

'We're trying to do it without a government solution'

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It's likely the agency will assemble an advisory committee that includes representatives of the canola and specialty seed industries who will try to hammer out an agreement, said Kathy Hadley, a canola farmer from Rickreall, Ore.

Hadley said she hopes canola can be grown on at least 5,000 acres a year, which would allow a local oilseed facility — Willamette Biomass Processors — to invest in producing food-grade vegetable oil.

"There's certainly a demand for that," she said.

The specialty seed industry wants to find a way to coexist with canola producers without further intervention from lawmakers, said Greg Loberg, public relations chairman for WVSSA.

"We're trying to do it without a government solution, but with a private solution," Loberg said.

The association is willing to include canola farmers as affiliate members for a reduced fee, permitting them to join in a map "pinning"

system designed to maintain isolation distances and avoid cross-pollination among species, he said.

Growers of turnip and radish seed can already participate in the system, but canola growers do not since they're currently regulated by ODA, Loberg said.

While the pinning system can preserve genetic purity, pest and disease problems would become worse if the total Brassica acreage continues to grow, he said.

"We're going to have to coexist but there is going to have to be some

kind of limit," Loberg said. "There will be impacts if a practical limit is exceeded."

It's true that increased Brassica production could aggravate pest and disease issues, but radish seed is already widely grown in the Willamette Valley without any cap on acreage, Hadley said.

"A Brassica is a Brassica. It's not necessarily right to talk limits about one species and not other ones," she said. "I feel like things need to be fair across the board for Brassicas, not picking and choos-

ing one crop over another."

Radish and turnip farmers can voluntarily pin their fields on WVSSA's map, but they're not required to participate, said Anna Scharf, whose family farms near Perrydale, Ore.

The Willamette Valley Oilseed Producers Association, which represents canola growers, plans to discuss the possibilities for coexistence with its board and membership by the end of the year, Scharf said.

"Until then, I'm very reluctant to say we want X and we want Y," she said.

No graduate program, but school doesn't shy away from ag research

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positions in the industry, and his program aims to win over new recruits early in their college careers.

"At our department, we have one of the highest rates of students who have a job at graduation because the demand is so high," Hansen said. "The problem is we don't attract enough students into our program to meet demand."

Though BYU-Idaho doesn't have a graduate program, the school doesn't shy away from agricultural research. Hansen said most clients who contract with the RBDC — the Idaho Wheat Commission, the Idaho Oilseeds Commission, J.R. Simplot Co., Monsanto, Agrium, Bayer Crop Sciences, BASF, DuPont and Mosaic, to name a few — also appreciate the chance to help groom the next generation of agricultural professionals.

Chris Humphreys, an agronomy and agricultural technology professor, has good luck recruiting mechanical engineering students into the agricultural program. He said mechanical engineering is a rigorous program with high turnover, and "rather than seeing them walk away, we're trying to find off-roads for these students."

Humphreys has also noticed more agricultural students with no farming or ranching background are enrolling. According to USDA, U.S. colleges produce 35,400 graduates per year to fill roughly 58,000 annual job openings requiring bachelor's or advanced degrees in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and the environment.

