

Tom Wimmer, Oregon Dairy Women honored by Oregon Aglink

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon Aglink, a state-wide organization dedicated to promoting a better public understanding of agriculture, will honor Tom Wimmer, chief operating officer of Marion Ag Service, and the Oregon Dairy Women for their decades of service to the industry at the Denim and Diamonds dinner auction next month in Salem.

Wimmer will receive Oregon Aglink's 2018 Agriculturist of the Year award, and the Oregon Dairy Women will receive its 2018 Ag Connection award at the annual Denim and Diamonds dinner and fundraiser on Nov. 16 at the Salem Convention Center.

The evening will start with a reception and silent auction at 5 p.m. It will be followed by dinner, the awards presentation and a live auction at 7 p.m.

Tom Wimmer

When he was hired as Marion Ag Service's bookkeeper nearly four decades ago, Tom Wimmer was only the seventh employee at the three-year-old company.

Today, Wimmer serves as the chief operating officer at the company, which has 120 employees at four locations.

"I learned from the ground up every facet of the business," said Wimmer.

In its announcement, Oregon Aglink said it is recognizing Wimmer for his "knowledge, work ethic and generosity."

Wimmer moved to Oregon from Iowa as a young boy when



Oregon Dairy Women

Oregon Aglink is honoring the Oregon Dairy Women with its 2018 Ag Connection award. From left are Dairy Women officers Becky Heimerl, first vice president; Ida Ruby, treasurer; Jessica Kliewer, state director of the Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador Program; Amy Franck, president; and Kristin Killgore, secretary. In front is Stephanie Breazile, the 2018 Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador.

his parents bought a 30-acre beef cattle farm near Woodburn. The ninth of 11 children, he remembers devoting his free time to farm chores to help his mother after their father passed away.

"We worked pretty hard," he said. "I loved it. I was deeply embedded in it."

After graduating from Oregon State University with a degree in agricultural engineering and business management, Wimmer accepted a job with Marion Ag Service in 1979 and has worked there ever since.

His position grew beyond bookkeeping to include dis-

patching employees and performing other management functions. Over the years, Wimmer has witnessed first-hand the company's major transformations.

Marion Ag Service converted from the grain business to the fertilizer business because many farmers in the area stopped producing wheat due to low prices.

In 1994, the company took a "big step" in buying St. Paul Feed Supply, which added many new functions to the operation, such as selling liquid and dry fertilizers, returning to the grain business and broad-

ening its base of chemistry sales.

Wimmer has also become familiar with many of the farmers in the region due to the company's custom work of applying lime to their soil to correct the acidity.

"I know their fields and operations because we've had to work on getting people and product to those locations," he said.

Last year, Marion Ag Service began operating a large new fertilizer facility near Aurora, including formulating and packaging product for national distributors that wanted to get away from manufacturing



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Oregon Aglink is honoring Tom Wimmer, chief operating officer of Marion Ag Service, as its 2018 Agriculturist of the Year.

Online

www.aglink.org/event/denim-diamonds/

themselves.

"They don't have to do a thing, they just have to go out and sell it," Wimmer said.

"Each challenge is an opportunity if you have the ability to work through the situation," Wimmer said. "It's just adapting ourselves to where there's a need."

Oregon Dairy Women

The Ag Connection award is in recognition of the Oregon Dairy Women's "decades of far-reaching efforts to connect consumers with Oregon dairy production," according to Oregon Aglink.

"They really have been the face of the Oregon dairy industry for many years," said Tami Kerr, executive director of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, as well as a past president and current member of Oregon Dairy Women.

Many Oregonians encounter the organization's Red Barn, an "icon of the state fair" where volunteers sell ice cream and milk shakes, she said.

"I always say it's the best quality and the best value at the Oregon State Fair," Kerr said.

The all-volunteer organization provides scholarships to community college students, the children of dairy families as well as people studying in dairy-related fields.

Financial assistance is also provided to 4-H, FFA, Ag in the Classroom, Ag Fest, the Summer Ag Institute and the Adopt-A-Farmer program.

Since 1959, the nonprofit has also been crowning Dairy Princess Ambassadors, who travel across the state to classrooms, fairs and other events to educate children about the dairy industry. Last year, the program reached 14,000 people.

Fees proposed for Washington farmers who hire foreign workers

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press



Mike Gempler

Washington farmers would pay thousands of dollars in new fees to beef up oversight of the H-2A program under a proposal by the state Employment Security Department.

The number of foreign seasonal farmworkers in Washington has soared in recent years, while the money the state receives from the federal government to monitor working conditions has been flat. Washington Growers League Executive Director Mike Gempler said the employment department has a legitimate case for more money, but its proposal is too costly.

