

## People & Places

# Putting wheat samples to the test

Bon Lee keeps tabs on wheat quality around Northwest during harvest, compares products

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — As laboratory supervisor at the non-profit Wheat Marketing Center in Portland, Bon Lee's job falls somewhere between data technician and pastry chef.

Not only is Lee responsible for tracking wheat quality across the Northwest, but many of the samples he collects are put to the ultimate culinary test in the center's product innovation kitchen, making everything from noodles to tortillas.

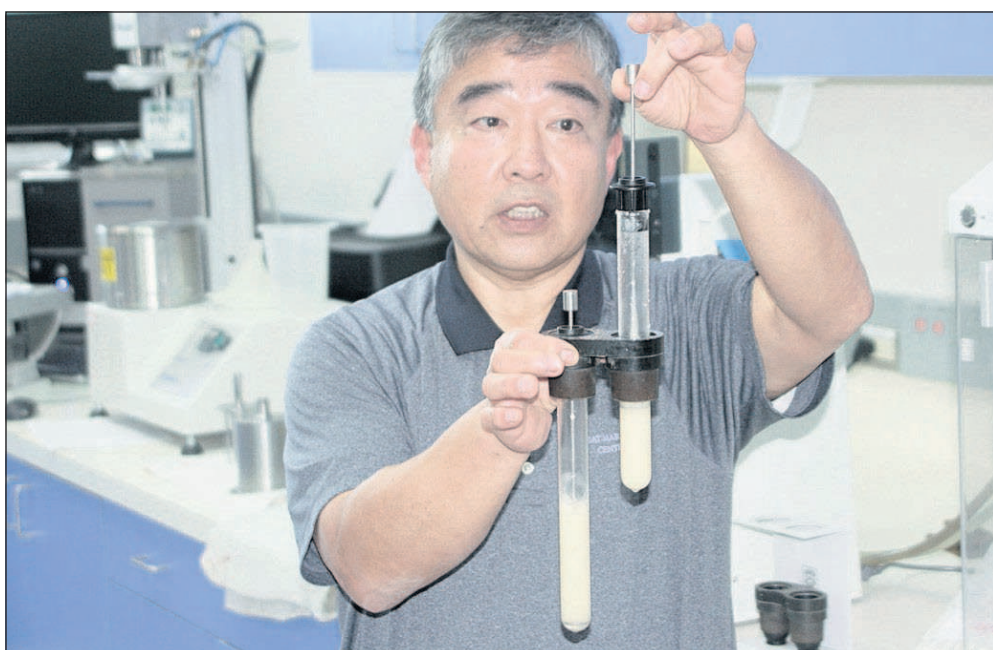
"Product evaluation is probably the most important part of what we do," Lee said.

One recent project had Lee and his staff bake nearly 60 Japanese sponge cakes using soft white and soft red wheat samples from Pullman, Wash., and Wooster, Ohio, which they compared to a control flour from a Japanese mill.

"Our findings help determine if a variety is good to release commercially," Lee explained.

Up to 90 percent of the soft white wheat grown in the Pacific Northwest is exported, which is where Lee and the Wheat Marketing Center come in with the latest data to keep overseas customers informed.

Housed in the old Albers Mill overlooking the Willamette River, the marketing center opened in 1989 with \$6 million in federal money secured by former Oregon Sen.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Wheat Marketing Center laboratory supervisor Bon Lee demonstrates the falling number test for starch damage. "The trade is interested in all these numbers to see which area produces the quality they want," he said.



George Plaven/Capital Press

Lee shows some of the many commercial wheat products from around the world supported by research the Wheat Marketing Center does for U.S. Wheat Associates.

Mark Hatfield. The center gets most of its funding today from the wheat and grain commissions in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota,

Colorado and Nebraska.

Lee, who was born in Japan to Korean parents, joined the center in 1998 after starting his career in the processing side of

agriculture, including stints at Hoody's snacks in Beaverton, Ore., and the Pendleton Flour Mills in Pendleton, Ore.

At the center, Lee is known for two things — wearing two different colored shoes (which he says he does for fun), and putting together weekly quality reports during wheat harvest, measuring protein levels, test weight, kernel moisture and gluten content.

"The trade is interested in all these numbers to see which area produces the quality they want," Lee said.

To get those numbers, Lee runs hundreds of flour samples through a battery of tests using high-tech equipment such as the Glutomatic, which looks like an espresso machine but actually uses a 2 percent saltwater solution to separate gluten from starch. Then there is the Extensograph, which stretches dough to test its strength and elasticity.



