



USDA

The Washington State Department of Agriculture says it will go to court if necessary to protect brassica seed growers from cross-pollination with cabbage and other brassica crops grown by small-scale producers and home gardeners.

## Washington vows to safeguard purity of brassica seed crops

### Gardeners, seed savers seen as potential threats

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

The Washington State Department of Agriculture says it's prepared to go to court to protect the purity of Skagit Valley's vegetable seeds from cross-pollination.

The department's warning responds to concerns that gardeners and small vegetable farms are letting their plants go to seed too close to commercial fields of brassica seed crops.

Washington State University-Skagit County Extension Director Don McMoran said cross-pollination is a growing worry. "It is, especially as we get more and more people from out of the area who are unfamiliar with our production," he said.

The agriculture department enforces a state law mandating minimum distances between fields of brassica seed crops. The rule also applies to farms that save seeds.

Since the 1940s Skagit County seed growers have met to identify their fields before spring planting. The fields must be spaced at least 1 mile apart, McMoran said. The requirement

extends to Whatcom, Snohomish, Island and Clallam counties. The state has a separate brassica seed production district in Central Washington. The agriculture department's warning was a reaction to cases in Skagit County.

In one case last summer, a residential garden was seen as a threat to a commercial cabbage seed farm, McMoran said. The case was resolved through appeals to the gardener, he said.

"Ninety-nine percent of the time, we educate them, and they're more than willing to go by the rules," he said.

Before the 2017 growing season, the agriculture department distributed postcards and made other efforts to inform gardeners and seed-savers of the rule against cross-pollination.

The department has authority to seek an injunction in Superior Court to protect commercial seed farms. The department has not taken a case to court recently, agency spokesman Hector Castro said.

"Hopefully, it doesn't come to that," he said. "We are very serious about these requirements."

Skagit County grows 25 percent of the world's cabbage seeds, according to the WSU-Skagit County Extension. The county is also a major source of spinach and beet seeds.

# University of Idaho announces \$25M plan to upgrade its research, extension centers

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — The University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences is pursuing an aggressive plan to invest tens of millions of dollars in its nine agricultural research and extension centers.

Those centers house the people that conduct research on a wide variety of crops grown in the state and seek solutions to production challenges faced by the state's farmers and livestock producers.

UI hopes to invest about \$25 million in the centers in the coming years, CALS Dean Michael Parrella told members of the House Agricultural Affairs Committee on Feb. 28.

The average age of the facilities at those centers is 50 years, he said.

"What we need going forward is a \$25 million investment in our R and E centers," Parrella said.

He told Capital Press later the plan "is an investment in the future of the state. Agriculture is 20 percent of Idaho's GDP, it's a critical industry and it's important to all aspects of our economy."

Parrella has told ag industry leaders at least twice in the past month that he is not the dean of CALS to maintain the status quo and that he wants to aggressively move the college forward.

The plan that Parrella outlined for lawmakers in broad strokes would do that.

He said with a lot of researchers and faculty set to retire in the coming years, CALS will be hiring a lot of "early career professionals," and "we need the type of facilities to attract them and keep them."

He said "modern, 'clean' and appropriately equipped" laboratories are required to do the type of cutting edge research that will be critical to the state's farming industry in the near future.

Parrella said he envisions



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Researchers at the University of Idaho's agricultural research and extension center in Parma check onion samples last September. UI's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences hopes to invest about \$25 million in its nine ag research and extension stations.

the funds that will be needed to accomplish this plan emerging from a three-way partnership between CALS, the farm industry and the legislature.

"I don't want to imply that we are not investing in our R and E centers because we are doing that," he said. "We as a college will contribute as much as we can but I think the industry is going to have to step up and help."

He said that when it comes time to approach legislators

about helping fund some of the investments, it's important "that we're not just coming with our hand out, that we have some skin in the game, so to speak."

CALS' effort to engage industry on the plan officially began March 8 with a visioning session at UI's Parma research station.

Parrella told Capital Press he hopes to form a group "where we bring all the (farm) commodity commissioners together and we talk about

what the R and E centers are doing, what their needs are and maybe we come up with (a plan)."

The chairwoman of the House ag committee, Rep. Judy Boyle, a Republican rancher from Midvale, said having the latest research infrastructure is critical to the state's farming industry.

"It's vital and agriculture is vital to Idaho so I think it's a worthwhile goal," she said of CALS' plan to invest in the research centers.

## Oregon meat distributor recalls ground beef, pork

By GEORGE PLAVEN  
Capital Press

An Oregon-based meat grinding and packaging company is recalling 14,806 pounds of raw ground beef and pork products that may be contaminated with E. coli.

Interstate Meat Distributors, of Clackamas, Ore., reports a sample of beef trim tested positive for E. coli, leading to the recall on March 3. Products include:

- 2.25-pound wrapped packages of fresh "All Natural Extra Lean Ground Beef," with package code 04118, and with 96 percent lean and 4 percent fat on the label.
- 2.25-pound wrapped packages of fresh "All Natural Ground Beef Chuck," with package code 04118, and with 80 percent lean and 20 percent fat on the label.
- 2.25-pound wrapped packages of fresh "Ground Beef and Pork Blend," with package code 04118, and with 80 percent lean and 20 percent fat on the label.
- 2.50-pound bag containing 10 quarter-pound frozen "Brothers Choice 85% Lean Angus Ground Beef Patties," with package code 04318.

The recalled food items were packaged on Feb. 10 and Feb. 12 and shipped to Walmart stores in Oregon, Washington, Utah and Idaho, as well as several locations in

Colorado, Montana, Nevada and Wyoming. A spokeswoman for the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service said there have been no reports of anyone becoming sick.

Interstate Meat Distributors declined further comment Monday. The USDA recommends anyone who bought the recalled products throw them away or return them to the store. Products can be identified by an establishment number of "965" inside the mark of inspection.

E. coli is a bacterium that can cause dehydration, bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps, usually for 3-4 days on average after exposure.

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