



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Egg producer Kevin Hobbs visits with his chickens at his family's farm near Turner, Ore. More egg producers like Hobbs are obtaining egg handler's licenses to expand their marketing options.

Oregon egg handler numbers surge

License provides farmers with marketing options

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Farmer Kevin Hobbs realized that inducing consumers to drive out to his property near Turner, Ore., just to buy eggs would be a tough sell.

Agritourism operations usually offer numerous other products and attractions, so Hobbs decided to find a retail establishment to buy his eggs.

To do so, however, he needed an egg handler's license from the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Obtaining the license involves fees and regulations, but Hobbs said the process paid off when he found a retail buyer in Portland.

"They're taking everything we produce," Hobbs said. "We can't produce enough pastured eggs."

Other egg producers across Oregon are taking a similar approach as Hobbs.

Between 2005 and 2015, the number of licensed egg handlers in Oregon more than doubled, from 81 to 189, according to ODA records.

Though growers don't need a license to sell eggs directly from a farm stand or at a farmers' market, many want to be able to supply grocery stores and restaurants, said Carl Buchholz, who raises eggs near Mount Angel.

"You see a lot of restaurants where a selling point for them is they buy local," he said.

Buchholz said he obtained his license to sell to the Bon Appetit Management Company, which provides food service to corporations and institutions, as well as a food retailer in Portland.

The license also allows him to sell eggs on behalf of a neighbor who also raises chickens on pasture. Several other producers wanted to supply Buchholz with eggs, but he was concerned with maintaining consistency and quality control.

"When you're selling at a higher price point, people are picky, and rightly so," he said.

For example, eggs must

be free of dirt, cracks and similar defects, and they must be held up to a candling light to inspect the air cell — which indicates freshness — and to ensure they contain no internal blood spots or signs of bacterial infection, she said.

Packages must also be labeled with the handler's permit number to allow for traceability, Schwab said.

Large producers are inspected by ODA quarterly, while smaller ones are inspected every other year, she said. The agency also inspects eggs at the retail level to check that handlers are complying with regulations.

In some cases, farmers' markets are requiring that egg producers obtain licenses, even though it's not mandated by law, she said.

"They want to ensure someone is overseeing their process," Schwab said.

Demand for local eggs among grocery stores and restaurants is strong despite competition among the growing number of egg handlers, particularly for eggs raised on pasture, said Buchholz.

Apart from the marketing angle, Buchholz said he's been able to save money on feed by allowing his chickens to forage freely.

Though he's now taken a full-time job and sells eggs directly to the public, Buchholz has elected not to let his handler's license lapse, in part because ODA's \$25 annual fee and other requirements are reasonable.

"I was really impressed," he said of working with the agency.

Licensed handlers can sell eggs produced by other farmers as long as the product undergoes the same grading, sanitation and packaging procedures, said Sarah Schwab, operations and automations specialist with ODA's food safety program.

Hobbs, who started raising chickens last year, plans to increase his flock from 250 to 1,000 birds and invest in mechanized equipment for washing and grading.

Maintaining the egg handler's license involves additional steps for his operation, but the expanded marketing opportunities it offers are valuable, he said. "It's worth it."

Bi-partisan reform group cites immigrants' contribution to economy

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

PORTLAND — A panel of agricultural, business, political and social leaders called for comprehensive immigration reform Wednesday, saying the current system is broken, hurts families and hampers economic growth in Oregon.

The gathering was part of a coordinated national campaign, called "Reason for Reform," that kicked off in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The effort is the work of a bi-partisan group called the Partnership for a New American Economy.

The group released reports that detail the economic impact of foreign-born residents, including data on businesses started by immigrants, the number of people they employ, their tax payments, spending power and the types of jobs they fill in Oregon and elsewhere.

Speakers in Portland in-

cluded state Rep. Tina Kotek, who is Speaker of the House of Representatives. She said immigrants make "an enormous and growing contribution to our culture and economy" and the current immigration system is disjointed and chaotic.

State Sen. Michael Dem-brow, D-Portland, said immigrants and refugees in Oregon are not here to "game the system."