Growth at RBDC

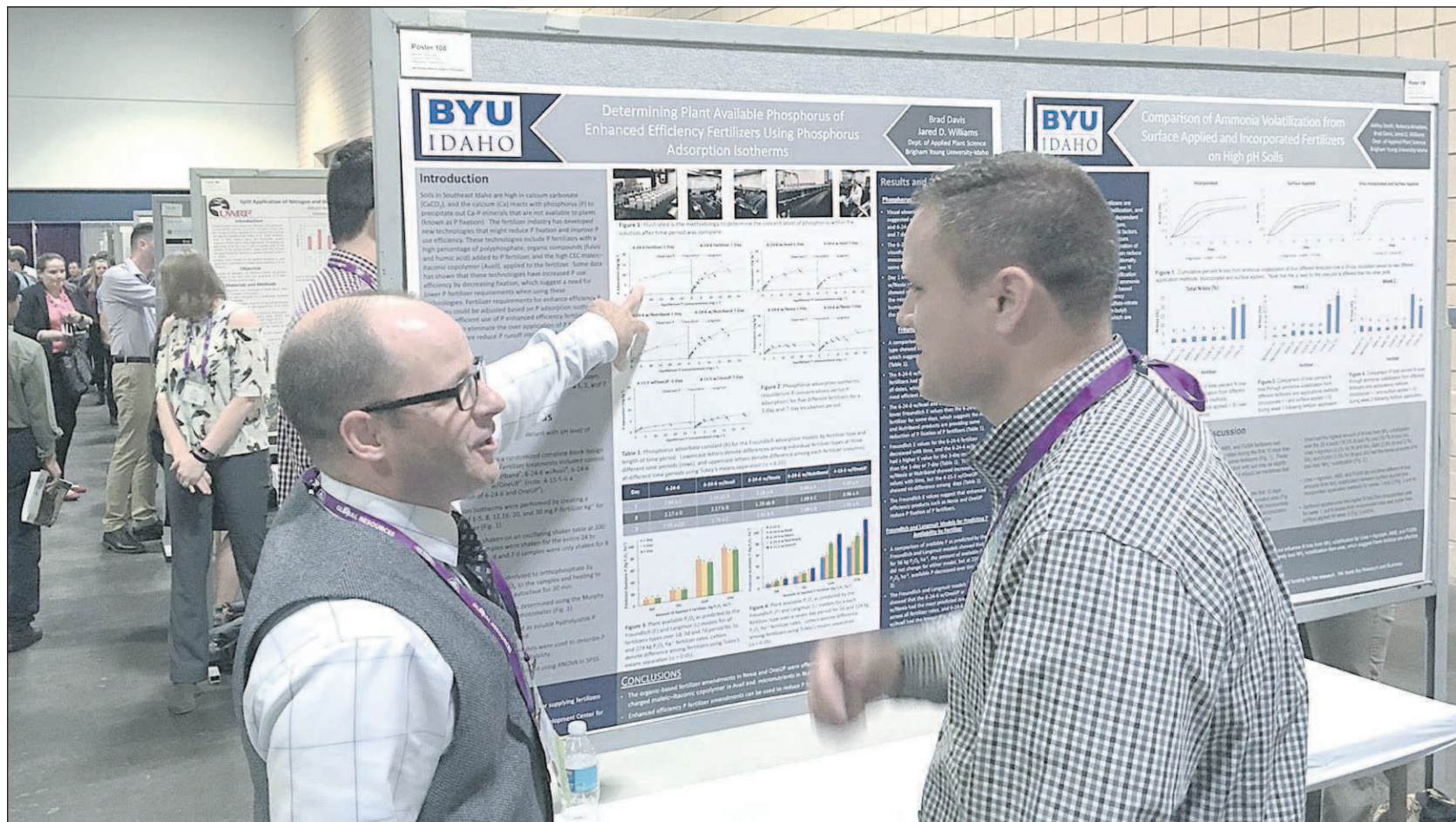
BYU-Idaho, owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, originated in 1888 as an elementary school serving 59 students in a log cabin, called Bannock Stake Academy. The curriculum was expanded to include high school courses two years later, and the name was changed to Rick's Academy in 1903.

College courses were added in 1915, and the institution became Rick's College in 1923, retaining only college courses. In 2001, Rick's College became BYU-Idaho, and now boasts an enrollment of 19,000, and is projected to grow to 22,000 students within the next few years, Hansen said.

BYU-Idaho's Hillview Farm is self-sufficient, supported by the sales of commodities such as wheat, alfalfa and potatoes.

"The primary goal of the farm is to give students applied experience that prepares them for the field of agriculture," Hansen said.

Farm revenue covers wages for student workers — the farm is available to about 100 students in the agronomy pro-



Brad Davis, left, presents during the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and the Soil Science Society of America undergraduate symposium at the organizations' annual convention this year in Tampa, Fla.

gram and 200 horticulture students, who raise vegetables for sale at area farmers' markets.

The university also seeks applicants each spring for more intensive "mentored student research." The student scientists are paid for the work but receive no course credit. RBDC handles the money and works with clients, who typically approach it with their research needs. Sometimes, however, RBDC and its mentors pitch ideas to industry.

Much of the research is conducted at Hillview Farm, involving BYU-Idaho faculty mentors. RBDC also has its own outside staff of expert mentors that supervises BYU-Idaho students' off-campus research.

RBDC Director of Agriculture Kurt Harman said the organization handles about 35 research projects per year, covering food science, animal science, plant science and agricultural business. Harman said RBDC's goal is to double its student-led research within the next 18 months, and to triple its program within three to four years. He said RBDC will soon make a push to hire additional expert mentors, attract volunteer mentors or reach arrangements with clients willing to supply new mentors to aid in the program's expansion.

"We have the students. We have the industry. We just need to get organized," Harman said.

The students

BYU-Idaho students are always among the top performers in an annual competition ranking undergraduate research projects, hosted during the annual meeting of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and the Soil Science Society of America. Of the five BYU-Idaho students who pre-



Courtesy of Colton Thurgood

During the phosphorus adsorption study, a photospectrometer is used to determine the amount of phosphorus in solution.

sented their research posters at the late-October conference in Tampa, Fla., three placed in the top three in their divisions.

