

# New insecticide to remain on market despite ESA violation

## Cyantranilprole provides new weapon against spotted wing drosophila in blueberries

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

A new reduced-toxicity pesticide may remain on the market even though its approval violated the Endangered Species Act, according to a federal appeals court.

Cyantranilprole, or CTP, was registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2014 as an active ingredient in 14 insecticide brands used on numerous

crops. It's commonly known as Cyazypyr.

The chemical provides a new weapon against the spotted wing drosophila in blueberries and the Asian citrus psyllid in citrus crops.

Environmental groups — Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety and Defenders of Wildlife — filed a lawsuit against EPA claiming the agency never studied CTP's potential effects on

threatened and endangered species.

According to the plaintiffs, CTP may be "fairly persistent" in an agricultural environment even as it degrades, raising the possibility the chemical will accumulate over time.

The plaintiffs pointed to EPA's own ecological risk assessment that found the insecticide is expected to be sprayed in areas inhabited by

1,377 endangered species.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit has now agreed that EPA violated the law by not reviewing the chemical's potential to affect protected species or consulting about those effects with other federal agencies.

However, the EPA did not have "total disregard" for CTP's possible adverse consequences, as shown by the

ecological risk assessment, and registered the chemical because it's likely to replace other insecticides more toxic to humans, birds, fish and bees, the D.C. Circuit said.

The D.C. Circuit said it's convinced that leaving CTP's registration in place while EPA further evaluates the chemical will maintain "enhanced protection of environmental values."

The insecticide's manufacturer, DuPont, intervened in the lawsuit, arguing that CTP's registration fulfilled

the fundamental purpose of the Endangered Species Act.

The D.C. Circuit rejected that argument, ruling that EPA wasn't excused from the legal requirement to conduct an "effects determination" or consult about the chemical's impact with other agencies.

Senior Circuit Judge Raymond Randolph dissented from the ruling because he believes the environmental plaintiffs weren't injured by the pesticide's approval and thus lack the legal standing to file the lawsuit.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Rob Giesbrecht discusses the growth stages of dry beans at a field he planted near American Falls, Idaho. He is attempting to grow dry beans outside their usual production area.

## Farmer in Eastern Idaho experiments with dry beans

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**  
Capital Press

AMERICAN FALLS, Idaho — To keep his small, Eastern Idaho farm financially healthy, Rob Giesbrecht believes pioneering new crops for his region is a safer bet than sticking with the status quo.

For a second consecutive year, Giesbrecht has planted a 63-acre field of dry beans near American Falls — well outside the crop's established growing area.

And his neighbors have been watching his experiment closely.

He also plans to try carrots as he moves toward more high-value specialty vegetables, hoping to earn a profit without having to continuously scale up his operation to spread fixed costs over more acres.

"As a smaller grower, it takes volume to be profitable in potatoes," said Giesbrecht, who farms 1,850 acres. "If I can change my farm, I live to see the future."

Dry beans are a major rotational crop in Idaho's warmer Magic and Treasure valleys. But officials with the Idaho Bean Commission believe dry beans may be poised to spread into new production areas where they haven't typically been considered viable, including Northern and Eastern Idaho.

"To limit ourselves to the Magic or Treasure Valley in the state of Idaho, I don't think that's correct," said Don Tolmie, an Idaho Bean Commission member who sells bean seed. "If that production is proven there, you will see that acreage expand very rapidly in places like American Falls."

Tolmie said dry bean prices have remained relatively strong despite declines in other commodities because of challenging conditions in

other global bean production areas.

Giesbrecht, who is required to reduce his ground-water irrigation under terms of a recent water call settlement, likes dry beans as a low-water option.

Furthermore, they're typically planted later than other crops, enabling him to benefit from spring growth on his cover crops, which are planted to improve soil health. He had to buy a used header to harvest the beans, and he'll incur greater freight costs to ship his crop to the Magic Valley. But Giesbrecht was pleased with last season's bean crop, until heavy rains complicated his harvest.

He said his current crop is also progressing nicely, but a bit slower than Magic Valley beans.

Giesbrecht said his buyer isn't yet looking for additional Eastern Idaho bean growers and asked to remain anonymous, wanting to test the potential for raising beans in the region to be prepared for greater market demand in the future.

Tolmie said the commission is funding a Northern Idaho dry bean trial this season in Genesee. They're working with the Pacific Northwest Cooperative, using short-season navy bean varieties.

