

# People & Places

# Making farmers' markets successful

Rebecca Landis advises on direct sales policy, runs two markets

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Two decades after she managed to “break out of the cubicle,” Rebecca Landis says she still draws on her time as an “all around bureaucrat.”

These days, Landis applies her experience to the variety of impromptu problems that arise while running two Oregon farmers' markets, from filing online forms to fixing pop-up tents.

“It’s not really a career path, you just bring to it whatever skills you have,” she said.

Aside from managing the farmers' markets in Corvallis and Albany, Landis serves as a policy adviser to the Oregon Farmers Markets Association, helping to navigate the regulatory hurdles growers encounter when selling directly to consumers.

## Questions arise

The rising prominence and popularity of farmers' markets in recent years inevitably led to questions about government oversight and food safety.

For example, should the Oregon Department of Agriculture require farmers' markets to be licensed, as are grocery stores?

Do growers need licenses to sell jams, jellies and similar products that were processed on-farm from their crops?

“It wasn’t clear what was regulated and what wasn’t regulated,” Landis said.

To dispel that confusion, Landis and other experts formed a work group aimed at establishing clear rules for farm-direct marketing.

The resulting legislation, House Bill 2336, was approved by the Oregon Legislature in 2011 with strong bipartisan support.

The bill clarified that farmers' markets aren't subject to licensing requirements — unless they refuse to comply with sanitary standards — and sets parameters for which processed goods can be sold in such venues.

“We talked out every



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Rebecca Landis, manager of the farmers' market in Corvallis, Ore., stands near the Willamette River in North Riverfront Park where the market is staged. She also manages the farmers' market in Albany, Ore., and is a policy adviser for the Oregon Farmers Markets Association.

## Western Innovator

### Rebecca Landis

**Occupation:** Manager of the farmers' markets in Corvallis and Albany, Ore. Policy adviser to the Oregon Farmers' Markets Association.

**Hometown:** Corvallis

**Age:** 58

**Family:** Husband, Larry, two cats

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of North Texas in 1980, master's degree in government from the University of Texas at Austin in 1985



product category that might be ripe for a lower level of regulation,” Landis said. “I think it’s stood the test of time so far.”

When a legal uncertainty recently came to light regarding egg sales, Landis lobbied for another bill that allows farmers to sell ungraded eggs as long as they checked them for inner defects with a candling light.

The proposal, House Bill 3116, passed the House and Senate unanimously this year.

The process highlights the improved lines of communication between farm direct marketers and ODA, which supported the bill, Landis said. “That made it easy to proceed with a fix.”

As a member of ODA’s Food Safety Advisory Committee, Landis has helped the agency avoid pitfalls in other proposed food safety legislation, said Stephanie Page, ODA’s food safety director.

The farm-direct marketing bill in 2011 has “provided greater certainty” for growers as well as ODA, Page said. “We see the farmers’ markets as an important partner.”

## Career move

Landis’ experience with laws and regulations dates back to her job as a legislative analyst in Texas, which she left to move to Oregon with her husband, Larry, in 1991.

After resettling in Corvallis, the couple was involved

in starting that city’s farmers’ market.

Landis initially worked for a regional government, managing contracts to provide homeless services, but decided she’d had enough of office work and in 1995 became manager of the Corvallis farmers’ market.

Her arrival as the market’s manager coincided with an emerging curiosity about local agriculture among consumers.

“How stuff was being grown wasn’t discussed in the mainstream culture until 20 years ago,” she said.

Back then, for example, having 14 vendors at the Corvallis farmers’ market would be a “spectacular day,” Landis said. Last year, the number of vendors topped 70.

## Market trends

Expanding a farmers’ market is often a “chicken and egg” proposition — vendors are reluctant to show up unless they can count on lots of visitors, while shoppers aren’t enthusiastic unless they can pick among lots of vendors.

An important trend that’s boosted market attendance is the availability of meat and poultry, which provides sta-

bility in comparison to the seasonal fluctuations of fruits and vegetables, Landis said.