"I think it's a tremendous

amount of overkill," he said Tuesday. "It's already expensive to use the H-2A program and adding this on would make it less feasible for many growers."

Washington farmers this year will hire approximately 30,000 foreign workers to fill jobs they couldn't find U.S. residents to do. Although the H-2A program is guided by federal rules, the state inspects farms to ensure employers are complying with workplace and housing rules.

The department says it doesn't have enough money

to do the job. The department is proposing to charge farms \$1,000 to apply to use H-2A workers, plus \$100 per worker for the first 1,000. After that, the fee would drop to \$50 per employee. The department estimates that if the fees were in place next year, they would raise \$3.18 million. The department anticipates revenue would rise in subsequent years.

The department's legislative director, Nick Streuli, said the number of H-2A workers has grown by more than 1,000 percent since 2009. The amount of

money the department receives from the U.S. Department of Labor to oversee the program has remained at about \$300,000 for several years, he said.

"We've been limping along for years. This was certainly not our first response," he said. "There are specific tasks authorized by Congress that we need to accomplish, and we're not receiving adequate funds to do that."

The department would use fees collected from farmers to create the Office of the State Monitor Advocate, according

to documents submitted to the state budget office. The department would continue doing what it has been doing, plus more, according to a summary of legislation the department is proposing.

The money includes a hot line for Spanish-speaking workers to report concerns and to fund what the department calls an adequate number of field inspections and audits.

Gempler said growers have an interest in government oversight to assure the public that foreign workers are well treat-

ed. The department's proposal, however, sets up a new bureaucracy and calls for collecting millions of dollars a year, he said.

"I really believe that could be done for far less than a million dollars," Gempler said.

The H-2A program also drawn accusations from activists that the foreign workers are vulnerable to being abused. "They have some political influence," Gempler said. "It's important we are able to show the H-2A program is being used in an ethical way."

Analyst questions whether trade deal will fix Canada's dairy policy

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

While a renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement was welcome news to U.S. dairy farmers, the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada agreement is unlikely to change Canada's behavior when it comes to dairy trade, according to one industry analyst.

The major sticking point in negotiations with Canada were granting more access to U.S. dairy products and the elimination of Canada's class 6 (Ontario) and Class 7 (nationwide) pricing policy for milk ingredients implemented last year.

U.S. and international dairy organizations contend the policy artificially lowered the price of domestic milk ingredients to Canadian processors to make such products as milk protein concentrate, milk powder and ultra-filtered milk.

U.S. exports of ultra-filtered milk to Canadian cheesemakers plummeted following implementation of the policy.

In addition, the policy subsidizes production of products containing those ingredients and has helped Canadian processors dump surplus milk proteins, such as skim milk powder, onto global markets, opponents say.

While the new agreement does offer a bit more access to Canadian dairy markets, it's only an additional 1 billion pounds of milk equivalent — about 0.5 percent of U.S. production, Matt Gould, an analyst with Dairy Market Analyst, said.

"These volumes aren't huge. Canada is a self-sufficient market; there's no big opportu-

nities in Canada for U.S. dairy," he said.

Retaliatory tariffs by the Mexican government on U.S. cheese following U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Mexico are far more important, and they weren't addressed in the agreement, he said. He also sees little change in the Class 6 and 7 issue. The new trade agreement does call for the elimination of those classes within six months, but it also provides methodology for Canada to recreate those classes with only minor adjustments, he said.

The agreement calls for Canada to price nonfat milk solids used to manufacture milk protein concentrates, skim milk powder and infant formula based on USDA's Class IV price minus Canada's processor margin.

But Canada's processor margin is nearly double the U.S. processor margin, or "make allowance." Class 6 and 7 might be eliminated, but the agreement creates something else that shuts down Canadian imports of U.S. ultra-filtered milk, he said.

Canadian processors will still be able to sell products on the international market lower than U.S. processors and still make a profit, he said.

The agreement also sets thresholds for Canada's exports of milk protein concentrates, skim milk powder and infant formula before surcharges must be applied, but the aggregate threshold is basically at the same level Canada has been exporting. And the penalty to export more isn't so cost-prohibitive to deter additional exports, he said.

Weekly Fieldwork Report



| Item/description | Ore. | Wash. | Idaho | Calif. |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| • Days suitable for fieldwork (As of Oct. 2) | 6.9 | 6.8 | 6.9 | 7 |
| • Topsoil moisture, surplus | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| • Topsoil moisture, percent short | 90% | 70% | 68% | 70% |
| • Subsoil moisture, surplus | 0 | 0 | 2% | 0 |
| • Subsoil moisture, percent short | 87% | 61% | 61% | 75% |
| • Precipitation probability (6-10 day outlook as of Oct. 9) | 40-50% Below | 40-50% Below | 40-60% Below | Normal |

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