**Western Innovator**

**Bon Lee**  
**Occupation:** Lab supervisor at the Wheat Marketing Center, Portland  
**Age:** 60  
**Education:** Bachelor's degree in food science, Oregon State University, 1983  
**Hometown:** Vancouver, Wash.  
**Family:** Wife, Suki, and son Dean

Each machine cost between \$50,000 and \$70,000. Most are sponsored by the partner wheat commissions.

Blake Rowe, CEO of the Oregon Wheat Commission, said the data they get in return is worth the investment.

"It's probably the best data, what (Lee) reports every week," Rowe said. "He puts those out so we can keep a running track of what harvest looks like, and what quality looks like."

Steve Mercer, spokesman for U.S. Wheat Associates in Arlington, Va., said the data Lee generates is "absolutely essential" for marketing wheat overseas.

"Bon does a wonderful job on this analysis," Mercer said. "You can just tell he enjoys his work."

Lee said it is a great feeling to help wheat farmers, traders and breeders.

"People are very nice in the grain industry," he said.

# Washington Sheep Producers honor Busboom

Capital Press

Jan Busboom, a Washington State University Extension meat specialist, has received the 2017 Golden Sheep Hook from the Washington State Sheep Producers.

It is the organization's highest honor.

The organization gave Busboom the award in recognition of his "outstanding service to the sheep industry," according to a press release.

Busboom grew up in the industry, raising and showing sheep with his father as his mentor. They were recognized across the U.S. as top quality Columbia breeders.

He pursued a degree in animal sciences and received a Ph.D. at Michigan State University.

When Busboom arrived



Washington State Sheep Producers

From left, Washington State Sheep Producers President Jill Swannack with Jan Busboom, Washington State University Extension meat specialist and recipient of the 2017 Golden Sheep Hook Award, and Mark Martinez, recipient of the award in 2016. The organization recognized Busboom for his years of sharing his expertise and mentoring students.

at WSU in 1989, he "quickly became a valuable asset to the world of academia, extension and the sheep industry here,"

according to the organization.

Busboom is the WSU Meat Evaluation and Analysis Team (MEAT) team leader for the

Lamb 100, 200 and 300 program and was "instrumental" in delivering the programs in Washington, Oregon, California and the Rocky Mountain region.

"A sheep judge in all climates, he shares his expertise with those passionate about sheep," the organization stated. "His calm demeanor and steady personality make Jan easy to work with and he excels in mentoring youth as a tireless, dedicated 4-H leader."

Busboom and his wife, Janice, manage a flock of Suffolk-Hampshire crosses and lead the Albion 4-H Sheep Club.

He has served as mentor to "countless" graduate students for 25 years. He's also been involved in the annual Northwest Junior Sheep Expo and

represented WSU by sharing knowledge on carcass and meat qualities.

He is currently a team member on a WSU Sheep Endowment ram management study on reproductive fitness of breeding stock and working with a group to create a Spanish language resource guide for sheep herders.

He received a University of Idaho grant to conduct training for ultrasound technicians specializing in sheep evaluation, to take place in the summer of 2018.

Busboom will retire from WSU in September, "but will forever remain passionate about education, meat science, genetic improvements, youth, mentoring, research and the sheep industry," according to the organization.

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### Monday, Jan. 15

**Sheep Producer Workshop.** Etchamendy Sheep Company, 24394 Highway 46, Wasco, Calif. The California Wool Growers Association is hosting four interactive workshops focusing on improving lamb marketing and quality as well as producer profitability by applying innovative management practices and technologies. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

### Tuesday, Jan. 16

**Cereal Grains Seminar.** 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Walla Walla, Wash., Regional Airport. The seminar will cover soilborne wheat mosaic virus, grasshoppers and Mormon crickets and other issues impacting farmers in Columbia and Walla Walla counties. For more information, contact Becki Green, WSU Walla Walla County Extension coordinator, at 509-524-2685 or email [becki.green@wsu.edu](mailto:becki.green@wsu.edu). Register online. Cost is \$25, including lunch and refreshments.

