Farm groups line up against Calif. ag overtime bill

By TIM HEARDEN Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Farm groups are lining up against legislation that would do away with agricultural exceptions to California's overtime laws.

A bill by Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzales, D-San Diego, would phase in a requirement that ag employers observe the same eight-hour work day and 40-hour work week as other employers. State law now requires overtime to be paid to farmworkers who exceed 10 hours in a day or 60 hours in a week.

The bill has quickly drawn criticism from groups including the California Farm Bureau Federation and California Cattlemen's Association, which assert that imposing the standard work week on agriculture could bring drastic cost increases and prompt some growers to leave the state.

'lt just doesn't work'

"It just doesn't work in agriculture," said Justin Oldfield, the CCA's vice president of government relations. "We're going to make every effort and do what we can to try and stop this thing. ... I will say it's going to be a tough fight but we're up for the challenge."

Gonzalez's Assembly Bill 2757 faces its first hearing in the chamber's Labor and Employment Committee on April 6. It would gradually roll back the daily and weekly overtime threshold on farms until reaching the standard 8 and 40 hours, respectively, in 2020.

Farm Bureau members and others have raised their concerns in meetings with lawmakers. Growers said they'd have to more carefully manage labor costs during peak harvests, and cuts in hours could affect farmworkers and their families, the CFBF reported.

In the Imperial Valley, the new regulations could prompt more growers of vegetables and other annuals to plant their crops in Arizona or Mexico,

where some have already gone because of California's stricter labor and workers' compensation laws, according to CFBF.

Gonzalez, a former labor leader and the daughter of an immigrant farmworker, argues that few occupations are as physically demanding or exhausting as farm labor and that workers should have the same right to overtime pay as others in the food production chain.

Clinton backs bill

She found an ally in former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Democratic presidential frontrunner. In a letter to Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative leaders, Clinton argued

the bill "reflects our shared commitment to fair and humane working conditions for those whose labor feed our nation and much of the world."

Agriculture was exempt from overtime laws until 1976, when Brown, in his first stint as governor, signed legislation establishing the 10-hour day and 60-hour week standard on farms. California is now one of four states that require overtime pay for farmworkers.

A bill similar to Gonzalez's failed in the California Assembly in 2012, two years after then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed another such proposal.

Across the U.S., workers

hired directly by the farm that employed them averaged 41 hours of work a week in July 2015, while California farmworkers averaged 43.6 hours, said Philip Martin, an emeritus agriculture and resource economics professor at University of California-Davis.

Most harvest workers are employed less than eight hours a day, but some work six days a week during harvests, Martin said in an email.

"Workers most likely to be affected by an 8/40 overtime requirement are irrigators and equipment operators, who often work 60 or more hours a week during busy periods," he said.

OSU hires expert to fight slug menace

McDonnell specializes in biological control of pests

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI Capital Press

Oregon State University has hired a new invertebrate pest scientist to help farmers fight the slug menace threatening their crops.

In 2015, farmers complained that damage from the slimy mollusks has grown worse in recent years during a "slug summit" organized by OSU, prompting the university to seek additional resources to battle the problem.

While slugs have long been a pest for Oregon growers, some believe their populations have grown in recent years due to the popularity of no-till farming and less field burning.

The slug researcher job was among several new positions created at OSU thanks to an additional \$14 million in funding allocated for agricultural research and extension during the 2015 legislative session.

The search for OSU's slug expert was recently completed with the hiring of Rory Mc-Donnell, who is currently a research specialist at the University of California-Riverside.

McDonnell will start his new position in Oregon in mid-July. A native of Ireland, Mc-Donnell obtained a doctorate in environmental science from the National University of Ireland in 2004 and has since studied biological control of slugs, including a nematode that parasitizes them. OSU was initially concerned that few people with sufficient expertise in slugs would apply for the job, but was ultimately able to choose from a good pool of candidates, said Sujaya Rao, an entomology professor at the university who headed the hiring committee.

European red slugs are common in gardens and landscapes.

It was important for OSU to find a researcher who's familiar with applied science managing slug pests - rather than simply studying slug biology, she said.

McDonnell's experience with using biological control agents and essential oils to combat the mollusks was impressive, as was his ability to win grant funding and train graduate and post-doctoral students, Rao said.

Novel methods of con-

Courtesy of Robin Rosetta, OSU



Farmworker retraining raises some questions

U.S. Department of Labor devotes \$75 million to farmworker training

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI Capital Press

The U.S. Department of Labor plans to spend \$75 million on training to help farmworkers find higher-income jobs, raising troubling questions for some agriculture groups.

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers "often experience chronic unemployment and underemployment" so the grant money is aimed at stabilizing their current jobs and acquiring skills needed "to start careers that provide higher wages and stable, year-round employment,' according to DOL.

The agency said its National Farmworkers Jobs Program is intended to help workers overcome obstacles on their way to a "sustainable future," but the agriculture industry faces problems in recruiting and retaining enough workers.

"We're seeing an increasingly alarming labor short-age," said Gail Greenman, director of national affairs for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

Greenman said she'd prefer if the program's goal is to train workers for better jobs within agriculture, rather than divert them into other industries. "I certainly hope that's not the intent," she said. The U.S. Department of Labor did not respond to requests for comment from Capital Press. Greenman said it's a misnomer that agricultural jobs are low-paying, since efficient blueberry pickers can earn as much as \$25 per hour. Tasks such as grafting said. "Just because this type of job doesn't require a college degree doesn't mean it's not skilled."

