

Ag industry welcomes USDA nomination

By ERIC MORTENSON and MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Farm and natural resource groups quickly announced their support Thursday for President-elect Trump's nomination of former Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue to be secretary of Agriculture.



Perdue

Trump's pick to head the USDA was the last of his Cabinet nominations, a fact that irritated some in agriculture because it appeared to indicate Trump had little interest in the nation's farms, forests and rangeland. At the recent American Farm Bureau Federation convention in Phoenix, AFBF President Zippy Duvall acknowledged that worry but urged producers to trust the incoming president.

On Thursday, Duvall called the nomination of Perdue, a fellow Georgian and friend, "welcome news."

"I've seen firsthand his commitment to the business of agriculture as we worked together on issues facing farmers and ranchers in our home state of Georgia," Duvall said in a prepared statement.

"He understands the challenges facing rural America because that's where he was born and raised. He is a businessman who recognizes the impact immigration reform, trade agreements and regulation have on a farmer's bottom line and ability to stay in business from one season to the next."

Other organizations voiced variations of that endorsement.

Western Growers President and CEO Tom Nassif said Perdue "has proven to be a consummate champion for agriculture and will undoubtedly serve our industry well in this capacity."

Nassif said vegetable, fruit and nut growers are counting on Perdue to press the administration and Congress for immigration reform and assure agriculture a stable workforce. In a

prepared statement, he said ag is "unique among industries" because its labor needs can't be met by domestic workers.

"Foreign hands will harvest our crops, either here or abroad," he warned.

Chandler Goule, CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers, said he hopes Perdue supports a comprehensive, "robust" farm bill, including comprehensive crop insurance and good conservation and rural development programs.

Perdue will hopefully help Trump realize the importance of trade for agriculture, Goule said.

"Pulling out of the (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and renegotiating (the North America Free Trade Agreement) is not in the best interest of agriculture, family farmers and wheat growers, especially in the United States," Goule said. "I'm hoping he can use his influence and ability to talk to (President) Trump and the rest of the administration as a more economical or reasonable way to move forward with trade, so we not only don't disrupt our markets, but we make sure they are still there for years to come."

Perdue supports trade, but shares the Trump administration's position on TPP, "which is concerning," said Matt Harris, director of government affairs at the Washington State Potato Commission.

"Hopefully what we can see is the administration moving toward unique trade agreements with specific countries," Harris said.

The American Wood Council called on Perdue to continue USDA's and Forest Service's support for basic research of innovative wood products and tall wood building construction. Doing so would introduce carbon-neutral building materials to urban areas and provide jobs in rural areas, the council said.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership praised Perdue as a quail hunter and "true sportsman" who created a "culture of conservation" during his time as Georgia governor.

Oregon's hazelnut boom gains momentum

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — The expansion of Oregon's hazelnut orchards is gaining momentum, with acreage surging by nearly 64 percent in the past five years, according to an industry analyst.

Farmers planted about 9,200 acres of hazelnuts last year, up from 6,200 acres in 2015 and 4,300 acres in 2014, said Mike McDaniel, principal of Pacific Agricultural Survey, which tracks the industry's growth.

"It's an accelerated growth of new plantings," McDaniel said.

Enthusiasm for hazelnuts is high due to healthy prices and the availability of new cultivars resistant to eastern filbert blight, a fungal pathogen that once threatened the industry.

Total hazelnut acreage in Oregon now tops 60,600 acres, according to McDaniel's analysis. That's an increase of more than 23,500 acres since the USDA's 2012 Census of Agriculture.

To compare, Oregon's hazelnut acreage increased by fewer than 4,000 acres in the entire decade between 2002 and 2012, according to USDA.

Pacific Agricultural Survey relies on aerial geographic data to monitor hazelnut acreage, McDaniel said on Jan. 18 at the 2017 Nut Growers Society meeting in Corvallis, Ore.

The company's estimate of hazelnut acreage growth is conservative, since many growers think the expansion is even larger based on sales of nursery seedlings, he said.

It's likely that some new trees are "intercropped" within existing hazelnut orchards, obscuring the new plantings, McDaniel said. "That's not visible through a dense canopy cover."

In other cases, McDaniel said he's observed new orchards failing to become established, with the trees removed soon after planting.

Nik Wiman, an Oregon



A hazelnut orchard in Oregon's Willamette Valley during winter. Hazelnut plantings have surged recently in the area.

Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press



Mike McDaniel, principal of Pacific Agricultural Survey.



