

Hay exporters worried about China

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — Hay harvest is wrapping up in Washington’s Columbia Basin and in Oregon and while weather and quality have been generally good, the big deal in the export world is loss of sales to China because of higher tariffs.

China had an 8 percent tariff on U.S. hay but added 25 percent for a total of 33 percent in retaliation to President Donald Trump’s steel and aluminum tariffs.

“Volume has dropped significantly since July because of the tariff, down more than half,” said Jeff Calaway, president of Calaway Trading Inc., a major West Coast exporter in Ellensburg.

China buys about 1.2 million metric tons of U.S. hay per year, mainly for dairies. It’s the No. 1 export market for U.S. alfalfa and is barely No. 2 to Japan for all U.S. hay.

But another major West Coast exporter in Ellensburg, Mark Anderson, president of Anderson Hay & Grain Co., said there has not been a large impact in the China market yet because that nation uses a lot of



Dan Wheat/Capital Press

A trucker sweeps his flat-bed trailer as second-cutting Timothy hay from Ephrata, Wash., is unloaded at Anderson Hay & Grain Co. in Ellensburg, Sept. 20. Exporters have enjoyed good quality from good weather but are worried about sales damage from China’s higher tariffs.

its own hay in summer. Any impact will be more evident when September through December numbers are compiled, he said.

“Our hope is that some kind of agreement comes together with China in the coming months,” he said.

Calaway said traders he deals with in China are saying China’s summer production is almost gone.

“It’s lower quality and I think there’s a lot of pressure on them. They need hay and have dropped some of the tariffs they imposed (on

other products),” he said.

New U.S. trade agreements with Mexico, Canada and South Korea and progress with Europe and Japan also pressures China, Calaway said.

“China will have to come around. It is more dependent on us than we are on them,” he said.

Saudi Arabia continues to be a growth market for U.S. hay, Calaway and Anderson said.

Second-cutting Timothy is done in Eastern Washington, limited third-cutting is finishing in the southern Columbia Basin and alfalfa will soon be done, Anderson said.

Oregon is wrapping up alfalfa in Christmas Valley and Klamath, the latter of which is sold mostly domestically, he said.

The Pacific Southwest will continue with a couple more fall cuttings mostly for domestic market, he said.

“Quality has been nice with a mix of grades produced in all areas,” Anderson said.

Inventory of feeder hay maybe tightening in the PNW as quality has been better from lack of rains, he said.

But quality and color has also been damaged from wildfire

smoke preventing hay from drying in a timely fashion, Calaway said. The Pacific Southwest gained export market share over the PNW in recent years due to lower shipping costs. While PSW shipping costs remain lower its prices have increased due to Saudi Arabia demand and drought in New Mexico, Anderson said. That’s allowed the PNW to regain some market share, he said.

Exporters have generally recovered from market losses due to the 2014-2015 work slowdown at West Coast seaports, Anderson said.

Supply and demand are matching up well this season and generally hay prices have been good in the Pacific Northwest for growers and domestic and export markets, he said.

USDA Market News, Washington and Oregon, out of Moses Lake for Sept. 28 said demand from exporters was light with more interest from dairies and Canadian buyers. High test alfalfa was in short supply. Alfalfa mid-square Supreme averaging \$200 per ton and Good \$165 per ton. Alfalfa small square Premium \$200 and Timothy small square Premium \$260.

Judge: Tillamook pollution lawsuit isn’t ‘time-barred’

Oregon environmental regulators never finalized bacterial limit, judge rules

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon’s environmental regulators never finalized a limit on fecal coliform bacteria in Tillamook Bay, which means an oysterman isn’t time-barred from challenging the decision, according to a judge.

Tillamook County Circuit Court Judge Mari Garric Trevino has found the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality’s director didn’t sign an “issuance memorandum” for its 2001 “total maximum daily load” for fecal coliform bacteria in the bay or send it to the required people.

Those steps were required for “due process” under the state and federal constitutions, as well as administrative law, which means the TMDL “was nev-

er finalized and instead remains a draft order,” the judge said in an Oct. 2 ruling.

Trevino’s ruling is important because oysterman Jesse Hayes has filed a lawsuit challenging DEQ’s standard for fecal coliform bacteria in the bay as too lenient.

