

Extension agent dives into field crop research

By DENISE RUTTAN
For the Capital Press

Nearly two years after Clare Sullivan started as an Oregon State University Extension field crops agent for Linn, Benton and Polk counties in the Willamette Valley, she has not

lost her Canadian accent — or her enthusiasm for helping growers through research.

In fact, she has found herself in the thick of five big research projects all in initial years of study. She juggles research with talking regularly

to growers through field days, meetings, newsletters, social media and email alerts.

As field crops agent, grass seed is king in her crop repertoire; she also handles winter wheat, clover seed, mint, meadowfoam and brassica seed.

Her research involving these crops is grower-driven and industry-funded. One project, for example, involves examining different products and rates for spraying in established white-clover stands. It's a broadleaf rotation, she said, with many benefits as a rotation crop.

A second project involves studying nitrogen rates in an old crop that is generating new buzz — spring-planted field peas. They are either grown for seed or sprouting peas, depending on the buyer.

"The price is better so people are growing them again,"



Sullivan

Sullivan said. "But growers have tons of questions about them because their grandparents or parents grew them but they don't have personal experience with them."

Additionally, Sullivan is studying management of tall fescue by mixing plant growth regulators. This plant lives up to its name and naturally grows so tall it can topple over, potentially a huge problem for yield.

"The idea is to get a synergy between the two plant growth regulators to increase yield," Sullivan said. "This hasn't been looked at yet in tall fes-

cue. As with the other projects we have to get one or two years of data. We're starting the first year this summer."

Lastly among major projects, Sullivan has been working with Pat Hayes, the barley breeder on campus at Oregon State University, and his team to study malting barley.

The team is in its second field season starting this spring. "It is definitely a smaller crop in Oregon but there is interest because Oregon has a growing craft brewing industry, but there is not a lot of malting barley grown here in Oregon so there is a push by brewers

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