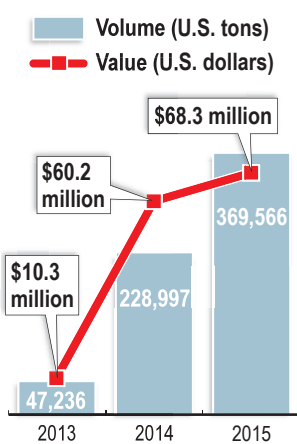
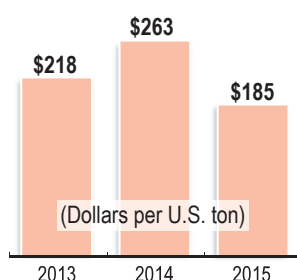


Ammonium sulfate imports from China

Annual volume and value totals since 2013 ...



... and annual average unit value since 2013.



Source: U.S. International Trade Commission
Capital Press graphic

Feds find 'reasonable indication' of Chinese fertilizer dumping

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Federal trade officials have determined there's a "reasonable indication" that U.S. fertilizer producers are harmed by Chinese "dumping" of ammonium sulfate fertilizer at unfair prices.

Depressed prices for the fertilizer aren't due to lower demand from U.S. farmers for the nitrogen source, since consumption of the fertilizer has increased while Chinese imports gained in market share, according to the U.S. International Trade Commission.

Imports of ammonium sulfate from other countries have fallen, so they're not the likely culprit for declining prices, either, the USITC's preliminary report found.

Given these findings, the USITC and U.S. Department of Commerce have begun the final phase of their investigations, which may result in federal duties aimed at offsetting alleged Chinese subsidies and dumping.

Farmers use ammonium nitrate as a specialty fertilizer, since it adds sulfur as well as nitrogen to the soil.

Earlier this year, PCI Nitrogen of Pasadena, Texas, filed a complaint with federal trade agencies, alleging that an eightfold increase in Chinese imports of the fertilizer since 2013 have driven down wholesale prices 25 percent, to \$164 per short ton, in the U.S.

Ammonium sulfate is a byproduct of steel and nylon manufacturing, both of which are subsidized by the Chinese government with preferential loans, reduced export tariffs and lower taxes, the complaint said.

PCI Nitrogen wants to forestall a further drop in prices for the fertilizer, since China is greatly expanding its production capacity for the product as shipments to the U.S. were on track to rise 60 percent in 2016 over last year, the company claimed.

Last year, China exported more than \$700 million worth of ammonium sulfate to countries around the globe, with about \$68 million ending up in the U.S., according to USITC's report.

Mexico began applying antidumping duties of \$84-\$154 per short ton of ammonium sulfate from China last year, depending on the manufacturer, the report said.

'Crazy snake worm' unearthed in Oregon

Invasive species could impact forest water retention

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A new invasive species, known as the "crazy snake worm" or "Asian jumping worm," has been unearthed for the first time in Oregon.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has confirmed that the worm, *Amyntas agresitis*, was found in Clackamas and Josephine counties in 2016.

The significant distance between the two discoveries likely indicates the species is probably found elsewhere in Oregon as well, said Clint



Courtesy of Oregon Department of Agriculture

This close-up image shows the "Asian jumping worm." The Oregon Department of Agriculture confirmed that the worm, *Amyntas agresitis*, was found in Clackamas and Josephine counties in 2016.

Burfitt, manager of ODA's insect pest prevention and management program.

Residential landowners turned the worms over to officials from ODA and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife after noticing

its vigorous flipping.

"The behavior is very distinctive," Burfitt said. "Earthworms aren't known for their energetic behavior, but this one is."

The worm's detrimental effects on forest health have

also been causing growing concern in the Great Lakes region and the East Coast, said Jim Labonte, an ODA entomologist.

"There's beginning to be a lot of attention to be paid to this there," he said.

Several pathways may be responsible for the worm's movement, including earth-moving equipment, compost and fishermen, he said. The species reproduces asexually, so not many individuals are necessary for an established population.

By rapidly consuming the detritus along the forest floor, the worms remove the protective layer that plant seeds need to sprout and outcompete other animals that depend on this habitat.

"That affects the forest's

ability to regenerate," Burfitt said.

Bare soil isn't as effective as retaining water, allowing it to run off more quickly — potentially having an impact on agriculture, said LaBonte.

The change in soil structure also disrupts nutrient cycling, harming the forest's health over time, he said.

At this point, though, it's unknown whether these impacts will be experienced in Oregon as they have elsewhere in the U.S., since the forest type and climate here are different, LaBonte said.

"When you're making projections, it's easy to go to 'The sky is falling,'" he said. "Sometimes that happens, sometimes it doesn't."