Hayes claims the bacterial contamination has restricted or prohibited harvest of oysters from his 600 acres of plats in Tillamook Bay and he seeks stricter controls over alleged dairy pollution in the Tillamook basin.

Last month, an attorney for DEQ argued that Hayes Oyster Co.’s lawsuit should be dismissed on multiple grounds, including because he allegedly missed the deadline to challenge the TMDL by roughly 17 years.

Trevino has decided that since the TMDL was a “draft order,” Hayes’ claim seeking damages for a public nuisance should be dismissed but his attack on the standard itself isn’t time-barred.

“What we’re down to is a direct action against the TMDL,” said Thomas

Benke, attorney for the Hayes Oyster Co.

Hayes plans to review his options regarding an appeal of the judge’s dismissal of his damages claim but he respects the judge’s opinion, which effectively gives him the opportunity to modify his complaint and continue with the litigation, Benke said.

“It means we get process,” he said. “Now they have to defend that 17-year-old decision.”

It remains to be seen whether Trevino decides she has the jurisdiction to order DEQ to finalize or modify the TMDL for fecal coliform bacteria, he said.

Nonetheless, the judge’s ruling makes it clear that DEQ can’t stand behind the statute of limitations to defend a 17-year-old “compromise” TMDL that Hayes believes is illegal, Benke said.

“This is a positive development for all users of the rivers in Tillamook Bay,” he said. “The big winner here is Tillamook Bay.

Sadie Forzley, a state attorney representing DEQ, said she can’t comment on pending litigation.

Farm Bill expiration puts 39 programs in limbo

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Expiration of the 2014 Farm Bill has orphaned 39 programs, leaving them bereft of funding.

Those programs span 10 of the 12 farm bill titles and support conservation, bioenergy, rural development, research, nutrition, organic agriculture, farmers’ markets, trade promotion and beginning, military veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers. Because they received mandatory funding of \$50 million or less, they don’t have baseline funding beyond Sept. 30, when the federal government’s fiscal year ended.

Mandatory spending on those programs over the course of the five-year farm bill was about \$2.8 billion — accounting for 0.6 percent of the \$489 billion in total mandatory costs and 2.5 percent of the total excluding nutrition programs, according to the Congressional Research Service.

“While this total may be a relatively small fraction of total farm bill spending, the effect may be particularly important to specific farm bill titles and to the programs’ beneficiaries,” CRS analysts said.

The nonprofit Center for Rural Affairs agrees and is most concerned with about 10 of those sidelined programs, Anna Johnson, policy manager with the center, told Capital Press.

But four major conservation programs not on the orphaned list are also stranded, she said.

“They have funding, but authorization has run out. Even though the money is there, they’re (USDA) not allowed to run the programs,” she said.

Those programs are the Conservation Stewardship Program, Conservation Re-



serve Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Agricultural Easement Program, she said.

With the beginning of a new fiscal year, conservation programs would normally be ramping up for new contracts, but USDA has to sit on its hands. It has no authority for new contracts, she said.

But it’s not just conservation programs that are being sidelined, she said.

“Many programs that support rural vitality are being left behind with the farm bill expiration,” she said.

Uncertainty abounds due to depressed commodity prices for many years, and lack of a farm bill creates additional uncertainty, she said.

“The farm bill is getting left on the wayside, and that’s irresponsible,” she said.

The Center for Rural Affairs wants a farm bill as soon as possible and also wants Congress to pass a farm bill extension quickly to fully fund and authorize all of the programs, she said.

Wheat, corn and soybean growers are particularly concerned with a lapse in the Foreign Market Development Program, another of the 39 orphaned programs.

That program is fundamental in U.S. Wheat Associates work to promote U.S. wheat around the world, Vince Peterson, USW president, said in a press release.

“We use FMD funding to cover salaries of more than 40 non-American employees and expenses for 14 overseas offices,” he said.

Without FMD funding, USW will have to cover costs incurred by shifting funds away from its activities or by using reserves from producer funds, he said.

“That is a short-term bridge we have used in the past. But it is not sustainable for more than several months. Beyond that, we would have to start cutting activities and eventually closing offices,” he said.

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