

Oregon

Diverse farm keeps grower busy

By ALIYA HALL
Capital Press

SILVERTON, Ore. — Karl Dettwyler puts his farm first. The manager of Blue Line Farms, member of the Oregon Blueberry Commission and father of two daughters, Dettwyler admits that he doesn't know how he's been able to balance his responsibilities.

"I think you have to have (attention deficit disorder) in order to handle it. It's like putting fires out, you leave one smoldering until you have time to put it out," he said.

Dettwyler has been on the blueberry commission for 2 1/2 years, and finds the organization valuable.

"On the farm anymore, if you want to be relevant, you need to be involved. My Uncle Bob taught me that it's important to be involved in the industry," he said. "You can't complain if you're not involved, and I see a lot of growers grumble about this or that but never take the step to be involved."

The commission was established in 1986 and consists of nine members. The terms are three years with a limit of two consecutive terms. There are 353 growers, and this year the commission is estimating a harvest of 118 million pounds of blueberries.

Blue Line Farms hand-picks around 6,000 pounds of blueberries a year.

The farm employs five people full-time, including himself, his brother and his cousin. His uncle and father also work part-time.

Dettwyler enjoys getting to know people through the commission and helping address problems that other growers are having.

"All of a sudden you hear a commissioner talk about the problems and challenges



Photos by Aliya Hall/Capital Press

Karl Dettwyler said that being able to eat the fruit his farm has grown is rewarding.



Blue Line Farms grows four varieties of blueberries. Manager Karl Dettwyler said that everyone has a different preference for how they like their blueberries and he tries to account for that.

he's having, and even though we're both blueberry farmers, because of soil tops and their access to labor versus my access to labor, we're always learning," he said. "I'm learning from him, and he's learning from me, too, hopefully, and together we can help the whole industry."

Beyond blueberries, Blue

Line Farms also grows turf type grasses such as perennial rye grass and tall fescue, green beans and hazelnuts.

However, 7.5 percent of the farm is blueberries. The varieties he grows include Elliot, Liberty, Legacy and Aurora. Legacy is his favorite.

Dettwyler said the most rewarding part of farming is "see-

"There's a rural versus city divide. There's a lot of things people don't understand about agriculture, and we want to get people to understand why we do what we do."

Karl Dettwyler
Manager, Blue Line Farms
in Silverton, Ore.

ing a crop come to fruition." "There's challenges, but seeing the different challenges and rewards, and being able to eat the fruit when it's blue. There's one variety out there that's so sweet and I love it," he said about the Legacy variety.

Although the blueberry industry has been booming in recent years because of recent health studies revealing the benefits of eating blueberries, Dettwyler has noticed the market leveling off.

"There are ways of mitigating risk, but it depends on how innovative you are," he said. "If you sit back and say 'that's the market' and don't do anything innovative, you're going to have to ride out the highs and the lows, if you can."

His innovative examples included a roadside blueberry stand or talking to a different packer or to the commission about new ways to promote blueberries.

Dettwyler encourages farmers to get involved and share their story.

"There's a rural versus city divide," he said.

"There's a lot of things people don't understand about agriculture, and we want to get people to understand why we do what we do."

OSU cereals specialist moving to Limagrain

By MITCH LIES
For the Capital Press

Oregon State University Extension Cereals Specialist and Assistant Professor Mike Flowers has announced that he is leaving the university to take a position with Limagrain Cereal Seeds.

Flowers announced his departure on Aug. 8, after signing an offer letter to become new products supply manager for Limagrain Cereal Seeds. He will depart in mid-September and be based in Fort Collins, Colo.

"It is a good opportunity for me," Flowers said. "I am going to get to do something a little bit different, but I still get to be involved with the industry. I'll be a little bit more 'behind the doors,' but I'll be working with all of their varieties and breeders, and bringing new products to market, so that is really exciting."

"It is just a good opportunity to do a lot of the things that I like and also learn a few new skills," he added.

