

New brewhouse to bolster beer research, training at OSU

Equipment manufactured in Germany

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

CORVALLIS, Ore. — As the number of craft breweries skyrockets across the U.S., Oregon State University is continuing to grow its fermentation science program, offering students hands-on training in the art of making beer.

The latest equipment to arrive at Wiegand Hall on campus, a sparkling new brewhouse, is nearly commissioned and ready to start producing batches of experimental ale, pilsner, lager or any other beer style, for that matter.

Specially made by the German company Esau & Hueber, the OSU brewhouse combines rows of sleek metallic tanks with a computer interface that controls the flow of liquid from mashing to fermentation.

Tom Shellhammer, the

Nor’Wester professor of fermentation science at the university, said the high-tech system is not only what students can expect to find at modern breweries, but should allow greater efficiency and reproduction of beers for research.

“It is going to have a transformative effect on our program here,” Shellhammer said.

OSU purchased the brewhouse thanks to a \$1 million donation from Carlos Alvarez, chairman and CEO of The Gambrinus Company in San Antonio, Texas, which owns several high-profile breweries across the country — including BridgePort Brewing Company in Portland.

The brewmaster at BridgePort, Jeff Edgerton, is an OSU alum, and the brewery maintains a close working relationship with the college, Shellhammer said. Edgerton occasionally lectures on brewing, and BridgePort has used the fermentation program’s facilities in the past to develop new products.

Edgerton said BridgePort has hired interns from the program, and the new brewhouse



Tom Shellhammer, Nor'Wester professor of fermentation science, discusses the new brewhouse at Wiegand Hall on campus in Corvallis, Ore.

will allow students to enter the workforce already at the level of trained employees.

“That was something we were very excited to see,” Edgerton said. “They’ll have such good hands-on experience with the latest and greatest technology.”

The number of American breweries has increased from 1,460 in 2006 to 5,301 in 2016, according to figures from the Brewers Association.



George Plaven/Capital Press

The new brewhouse at Oregon State University was designed and built by Esau & Hueber, a German company, which delivered the equipment in February.

“Craft brewing has been taking off,” Shellhammer said. “The whole thing has grown tremendously.”

From an industry perspective, Shellhammer said the new brewhouse will continue to set OSU apart from other fermentation science programs. The equipment was delivered from Germany in February, and could be commissioned within a matter of days.

Shellhammer explained how the process works, beginning with the combination of malted barley and water into each of two large mash cookers. Steam heats the containers, and enzymes in the barley get to work chewing up starch into simple sugars.

From there, the solution — known as wort — goes into a vessel that separates the barley husks from the liquid. It is then pumped into a boiling kettle which sterilizes the wort, while brewers add hops for flavor and bitterness.

The hops are filtered out in a whirlpool separator, and the wort is cooled and left to ferment in tanks with yeast. The brewhouse is computer-controlled and capable of making up to six kegs of beer per batch.

On Wednesday, the fermentation tanks contained four different beer varieties, including Triumph IPA (made with the university’s newest hop variety), two types of German-style Helles lager and a pilsner.

“I imagine next month we’ll be doing a lot of playing around with a lot of beer,” Shellhammer said.

The program does intend to keep its old brewhouse, which Shellhammer said is more evocative of smaller brewpubs. But the new technology means students will be that much more job-ready when they start work in a modern brewery, he said.

Delay in grant funding puts commission in financial bind

By **SEAN ELLIS**
Capital Press

BOISE — The Idaho Bean Commission might soon have trouble paying all of its bills because the Idaho State Department of Agriculture delayed the payment of \$197,000 in specialty crop grant funding.

The commission has waited a year for the funding from the department, which in 2015 approved the grants for two research projects. Typically, it takes about six weeks to receive specialty crop grant funds once they are requested.

The \$197,000 in grant funding is for two projects with University of Idaho researchers. The bean commission pays the university first and then is repaid by the grant funds.

The delay in receiving the

grant funding, which is almost equal to the IBC’s annual budget of \$200,000, is starting to cause the commission some major challenges.

“I’m holding all invoices until the end of the quarter,” IBC Administrator Andi Woolf-Weibye told commissioners during their regular meeting March 7.

