

USDA official named to lead ODA

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press



Alexis Taylor

A USDA official, Alexis Taylor, has been nominated to head the Oregon Department of Agriculture, replacing former director Katy Coba.

Taylor is the USDA's deputy under secretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services. She will begin serving as ODA director on Jan. 23, once confirmed by the Oregon Senate.

Lisa Hanson, ODA's deputy director, was a finalist for the position and has served as the agency's chief since Coba left in October to lead the state's Department of Administrative Services.

In her position at USDA,

Taylor served as an advocate for international trade policies that benefit U.S. agriculture and led the agency's Women in Agriculture Initiative, which supports female farmers.

Prior to the USDA, she negotiated provisions that ended up in the 2008 and 2014 farm bills as a legislative adviser to congressional committees.

A graduate of Iowa State University, Taylor was raised on an Iowa farm and served in the U.S. Army Reserves for eight years, including a tour in Iraq.



Katy Coba

When Coba announced she was leaving ODA, eight of Oregon's agriculture industry groups wrote a letter to Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, urging her to install Hanson as the permanent agency chief.

However, the Oregon Farm Bureau has welcomed the news of Taylor's appointment, citing her "track record of success" at the USDA.

Taylor has solid experience both in a congressional setting and within an executive administration, which will serve her well in the top ODA position, said Dave Dillon, OFB's executive vice president.

"She's seen the world through that lens and that should help speed up her readiness," he said.

The Oregon Legislature is scheduled to begin its 2017 session shortly after Taylor begins her new job, and ODA may be affected by a range of bills on subjects ranging from antibiotics to marijuana, Dillon said.

"She's going to get up to speed on a lot of legislative issues," he said.

Taylor will also face budget uncertainty, as Oregon faces a \$1.4 billion budget deficit related to pension

obligations for retired state employees.

It's unclear how the legislature will handle the situation with changes to spending and revenues, but ODA senior management will provide needed support, Dillon said.

"They know how to operate in this environment," he said.

Katy Coba served as ODA's chief for 13 years, so the industry hasn't had much experience with turnover at the agency.

One question is whether Taylor will replace top staff when she assumes the director role.

It would be tough to lead the agency without assis-

tance from people who already know the lay of the land, said Lynn Youngbar, board president of Oregon Tilth, an organic certifier, who interviewed candidates for the ODA director.

"You've got to have people who know what's going on. I would assume that, but I don't know," she said of Taylor's attitude toward retaining top staff.

While Youngbar said she wouldn't suppose to speak for the governor, it's possible that Taylor was chosen for the position because she has a clean slate with interest groups in Oregon.

"Everybody gets to start from the same place," she said.



Courtesy of USDA

A federal judge has approved search warrants to take samples from fields in Eastern Idaho after farmers refused to allow federal authorities to check for pale cyst nematode, a microscopic potato pest.

Search warrants for potato pest ordered at E. Idaho farms

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho (AP) — A federal judge has approved search warrants to take samples from fields in Eastern Idaho after farmers refused to allow federal authorities to check for a microscopic potato pest.

The Post Register reports that U.S. Magistrate Judge Candy Dale on Friday denied a motion by farmers seeking to delay the testing until a related lawsuit is settled.

Some sampling was already carried out before Dale's ruling, and additional soil samples are expected to be taken this week at the farms in Bingham County.

"We've done what we could," said Bill Myers, a Boise attorney representing the farmers, which include Mickelsen Farms, CVRH Farm and several others. "The court's allowed those search warrants to go forward."

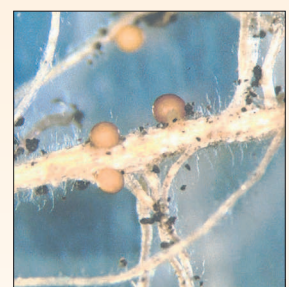
The discovery of the pale cyst nematode in Bingham and Bonneville counties in 2006 was the first detection of the pest in the United States, and several countries temporarily stopped shipment of Idaho potatoes. Japan still doesn't allow them.

The worms feed at the roots of potato plants and can reduce crop production by 80 percent. Officials say the pest is not harmful to humans.

Idaho's plan to eradicate the pest includes quarantine and treatment of infected fields as well as special regulations for some associated fields.

In early 2015 a group of Eastern Idaho potato growers and a shipper filed a lawsuit seeking to end the quarantine and field testing imposed by state and federal authorities.

Pale cyst nematode



Courtesy of USDA APHIS

Binomial name:
Globodera pallida

Appearance: One-millimeter long roundworm

Diet: Roots of plants in the Solanaceae family, which includes potatoes and tomatoes

Life cycle: Typically one generation per year. After fertilization, females swell up to appear as cysts on roots of the host plant. Each cyst may contain more than 400 eggs which can survive for several years.

Origin: Andes region of South America

First observed in U.S.:
2006 in Idaho

Sources: USDA APHIS; University of Idaho

Capital Press graphic

The group in the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Idaho cites the 10th Amendment concerning state's rights in arguing that the federal government is illegally imposing regulations in Idaho through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The group also said authorities failed to follow federal environmental laws in imposing actions without proper study, such as an Environmental Impact Statement.

The 12 fields federal authorities want to test now are next to a field known to have the pale cyst nematode, or PCN, and were farmed with the same equipment as the infected field.

Wilco grows to keep pace with industry

Cooperative breaks ground on new facility, joint venture

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

As agricultural operations grow larger and more consolidated, the Wilco farmers cooperative is aiming to keep pace.

The company recently merged with another cooperative, Hazelnut Growers of Oregon, and has broken ground on a new processing and distribution facility.