Flowers described Limagrain as "an exciting group to go work for."

"One of the attractive things about them is that they are interested in working with the land grant institutions across the nation," Flowers said.

"They do breeding exchanges with them, and as they bring new traits to market, they show the ability to work with the land grants to get those traits put into institutional grant and private breeding programs."

Flowers leaves behind an acclaimed cereals program at Oregon State University that includes wheat breeder Bob Zemetra, plant pathologist Chris Mundt, field staff and extension personnel, who work closely with university-based researchers on field trials.

Mundt received the Oregon Wheat Commission's 2017 Distinguished Service Award. Flowers received the same award in 2015.

Flowers said he plans to complete his 2017 trial work by the time he departs and hopes the university will continue to conduct variety trials that he ran point on for several years.



Mitch Lies/For the Capital Press

Mike Flowers speaks to participants in a 2014 Oregon State University Extension seed and cereal crop production meeting. He is leaving OSU after a dozen years as the College of Agricultural Sciences Extension cereals specialist. Flowers is taking a position with Limagrain.

"I am working with the university and the Oregon Wheat Commission to figure out who is going to take over those variety trials, so they can continue," he said.

"My technical staff is still in place and the funding is there to continue with the work, so I am hoping that the university will continue on those trials for the short term, and, for the long term, replace my position so the industry has that voice there for them."

Flowers said he will miss working with growers.

"Working with the growers, and working on practical problems was the most fun part of my job," he said. "I will definitely miss that."

Flowers holds a Ph.D. in crop science from North Carolina State University, a master's degree in soil science from Ohio State University and a bachelor of agricultural science from the University of Tennessee.

Before joining OSU in 2005, Flowers worked for the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Plant Sciences Research Unit in Raleigh, N.C.

Limagrain is an international agricultural cooperative based in France specializing in field seeds, vegetable seeds and cereal products.

Regulators seek to offer water loans

About \$20 million may be available for water projects

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon's water regulators are proposing to devote more of the money in the state's \$20 million water supply development fund to loans. During the first round of funding last year, nearly \$9 million was disbursed from the fund entirely in the form of grants.

After those disbursements, there was \$5 million remaining in the fund, to which Oregon lawmakers appropriated \$15 million this year.

The Oregon Water Resources Department, which administers the fund, plans to spend that \$20 million over the next three years.

Of the 32 applications for funds in 2017, only three sought money in the form of loans — and those were to provide "matching funds" for



their grant proposals, said Kim Ogren, the agency's senior water resources development advisor.

To "incentivize" more loan applications, OWRD is contemplating setting aside roughly half the funds available for the 2018 and 2019 funding for loans, Ogren said.

About \$6 million of the fund is expected to be spent during 2017, leaving \$14 million for the remaining two years unless more money is appropriated by lawmakers. In 2015, the Oregon Legislature authorized \$30 million to

a separate water development loan fund, but nobody applied for the money.

It's possible the lack of interest was due to a requirement that borrowers compensate OWRD for the cost of administering the loan program, which would result in a higher interest rate, said Raquel Rancier, the agency's senior policy coordinator.

That requirement doesn't exist for the \$20 million water supply development fund, which could make such loans more attractive, she said. Members of the Oregon Water Re-

sources Commission, which oversees the agency, appeared to have a lukewarm reaction to the proposal during an Aug. 17 meeting.

Commissioners questioned whether OWRD wanted to take on the added responsibility involved in issuing loans and overseeing their repayment.

"We're going to be very risk averse as we practice these loan reviews," said Tom Byler, the agency's director.

The agency would be better off not assigning a specific proportion of the fund to loans, said April Snell, executive director of the Oregon Water Resources Congress, which represents irrigation districts.

The commission should "flesh out" the idea of dedicating a specific amount to loans, considering the amount of funding is already limited and there hasn't been much enthusiasm for loans, she said.

Commissioners concluded the conversation without making a decision on the matter.

"It will be an ongoing discussion," said Rancier.



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