IBC Commissioner Don Tolmie told Capital Press that being \$200,000 in the arrears is tough on a small commission.

“It’s getting to be very critical,” he said of the situation. “We’re probably going to have to draw a line in the sand and say, we’re going to quit paying bills except the essential bills to maintain the financial viability of the commission.”

IBC Commissioner Mike Goodson said it’s “basically going to come down to not

paying some of the research funding we committed to to make sure we can pay our bills.”

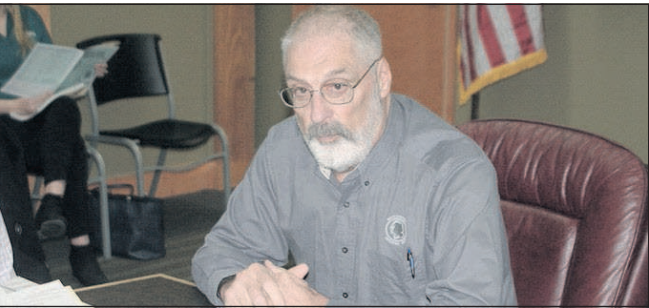
In a statement sent to Capital Press, ISDA officials said the delay has to do with some internal processing issues the department has identified with its specialty crop grant program.

“To rectify these processing issues, changes have been made within ISDA’s Marketing Bureau, which oversees the grant program,” the statement said.

Internal areas needing improvement are related to paperwork and processing “and do not reflect changes to the funds themselves or their availability,” it added.

The funding for ISDA’s specialty crop grant program comes from USDA.

“We are ensuring that we



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Jerry Robinson, Washington State Crop Improvement Association manager, provides an update to Washington Grain Commission board members March 8 in Spokane.

Crop improvement association funding clarified by legislation

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee is expected to sign a bill that includes a temporary memorandum of understanding between the state agriculture department and the third-party organization that certifies seed.

The Washington State Crop Improvement Association has a longstanding memorandum of agreement, or MOA, with WSDA to act as an agent of the department to certify certain crops within the state, including fall-planted and spring-planted grains and pulses. The MOA is renewed every five years.

During the renewal and updating of the MOA, according to the association, “a difference in opinion in the interpretation of a section of the Revised Code of Washington became a very large point of contention,” according to the association.

Jerry Robinson, WSCIA manager, said the state assistant attorney general expressed concerns about using funds collected during the certification process for working with certified foundation seed.

Language is being added to better explain the use of the funds, he said.

“It’s just been an arduous process. It’s not been an adversarial process,” Robinson said.

Until legislative changes can be made to accommodate the changing roles of foundation seed and certification in the state, the crop improvement association and WSDA drafted the short-term MOA.

SB 6278 was drafted with the WSDA to clarify current language and states “fees authorized under this subsection may be used for services involving breeder seed, foundation seed, registered seed and certified seed.” The House and Senate passed the bill and sent it to Inslee for his signature.

The temporary MOA will be good through the end of the year, Robinson said.

“I’m very hopeful we’ll have something in place for a new, long-term one in the near future,” he said. “I feel very positive. The department has been super supportive in this whole process.”

WSCIA and WSDA are working on language for a longer-term MOA, Robinson said.

‘Plate and Pitchfork’ helps hungry Oregonians

By **KATY NESBITT**
For the Capital Press

PORTLAND — While a growing push to link consumers with their food has become the norm, one Oregon agritourism business is stretching the local food movement further by sharing its proceeds with the hungry.

Every summer since 2003 Plate and Pitchfork has offered on-farm, gourmet meals around Oregon featuring tours of the land the meal was harvested and an opportunity to interact with the host farmers. Since its inception, Plate and Pitchfork has shared a portion of its profits.

“Plate and Pitchfork has always supported hunger relief — in the beginning we divided our support between hunger and environmental causes,” founder Erika Polmar said.

As her business grew and the message of eating locally produced food became well known, Polmar said she wanted to make a more dramatic impact by sharing her profits with those who don’t get enough to eat.

“One-in-five Oregonians is food insecure,” Polmar said.