While agriculture can offer a decent income, many people nonetheless avoid seasonal work, said Dan Fazio, executive director of WAF-LA, formerly the Washington Farm Labor Association.

For some individuals such as undocumented workers — the arrangement is acceptable, which is why they stick with such jobs, he said.

Fazio said the agency is publicizing the farmworker training program at a time it claims not to have enough resources to process applications for the H-2A agricultural guestworker program.

"The Department of Labor should be spending their money on making the legal worker program work," he said.

The agency is supposed to provide farmers with necessary certification to bring in H-2A workers 30 days before their "date of need," but has recently waited until they only have 10 days or less, Fazio said.

That delay leaves growers with little time to get approval from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and obtain other clearances, he said.

As to the purpose of the

trolling slugs are increasingly important because the baits that are commonly used to attract and kill them aren't always economical, she said.

"People are looking outside the box for slug management," Rao said.

While recruiting for the position, OSU consulted farmers as well as representatives of the USDA, Oregon Department of Agriculture and local soil and water conservation districts, she said.

"We got input from everyone," Rao said.

Courtesy of Rory McDonnell

Rory McDonnell hunts for slugs in Ireland in this undated photo. McDonnell has been selected as OSU's new slug expert.

also require expertise that's highly valued by farmers, she

retraining program, Fazio said he wouldn't stand in the way of people bettering themselves but believes the DOL "feeds the misconception" that agriculture provides only low-paid, unskilled work.

'The obvious question is, 'Are you taking people away from the agriculture industry?" he said, adding that he doesn't believe the program to be effective. "I think I would be more upset if I thought it would actually take workers away."



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NOTICE OF OREGON MINT COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING

TO: ALL OREGON MINT GROWERS

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held oursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Wednesday, April 13, 2016 at 10:00 a.m., at the Hood River Hotel, 102 Oak Street, Hood River, Oregon upon a proposed budget for operation of the Mint Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017. At this hearing any producer of Oregon Mint oil has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Oregon Mint Commission business office, 4093 12th Street Cutoff SE, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944. 13-4/#4

USPB changes name to Potatoes USA

By JOHN O'CONNELL Capital Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. - Leaders of the National Potato Promotion Board have changed the organization's informal name to Potatoes USA, seeking to place a greater emphasis on the commodity they market.

Board members of the organization, which previously went by U.S. Potato Board on its website and literature, approved the name change March 17 during their annual meeting.

"It's not important for everyone to know that we're

the Potato Board, but it is important for them to know that we represent potatoes," said board member Karlene Hardy, of Oakley, Idaho. "The board is not important. The potato is."

The organization is updating its website under a new web address, potatoesusa. com.

At the meeting, the organization, which represents 2,500 family farms, also simplified both its strategic plan and its mission statement, which now read, "Strengthen demand for U.S. potatoes."

Hardy said the board is analyzing its two newest

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NOTICE OF OREGON BLUEBERRY COMMISSION PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

TO: ALL OREGON BLUEBERRY PRODUCERS

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Tuesday, April 26, 2016 at 12:00 noon at Chemeketa Events at Winema, Room 210, 4001 Winema Place NE, Salem, Oregon, upon a proposed budget for operation of the Oregon Blueberry Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017. At this hearing any producer of Oregon Blueberries has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Oregon Blueberry Commission business office, 4093 12th Street Cutoff SE, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944 13-4/#4

programs that are aimed at strengthening potato demand to assess their returns on investment. One places potato-centric salad bars in schools and another features food trucks with all-potato menus.

The strategic plan, which was once about 60 pages long, has been pared down to about 15 pages.

Potatoes USA President and CEO Blair Richardson said the plan, which had offered rigid guidelines covering five years, will now be more fluid, allowing the board to make adjustments as needed.

Given that the industry is

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The Oregon Processed Vegetable Commission will hold a public budget hearing on April 21, 2016, 7:30 p.m. at 1320 Capitol Street NE, Salem, Oregon. Any person wishing to comment on the budget is welcome to do so either orally or in writing. A copy of the proposed budget public available for inspection during normal business hours at the commission office located at 6745 SW Hampton Street, Suite 101, Portland, Oregon. 13-2/#4

rapidly evolving, Richardson said the board wished to make its strategic plan more of a philosophical document, rather than setting specific goals for each year.

"It does allow us to take advantage of opportunities as they pop up," Richardson said.

Richardson said all of the changes were made with input from growers around the country at several meetings held during the past 18 months.

Potatoes USA invests about \$6 million per year in USDA funding to boost global demand for potatoes.

U.S. potato growers also support the organization's efforts with an assessment of 3 cents per hundredweight of potatoes they produce.

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PURSUANT TO ORS CHAPTER 98 Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 3/29/2016. The sale will be held at 10:00 am by **RETRIEVER TOWING** 1768 13TH ST SE, SALEM, OR 2012 HONDA CBR250R M/C VIN = MLHMC4104C5208398

Amount due on lien \$3,237.00 Reputed owner(s) Jesse Kinney United Finance Legal-12-2-2/#4