



George Plaven/Capital Press

From left, Erik Andersson, president of SEDCOR; Chris Sarles, CEO of Oregon Fruit Products; Ed Maletis; and Salem Mayor Chuck Bennett cut the ribbon on the new Oregon Fruit Products headquarters and processing plant Dec. 11 in southeast Salem.

Oregon Fruit Products expands into new building

By GEORGE PLAGEN
Capital Press

SALEM, Ore. — When Chris Sarles joined Oregon Fruit Products as CEO five years ago, the long-time West Salem, Ore., company was already looking to leave its original facility and move into a new home where the business could grow and thrive.

“It wasn’t optimal for food manufacturing,” Sarles said of the original plant, which was cobbled together by necessity over the decades and limited by space.

Oregon Fruit Products officially moved into its new building — the former NORPAC Foods vegetable cannery in southeast Salem — in October. Approximately 200 people attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony Dec. 11 to celebrate the 83-year-old food processor’s fresh start in spacious new digs.

“It allows us to shape and diversify our business so we can continue for another 80 years,” Sarles said.

Oregon Fruit Products operates four processing lines and makes a wide variety of products for consumer retail and the food service industry, such as canned fruit and purees. The company has also expanded in more recent years to provide flavoring and ingredients for craft beverages, including beer and soft drinks.

Sarles said the 165,000-square-foot building is better equipped to serve their needs, and will allow them to keep growing while complying with more rigorous food safety requirements.

“We continue to listen to our customers about what their needs are, and innovate to meet those needs,” Sarles said. “We’re consistently looking to attract new folks to the team.”

Oregon Fruit Products was founded in 1935 by Max Gehlar after working on his family’s cherry and plum orchard in the Eola Hills area outside Salem. The Gehlar family ran the business for three generations before selling to Ed and Cindy Maletis in 2011. At the time, Ed Maletis, a third-generation Oregonian, had just sold his own beer and wine distribution company, Columbia Distributing.

Both Sarles and Maletis said their goal was to keep the company and its 85 year-round employees in Salem. They looked at sites elsewhere, including in neighboring Clackamas County, before Sarles stumbled upon the NORPAC cannery last year.

In July 2017, NORPAC Foods, a local food processing co-op, announced it was selling its canning business to Seneca Foods Corp. Sarles said he reached out to Shawn Campbell, NORPAC president and CEO, and the two began discussing plans for the old plant on Southeast 22nd Street.

“Our goal was we wanted to stay here and retain jobs,” Sarles said. “It’s pretty darn cool to be able to do that.”

City and economic development officials are equally excited about the opportunity to keep a company like Oregon Fruit Products. The Salem Urban Renewal Agency chipped in a \$300,000 grant to help Oregon Fruit Products with the \$13 million move. Salem Mayor Chuck Bennett spoke during the ribbon cutting, calling the company a legacy business that helped to put Salem on the map as a food processing and agricultural powerhouse.

“This is such an important business here,” Bennett said. “The city continues and will continue to value your contribution.”

NRCS invites farmers to ‘soil your undies’

Burying underwear can help determine soil health

By GEORGE PLAGEN
Capital Press

Talk about a strange harvest.

Earlier this year, six Eastern Oregon farmers and ranchers agreed to bury pairs of cotton underwear in their fields and dig them back up later in the season as part of the “Soil Your Undies” challenge, organized by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Not much remained of the tattered, torn and threadbare britches — and that’s precisely the point. The “Soil Your Undies” challenge was devised to illustrate the presence of tiny microorganisms like mites, bacteria, fungi and protozoa that make up healthy soil, and which devour the organic cotton fibers in underpants.

NRCS Oregon is now ready to roll out the challenge statewide, inviting any and all growers to participate in 2019.

“This challenge is no substitute for lab testing,” said Cory Owens, NRCS Oregon state soil scientist. “But it’s a fun way to start thinking about what’s going on in the soil.”

According to the NRCS, one teaspoon of healthy soil contains more microbes than



NRCS

Joe McElligott, who farms dryland wheat in Morrow County, Ore., participated in the “Soil Your Undies” challenge through NRCS Oregon, burying 100 percent cotton underwear in his field to test the presence of microbes in healthy soil.

the entire human population on Earth. Working in concert, the bitty organisms are a critically important feature in soil, cycling nutrients for plants, storing moisture and helping to resist erosion.

Robert Hathorne, a spokesman for NRCS Oregon, said the more microbes break down undies, the stronger the indication of healthy soil.

“It’s a way to start thinking about what’s happening that causes soil health,” Hathorne said.

Six Oregon producers

took the challenge in 2018, including Joe McElligott and Corey Miller, of Morrow County, and Woody Wolfe, Joe Dawson, Alan Klages and Mark Butterfield, of Wallowa County.

“They thought it was all pretty funny,” Hathorne said. “All of them had really strong results from what we found.”

The only exception was Butterfield, who was unable to find his underwear after sneaky cows stole the marker flag he had used to mark the spot.

