

Oregon's 'rocking' wine industry advised to avoid complacency

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Oregon's wine producers should beware of becoming complacent now that their growth is outperforming regional and national competitors, experts say.

"There's no question Oregon is rocking," said Rob McMillan, executive vice president of the Silicon Valley Bank's wine division, said Feb. 20 during the Oregon Wine Symposium in Portland, Ore.

Last year, the Nielsen consumer research company found that Oregon's annual sales volume had increased 17 percent, compared to 2.3 percent for Washington, 3 percent for California and 2.8 percent for the U.S.

"Nobody is growing as fast as Oregon," said Danny Brager, senior vice president of the beverage alcohol practice at Nielsen.

Certain trends continue to favor Oregon.

The value of wine exported from Oregon increased 53 percent, from \$127 million to \$195 million, between 2013 and 2016, he said. Roughly half of Oregon's wine is now sold outside its prime West Coast sales territory.

Social media references to Oregon wine are much more complimentary than references to the wine industry on average, Brager said. "The discussion of Oregon wine is massively positive."

Higher-quality wine generally continues to see increasing sales compared to lower-end brands, said Christian Miller, proprietor of the Full Glass Research company.

"The core wine consumers are drinking more and better," he said.

Oregon's renowned Pinot noir is in the "sweet spot" to appeal to debt-ridden "millennials" and retirement-age "boomers" who are "frugal hedonists," said McMillan.

In the future, though,

Oregon wine producers shouldn't count on tasting rooms to remain as effective in selling their products — particularly if they're overly reliant on visitors from Portland, he said.

Though the trend has yet to hit Oregon, tasting room traffic is falling in other popular wine country destinations, such as California's Napa and Sonoma counties, McMillan said.

"Oregon is the outlier, which is good for now," he said.

Even so, the tasting room is a "choke point" in terms of reaching consumers, so wineries should become more effective national marketers, he said.

Wineries should move past "wine clubs" to attract customers by improving their e-commerce capability and digital marketing, as well as focusing on tourism, McMillan said.

"A national brand needs to have a national presence," he said.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press
Rob McMillan, executive vice president of the Silicon Valley Bank's Wine Division, speaks at the Oregon Wine Symposium in Portland on Feb. 20. Oregon is outperforming other regions in wine sales growth but should avoid resting on its laurels, he said.

Wine foundation raises \$160,000

KENNEWICK, Wash. — The Washington Wine Industry Foundation raised more than \$160,000 at an auction fundraiser that drew nearly 400 wine industry members in early February.

The event was sponsored by Barnard Griffin, Fidelitas Red Mountain, Gamache Vitners, Kiona Vineyards, TricorBraun Winepak, Basin Pacific Insurance and CoEfficient Consulting. It was also supported by 11 foundation annual partners.

The foundation's vision is a thriving Washington wine industry. It has been awarded over \$2.6 million in federal and state grants for projects addressing industry challenges. It has also distributed more than \$225,000 in scholarships and has helped fund programs and projects including the Washington State University Teaching Vineyard and the AgForestry Leadership Program grape seat.

— Dan Wheat



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
A calf carcass lies in the snow Nov. 9 in Ferry County in northeast Washington. The state Department of Fish and Wildlife determined a wolf killed the calf, one of two depredations in the area shortly after a rancher shot a wolf chasing a calf in a fenced pasture.

Washington rancher shot wolf thinking it may be dog

Rare caught-in-the-act shooting lawful

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A Washington rancher who killed a wolf in October told investigators that he thought he might have been shooting a dog, according to a Department of Fish and Wildlife report.

The rancher found the carcass, realized it was a wolf and called authorities. WDFW investigators concluded the shooting was justified because the wolf, an adult female, was chasing a calf.

The shooting, Oct. 27 near the Canadian border in Ferry County, was Washington's second case of a rancher lawfully killing a wolf under the state's "caught-in-the-act" law.

WDFW released a redacted copy of the investigative report in response to a public records request from the Capital Press. The name of the ranchers, a man and woman, were withheld by the department and were referred to in the report as "Producer M" and "Producer F."

The shooting was not an isolated event in northern Ferry County as ranchers moved cattle from public grazing grounds to private pastures in the fall. Within two weeks of the shooting, at least two other calves were

attacked by wolves fewer than 3 miles away.

The shooting and depredations occurred outside the range of any documented pack, according to WDFW. Ferry County rancher Arron Scotten, whose cattle were not involved in the incidents, said there had been signs of wolves in the area that fall.

"I think it was all one group that was there," said Scotten, who was contracted by WDFW as a range rider to look for wolves and patrol around cattle.

"You ended up with (pack) members right there and cattle right there," he said. "I'm not sure what really could have been done differently."

