

Maritime weigh-in rule dispute appears resolved

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

The possibility of slow-downs again plaguing West Coast seaports was averted June 17 when ocean carriers agreed to accept combined cargo-container weights from marine terminals instead of requiring them from exporters.

The Ocean Carrier Equipment Management Association, a U.S.-based association of 19 major ocean carriers, announced its decision at the Agriculture Transportation Coalition's annual meeting in Long Beach, Calif.

"OCEMA applauds the efforts of ports and marine



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson File

The Port of Seattle is shown in this file photo. An agreement has been reached for obtaining the weight of containers and their cargo to avert a possible bottleneck at ports on the West Coast.

terminal operators that have announced they will provide VGM (Verified Gross Mass or combined cargo-container weight) weighing services on

behalf of U.S. exporters and encourages ports and terminals across the country to adopt similar approaches," OCEMA stated in a press release.

OCEMA said earlier that week it received confirmation from the U.S. Coast Guard that the approach complies with the International Maritime Association's Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) July 1 requirement that all exporters certify and submit VGM to steamship lines and terminal operators before containers are loaded onto vessels.

Exporters have been responsible for accurately reporting cargo weight but no one had been reporting VGM, Peter Friedmann, AgTC executive director in Washington, D.C., has said.

Friedmann warned in February that an amendment to SO-

LAS from the London-based International Maritime Association could create "major turmoil at marine terminals" and "significantly impede" U.S. exports.

In May, he said requiring exporters to report the VGM would cause congestion, backups and delays of exports through ports.

A 2014-2015 slowdown at West Coast ports, caused by a labor dispute, cost farmers, manufacturers and retailers across the country hundreds of millions of dollars in losses.

Friedmann could not be reached for comment but in a news release said there's still work to be done, particularly for containers arriving at terminals

by on-dock rail without going through gates.

He thanked AgTC's SOLAS committee and others for working on the issue and said it demonstrates the "role AgTC can and must continue to perform for the U.S. export community."

"We have more work to do on SOLAS and so many other challenges," he said.

OCEMA said its action should alleviate the problem but there may be operational constraints that require different processes for determining and transmitting VGM. It said it will continue to look for solutions in cases where terminal weighing may not be feasible.



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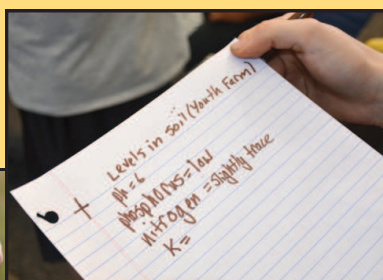
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Students Justine Colby and Andrew Bond test soil for its composition.

4-H JUNIOR MASTER GARDENERS GRADUATE



A field report shows the results of the soil test for pH, nitrogen and potassium, and is waiting for the potash level. OSU Junior Master Gardeners study soil health as part of their 4-H lesson in gardening practices.

A student checks out a soil sample for testing.

The Oregon State University Extension Service's Master Gardener program isn't just for grown-ups anymore. A Junior Master Gardener 4-H program in Marion County has just graduated a class of nine budding gardeners who are learning how to grow food from the ground up.

In their final field experience of the year, nine Marion County youths ranging from grades 6 to 10 learned first hand how healthy soils are important when producing a resilient and productive garden.

First, soil samples were collected from three different areas of top soil at the Youth Farm site. "This is clay soil," noted Justine Colby, Parrish Middle School, as she helped pulverize the soil sample into small particles for nutrient testing.

Next, a soil testing kit was used to measure nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium content—three main nutrients plants need so they can build their own food. The youths dropped solutions into test tubes until the liquid turned a color that matched the nutrient guide.

Abigail Jeanseau, Parrish Middle School, reported the results: "There is a slight trace of nitrogen, phosphorus is low and potassium is very low." This soil would need all three amendments for a successful garden.

Seasoned OSU Master Gardener Jim Liskey taught the class. "Everything gets back to plants, including our food," says Liskey. "Plants get nutrients from soil, and we get nutrients from plants."

Dan Hoynacki, Extension 4-H faculty, says there is a need to engage youths in gardening so they learn how food is grown. They also learn the essential leadership elements of scientific and civic inquiry.

The Youth Farm site is on the Chemeketa Community College campus, a partnership of Marion Polk Food Share and the OSU Extension Service Youth Enviro Squad program that recruits and trains the youth farmers.

For information about 4-H youth development education programs, contact your local OSU Extension Service office
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