Improved payment options have also helped.

Consumers who don’t usually carry cash can now swipe their debit or credit cards at the farmers’ market in exchange for tokens used to pay vendors. Some vendors now accept “plastic” directly, through devices connected to their smartphones.

The ability to pay with food stamps — the USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP — has increased the number of people shopping at farmers’ markets as well.

“None of this existed back in the ’90s at all,” Landis said.

One thing that has remained constant, though, is the connection that farmers’ markets provide between growers and consumers.

Landis said she’s vigilant in ensuring her markets are free of vendors who simply resell wholesale food, since they undermine the venue’s credibility and unfairly compete against actual farmers.

“It’s transparent and traceable to have direct sales,” she said. “There’s a lot of accountability that comes from direct-selling.”

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### Through Friday May 12

Oregon Board of Agriculture. 8:30 a.m. Best Western Mill Creek Inn, 3125 Ryan Drive SE, Salem. On day one, the board will hear from a panel of agriculture industry representatives regarding the legislative session. A separate panel, representing key industry organizations, will discuss immigration issues. The board will also be given a presentation on food sourcing and hunger issues in Oregon. A public comment period is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on day one. On day two, board members will receive a progress report on the Japanese beetle eradication project in Cedar Mill and receive an update on Oregon’s Integrated Water Resources Strategy and a presentation on the Port of Portland’s efforts to address transportation issues. The meeting will conclude with reports by board subcommittees.

### Through Saturday May 13

87th Washington FFA State Convention. Washington State University, Pullman. www.washingtonffa.org/calendar/

### Saturday, May 13

Spring Hay Field Day. 8:30 a.m.-noon. Lazy L Farm Services, Clayton, Wash. Registration at the door is at 8:30 a.m. A 9:45 a.m. presentation is on poisonous plants and pesticides in hay production problematic for livestock. Sponsored by the Northeast Washington Haygrowers’ Association and Washington State University Web-

site: www.extension.wsu.edu

### Monday, May 15

Farm & Ranch Succession Workshop. 5:30-8:30 p.m. Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District, 89 Alder St., Central Point, Ore. Two-thirds of Oregon’s agricultural land will be changing hands in the next 20 years, but the vast majority of farmers and ranchers don’t have succession plans. Want to hear about the trends in farm succession and land use? Want to learn the steps for preparing a succession plan for your farm? Want to hear the stories of local farmers who have gone through the process? Learn about recent research by OSU, PSU and Rogue Farm Corps on agricultural land transition. Hear from attorney Doug Schmor about the steps to passing your legacy to the next generation. Learn from a landowner panel who has been through the process. And hear from Southern Oregon Land Conservancy about how conservation easements can be a tool to help you plan for succession and leave a legacy. This event is sponsored by Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District and the Josephine County Farm Bureau with support from Rogue Farm Corps. Cost: Free. RSVP to Nellie McAdams, 971-409-6806, nellie@roguefarmcorps.org

### Wednesday, May 17

Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC) Board meeting. 9 a.m.-noon. Oregon Department of Agriculture, 635 Capital St. NE, Basement Hearing Room, Salem, Ore. Website: www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/pesticides/pages/PARC.aspx

### Thursday, May 18

FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food — One-Day Blended Course. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Idaho Water Center, 322 E. Front St. Boise, Idaho. The new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) regulation

requires every processing facility to have a trained resource person or “Preventive Controls Qualified Individual” who has completed a specialized training course (such as this one) that was developed by the Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance (FSPCA) and is recognized by the FDA. This person will oversee the implementation of the facility’s food safety plan and other key tasks. Cost: \$330. www.techhelp.org/events/342/fspcaboisemay2017/

Four-Part Farm/Ranch Succession Planning Workshop. 6-8:30 p.m. Canby High School, 721 SW Fourth Ave., Canby, Ore. A free four-part workshop on succession planning with one-hour personal counseling sessions for your family after each workshop. Light dinner 6 to 6:30, workshop 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Course 3 on May 18 is Getting Organized, and Course 4 on June 1 is Passing on Management Roles. RSVP required. Organized by Clackamas Small Business Development Center and Rogue Farm Corps. Cost: Free. http://bit.ly/2opTHQo