The shooting occurred in the late afternoon as the man and woman were hauling cattle from a grazing allotment to a large fenced pasture. The woman told an investigator that she saw what she thought was a bear chasing a calf in the pasture.

Since she had a tag to harvest a bear, the woman aimed a rifle, looked through the scope, saw it wasn't a bear and handed the gun to the man, who saw a dark-colored canine and shot, according to the report.

The animal went down, got up, veered from the calf and tumbled downhill. "Producer M said they had been seeing a large black/brown domestic dog running loose in the area recently, and they thought it might have been that dog as it

looked similar to it from their location," the WDFW report states.

The ranchers did not find any dead or injured cattle. The cattle were bunched near the pasture's entrance. WDFW investigators said the wolf was shot once and that the evidence at the scene matched the ranchers' description of events.

A separate livestock producer in the area reported an injured calf Nov. 2. Another calf was found dead Nov. 8. Scotten said range rider patrols, particularly at night, were increased.

WDFW also ruled that a ranch employee was justified in shooting a wolf June 30 in Stevens County.

Washington law allows shooting one wolf attacking livestock. The law applies in the eastern one-third of Washington, where wolves are not federally protected. Under state law, illegally shooting a wolf is a gross misdemeanor and punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

New techniques murky for organic breeders

Unclear whether some methods consistent with organic rules

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — As scientists devise more intricate ways to create new plant cultivars, organic breeders are wary of techniques that cross the line into methods that are "excluded" under regulations.

Genetically engineering crops to incorporate foreign DNA is prohibited in organic production, as is gene deletion or alteration through "editing" technology such as CRISPR.

However, the propriety of some other techniques remains ambiguous in the organic industry, which is complicated by the fact organic farmers have already been unwittingly growing crops developed with such methods.

One example is male sterility, a common tool in breeding hybrids. It can be achieved with "cytoplasm fusion," under which organelles from one plant species are combined in the same cell with the nucleus of another plant species.

Such a combination between two plants of the same family would be considered natural, but mixing families would be considered unnatural and more likely to be disallowed from organics.

While organic growers may be urged to "stretch the rules" to incorporate new techniques, the industry should be guided by its basic values such as maintaining the integrity of life and using ecological approaches, said Edith Lammerts van Bueren, a retired plant science professor at Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

"The issues are not just about safety, and that's what I want to stress," she said



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press
Brian Baker, right, president of the International Federation of Organic Movements North America, speaks at the Organic Seed Growers Conference on Feb. 16 in Corvallis, Ore. He's joined by Edith Lammerts van Bueren, a retired plant science professor at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, and Jim Myers, vegetable breeding and genetics professor at Oregon State University.

Feb. 16 during the Organic Seed Growers Conference in Corvallis, Ore.

Refraining from certain methods also forces organic farmers to come up with other innovative strategies, Lammerts van Bueren said.

It's been suggested that organic breeders could still indirectly use new technologies, such as CRISPR, to identify the function of certain genes, she said.

The idea is "tricky" because such identification could assist traditional breeding without directly altering genes, she said.

However, with limited funds for organic research, it's probably best to avoid dedicating money to a technological direction in which the organic industry doesn't want to go, Lammerts van Bueren said.

"Is it opening the side door for such a technique?" she said.

In the past, crops developed with exposure to gam-

ma radiation were adopted by organic growers, but the industry now has a more cautious approach to new technology, said Brian Baker, president of the International Federation of Organic Movements North America.

Whether organic growers can identify seeds bred with questionable new techniques is another question.

Patent filings may disclose which plants were bred with these methods, Baker said. "The owners of the technology have an incentive to protect their investment."

Baker would prefer greater transparency through labeling to ensure organic growers aren't "stuck with the bill" of identifying crops that don't fit organic production.

Using patents for identification isn't ideal because the information may be difficult or impossible to find, he said. "That's not what I'm advocating, that's just what we have at our disposal now."

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Tires LES SCHWAB **Weekly fieldwork report**

Item/description	Ore.	Wash.	Idaho	Calif.
• Snow water equivalent*	44%	101.6%	81.8%	32.3%
• Percent area in drought	76.2%	8.3%	40%	81.7%
• Avg. temperature, 6-10 day outlook (Percent chance deviation from normal)	80% below	70-80% below	70-80% below	70-80% below
• Precipitation, 6-10 day outlook (Percent chance deviation from normal)	Normal/ 33% above	Normal	Normal/ 33% above	33-50% above
• Soil moisture anomaly (Monthly deviation from normal)	Normal/ Below normal	Normal/ Above normal	Normal/ Above normal	Below normal

*Aggregate average percent of median as of Feb. 20. Medians calculated for the period from 1981-2010. Sources: USDA, NRCS; NOAA, www.ca.gov; www.drought.gov/

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