



Jessica Jansen

Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom expands

By ALIYA HALL
For the Capital Press

HILLSBORO, Ore. — Money from a successful 2016 tax levy for the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District will allow Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom to expand in Washington County.

“We are so pleased with this opportunity for agricultural education to reach some of the most urban schools in our state,” said Tammy Dennee, president of the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, in a press release.

With over 250 schools, Washington County is the second most populous county the state, behind Multnomah County.

“We work to reach urban audiences who typically have the least interaction with agriculture,” Jessica Jansen, executive director of Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom, said. “This expansion is huge for the program and the urban area of our state. Washington County has agriculture industry in it already. It’s a unique urban and rural blend, and an easy position to bridge.”

In November 2016, Washington County voters approved a tax levy to secure funding for an expansion of resources provided by the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District.

Education was “a high priority for development with funding from the tax base,” John McDonald, chairman of the district, said.

“When we learned about Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom and the great work that they are already doing, we thought a full-time position and programming dedicated to Washington County would be a great way to leverage existing resources and make an impact in our local schools,” McDonald said.

Jansen said the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation is appreciative of the partnership with the district, as well as for putting its trust in the program.

The district will sponsor a full-time position, as well as provide funding for a lending library available to Washington County teachers.

Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom is a statewide non-profit organization that provides resources for educators to help bring agriculture, the environment and natural resource topics into their classrooms.

The program has about 100 lesson plans on its website, and uses a hands-on approach to integrate agricultural topics into the existing curriculum.

Dennee said that it’s important to not add “one more thing” for the educators to teach, but rather provide the tools to make the topics more engaging and effective.

“We use agriculture as a lens to teach science or math,” Jansen said. “Science is a natural fit for agricultural topics.”

She used an example of talking to students about the changes in matter through making ice cream or butter.

“We want to provide teachers with a resource to help them inspire students and make learning fun for students,” Jansen said. “That’s our ultimate goal: To help bring class to life in a fun and unique way and help students become familiar with agriculture. We find after familiarization it becomes interesting and engaging, and lends itself well to starting conversations.”

Idaho’s 2017 wheat crop 9 percent smaller

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho wheat production in 2017 is 9 million bushels lower than in 2016 and the second lowest level since 2009. But the overall quality of this year’s wheat crop may be the best ever, according to industry leaders.

“Last year we had record yields but quality was (down). This year, the size of the crop is down but quality is just superb,” said Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson. “It’s one of our best crops ever.”

“The quality of my wheat was good and my yields were good,” said East Idaho grower Gordon Gallup. “Falling numbers, test weights, protein. They were all good, right where they need to be.”

Idaho’s average wheat yield set a record of 91.3 bushels per acre in 2016, far exceeding the previous record of 85.5 bushels per acre set in 2004. This year’s aver-



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

A wheat field near Nampa, Idaho, is harvested Aug. 3. Idaho’s total wheat production in 2017 was 9 percent lower than in 2016 but quality was “superb,” growers and industry leaders told Capital Press.

age yield — the 2017 number will be released Sept. 29 — will be down from last year, industry leaders and growers said.

However, quality is excellent, they added.

East Idaho farmer Jerry Brown said that from what he’s seen and heard from growers in his region and other parts of the state, “This is one of the best quality years we’ve had in a long time.”

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Idaho farmers produced an estimated 92 million bushels of winter and spring wheat combined in 2017. That’s down from 101

million bushels in 2016 and below the state’s five-year average of 97 million bushels.

Jacobson said protein levels in this year’s wheat crop were good and falling numbers and test weights were up.

“Our customers should have no trouble finding the specifications they want,” said “Genesee” Joe Anderson, a North Idaho grower.

Tough weather conditions combined to significantly reduce wheat production in some parts of North Idaho, said “Potlatch” Joe Anderson, a North Idaho farmer.

He said his farm’s “total wheat production was about half of what it was last year. I’m hearing that from others as well.”

An extremely wet spring significantly reduced the number of spring wheat acres planted in the region and then an 81-day stretch with no rainfall and unusually high temperatures was tough on the winter wheat crop, “Potlatch” Joe Anderson said.

Pacific Northwest pear crop close to estimates

California’s pears nearly all sold

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

PORTLAND — The Pacific Northwest pear crop may pick out near the estimates for this year, says Kevin Moffitt, president of The Pear Bureau Northwest in Portland.

The crop appears to be slightly under the Aug. 22 estimate of 18.3 million, 44-pound boxes but still ahead of the June 1 estimate of 17.6 million boxes.

Harvest began Aug. 2 in Medford, with Comice and Seckel, and is about 60 percent complete. It will end in late October with d’Anjou in the upper reaches of the Hood River and Wenatchee valleys.

“I think Bartlett may come in a little shorter than estimated and winter pears (mainly d’Anjou) maybe slightly above estimate in Hood River and slightly below in Wenatchee. So we come out a little less overall,” Moffitt said.

This year’s crop being more normal in development timing made it a more difficult to get an accurate June forecast, he said. It was early the past two seasons.

Early prices are strong, overall quality is good and labor is tight with some growers needing more pickers.

California wrapped up its harvest of slightly over 3 million, 36-pound boxes of pears, up 29 percent from last year due to better fruit set from better winter chill.

Early fruit from the Sacramento Delta was pretty small,



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

David Flores picks d’Anjou pears near Dryden in Washington’s Wenatchee Valley on Sept. 11. The Pacific Northwest crop is about 60 percent harvested.

more had to sell fresh because of fewer canneries and prices were low, said Kyle Persky, sales manager at Rivermaid Trading Co. in Lodi, California’s largest pear grower and packer. It handles more than half the fresh-pack volume.

But later fruit from the Mendocino District was larger and good quality bringing good prices, he said.

“Washington didn’t have as much large fruit, which gave us a window,” Persky said. “We lose more customers to the Northwest every year.”

The California crop is close to 80 percent shipped with several weeks of shipping over 200,000 boxes per week, “which is good for us,” Persky said.

“Overall, it’s a fairly decent season given expected supply and where we’re at now. We’re pretty happy. Movement was good and we have limited time to sell,” he said.

California is too warm to grow d’Anjou and doesn’t store fruit for winter sales.

In 2016, the value of uti-

It’s the fourth year in a row the crop has been lighter than average. Hot summers are suspected of causing greater spring fruit drop, resulting in smaller crops.

The Bosc crop is estimated at 2.5 million boxes, down 19 percent from last year and down 16 percent from the five-year average, Moffitt said. He blamed it on being a bit more cyclical in bearing, heat stress and the overall lighter crop.

Overall fruit size may be slightly smaller, peaking at size 90 (90 pears per box) instead of 80, he said. There is probably a little more fancy grade versus U.S. No. 1, he said. Export markets prefer fancy and smaller fruit, he said.

Domestically, smaller fruit has been selling well in pouch bags, which is a bright spot, he said.

Cork — decay-causing dimples under the skin — is an issue in Wenatchee and Hood River, Moffitt said. Randy Arnold, a Wenatchee Valley grower, said he probably has a 2 to 3 percent cork loss and some growers have up to 6 percent. It’s caused by a calcium deficiency in the soil and fruit, he said.

It’s more difficult to control pear psylla and mites without certain pesticides used in the past, Arnold said. That results in more unhealthy trees, which increases susceptibility to cork, he said.

Six of his annual 24 domestic pickers didn’t come this year because they knew his crop was down, he said. He’s OK on labor but his neighbor needs 14 more pickers than he has, and others are operating with less-than-full crews, he said.

Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom FALL HARVEST DINNER & AUCTION



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