Four steps to healthy soil

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service recommends four steps to maintaining soil microbes and health:

1. Avoid soil disturbance wherever and whenever possible.
2. Maximize soil cover with living plants and residue.
3. Maximize biodiversity by growing a variety of plants and managed integration of livestock.
4. Maximize living roots in the soil throughout the year.

Even McElligott and Miller, who farm dryland wheat in an area that receives just 9-12 inches of rain every year, found their undies were eaten down to just the elastic. Both growers use a no-till or reduced tillage system, leaving crop residue in the field to replenish soil organic matter.

Hathorne said the NRCS is hoping the results lead to more interest in the “Soil Your Undies” challenge in 2019. To participate, farmers should “plant” a pair of 100 percent cotton underwear at the beginning of the normal growing season, and leave them for at least 60 days. Send “before” and “after” photos, along with information about the farm and growing practices, to orinfo@nrsc.usda.gov, or to any local NRCS office.

Evans Fruit seeks \$3.7M

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A Washington apple farm is seeking about \$3.7 million from an Oregon juice company for allegedly breaching contracts to pay for apples.

The Evans Fruit Co. of Cowiche, Wash., has filed a complaint seeking a judgment against the Hood River Juice Co., and its owner, David Ryan, in the U.S. District Court of Oregon.

The lawsuit alleges that between August 2013 and the end of 2014, Evans Fruit delivered \$3.5 million worth of apples to the Hood River Juice Co., which sells products under the Ryan’s brand.

In 2015, Evans agreed to accept a promissory note from Hood River Juice Co., under which it would be repaid in 36 monthly installments followed by a \$2 million balloon payment, the complaint said.

The terms of the promissory note were renegotiated in early 2018 to allow Hood River Juice Co. to repay the balloon payment in installments, but the company has since breached the contract and owes more than \$1.8 million in principal and \$20,800 in interest, the complaint said.



JUSTUS BAG
COMPANY, INC.

Strong Since 1959
Trusted Manufacturing
Diverse Bag Capabilities

1-800-456-7878
www.justusbag.com

**WHEN IN NEED OF BAGS,
CALL “JUST-US!”**

Polypropylene Bags
Polypropylene Bulk Bags
Burlap Bag
Multiwall Paper/Paper Poly
Flexible Packaging | BOPP Bags
Onion/Potato Mesh Bags
Pallet Netting
Stretch Wrap | Sewing Twine
Bagging Supplies

45-13-3/104

- **SPOKANE PLANT & HEADQUARTERS**
11205 E. Trent Ave.
Spokane Valley, WA
99206 - 4630
darin@justusbag.com
509-924-8353
- **PORTLAND PLANT**
2734 N. Hayden Island Dr.
Portland, OR 97217
ctoomb@justusbag.com
503-287-3885
- **MOSES LAKE BRANCHES**
417 E. Broadway, Suite 1
Moses Lake, WA 98837
johnlvk@justusbag.com
509-750-2900

223 Linden Ave. East
Moses Lake, WA 98837
adam@justusbag.com
509-765-2872



WESTERN PACKAGING

Your Future is Our Future...





WE SPECIALIZE IN BULK BAGS!

BAGS:

- Seed Bags
- Fertilizer Bags
- Feed Bags
- Potato Bags
- Printed Bags
- Plain Bags
- Bulk Bags
- Totes
- Woven Polypropylene
- Bopp
- Polyethylene
- Pocket Bags
- Roll Stock & More!

HAY PRESS SUPPORT:

- Hay Sleeves
- Strap
- Totes
- Printed or Plain
- Stretch Film (ALL GAUGES)

WAREHOUSE PACKAGING:

- Stretch Film
- Pallet Sheets
- Pallet Covers

LOCATIONS:


Albany, Oregon (MAIN OFFICE)
Ellensburg, Washington

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Phone: 855-928-3856
Fax: 541-497-6262
info@westernpackaging.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS OUR TOP PRIORITY!

www.westernpackaging.com



Thank you

for reading the Capital Press

Earlier this month the Capital Press moved to a new suite of offices a mile and a half down the road from the building we occupied in Salem for 55 years.

Newspaper people are notorious packrats, so you can imagine the amount of material we sifted through in order to prepare for the move. What to keep, what to throw away? I quickly found myself engrossed in each old paper, each photograph, each artifact of a bygone day.


The history of the Capital Press is tightly bound with the history of Western agriculture. Holding that history in my hand was a profound experience. So much has changed in our business and in your business over those decades.


Some things have endured. Over the years you have trusted us to be an unbiased source of news and a partner in advancing your business interests. We have dedicated ourselves to providing the most relevant content to keep you informed, and to providing an engaged audience for your commercial messages.

It is our honor to serve and empower the producers of food and fiber in the Pacific Northwest.

On behalf of the staff at the Capital Press, I wish our readers and our advertisers a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Years.

Joe Beach
Editor & Publisher





Capital Press

EMPOWERING PRODUCERS OF FOOD & FIBER

50-3/HOU