

Governor's office nixes proposed ban on soybean production

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — A proposal to ban the planting of soybeans in parts of Idaho where dry beans are grown has been nixed by the governor's office.

The Idaho-Eastern Oregon Seed Association and Idaho Bean Commission proposed a rule that would prohibit soybeans from being grown in southcentral and southwestern Idaho, where the state's dry bean industry is centered.

Those groups say soybeans have the potential to bring in diseases that could significantly harm the state's \$70 million dry bean industry.

Soybean acres in Idaho have fluctuated between a few dozen and a couple hundred over the past decade, but some people believe it's only a matter of time before they're planted in large numbers because of the state's large and growing dairy industry.

The groups had asked the Idaho State Department of Agriculture to initiate rule-making that would have led to the prohibition but the ISDA recently sent them a letter saying the idea was not approved by the governor's office.

The letter from ISDA Deputy Director Brian Oakey states that the reasons given included, "current rules are in place to sufficiently pre-



A farmer holds soybean seeds. Idaho Gov. Butch Otter has rejected a plan to ban the cultivation of soybeans in parts of the state.

Associated Press File

vent disease and that banning a crop is not an appropriate role for an ISDA rule."

Jon Hanian, spokesman for Republican Gov. Butch Otter, a rancher and farmer, told Capital Press that the

governor needs a lot more information about the rationale for the proposed ban.

"Something that serious needs to be reviewed thoroughly," Hanian said. "We need a lot more information

before we start talking about bans."

The seed association and IBC members will discuss their options during an August conference call.

During the IBC's quar-

terly meeting June 29, commissioners discussed the possibility of taking soybeans under the purview of the commission.

Idaho is the nation's leader in dry bean seed produc-

tion because of strict testing guidelines that require bean seed to undergo serology testing and be certified as disease-free.

Having soybeans fall under the IBC would ensure the crop follows the same testing rules and regulations that dry beans do.

Some IBC commissioners embraced that idea.

"I think we should jump on it ... because soybeans are coming to Idaho," said IBC Commissioner Monty Hamilton.

But others still support a ban on soybean production in bean-producing regions of Idaho.

"We're talking about an industry that might come in versus an industry that has been here for 100 years," IBC Commissioner Don Tolmie told the Capital Press. "I have to side with the industry that has been here for 100 years. I think it's short-sighted ... to deny this at first glance."

Roger Batt, executive director of the seed association, said the groups' two main options appear to be legislation that protects the bean industry or placing soybeans under the IBC umbrella.

"The bean industry is a \$70 million industry in Idaho," he said. "The last thing we need is to have (a soybean disease) impacting our bean industry. This is something we definitely need to get ahead of."



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Workers harvest blackberries July 6 in Ridgefield, Wash. With the harvest underway, growers report a cold winter and heat wave in June have sharply reduced the crop.

SW Wash. blackberry crop falls short of low expectations

Slim pickings start after Fourth of July

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

RIDGEFIELD, Wash. — Southwest Washington's blackberry crop may be even smaller than expected, according to growers.

Several weeks ago, berry farmers predicted low yields from freeze-damaged plants. But hopes that the bushes would at least yield half the average amount of berries now look too optimistic, said grower Jerry Dobbins, a receiver of fruit from several farms.

"Everyone who delivers fruit here is of the same opinion," he said July 6. "Pretty much everybody is in the same predicament."

In May, growers and crop consultants in Washington and Oregon reported seeing widespread freeze damage in blackberry plants. The damage reportedly varied from field to field and may have been particularly severe in southwest Washington, the northern end of the U.S. commercial blackberry region.

Dobbins said plants there were further harmed by a three-day hot spell in late June. High temperatures around Clark County's berry fields were about 25 degrees above average, according to the AccuWeather website.

"The heat didn't hurt the berries, but it just made a weak plant fall apart," Dobbins said.

Other types of berries have apparently weathered the cold and heat better. The USDA crop report issued July 5 reported that Oregon's raspberry harvest was in full swing and blueberry fields were producing average yields. Dobbins said that in southwest Washington strawberries ap-

peared to be least affected by the weather.