"The last report was they're on schedule and doing great," Tolmie said.

Andi Woolf-Weibye, the commission's executive director, said she's heard more inquiries lately from growers mulling bean production outside traditional growing areas, including from an Eastern Idaho grower in Grace. She attributes the recent interest to short-season varieties, and that "everybody is always looking for something new to add."

# Coors field day draws hundreds

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**  
Capital Press

BURLEY, Idaho — It seemed a mutual-admiration celebration at the Coors field day and grower appreciation lunch on July 6. Though temperatures reached 100 degrees, about 400 people showed up — and taps were flowing with cold Coors brews.

Pete Coors, vice chairman of Molson Coors Brewing Co. — the parent company of MillerCoors, its U.S. division — told growers, "It is so humbling to be amongst you who work so hard to make the best barley in the world."

Molson Coors is the third-largest brewer in the world, and great barley is what this is all about, he said.

"We used to believe great beer is made in the malt house, but ... really, great beer is made in the barley field," he said.

Coors' focus is constant improvement of its beer. Its breeding research develops the best lines to achieve that goal and provide viable varieties for growers, he said.

The company owes much thanks to its growers who "work hard to make sure we get good barley, and the results are in the can," he said.

Wade Malchow, Coors senior manager of global barley, said Idaho growers produce one-third of Coors' barley — two cans out of every six-pack, with the average-sized Idaho grower's contract representing 1.5 million cases of beer annually, he said.

In 2017, Idaho growers planted about 60,000 acres of Coors' Moravian barley, with an expected production of 8 million bushels, he said.

The Burley facility has a storage capacity of 9 million bushels, receiving barley from growers nearly year-round and shipping to four malting houses, including Coors' own in Golden, Colo., once a week. An investment in excess of \$12 million in 2016 doubled its



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Bob Brunick, Molson Coors manager of barley breeding, center, talks about developing breeding lines and shows research plots at the Coors facility in Burley, Idaho, on July 6. Behind him is Pete Coors, vice chairman of Molson Coors Brewing Co.



Coors barley growers enjoy a grower appreciation lunch at the Coors facility in Burley, Idaho.

receiving ability from 10,000 bushels an hour to 20,000 bushels an hour, he said.

Handling at the storage facility is "all about making a lot of one thing really well," so that the first shipment of barley to go out is the same as the last, he said.

If things are done right at the storage facility, it makes the maltster's job easier and provides a consistent product to the brew house. Consistency is important so that Coors' beer is the same anywhere in the world, he said.

At the heart of that consistency

is seed, and the Burley facility has storage capacity for 500,000 pounds of registered seed for its seed growers and 12.5 million pounds of certified seed for its malt barley growers, said Brent Wolf, Coors elevator supervisor at Burley.

Coors' seed varieties are all developed at its research greenhouses at Burley, where breeders plant about 20,000 seeds a year, making 300 to 350 crosses. The process requires four generations for the genes in the seed to become stable, said Mont Stuart, Coors' manager of malt operations.

That seed ends up in test plots at 14 field sites in Idaho, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming and Alberta, Canada, where researchers grow it out and observe it or carry the resulting barley through to quality and malting testing, said Bob Brunick, Coors' manager of barley breeding.

The company screens about 23,000 breeding lines a year, and only about one in 100,000 lines becomes commercially viable. The whole process takes about eight to 10 years to release a variety, he said.

The objective is to "position ourselves to have a proprietary supply chain," he said.

In addition to breeding for quality and agronomics, the company is also focused on sustainability. For example, if the company can develop a variety that ripens quicker, the crop would use less water. Along the same vein, the company is also trying to develop varieties that are viable for dryland farming, Pete Coors said.

Sustainability is a "key focus of the program now," he said.

## Open house showcases drones, precision agriculture

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

Farmers will see demonstrations of the latest in drone and precision agriculture technology during an upcoming open house.

Washington State University's Center for Precision and Automated Agricultural Systems will host an Agricultural Technology Day at 1 p.m. July 31 at the Ag Technology Build-

ing, 24016 N. Bunn Road, Prosser, Wash.

The event showcases the university's efforts, focusing on unmanned aerial vehicles and precision irrigation, said Lav Khot, assistant professor of precision agriculture.

