

Washington resumes its hemp program

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The Washington State Department of Agriculture has resumed processing applications to grow and process hemp, following a one-time infusion of \$100,000 to get the program through a second season.

The department will hire an administrator to oversee the program, an agency spokesman said. The department stopped licensing hemp farmers and processors late last year because fees collected from license holders were far short of what the department spent to regulate the state's first hemp crop.

The hemp program will need to be self-supporting someday, though there are no plans to raise fees this spring or summer, the spokesman said.

Gov. Jay Inslee signed a budget Tuesday that included the money to save hemp. The department announced the following day it was again reviewing applications.

It's a stopgap measure, and hemp's



Don Jenkins/Capital Press File

A Washington farmer plants hemp June 6, 2017. The state Department of Agriculture resumed taking applications March 28 to plant hemp. The program had been suspended after running out of money.

long-term prospects in Washington are unclear. Few farmers signed up last year, and there is no developed in-state market for the harvest. Hemp fields must be at least 4 miles from any marijuana operation to prevent cross-pollination. Washington has 1,172 licensed marijuana producers, according to the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Control Board's current count.

Some 180 acres of hemp were planted in 2017, according to the agriculture department. The license holder responsible for about half of those acres has said he won't plant this year. The state issued five other hemp-related licenses, including two to Native American tribes and two to Washington State University researchers.

Industrial Hemp Association of

Washington lobbyist Bonny Jo Peterson said Thursday that she does not expect the department's resumption of the program to set off a rush to plant this spring.

"If they weren't prepared to plant this year, they may want to wait," she said. "I remain confident about the long-term viability of a healthy, sustainable industry if everybody is working toward that goal."

Hemp plants and viable hemp seeds remain as illegal under federal law as marijuana. The only exception is for hemp cultivated under state supervision. The agriculture department's costs are related to providing that oversight.

More than 30 states have set up supervised-hemp programs. Many boast a large number of producers and processors.

U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said at a media event in his home state March 26 that he will introduce a bill to take hemp off the federal controlled substances list. Such a proposal has been in front of Congress since at least 2005.

Ellis joins Idaho Farm Bureau staff

Capital Press

Veteran journalist Sean Ellis has joined the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation as publications editor and will also handle media inquiries, the organization announced Wednesday.

Ellis joins Farm Bureau after working seven years for Capital Press, a continuously updated website and weekly farm publication that focus on agriculture in the Northwest. The website is www.capitalpress.com.



Sean Ellis

During that time, he covered a wide variety of issues important to farmers and ranchers. He also covered the Idaho Legislature for Capital Press for eight sessions, writing stories about dozens of bills and their impact on Idaho's agricultural industry.

Ellis, who has worked as a newspaper reporter and magazine editor for more than 30 years, previously worked for IFBF and has a solid knowledge of its organizational structure and policies.

"We're happy to have someone with Sean's experience and capabilities return to the Farm Bureau family. He served us well several years ago and we're excited to have him back," Rick Keller, IFBF executive vice president and CEO, said.

"I thoroughly enjoyed writing about agriculture for Capital Press, and I look forward to continue writing about the industry and also representing farmers and ranchers through the Farm Bureau organization," Ellis said.

Ellis can be reached at (208) 239-4292 or (208) 220-5428 or by email at seanellis@idahofb.org.

Farm groups relieved by new S. Korea trade deal

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

U.S. agricultural groups are applauding the Trump administration and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer for safeguarding agricultural trade with South Korea in renegotiating the U.S.-Korea free trade agreement.

Renegotiations of the trade deal that originally went into effect in 2012 primarily involved automobile exports, steel imports and currency manipulation in an effort to balance trade between the partners. But commodity groups were concerned that agricultural trade could take a hit in those talks.

USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue gave a hat's off to President Trump, Lighthizer and the U.S. trade team for protecting the strong agricultural components that were built into the pact.

Korea has long been an important trading partner for U.S. agriculture and currently ranks as the sixth-highest value mar-

ket. "U.S. agricultural exports to the country have increased 95 percent over the past decade, and we look forward to continued growth," he said in a statement.

U.S. agricultural exports to the country increased from \$3.5 billion in 2007 to \$6.9 billion in 2017, according to the Foreign Agricultural Service.

"We look at it as a win. The things that work for agriculture are still very much in place," Dale Moore, vice president of public affairs for American Farm Bureau Federation, said.

That part of the agreement stayed in place and it will provide opportunity to continue to grow in that market, he said.

It was a great accomplishment, Shawna Morris, vice president of trade policy with U.S. Dairy Export Council, said.

It preserves the agricultural components that have been so important to the U.S. dairy industry and at the same time made some targeted improvements outside the agricultural arena. One of those is the issue



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press File

A dry bulk vessel is loaded with wheat at the Columbia Grain facility in Portland, Ore., bound for South Korea. The revised KORUS trade agreement retains the agricultural trade elements of the original, which pleases commodity groups.

of customs procedures, she said.

U.S. dairy exporters have repeatedly encountered challenges with South Korea's overly narrow interpretation of which goods qualify as those originating in the U.S., she said.

"We're happy to see a swift renegotiation of the

National Pork Producers Council is pleased the Trump trade team was able to come up with a deal that's fair for both countries, Dave Warner, NPPC director of communications, said.

"We're even more pleased that the renegotiated KORUS maintains the zero-tariff access U.S. pork has on cuts of commercial significance going to the South Korean market," he said.

The U.S. must stay in the trade deals it already has, such as KORUS and the North American Free Trade Agreement, and start negotiating and concluding new agreements, including one with Japan, he said.

The announcement of the successfully revised trade deal is excellent news, Dan Halstrom, president and CEO of the U.S. Meat Export Federation, said in a statement.

"It helps ensure that we will continue to be able to serve the growing South Korean market and a critically important customer base," he said.

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