Wilcox, who was raised on a cattle ranch in Redmond, Ore., took second place in the agronomy division. As an undergraduate studying agricultural business, Wilcox is following closely in the footsteps of his grandfather, Dennis Wilson, a former DuPont agronomist. Wilcox has enjoyed collaborating through his research with his grandfather's former colleagues and competitors.

BYU-Idaho senior Brad Davis, of Kingsport, Tenn., took second place among 22 participants in the competition's soil fertility and plant nutrition category. His research involved testing the effectiveness of humic acid-based products made

by his client, J.R. Simplot, to prevent phosphorus from binding with calcium in soil. After five months of testing soil reactions in a laboratory, Davis concluded at least one of the products would provide growers with a good return on their investment.

While pursuing his bachelor's degree, Davis said he's participated in about 10 agricultural research projects, including four that received funding from industry partners.

"Our program is probably one of the most student-driven programs in the country," Davis said. "I don't know of any other program that allows undergraduate students to do the things they're doing at BYU-Idaho."

The clients

BYU-Idaho faculty mem-



BYU-Idaho

An applied plant science class at BYU-Idaho, where undergraduate students participate in research projects for outside companies.

bers have a heavy course load and seldom have time to get the research they facilitate published in scientific journals. Nonetheless, research findings are widely disseminated. Clients often publicize the data or provide support for students to present their findings at conferences.

Most of the program's graduates become agronomists or farm managers, and about 10 percent go on to graduate school. Hansen, the department chairman, believes the opportunity BYU-Idaho students have to learn in real-world circumstances enables them to "hit the ground running, and it sets them apart."

"I have a degree in agronomy, and I think I was out in the field two times the entire time I went through that degree," Hansen said.

Humphreys typically asks students he's mentoring to help teach classes, and recruit classmates to help with labor and data-gathering.

"There's a certain aspect of learning you have to do before you teach," Humphreys said.

The Idaho Oilseeds Commission started contracting with BYU-Idaho on mustard research this season to provide data in the region where most of the crop's production occurs.

"We can have field days and have our growers come to those field days and review the work

they're doing," said Bill Meadows, owner of Mountain States Oilseeds in American Falls.

University of Idaho Extension Cereals Pathologist Juliet Marshall, who conducts UI's cereal variety trials, is working with Humphreys on winter wheat variety trials BYU-Idaho students planted this fall at Hillview Farm.

Cathy Wilson, the Idaho Wheat Commission's director of research collaboration, said her organization helped the BYU-Idaho program buy a combine last fall. The commission is also supporting the variety trials and has contributed toward a seeding-rate study and trials on fungicide and herbicide application timing.

Wilson said application-timing research "wasn't novel," but the commission supported it based on its strategic objective to "raise the next generation of agricultural professionals."

Students who lead research for the commission must submit a report documenting what they learned and present their findings at a national conference.

"A lot of people throughout the industry are approaching retirement, and we need that next generation to fill those positions," Wilson said.

"We're trying everything we can to encourage students to pursue agriculture."

La Nina doesn't always lead to cold and wet Northwest winters

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La Nina tilts the odds in favor of below-average temperatures and above-average precipitation across the northern tier of the U.S. For the southern tier, the reverse is true.

La Nina doesn't always lead to cold and wet Northwest winters, but does portend the greater accumulation of snow to supply water for

summer irrigation.

"It certainly gives us the possibility of a wetter winter," Idaho State Climatologist Russell Qualls said.

Qualls said that snowfall was heavy in recent years when ocean temperatures were warm enough to create strong La Nina conditions. This La Nina is expected to be weak, but snow totals have been above average even in those years.

La Nina conditions are now similar to one year ago, according to NOAA. An ample snowpack last winter got Washington irrigators through a record-hot August.

Washington's snowpack drought in the winter of 2014-15 was during an El Nino, a warming of ocean temperatures.

The Climate Prediction Center planned to issue a new three-month forecast Nov. 16. The Oc-

tober long-range forecast called for precipitation and temperatures to be average for most of the Northwest through the end of January.

Northwest basins have an unusually large amount of snow for this time of year, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Snowpacks in many basins in Oregon, Idaho and Washington were double or triple of

normal for mid-November.

According to NOAA, a substantial amount of cooler-than-average water below the surface of the tropical Pacific could have an affect for months, extending La Nina into the spring.

Sea-surface temperatures stayed cool in October, resisting atmospheric forces that normally have a warming effect, according to climatologists.