Woodland, Wash., farmer George Thoeny started harvesting blackberries July 5.

"The quality of the fruit is fine — just no tonnage," he said. "It's worse than I thought."

U.S. blackberry production, dominated by Oregon, was 58.4 million pounds last year, a 14 percent increase over the year before, according to the USDA.

The average price, however, fell to 45 cents a pound from 74 cents in 2015. As a result, the value of 2016's robust crop was \$26.3 million, compared to \$38 million for 2015's smaller harvest.

Thoeny said he expects blackberry prices to rise, but not enough to offset low yields.

"We're just trying to manage our losses," he said.

Dobbins also started harvesting blackberries July 5. A five-worker crew machine-harvested about 2,000 pounds, but in a normal year they would have picked 10,000 to 12,000 pounds, he said.

The next day, Dobbins reduced the crew to three because the volume didn't justify having two more workers to cull green berries shaken from the canes.

Dobbins said he may change plans and resort to more-expensive hand-picking to get every berry possible.

"Whatever is the best way to salvage some of that crop," he said.

Last year, his fields yielded about 5 tons an acre. This year, he said, they might yield 2 tons an acre.

Dobbins said he has been growing Black Diamond blackberries for 12 years and has never had the crop fail. "I think, when everything is said and done, this will be a failure."

Trials investigate potential quinoa herbicides

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

ABERDEEN, Idaho — A weed scientist has found a few promising leads in her field trials to identify herbicides that can be used in quinoa production.

University of Idaho Extension weed specialist Pam Hutchinson explained U.S. growers currently have no herbicides labeled for weed control in the high-protein, gluten-free specialty grain.

Production of quinoa — which contains every amino acid and is regarded as a health food — is on the rise in Eastern Idaho, where it's proven to be a good fit in potato rotations. The buyer who has contracted for all of the region's quinoa acreage, Jeremiah Clark, has opened a quinoa processing facility in Idaho Falls and is already considering plans for expansion.

Hutchinson, who is in the second year of her quinoa replicated herbicide trials at UI's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center, has expanded the number of herbicides she's testing this season. Hutchinson said a challenge with finding an effective quinoa herbicide is that the crop is a close relative of the common weed lambsquarters. Products that control lambsquarters are also likely to kill quinoa.

Hutchinson has found several products that kill quinoa to help growers clean their fields and prevent the crop from escaping and becoming a weed. She's also evaluated herbicides that are known to effectively control lambsquarters and some that offer only moderate control.

Hutchinson said she's found three products that are safe for quinoa and may control a host of weeds, while at least offering some degree of lambsquarters control.

Hutchinson said Syngenta's Dual Magnum can be used both pre-emergence and post-emergence without harming quinoa.

Hutchinson has also had success with two older herbicides that were used in sugar beets before the release of genetically modified beets that resist glyphosate herbicide, rendering other products obsolete. Hutchinson said the beet products that tested well in quinoa, Ro-Neet and Norton, could be tough to find.

Clark, who supplied seed of his own proprietary quinoa varieties for Hutchinson's trials, said his growers under contract planted 1,600 acres this season, and will likely plant more next season. He's optimistic that

Hutchinson's efforts will lead to special-needs or permanent labels for quinoa herbicides. The absence of labeled herbicides has been a "big stumbling block" for growers, Clark said.

"A lot of farmers stay on top of their weeds, and if they go one year without controlling their weeds, they've got weed seed in the ground for several years," Clark said.

Clark said many of his growers have kept weeds in check by increasing quinoa seeding density.

Hutchinson said a federally funded program that seeks to modify product labels to benefit minor crops, called Inter-regional Research Project No. 4, has also expressed interest in her trial results.

UI agronomist Xi Liang, is

in the third year of trials in both Aberdeen and Tetonía investigating quinoa agronomic practices, including planting date and row spacing. Liang said her trials aren't working well this season because of challenging early season conditions, but she said it appears yields are higher in Tetonía, where the weather is cooler, and early season planting is preferable.



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