Family Business Charters. 7:30 to 9 a.m. BridgePort BrewPub, 1313 NW Marshall St., Portland. A family business charter sets forth the essential rules, obligations, and responsibilities relating to ownership and management of the business, as well as the family values that will help sustain the business for future generations. Presented by A. Jeffery Bird, Lane Powell PC and the Austin Family Business Program, Oregon State University. \$40 per person. 800-859-7609, http://bit.ly/2gPuLYY

### Thursday-Sunday May 27-28

Alpaca Shearing Day and Sale. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas of Oregon, 21345 SW Aebischer Road, Sherwood, Ore. Join EasyGo Farm at Alpacas of Oregon and take a

break from the Memorial Day Winery Tours to watch the alpacas get their annual haircuts. Get up close, hand feed them and handle their luxurious fleece. Shearing Day is Saturday. On Sunday, learn to felt an alpaca gift. Phone 503-348-6954 to reserve a spot; \$25-\$75 covers your materials and instruction. Hand-spinners, knitters and other fiber artists will find fleece and yarn. Visitors can chat with four long-time livestock breeders who’ve raised llamas, horses, sheep and goats. www.easygofarm.net/AOOMem-Day

### Wednesday-Friday May 31-June 2

2017 Oregon Cattlemen Mid-year Meeting, Wildhorse Casino, 46510 Wildhorse Blvd., Pendleton, Ore. The annual 2 1/2-day midyear event is where Oregon cattlemen and women gather to get updates on the latest news in Oregon agriculture, hear from top industry speakers and reconnect with fellow ranchers. http://orcattle.com/

### Thursday, June 1

Four-Part Farm/Ranch Succession Planning Workshop. 6-8:30 p.m. Canby High School, 721 SW Fourth Ave., Canby, Ore. A free four-part workshop on succession planning with one-hour personal counseling sessions for your family after each workshop. Light dinner 6 to 6:30, workshop 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Course 4 on June 1 is Passing on Management Roles. RSVP required. Organized by Clackamas Small Business Development Center and Rogue Farm Corps. Cost: Free. http://bit.ly/2opTHQo

### Thursday-Friday June 15-16

2017 Interpera Congress. Wenatchee Confluence Technology Center, 285 Technology Center Way, Wenatchee, Wash. The conference features presentations from

world experts on emerging pear varieties, high-density planting, root stock, harvest and packing house mechanization, integrated pest management successes, export trade flows and successful practices for building consumer demand. http://incwctc.com/

### Friday-Sunday June 16-18

Glenwood Ketchum Kalf Rodeo and Bull Bash. Glenwood Rodeo Grounds, Trout Lake Highway, Glenwood, Wash. The bull Bash starts at 7 p.m. June 16, followed by the rodeo, which starts at 12:30 p.m. June 17-18. Website: http://business.gorge.net/glenwoodrodeo/

### Tuesday-Wednesday June 20-21

Center for Produce Safety Research Symposium. Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center, 7800 E. Tufts Ave., Denver, Colo. Agricultural water will kick off the program agenda. This session will focus on four CPS-funded research programs that will help stakeholders better understand the factors involved in sourcing, sampling, testing and treating specific types of agricultural water.

### Thursday, June 22

Oregon Angus Field Day. 4-10 p.m. Quail Valley Ranch, Prineville, Ore. Cattle on display, contests with prizes, a meal and a time to visit. For more information, contact Becky Tekansik, Quail Valley Ranch, 541-699-8562, or Dick Hubman, president of the Oregon Angus Association, 541-601-5495.

### Wednesday-Saturday June 28-July 1

128th Annual Washington State Grange Convention. Ocean Shores Convention Center, 120 W. Chance a La Mer NW, Ocean Shores, Wash.