Meanwhile, Wilco has expanded its reach as a farm supplier through a new joint venture agreement with other agronomy companies.

"We gain size and scale," said Doug Hoffman, Wilco's CEO. "Size dictates pricing, sharing of technologies, efficiencies in administration and attracting employees."

The new facility in Donald, Ore., which will be completed in 2018, marks an expansion for both Wilco and HGO.

The hazelnut company's current facility in Cornelius, Ore., is roughly 55,000 square feet, with separate buildings for storage and processing.

In the new building, HGO will occupy nearly 120,000 square feet and bring storage and processing under the same roof, reducing material handling and improving productivity.

With the new location, the cooperative will also be more centrally located — roughly 70 percent of its members will be within a 100-mile radius of the plant, said Jeff Fox, executive vice president of the hazelnut division.

"For us, it's about production efficiency and being close to our grower base," Fox said.

For Wilco, the new facility means an increase in size from 50,000 square feet at its current agronomy products distribution facility in Mt. Angel, Ore., to about 119,000 square feet.

Because Donald is much closer to Interstate 5, the cooperative expects to save hundreds of thousands of dollars in trucking costs, said Hoffman.

The building is being constructed by a real estate developer who's shouldering the costs of its exterior, while Wilco and HGO will lease the facility and pay for interior structures, said Fox.

Some hazelnut processing equipment will simply be moved from the Cornelius facility, which will be shut down and sold, he said. "A lot of that equipment is coming with us."

Wilco offers agronomy services and farm supplies through a joint venture with Winfield Solutions, called Wilco-Winfield, which operates in Western Washington and Western Oregon.

That joint venture is now merging



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Doug Hoffman, left, CEO of the Wilco farmers cooperative, and Jeff Fox, executive vice president of its hazelnut division, break ground on a new hazelnut processing plant and agronomy products distribution facility in Donald, Ore.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Heavy equipment prepares the ground for a new hazelnut processing plant and agronomy products distribution facility in Donald, Ore., that will be operated by the Wilco farmers cooperative and Hazelnut Growers of Oregon.

with Valley Agronomics, an agronomy company operating in Southern Idaho and portions of Utah and Wyoming that's a joint venture between Winfield Solutions and the Valley Wide Cooperative.

The deal reflects a pattern of consolidation throughout the agricultural

industry, such as the proposed merger between Monsanto and Bayer, said Hoffman.

"What's really driving all this is that our farmers are getting larger," he said.

Though the merger between Wilco-Winfield and Valley Agronomics will create some redundancies at the administrative level, Hoffman said he doesn't expect any layoffs because employees will be shifted into new positions.

"We're going to grow the workforce, grow the business," he said.

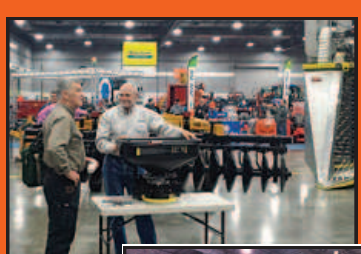
Wilco is also opening new farm retail stores in Salem, Ore., and Puyallup, Wash., and is planning a 19th outlet at an undisclosed location.

Last year, the cooperative earned \$230 million in total revenues and this year it expects to earn \$280 million due to the merger with HGO, Hoffman said.

Wilco typically earns profits of about 3 percent of sales, with the retail division earning the strongest net income, he said. "It's a good model, it does well."

SUCCESS AT THE NW AG SHOW KEEPS THESE COMPANIES COMING BACK

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The team at General Implements is already making plans for this January's Northwest Agricultural Show. The Salt Lake City company, formerly known as RM Wade, never misses the event.

The farm machinery wholesaler, one of two vendors that have participated every year since the show's inception in 1969, introduces new products to dealers at the NW Ag Show and assists end users in finding local dealers and retailers who sell their products where they live. Success at the show keeps bringing them back.

"We're a multi-state business, and we see people at the show from all over," said Portland-based territory manager DJ Domeyer. "People come from overseas and other parts of the U.S. for some of the training and grower meetings."

NW Ag Show is the longest-running and largest show of its kind in the Pacific Northwest. Billed as "Everything for Every Farmer under One Roof," the show features 200

exhibitors and educational seminars for more than 8,000 customers who attend over three days. The 48th annual show will be held January 24-26, 2017, at the Portland Expo Center.

Rankin Equipment has also been involved in the NW Ag Show since day one. The Union Gap, Wash. company also sells farm equipment, among other lines, exclusively to dealers.

With the NW Ag Show's diverse product mix, "We've always felt it was the premier show for the Pacific Northwest," said Vice President of Sales Mike Yearout, a 29-year veteran of both Rankin and the show. "Our No. 1 priority is to support the tractor implement dealers that are at the show. We expose new products and offer background support to the dealers."

Last year, Yearout said, was one of the best shows Rankin Equipment ever had. "There were more buyers showing up and we managed to sell

just about everything we had in our booth."

Ag West Supply is a relative newcomer to the show. The farmer-owned cooperative retailer, based out of Rickreall, Ore. has been showcasing its products at the NW Ag Show since 1974. Ag West Supply focuses on selling equipment at the show, and will be featuring a GK Machine nut harvester this time.

The show "brings people in from a wider area," said Jason Koning, Sales Manager at Ag West Supply. "A lot of times we really get to know people who may not come down to one of our stores. We've sold some tractors in the Chehalis area to someone we've met at our shows. There's a big market for the smaller farm acreage customer and we see a lot of those people at the show."

With these three exhibitors, and vendors from around the nation and all over the world, there's truly something for everyone at the NW Ag Show.