

Washington

Farm Bureau video highlights labor shortage

Zucchini's outgrow supply of pickers

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A new American Farm Bureau Federation video features a Western Washington farm to highlight a national labor shortage and the organization's push for a more flexible guestworker program.

In the 1-minute, 43-second video, a tractor plows under zucchinis in King County grown by Burr and Rosella Mosby. They said they abandoned the 20-acre field, easily losing \$100,000, because they didn't have enough workers.

"We've never had a year



Farm Bureau TV

Farmer Burr Mosby says in the Farm Bureau video that he and his wife, Rosella, were forced to plow under 20 acres of zucchini because they couldn't find enough labor.

like this year," Rosella Mosby said Thursday in an interview with the Capital Press.

The Farm Bureau has been warning that growers

will have to let produce rot in the fields because they won't have enough workers. The shortage this year hit the Mosbys, who grow veg-

etables on 350 acres in King and Pierce counties south of Seattle.

The Farm Bureau favors a guestworker program administered by the USDA that allows workers to enter the U.S. on short-term visas and hire out to the farm of their choice. The H-2A program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor is rigid, burdensome and nearly impossible to use, according to the Farm Bureau.

The Mosbys rely on domestic workers, many of whom work elsewhere in the winter. Rosella Mosby said that the farm has been short of workers for many years, but this was the first time in 40 years that the shortage was severe enough to force abandoning a field.

She said the farm was about 25 workers short. The zucchinis in the 20-acre field grew too large for commercial use before they could be harvested.

Mosby said the farm has about 25 year-round employees and needs approximately 75 seasonal employees.

The farm needed adults who aren't limited in the jobs they can do, and stay on in the fall. Mosby attributed the shortage to a strong Puget Sound economy. "I think they're all doing other jobs," she said. "I think there are just better opportunities."

Mosby said that she's not heard from her employees that fear of the Trump administration is keeping workers away.

USDA temporarily suspends new CRP applications

4 million acres in conservation program set to expire in 2018

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The USDA is putting a temporary hold on new applications for the Conservation Reserve Program.

The agency accepted applications last year, but is holding them, said Rod Hamilton, farm programs chief for the USDA Farm Service Agency office in Spokane.

All current eligible CRP continuous enrollment offers made through Sept. 30, except those made under the Pollinator Habitat Initiative, will be approved, according to the national office.

CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive land from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

Contracts last between 10 and 15 years. Payments for 2017 totaled more than \$1.6 billion.

The agency will wait on offers received after Sept. 30, Hamilton said, and see how the applications correspond to the national 24 million-acre statutory cap.

"For those folks that want to make new offers now, it does put them on hold," Hamilton said.

The temporary halt will likely be revised at some point in the fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, Hamilton said.

Farmers with CRP contracts set to expire Sept. 30, 2018, are in "a little uncertain" position, Hamilton said. About 4 million acres are due to expire across the country.

"They're kind of left treading water, for at least a while, until a decision is made how to proceed," he said.

The agency has historically held a signup allowing farmers the opportunity to make a new offer if they choose.

Hamilton said "a fair amount of interest" remains in CRP, although growers are aware the agency is close to the acreage cap.

It's caused farmers who would otherwise routinely renew their CRP contract to consider other options, he said, including putting the land back into production, converting it to grazing lands or trying another version of CRP, such as SAFE, which targets wildlife habitat, or other options under the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The previous cap was 32 million acres. It's reached as high as 39 million acres, although Hamilton said enrollment numbers never reached that total.

Last year, only 20 percent of offers were accepted, Hamilton said.

He believes U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue is analyzing the CRP program and future directions, including whether he will focus on general or targeted CRP programs.

Discussions are ongoing at the national office, Hamilton said.

It's not clear when the suspension will be lifted.

"We've just been told, 'These are the rules until further notice, but there will be a change later on in the fiscal year,'" Hamilton said.

Hamilton recommends farmers keep in touch with their county FSA office for updates.

State agriculture department seeks study on dairy manure use, regulations

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Washington State Department of Agriculture proposes to study whether it should regulate cow manure hauled from dairies and spread at other commercial farms.

WSDA monitors how dairies use manure, but the oversight ends when manure goes elsewhere. The department hopes to get a grasp on whether those manure appli-

cations threaten groundwater and waterways.

"We really don't have a good understanding of where it goes when it leaves the dairies," WSDA spokeswoman Kathy Davis said.

Washington dairies are under scrutiny, targeted by lawsuits and facing new Department of Ecology rules, and so is the WSDA-enforced Dairy Nutrient Management Act. Environmental groups criticize the law as

too weak, while industry representatives say it has worked well in protecting water.