Falling number problems persist for Wash. farmers

Usually resilient, hard red winter wheat losses 'severe'

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. — This year's wheat crop looks great on the outside.

But what's on the inside could leave Washington wheat growers with less than market price.

Much, much less. Grain elevators use the Hagberg-Perten falling number test to measure starch damage due to sprouting. A low falling number indicates a high level of alpha amylase, an enzyme that degrades starch and diminishes the quality of wheat products.

Grain with a falling number below 300 typically receives a discount in the Pacific Northwest. Rain and temperature fluctuations are the primary cause.

Farmers have been hit "pretty severely" across multiple varieties and environments, said Aaron Esser, Washington State University Extension area agronomist in Lincoln and Adams counties.

"Farmers have gotten docked pretty heavily three out of the last four years up here for quality, two years for falling number, last year for protein," Esser said. "It starts adding up."

This year, some hard red



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Taylor Keeton, program specialist, calculates the falling number for a wheat sample Aug. 9 at the Washington State Department of Agriculture grain inspection office in Spokane Valley. At right, technician Mike Espinoza washes beakers from the test.

winter wheat in the Davenport, Wash., area could potentially receive less than \$1 per bushel due to falling number, Esser said. Hard red winter wheat prices ranged from \$4.60 to \$5.20 per bushel on the Portland market.

Most falling number problems are likely pre-harvest sprouting, said Camille Steber, USDA Agricultural Research Service plant molecular geneticist

in Pullman, Wash.

It is not usually a problem in red-colored grain because it has more seed dormancy. But based on Esser's report, the Davenport area got so much rain that even the hard red wheat is having serious problems, Steber said.

"We had the right combination of rain combined with cooler temperatures," Steber said.

"It would have been one

hell of a bumper crop if it weren't for falling numbers," said Mark Marshall, supervisor for the Washington State Department of Agriculture grain inspection office in Spokane Valley. Test weights and protein levels are normal, he said.

State grain inspection offices in Spokane Valley and Pasco are working double shifts on Saturdays and Sundays to meet the demand for falling number tests on top of

Online

<http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/reduce-economic-loss/>

typical harvest grading, said Eastern Washington regional manager Don Potts.

The office in Colfax, Wash., will extend hours as needed.

Potts estimated 80 percent of club wheats are experiencing falling number problems, and roughly 10 percent of soft white wheat, higher in some areas.

"We've had some (falling number test results) in the hundreds — 116, 130," Potts said.

The Spokane office runs 220 falling number tests per day, Potts said. He compares this year to 2013, when 12,000 falling number tests were conducted, unheard of at the time.

Grain inspection offices are working to send out results within three business days, Potts said.

"Unfortunately, we're becoming experts at something we don't want to be experts at," Potts said.

He recommends growers pay strict attention to their varieties, and which are susceptible to temperature extremes.

Esser is working to offer more falling number information as farmers make planting decisions.

"I don't think farmers should completely overreact to the falling number issue, but I think they have to keep it in the back of their mind," Esser said.

'Drone rodeo' in Pendleton will showcase agricultural technology

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

Organizers say a two-day "drone rodeo" in Pendleton, Ore., this month will demonstrate the future of digital agriculture.

The event will be held Aug. 18-19 at the Pendleton Airport. The site is one of the national unmanned aerial system (UAS) test ranges and has become a focus of Pendleton's economic development efforts. Part of the facility is now called the Oregon UAS Future Farm, and is intended to be a proving grounds for equipment developed by digital agriculture pioneers.

Steve Chrisman, Pendleton's economic development director and airport director, said drone and high-tech ag companies are attracted by Pendleton's wide open spaces and the wide variety of crops grown in the region. While digital ag doesn't have the economic impact of a 250-employee manufacturing plant, it does have a ripple effect, Chrisman said.

The presence of flight test teams can lead to companies renting office space or workshop space, he said. A Virginia company, Digital Harvest, has opened a branch office in Pendleton.

"A certain percentage will take up some level of permanent residence," Chrisman said.

Industry advocates believe agriculture is on its way to being one of first commercial adopters of drone technology. Equipped with cameras or other sensors, drones could spot irrigation or pest problems, estimate yield, do inventory or other chores. In time, drones could communicate directly with other unmanned farm implements, and send them to take care of problems spotted from the air.

The event is aimed at farmers, and will include flight and data-downloading demonstrations of various types of unmanned vehicles.

"It's an opportunity for growers and drone guys to be in the field together," said Jeff Lorton, the event's promoter and organizer.

The event includes a competition, of sorts. Operators will program their aircraft to launch from the airport, fly to a nearby irrigation pivot and record data with their cameras or other sensors before returning.

"It's a bit of a shootout," Lorton said.

Admission to the event is free but registration is required.

Online

Register online at <http://www.pendletondrone.rodeo>

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