Displays and short demonstrations on the agenda include robotic weeding, precision polination, mechanical pruning, direct root-zone deficit irrigation, robotic apple harvesting

and high-throughput crop phenotyping technologies.

Khot welcomes feedback.

"What we do has to make sense in terms of how growers use it," he said.

He is also looking for collaborators to help him test the technology, he said.

The university offers the event every other year, Khot said.

It's anyone's guess how far along the tech will be when the

event is held again in 2019.

"It is advancing at a rapid pace," Khot said.

Certified crop advisor continuing education units for soil and water management, crop management and integrated pest management are available.

The event is free but registration is required. Contact Khot at 509-786-9302 or lav.knot@wsu.edu or Linda Root at 509-786-9235 or lsfleming@wsu.edu

## Idaho leads nation in personal income growth because of strong farm earnings

By **SEAN ELLIS**  
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho led the nation in personal income growth during the first three months of 2017, economists say, and the gain was driven largely by strong farm earnings.

The state's seasonally adjusted personal income grew by 1.6 percent during the first quarter of 2017 compared to the fourth quarter of 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Personal income grew by 1 percent nationwide. Florida, Louisiana, Michigan and Texas tied for second in personal income growth, at 1.3 percent.

Personal income in Idaho totaled \$67.6 billion in the first quarter, up from \$66.5 billion in the fourth quarter of

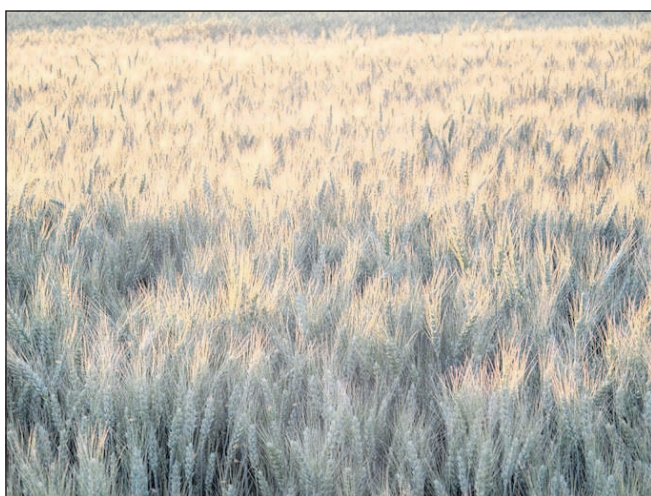
2016. The gain was driven by farm earnings, which grew by \$239 million, or 17 percent, to \$1.65 billion.

According to state Department of Labor officials, farm earnings accounted for 36 percent of the state's personal income growth during the first quarter.

Agricultural and state economists cautioned that the quarterly data are often revised, sometimes significantly, but they also said the growth in farm earnings in Idaho is a positive sign.

The first quarter growth in farm earnings marked the first time since the third quarter of 2015 that farm income increased in the state.

Idaho farm income peaked at \$1.8 billion in the third quarter of 2015 and dropped every quarter after that until



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

A wheat field near Meridian, Idaho, on June 28. Strong farm earnings were the major factor in Idaho leading the nation in personal income growth during the first quarter of 2017.

the first quarter of 2017.

"The bottom line is it's up and that's a lot better than being down," said Garth Taylor,

a University of Idaho agricultural economist.

Derek Santos, chief economist for the state Division of

Financial Management, cautioned against getting too excited about one quarter of personal income data, but he also said the significant increase in farm earnings is a good sign.

"A quarter doesn't make a trend but the direction is positive and hopefully it will hold," he said.

The total value of Idaho agricultural exports reached positive territory during the first quarter of 2017 after declining for two years.

The record or near-record yields many Idaho crops experienced last year may have played a role in the strong first-quarter farm earnings.

Doug Robison, Northwest Farm Credit Service vice president of agriculture for Western Idaho, told Capital Press that in addition to higher values for key Idaho com-

modities, such as beef and milk, 2016 was also an excellent production year for many farm commodities.

That resulted in above-average inventories from 2016 being sold in the first quarter of 2017, he said in an email.

"Prices were somewhat higher, but much of the (first quarter personal income) gain was due to the higher yields and total production values realized with the sale of these commodities," he said.

It's unlikely there will be a repeat this year of those above-average yields "that helped support the increases we saw in the first quarter," Robison said. "Without increased commodity prices, we may even see farm income decline modestly once the 2016 inventory gains work their way through the system."