The Legislature directed WSDA to convene an advisory committee to discuss purported "gaps" in the state law. The proposal to study extending WSDA's oversight of dairy manure to other farms stems from the committee.

Washington State Dairy Federation policy director Jay Gordon said that singling out dairy manure for new

rules could cause farmers to shift to other fertilizers, such as chicken manure or synthetic fertilizers.

"Nobody ever talks about that," he said. "What are dairy farms going to do with the manure? Stigmatizing one nutrient source is going to create problems. It (dairy manure) is incredibly important as a nutrient source."

WSDA has asked for \$200,000 from the state's general fund to conduct the

study. The governor's budget office may forward the request to the 2018 Legislature.

The study would include looking at how much manure leaves dairies and how many places apply it. The debate over regulating manure has persisted for years. Proposals range from voluntary training on properly applying manure to a "more robust regulatory certification process," according to the WSDA's budget request.

Fire erupts at Underwood Fruit and Warehouse Co. in Gorge

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

A fire early Wednesday morning damaged the Underwood Fruit and Warehouse Co. on the west end of Bingen, Wash., across the Columbia River from Hood River, Ore.

Details were scarce Wednesday, but video shot from a news helicopter and shown on Portland television station KOIN showed towering flames and columns of heavy smoke.

In a TV interview, Underwood CEO Don Gibson said the fire primarily damaged the pear packing part of the building. He said the company will rebuild. Company officials were not available for additional comment.

Klickitat County Emergency Management said the fire was reported at 5:45 a.m. Eleven Klickitat County fire departments responded,

along with personnel from the BNSF Railway fire train, Hood River Fire Department, Skamania Fire Department and Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue, according to a statement on the emergency department's website.

Underwood Fruit and

Warehouse is a 100-year-old packing and shipping facility for 55 apple, pear and cherry growers in the Columbia River Gorge, according to the company's website. The packing house is under the same ownership as Mount Adams Orchards, of Yakima, Wash. A Mount Adams spokesperson was not available as of Wednesday mid-day.

The fire apparently knocked out electrical power in parts of Bingen and neighboring White Salmon. As of mid-day Wednesday, the fire was isolated to the building in which it started. No hazardous material was released and no evacuation orders were issued, the emergency department said on its website. The department did not provide information about a possible cause of the fire.

The White Salmon Valley School District placed its buses on what it termed "road restriction routes" Wednesday morning. It closed one bus stop and directed children who usually catch the bus there to go to another stop "due to fire at Underwood Fruit," the district said on its website.

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2009
Prem Cab, PS trans, 36" tracks, 1000 PTO, High flow hyd, 4 remotes, 4,472-hrs, #8F112520
-Located in Tekoa

\$215,000



Landoll 7431
2013
26" Wing fold vertical tillage, rear clod crumbler, #J1203522
-Located in Harrisburg

\$39,500



Case IH 2188
1996
Rotary, Sm Grain, 1015 BPU Platform, 4,691-hrs, #C0193663
-Located in Harrisburg

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CASE IH 340
2015
Prem cab, Susp axle, CVT, 480-54 duals, 380-38 ft duals, 4 remotes, 644-hrs, #ERF06413
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Wilrich V957DD
14 9 Shank disk ripper, #457580
-Located in Merrill

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16 7 shank disk ripper, Shear bolt trip, rear rolling basket, 22" blades, #H0037240
-Located in McMinnville

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Case IH 7088
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Sm Grain, AFX rotor, duals, 24' unloading auger, combine only, 1,726-hrs, #AG003915
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Challenger MT575B
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Susp cab, Susp MFWD, CVT, 4 remotes, 480-46 singles, 380-34 ft singles, 1,900-hrs, #1079072
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JD 2210
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28' folding field cultivator, C shanks, rear time harrow, #D0755492
-Located in Donald

\$45,000



Salford 8211
2013
11 bottom pull plow, 6 and 5 bottom in tandem, demo unit like new, #130143
-Located in Merrill

\$52,000



JD 9670
2008
Rotary, Sm Grain, 615P PBU platform, sidehill cleaning package, 2,747-hrs, #0S726119
-Located in Salem

\$150,000



Case IH 600Q
2014
Lux cab, 36" tracks, PS trans, twin flow pump, 8 remotes, auto guidance, 2,255-hrs, #EF139730
-Located in Tangent

\$320,000



Great Plains TG 5111
2015
16" Vertical Tillage tool, rigid frame, rear clod crumbler, like new, #A1758X
-Located in Madras

\$34,900



JD S670
2014
Sm Grain, A/T ready, Pro Drive, JD 615P belt pickup platform, 464-hrs, #765545
-Located in Merrill

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JD 9770
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Rotary, Sm Grain, JD 615P BPU platform, 2,232, #A0738937
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