Nik Wiman, Oregon State University Extension orchard specialist.

State University Extension orchard crops specialist, said he isn't surprised.

"I think a lot of poor quality trees have been sold," Wiman said.

Weak hazelnut seedlings don't necessarily end up dying, though.

Farmers who buy weak trees may plant them in high-density sawdust nursery rows until they grow stronger and are ready for the orchard, Wiman said.

In his aerial reconnaissance, McDaniel has noticed that farmers haven't been removing mature orchards all at once — which is not surprising, given the high prices hazelnuts have fetched in recent years.

Instead, growers divide orchards into several blocks and replace old trees with

new ones "a few bites at a time," he said.

Aside from the ongoing battle against eastern filbert blight, recent droughts in Oregon have stressed hazelnut trees, making new plantings vulnerable to flatheaded borers, which are tree pests.

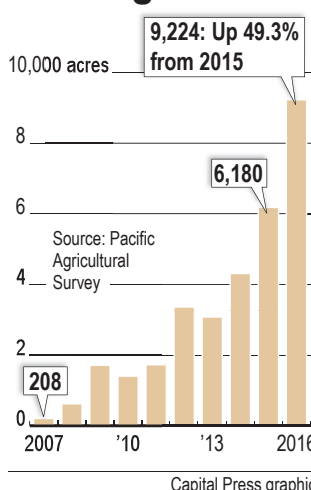
"It advertises the tree to the borer. They're less able to resist," Wiman said of drought effects.

In 2017, OSU plans to conduct trials to determine the effectiveness of different pesticides in fighting the borers, he said.

Another pest, the brown marmorated stinkbug, is becoming a significant problem for hazelnut producers, but help is on the way, Wiman said.

The samurai wasp — a natural predator of the exotic

New hazelnut acres planted in Oregon



stinkbug — was discovered at 11 sites in Multnomah County, Ore., last year.

Specimens of the wasp have been redistributed to fruit and nut orchards across the state to speed up their predation of stinkbugs, he said.

It will take a while for wasp populations to catch up with those of stinkbugs, but they are an effective predator in China, the homeland of both species, Wiman said.

"Over there, they hammer 80-90 percent of the eggs," he said.

Oregon's new dairy princess-ambassador from Columbia County

By GEOFF PARKS
For the Capital Press

SALEM — Kiara Single was chosen the 2017 Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador at the 58th annual coronation event on Jan. 21 in Salem.

The 20-year-old Warren resident, representing Columbia County, was crowned from a field of four finalists. The event was sponsored by the Oregon Dairy Women.

Kortni Ragsdale, a 2015 Banks High School graduate now attending Portland Community College and who represented Washington County in the competition, was chosen the first alternate.

Other finalists included Faith Wilson of Linn and Benton counties and Emma Coleman of Marion County.

Ragsdale also received the Miss Congeniality award.

After the crowning ceremony, Single was presented over \$3,500 in scholarships.

Outgoing 2016 Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador Sara Pierson received a total



Geoff Parks/For the Capital Press

Kiara Single of Warren is crowned as the 2017 Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador by the 2016 princess-ambassador, Sara Pierson, as Faith Wilson, the dairy princess-ambassador for Linn and Benton counties, watches.

of \$17,675 for her past year's work.

Single is a student at Concordia University studying elementary education, and hopes to become a second-grade teacher. She is the daughter of John and Suzie Single, and her father is the production planner at the Kroger Swan Island milk processing plant.

Her speech at the banquet held in the Salem Convention Center was titled, "For the Love of Milk," and centered on the health benefits of dairy products and "the journey of milk from farm to table."

She now begins her year traveling statewide to make presentations at fairs, town meetings and public events

representing Oregon's dairy industry. A particular focus is on classroom presentations depicting life on a dairy farm and the benefits of dairy products.

The Oregon Dairy Women's Dairy Princess-Ambassador Program has served since 1959 as a prime advocate for the state's dairy industry in collaboration with the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association and the Oregon Dairy Nutrition Council.

"We have expanded our program to include K-12 and civic presentations," said Jessica Kliewer, Oregon Dairy Princess-Ambassador program state director. "Since Kiara is planning on becoming an educator, we believe she will be a great asset in spreading the good news about dairy."

The Oregon Dairy Women award scholarships, and provide financial support to 4-H and FFA programs, Agriculture in the Classroom, Ag Fest, Summer Ag Institute, Adopt-a-Farmer and dairy judging teams.

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