"They are here to work and work hard," he said. "Without their labor, agricultural areas all over the U.S. would be in serious distress."

Immigrants' contribution to Oregon agriculture was a highlight of the state report.

Leigh Greschwill, whose family owns F&B Farms and Nursery of Woodburn, said a lack of labor is the top issue for agriculture, and the immigration problem is weakening Oregon's economic health.

She said some members of the Oregon Association of Nurseries could grow their

businesses 20 percent, but due to a lack of workers will grow only 2 percent because "we can't get off our butts and get this done."

Ryan Deckert, president of the Oregon Business Association, called immigration reform a moral and economic "no-brainer."

Among the report's Oregon highlights:

- Nearly 390,000 Oregon residents were born outside the U.S., and 14,599 people immigrated to Oregon between 2010 and 2014.

- Immigrants make up 10 percent of the state's population but 13 percent of the overall workforce and an estimated 56 percent of the workers who hand-harvest crops. About 73 percent of immigrants are working age, between 25 and 64, compared with 51 percent of the native-born population.

- In 2014, undocumented immigrants earned an estimated \$1.6 billion in wages and paid \$61 million in state and

local taxes and \$104 million in federal taxes.

The report's authors acknowledged that immigration issues cut both ways.

"Of course, there are many compelling reasons that having a large undocumented population is a problem for a society," the report said. "It undermines law and order, permits a shadow economy that is far harder to regulate, and is simply unfair to the millions of people who have come here legally."

But the problem of undocumented immigration has "gone largely unaddressed" for 30 years, they added, while undocumented workers have come to fill an integral role in many industries.

Other speakers in Portland included state Rep. John Davis, a Republican from Wilsonville; and Andrea Williams, executive director of CAUSA. Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, served as moderator.

Yantis' neighbor: Death investigation outcome disappointing

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — A friend and neighbor of Jack Yantis, the Council rancher shot and killed by two Adams County deputies Nov. 1, said he was disappointed but not surprised by announcements July 29 by federal and state officials that no charges will be filed against the officers.

"It's very disappointing. We wanted justice for Jack," Adams County rancher Ken Downey said. "But I've known for six months he's not going to get justice."

The U.S. attorney for Idaho and the state attorney general both announced July 29 that there is insufficient evidence to charge Adams County sheriff's deputies Cody Roland and Brian Wood for the death of Yantis, who was 62.

The attorney general based his decision on an investigation by the Idaho State Police while the U.S. attorney in Idaho investigated the case along with the FBI.

After one of his bulls was hit and injured by a car on Highway 95, near his home in Council, Idaho, Yantis responded to the scene after being asked to by dispatch.

Roland and Wood both had body cameras but investigators determined that Wood's body camera memory was full, while Roland didn't activate his.

There were four primary eyewitnesses to the event: Roland and Wood; Yantis' wife, Donna; and Rowdy Paradis, the Yantis' nephew.

According to a letter sent by the attorney general's office to the Adams County prosecuting attorney, the eyewitness "accounts of the interaction between Wood and (Yantis) and the parties' resulting actions contain significant discrepancies."

"Their conflicting statements create sufficient doubt to prevent a jury from holding anyone criminally responsible for this extremely unfortunate fatality," the letter states.

After arriving at the scene, Yantis was handed a rifle by his wife and began

moving toward the bull. According to the letter from the attorney general's office, "this was expected by the officers so Jack could put down the bull."

Yantis then walked up to the bull and lined up to shoot it.

According to the ISP investigation, the officers became concerned for the safety of others because of the direction Yantis was aiming his rifle in and intervened. Both deputies stated that Yantis pointed his rifle toward Roland and they fired at him in response to that perceived threat.

According to the attorney general's office, the deputies fired at Yantis 20 times and hit him 12 times, including three times in the abdomen, eight times in his upper extremities and one time in the chest. One shot was fired from Yantis' rifle.

An autopsy revealed Yantis' blood alcohol content was .104 percent, above Idaho's legal driving limit of .08 percent.

The ISP investigation involved more than 50 witness interviews, 5,300 pages of documents, 590 photos and 30 hours of audio and video recordings.

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