For the past six years a portion of ticket sales and profits from merchandise were sent to Farmers Ending Hunger, a group that solicits crop donations from farmers for the Oregon Food Bank. In 2016 those donations added up to more than \$22,000.

A donation of \$150 to Farmers Ending Hunger is a year’s supply of fresh vegetables for a family of four, providing Polmar a way to make the dramatic impact she sought.

“I wanted to work with them because they are so cost efficient with so little overhead,” Polmar said.

John Burt has served as Farmers Ending Hunger’s executive director for 10 of its 11 years. The retired Oregon State University Extension agent said in 2015 his group helped get more than 4 million pounds of donated food to the Oregon Food Bank and 3.5 million pounds last year.

“We help get food from point A to the food box,” Burt said.

Potatoes and onions make up half of the fresh food that Farmers Ending Hunger steers to the food bank, totaling 1 million pounds each. A major cherry producer in the Columbia Gorge is donating nearly 100,000 pounds, delivering bins every week during the season a large cattle farm donates hamburger.



Courtesy Plate and Pitchfork

Plate and Pitchfork farm dinner participants tour a host farm.

A lot of the crops, such as carrots, green beans, carrots or beets, are frozen or canned at Norpac. At present time Burt said Norpac knows how many acres of crop to expect.

Three years ago a wall-size display featuring Farmers Ending Hunger was installed at SAGE Center in Boardman, a sustainable agriculture and energy interpretive center. The center’s interactive displays describe the food and energy businesses at the Port of Morrow and their impact on the region.

“To be asked to have space on the wall felt like we’d arrived,” Burt said.

For Polmar, finding worthy causes to share her profits was easy, but collecting more than 100 donations from each of Plate and Pitchfork’s events was generating an administrative nightmare for nonprofits with small staffs like Farmers Ending Hunger where Burt is part-time, running an entire program on roughly \$125,000 year.

To alleviate the paperwork burden for the organizations she supports, Polmar started the Plate & Pitchfork Fund to End

Hunger in 2017, under the umbrella of the McKenzie River Gathering, a community foundation. The donations go into the fund throughout the summer months and at the end of the year checks are cut to different organizations.

“This was the first year we awarded \$15,000 to Farmers Ending Hunger, \$1,000 to Lower Columbia School Gardens and \$3,500 to Community Connection of Northeast Oregon’s food bank,” Polmar said.

Polmar is preparing her 2018 Plate and Pitchfork calendar, on-farm meals with a story and a mission.

“When guests come to dinner this year a portion of their ticket and merchandise purchases will benefit the fund and awarded to Farmers Ending Hunger and other organizations finding creative ways to solve Oregon’s hunger crisis,” Polmar said.

To learn more about Plate and Pitchfork’s fund visit www.plateandpitchfork.com. For more information on Farmers Ending Hunger, visit www.farmersendinghunger.com.

Hemp industry gets lifeline

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Legal hemp in Washington apparently will survive for a second season, though the state Department of Agriculture has yet to resume issuing licenses to growers and last year’s biggest hemp planter warns against cultivating more acres than the market can handle.

Legislators tucked \$100,000 to market hemp and license farmers and processors into a new state budget passed March 8. The amount is less than half the \$287,000 department requested, but ensures Washington remains among the states trying to build a hemp industry.

The department is discussing exactly what it can do with the money and has not set a timetable for issuing and renewing licenses, an agency spokesman said Tuesday.

The state’s hemp program, a necessity to stay within federal law, has been on hold

since late last year. The agriculture department said it couldn’t continue overseeing hemp unless lawmakers appropriated funds to augment license fees.

When legislators approved hemp, they gave the department money to write regulations, but expected fees to sustain the program. Fees have been far short of meeting the department’s costs.

Bonnie Jo Peterson, founder of the Industrial Hemp Association of Washington, said that she found lawmakers still backed hemp. “Across the board, the reception was positive,” she said.

Cory Sharp, who cultivated about half the 180 acres of hemp grown in Washington last year, said Tuesday that he will forgo planting this year. He said his company, Hemp-Logic, was too busy developing a mobile hemp processor in partnership with a Colorado equipment maker. He said he has plans to take the decorticator to about 20 states.