



FALLING NUMBERS

FALLING INCOMES

“It’s a financially devastating problem when it happens to growers.”



Andrew Ross, a professor of crop and soil science and food science at Oregon State University, bakes bread in his laboratory. Researchers have been looking for a better wheat quality test than the falling number test. “If it were an easy problem to solve, then it would have been solved,” he says. Courtesy of OSU

Uncertainties of test perplex NW wheat industry

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

PALOUSE, Wash. — For Jake Cloninger, the numbers didn’t add up. At one grain elevator, his soft white wheat showed a falling number of 315, well above the industry standard of 300 for test results. At another elevator, his wheat tested at 240, meaning he would receive a lower price per bushel because it was damaged by sprouting. The grain samples came out of the same 278-acre wheat field, he said. Cloninger retrieved his sample and had it tested again. The test result was 50 points higher. “And it was out of the same 1-gallon bag,” Cloninger said. Overall, the lowest score Cloninger received from that single field was 204, and the highest score was 315. “And it was everything in between, in the same field,” he said. Cloninger, 38, is in his fifth year of farming. This was his first



After drought hit his crop last year, Palouse, Wash., wheat farmer Jake Cloninger was hoping this year’s crop would make up for it. Instead, low falling number test results have reduced the prices he has received. Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Turn to **NUMBERS**, Page 12

Judge blocks rule expanding overtime pay

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

A federal judge’s ruling in Texas is saving employers nationwide, including West Coast agricultural employers, labor costs by stopping an Obama administration rule in-

creasing the number of workers eligible for overtime pay. The Obama DOL rule, released in May, was set to go into effect Dec. 1 and would have nearly doubled the threshold at which executive, administrative and professional employees are exempt from overtime pay from \$23,660 to \$47,476. An estimated 4.2 million workers were to be

“It’s a big victory for small business owners.”

Dan Fazio, director and CEO of WAFLA

newly eligible for time-and-a-half wages for each hour they worked beyond 40 hours in a week. The rule would have required employers to treat employees as hourly workers unless the employee was re-

ceiving at least \$47,476 per year and filing a managerial or professional role. U.S. District Court Judge Amos Mazzant ruled the new salary level and an automatic updating mechanism lacked statutory authority.

Business groups and 22 states challenged the overtime expansion, saying Congress never intended to set any salary threshold for the exemptions nor to allow the threshold to be raised every three years as the DOL rule required. Dan Fazio, director and CEO of WAFLA, formerly the Washington Farm Labor As-

sociation in Olympia, Wash., said the incoming Trump administration’s Department of Labor is likely to overturn the overtime rule. However, while Trump has said he wants to reduce regulations on businesses, it is not clear where he stands on the overtime rule. President

Turn to **PAY**, Page 12

New EPA grant tightens oversight to prevent another What’s Upstream

Tribes to get \$25M

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The Environmental Protection Agency has awarded Western Washington tribes another \$25 million for Puget Sound projects, but with stron-

ger instructions to collaborate with others, a response to congressional complaints that one tribe misspent EPA funds to malign farmers. The new grant to the 20-tribe Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission extends for five years a federal program that financed What’s Upstream,

a media campaign directed by the Swinomish Indian tribe portraying farmers as careless and unregulated polluters. EPA staff members had concerns about the project’s tone and accuracy, but the EPA’s Northwest administrator, Turn to **GRANT**, Page 12



A What’s Upstream billboard shows cows in a stream. The federal Environmental Protection Agency has awarded a new \$25 million grant to Indian tribes in Washington. Don Jenkins/Capital Press

EVER WONDERED WHAT TO DO WITH THAT OLD, WORN OUT COMMODITY TRAILER?

NEW SALES • REBIN PROGRAM • TRAILER PARTS • REPAIR & SERVICE • CUSTOM MANUFACTURING



Our Rebin Program can turn your old trailer into a new trailer! We will remove all working mechanical parts, and replace the bin with a new Stainless Steel STC Bin on your existing running gear. All parts deemed reusable are reinstalled on the new bin. All of this at the fraction of the cost of a new trailer!



WWW.STCTRAILERS.COM

