Meanwhile, people who live in areas surrounded by farmland are bothered by common farming practices, said Mary Anne Nash, public policy counsel for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

"We see a continued conflict between urban and rural issues," said Nash.

Mary Kyle McCurdy, policy director of the 1,000 Friends of Oregon conservation group, said directing affordable housing development to grow onto farmland "does not work for either side of the UGB."

The costs of bringing water, roads and other infrastructure onto such rural properties costs about \$100,000 per housing unit, so housing development makes more sense on undeveloped land within cities, she said.

"We're picking on agri-

cultural land because there are fewer people there and it's cheaper compared to urban land," McCurdy said.

Proponents of easing the UGB expansion process argue that restrictive land use rules have contributed to the lack of affordable housing around Oregon and must be part of the solution.

Oregon's land use statutes have improved livability and preserved agriculture but "they have not come without costs," said Jon Chandler, CEO of the Oregon Home Builders Association.

The impact of SB 1575 would be complicated for home builders. While the bill would speed up the process of expanding UGBs, it would also allow cities to adopt a form of "inclusionary zoning," under which a portion of housing units must be priced to fit the median income of local families.

Home builders have traditionally opposed such zoning as posing a threat to real estate markets, and the practice is currently prohibited in Oregon.

Chandler said he's willing to have a "thoughtful conversation" about inclusionary zoning in SB 1575. If the legislature sets the right parameters for such zoning, his group may not object to the proposal and even support it, he said.

### Housing shortage seen in Oregon

In testimony supporting another proposal, House Bill 4079, Chandler said that Oregon should be generating about 25,000 housing units a year to keep up with population growth.

In 2015, though, only about 15,000 units were built, and the state has developed a backlog of about 100,000 units in recent years, he said.

Under HB 4079, the legislature would allow two 50-acre pilot projects in which the UGB expansion process would be expedited to accommodate affordable housing — one located in a community with fewer than 30,000 residents, and the other with more.

## Pyle takes job at Portland lobbying firm

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

Retirement didn't last long for Paulette Pyle.

The longtime legislative advocate and grass-roots organizer for Oregonians for Food and Shelter has been hired by Gallatin Public Affairs, a Portland-based lobbying group.

The company announced



Paulette Pyle

Pyle's hiring Feb. 1.

Pyle spent 35 years with OFS before announcing her retirement in 2015. In November, she was named

the Oregon Aglink 2015 Ag Connection of the Year Award and was feted at the

group's annual Denim & Diamonds awards dinner and auction.

In announcing Pyle's hiring, Gallatin President Dan Lavey said her passion for the people and places of the rural Northwest is unmatched.

"She is a relentless advocate for America's natural resource communities. Everyone wants Paulette on

their side," Lavey said in a prepared statement.

Pyle will divide her time between Gallatin's Oregon and Idaho offices, the company said in a news release.

"My heart and love is with farmers, ranchers, loggers, foresters, fishermen and anyone who makes a living from the land in the Pacific Northwest," Pyle said in a prepared statement.

## Oregon stops sales of Guardian Mite Spray after lab finds contamination

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

The Oregon Department of Agriculture stopped sales of a pesticide statewide Feb. 5, a follow-up from the mid-January report that a private laboratory testing cannabis found an active ingredient that wasn't listed on the pesticide label.

The lab, Oregon Growers Analytical of Eugene, found a commonly used insecticide, abamectin, in Guardian Mite Spray. Its label says its active ingredients are cinnamon oil and citric acid, and that it is 100 percent natural, according to the ag department.

The insecticide was found

on cannabis intended for eventual use by medical marijuana patients.

In January, the ag department took Guardian off the list of products approved for use on marijuana while it investigated. Washington and Colorado, which like Oregon have legalized marijuana, followed suit. Oregon's stop-sale order, issued last week, is the regulatory hammer.

The order means people can't sell, buy, use or distribute the Guardian pesticide until the ag department and fellow regulatory agencies such as the Oregon Liquor Control Commission and the Oregon Health Authority take a closer look. In Oregon, it's

### Online

<http://pmep.coe.cornell.edu/profiles/extoxnet/24d-captan/abamectin-ext.html>

against the law to adulterate a pesticide product, misbrand it and make false or misleading claims about it, according to the ag department.

### Vindication for lab

The stop-sales order is vindication for Rodger Voelker, Oregon Growers Analytical's lab director and a former ODA chemist.

Sensing an economic opportunity as Oregon and other states moved to legalize pot for medical and recreational

use, Voelker and others joined Executive Director Bethany Sherman in founding the testing lab in Eugene about 2 1/2 years ago.

Voelker said he began finding abamectin in cannabis samples in October 2015, and again in November and December. Some growers went ballistic when he told them, and insisted the lab made a mistake or introduced the contamination itself.

"I was pulling my hair out," Voelker said. "Could we be doing something wrong in the lab?"

But the growers with problems had been using Guardian. When he tested the product directly, Voelker found

abamectin as an active ingredient. "Sure enough," he said.

Voelker said Eugene-area pot growers have a strong organic ethic, and want to use natural products such as Guardian claimed to be. It seemed to work "amazingly well," he said.

### Findings confirmed

He reported his findings to the Department of Agriculture, which seemed skeptical at first, but removed Guardian from the list of approved pesticides as it began its investigation. Two-and-a-half weeks later, the department confirmed Voelker's findings and issued the stop-sale order.

"They did a great job of

moving on it," Voelker said. "That is the government working at record speed."

Voelker said pesticide testing is complicated, and state employees understand the potential liability involved. "You've really got to get this thing right."

Guardian Mite Spray is made by All In Enterprises, Inc. of Machesney Park, Ill. The company could not be reached for comment, but a man who identified himself as the owner spoke to The Oregonian/Oregonlive.com in mid-January. The news outlet reported the man said he wasn't aware he had to list all active ingredients on the label.

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