

Northwest Ag Show draws thousands

Three-day event features trade show, seminars, career fair

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

SALEM — After a one-year hiatus, the Northwest Ag Show marked its return in 2019 to Salem, Ore.

An estimated 3,554 people attended the three-day event Jan. 16-18 at the Oregon State Fairgrounds, featuring educational seminars, a trade show and the first Agricultural Career Expo hosted by Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching students the importance of farming and ranching.

The Northwest Ag Show started 50 years ago in Salem, though for the last 45 years it was held at the Portland Expo Center. The EO Media Group, which publishes 11 newspapers in Oregon and southwest Washington — including the Capital Press — took over management of the show in 2017.

Faced with difficulties attracting vendors to Portland, the publishing company decided to suspend the 2018 Northwest Ag Show and move it back to its original home in Salem for 2019. Michael Keith, show director and marketing man-



Attendees make their way through exhibits in the Jackman-Long Building at the Oregon State Fair and Expo Center during the 2019 Northwest Ag Show in Salem.



Patrons take in the booths at the 2019 Northwest Agricultural Show in Salem.

ager for EO Media Group, said the change of location drew positive feedback from exhibitors and attendees.

“Overall, our exhibitors and attendees were pleased with the show,” Keith said.

“We had great conversations about how this year’s show went, and how to do even better next year.”

More than 120 vendors were on hand at the fairgrounds, including farm

equipment manufacturers such as Kubota and suppliers such as Coastal Farm & Ranch, which also sponsored the show. Seminars on Jan. 16 and 17 covered a range of topics, from agriculture technology to weather and economic forecasts.

Harvest Capital, an agricultural real estate lender based in Canby, Ore., served as the show’s title sponsor. Brian Field, founder and president, said he was happy with how the show came together, and is looking forward to next year.

“For the first year coming back to life, it was good,” Field said.

Harvest Capital has participated in 25-plus Northwest Ag Shows, Field said. He echoed the opinion that having the show in Salem,



OSU researcher Chad Higgins speaks at the 2019 Northwest Agricultural Show in Salem.

rather than in Portland, was a better overall fit.

“It felt like it was more a part of agriculture,” Field said. “It was a better engaged ag show.”

Field said organizers will meet in the next week or two to discuss ways to improve the 2020 edition of the show, though he added, “There’s nothing here except good marks from us.”

Oregon Aglink, a nonprofit volunteer membership organization that promotes Oregon agriculture, held its annual membership meeting at the ag show, while Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom, or AITC, also held its first Agricultural Career Expo, bringing in roughly 175 students from four Salem-area high schools to learn about different careers in the field

of agriculture.

Jessica Jansen, executive director of Oregon AITC, said students were able to interact with vendors at the trade show, as well as engage with a panel of 20 agriculture professionals with diverse roles in farming, marketing, machinery, finance and other fields.

“We were really trying to get a good subset of (careers) represented,” Jansen said. “I think it went great. I was thrilled, for a first-time event.”

Jansen said she hopes to make the expo an annual event for local high school students, and was pleased to partner with the Northwest Ag Show.

“If Northwest Ag Show is up for the partnership, I think it works really well,” she said.

Company confirms purchase of fruit operations

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

WAPATO, Wash. — A North Carolina agricultural investment firm has confirmed it has purchased three Washington state fruit companies.

International Farming Corp. of Kinston, N.C., issued a press release Jan. 22 announcing the acquisition of Legacy Fruit Packers and Valley Fruit III, both of Wapato, and Larson Fruit Co. of Selah.

The combined companies will be known as Columbia River Orchards LLC.

“IFC firmly believes that Columbia River Orchard’s exceptional tree fruit land base, state-of-the-art packing and storage facilities, outstanding horticultural expertise and forward-looking marketing desk position it very well for rapid growth in the innovative Northwest tree fruit sector,” the company said in the release.

The purchase price was

not disclosed. It includes 4,000 acres of orchards and two packing facilities that handle 4 million boxes of fruit annually. IFC plans to make “substantial investments in orchard and packing technology,” the press release stated. That will include expanding and developing further acreage in coming years and retaining approximately 3,000 seasonal and full-time employees and hiring additional staff as the business grows.

Chances of El Nino continue to fade

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

There is no “obvious indication” a long-anticipated El Nino will form this winter after all, according to a seasonal outlook issued Thursday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

NOAA continues to predict above-average temperatures for late winter and early spring in Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Northern California. But an expected El Nino is no longer a major reason for the temperate outlook.

A warm Pacific Ocean, El Nino’s essential ingredient, has not triggered the atmospheric conditions in the trop-

ics that actually lead to mild winters in the northern U.S.

Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond said temperatures have been generally above normal, but not because of an El Nino. “It’s hard to argue the tropics have really played that important of a role,” he said. “It could end up being a non-event for all practical purposes.”

For several months, NOAA has predicted a warm Northwest winter because it expected an El Nino to form. In December, the agency rated the odds at better than 90 percent. In early January, the chances were downgraded to 65 percent. Since then, sea-surface tempera-

tures have cooled more.

There remains only an “outside chance” a “marginal” El Nino will form late this winter, according to Thursday’s outlook.

“We don’t completely understand why it hasn’t,” Bond said. “We don’t have a previous example quite like this one.”

Rather than El Nino, the Madden-Julian Oscillation has dominated U.S. weather since October, according to NOAA. The 30- to 60-day weather pattern, named for the scientists who discovered it, rises up in the Indian Ocean, slowly moves eastward, and has dry and wet phases.

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