**Sheep Producer Workshop.** Emigh Livestock, 2838 Goose Ha-

ven Road, Suisun City, Calif. California Wool Growers Association is hosting four interactive workshops focusing on improving lamb marketing and quality as well as producer profitability by applying innovative management practices and technologies. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

**Soil Health Workshop** with Brendon Rockey & Steve Kenyon. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. The Gathering Place, 510 South Main, Three Forks, Mont. We have a number of great presenters lined up throughout the week that will share their own experiences in building and maintaining soil health. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2zGUuZC>

**Woodland Rice Grower Meeting.** 1:30-5 p.m. Craccholo's Market, 1320 E. Main St., Woodland, Calif. Website: <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

### Wednesday, Jan. 17

**Beekeeping Talk.** 6-8 p.m. OSU Extension classroom, 505 N Columbia River Highway, St. Helens, Ore. Beekeeper Bill Catherall will discuss resource hives, which are a way to save money by making your own splits, never having to buy bees with unknown pedigrees or diseases and having bees to sell or share. Website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/>

**Sheep Producer Workshop.** Chico State University Sheep

Unit, 311 Nicholas C Shouten Lane, Chico, Calif. The California Wool Growers Association is hosting four interactive workshops focusing on improving lamb marketing and quality as well as producer profitability. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

**Soil Health Workshop** Featuring Brendon Rockey & Wendy Taheri. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Holiday Inn, 1100 5th St. S., Great Falls, Mont. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2BpzYNT>

**Richvale Rice Growers Meeting.** 8:30 a.m.-noon. Evangelical Church, 5219 Church St., Richvale, Calif. Website: <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

**Glenn Rice Growers Meeting.** 1:30-5 p.m. Glenn County Office of Education, 311 S. Villa Ave., Willows, Calif. Website: <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

### Wednesday-Thursday Jan. 17-18

**2018 Northwest Hay Expo.** 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Three Rivers Convention Center, 7016 W. Grandridge Blvd., Kennewick, Wash. Featuring 90-plus exhibitors, top speakers and breakout sessions covering industry updates. Website: <http://wa-hay.org/nwhayexpo/>

**Idaho Noxious Weed Conference.** Riverside Hotel, 2900

W. Chinden Blvd. Boise, Idaho. A variety of presenters will offer information important to weed control. Website: [www.idahoweedcontrol.org](http://www.idahoweedcontrol.org)

### Thursday, Jan. 18

**Sheep Producer Workshop.** UC Hopland Research and Extension Center, 4070 University Road, Hopland, Calif. To register contact the CWGA office at [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org) or (916) 444-8122.

**Soil Health Workshop** Featuring Brendon Rockey & Steve Kenyon. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Big Horn Resort, 1801 Majestic Lane, Billings, Mont. We have a number of great presenters lined up that will share their experiences in building soil health. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2zGUuZC>

### Friday, Jan. 19

**SAIF Agri-Business Banquet.** 6-9 p.m. Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. The SAIF Agri-Business Banquet is a celebration of the agricultural community and its impact on the mid-Willamette Valley. The Salem Area Chamber of Commerce prioritizes hosting this event along with title sponsor SAIF and presenting sponsor KeyBank because agriculture is a key part of Oregon's economy. The banquet will feature guest speaker Steve Gilliland's humor, inspiration and business insight. There will also be recognition of an outstanding FFA student for leadership in shaping

the future of the agricultural industry. Website: <https://salemchamber.org/>

**Soil Health Workshop** Featuring Brendon Rockey & Derek Axton. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Richland County Fairgrounds, 2118 W. Holly St. Sidney, Mont. We have great presenters lined up throughout the week that will share their own experiences in building and maintaining soil health. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2zGUuZC>

**Soil Health Workshop** Featuring Steve Kenyon & Wendy Taheri. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Sleep Inn, 1006 S. Haynes Ave., Miles City, Mont. We have a number of great presenters lined up throughout the week that will share their own experiences in building and maintaining soil health. Cost: \$20. Website: <http://bit.ly/2zGUuZC>

**Family Foresters Workshop.** 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Coeur d'Alene Inn, 506 W. Appleway Ave., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The workshop, sponsored by the University of Idaho and Washington State University, is for any professionals that work with family forest owners. Cost: \$90 by Jan. 12. Website: [www.uidaho.edu/FamilyForesterWorkshop](http://www.uidaho.edu/FamilyForesterWorkshop)

**Colusa Rice Grower Meeting.** 8:30 a.m.-noon. Colusa Casino Resort, 3770 Highway 45, Colusa, Calif. Website: <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

**Yuba City Rice Grower Meeting.** 1:30-5 p.m. Veterans Hall, 1425 Veterans Memorial Circle, Yuba City, Calif. Website: <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

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