

Increase in spring canola acres could stretch seed supply

Bump could reach 85,000 acres

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

A projected 18 percent increase in spring canola acres could impact the availability of seed this year, the leader of the regional canola organization says.

Last year, Washington farmers grew 68,000 acres of winter and spring canola, said Karen Sowers, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Canola Association and outreach specialist in oilseeds for Washington State University Extension.

She estimates the acre-

age could increase to 80,000 to 85,000 acres this year.

Sowers said the increased demand is due to low wheat and chickpea prices, which make canola competitive for growers.

She also cites increased interest in canola among growers in Canada and North Dakota.

“Think about getting an order in sooner than later,” Sowers said. “It’s not an emergency-type situation, but it’s definitely something to think about.”

In previous years, spring and winter canola acres were evenly split, she said. In the last four to five years, two-thirds of the crop has been spring canola.

Growers considering canola should also know which herbicide was previously used on their fields and speak with their crop consultant or a WSU representative.

Warmer winter weather could move spring planting into late March, she said. Typical spring planting in Washington, depending on location, is late March to mid- to late April.

The canola association board of directors will interview permanent candidates for executive director in Clarkston, Sowers said. She works 85 percent of full-time for WSU and 20 hours a week as executive director.



Capital Press File

The supply of canola seed may be tight this year, the leader of a regional canola growers organization says.

Burley juniper project entering new phase

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

The Burley Landscape Juniper Project will enlarge its footprint in southcentral Idaho this year.

Partners in the juniper-removal project, part of the 2010 Sage Grouse Initiative, this year will start treating about 50,000 acres in the Goose Creek Watershed area south of Oakley, under a new U.S. Bureau of Land Management environmental assessment.

The group in 2017 finished treating 30,000 acres south and east of Burley three years ahead of a deadline included in a 2010 BLM assessment that defined project boundaries and established procedures for BLM grazing allotments, said Connor White, range and wildlife conservationist with Pheasants Forever, which has done much of the contracting. Work last year focused on private land. About \$4 million has been spent so far.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and BLM started the project on BLM grazing allotments and



Capital Press File

A project to remove juniper trees from the area around Burley, Idaho, is continuing.

private land. Partners include Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Fish and Game and landowners.

“The partnership we have going has strengthened, and it has exceeded expectations,” said David Mabey, NRCS district conservationist based in Burley. Treatments have been uniform across ownership and jurisdictional boundaries, he said.

Juniper plants compete for water, nutrients and sun-

light with sage brush and other perennials. White said junipers provide raptor perches and increase the risk of depredation. Junipers also reduce the understory of low-to-the ground plants that sage grouse prefer for brooding, nesting and rearing. The birds will start avoiding an area with juniper densities as low as three to four trees per acre, he said.

Western Watersheds Project has challenged juniper

removal, saying improper grazing harms sage grouse more than junipers. White said the Burley project can benefit grouse habitat and help prevent its fragmentation while avoiding total loss of production-agriculture uses.

“And what is good for sage grouse is good for cattle,” Mabey said. “It improves landscape grazing conditions.” Risk of intense wildfire also drops.

The first project emphasized live, green junipers. New work will concentrate on knocking down skeletons of burned plants and trees. White said the first site included some of the highest-priority habitat areas. The new work area includes important habitat and some harder-to-access spots.

Mastication has been used where juniper density is high and there is little or no understory of perennial plants, Mabey said. Native grass and forb seeds are broadcast aerially before crews use large equipment to grind junipers and scatter debris, which helps protect seedlings and provides mulch.



WSDA

A group is studying creating a food hub in the Walla Walla, Wash., area.

Walla Walla food hub survey responses sought

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Organizers studying the feasibility of a food hub in the Walla Walla area hope area farmers return a survey before a Feb. 12 meeting.

A food producers workshop is 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 12 at the Walla Walla County Fairgrounds Community Center.

The Blue Mountain Action Council received a USDA Local Food Promotion grant of nearly \$134,000 in September to study the feasibility of establishing a food hub in Walla Walla.

“Instead of just having a farmers’ market or grocery store, we’re looking at the potential to bring back processing to Walla Walla,” said Jeff Mathias, food bank director for the action council.

The hub would process fruits and vegetables and distribute them throughout the region, he said.

The council is surveying suppliers to get a “snapshot” of production in the Walla Walla Valley, including Hermiston and Pendleton, Ore., and Asotin, Wash.

“We want to know what people are growing and what they’re doing with it,” Mathias said. “Are they doing any processing or value-added stuff?”

Information from the survey will be included in the workshop, to build scenarios of what a food hub could look like, he said.

“The more we get, the better that meeting’s going to be,” Mathias said.

A consultant is looking at USDA and conservation district data to compile information.

Mathias said the council sent out surveys to more than 175 people. He hopes to see 100 to 125 people in attendance.

Mathias said the meeting will give growers a better understanding of what a food hub is, how they could fit into it and possible benefits for them.

“It’s going to be really exciting for this area,” he said. “We used to have tons of canning and packing plants. It’s kind of gone away. This is going to be exciting to bring some back.”

Registration is required. Register by calling 509-524-5218.

Malting barley association names 2019 recommended varieties

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Four new varieties have been added to the American Malting Barley Association’s list of recommendations for 2019.

New to the list this year are:

- **ABI Growler**, a two-rowed, mid-season spring barley developed by Busch Agricultural Resources in Fort Collins, Colo.
- **Bill Coors 100** and **Moravian 165**, two-rowed spring varieties bred by Molson Coors in Burley, Idaho. Bill Coors 100 was released in 2016 in celebration of the 100th birthday of Bill Coors, former chairman of the Adolph Coors Co.

Coors, the grandson of company founder Adolph Coors, died in October 2018 at 102. Bill Coors revolutionized the beverage industry with the creation and development of the aluminum can.

“He was a leader and a huge supporter of growers, as all the Coors family has been,” said Scott Heisel, vice president and technical director of the malting barley association. “They really bent over backwards to help them out when they could.”

- **Thunder**, a two-rowed winter variety from Oregon State University. Final approval for release is in process at OSU, said Pat Hayes, professor in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences.

The association adds an average of two varieties each year, Heisel said.

“It’s just what the marketplace was utilizing,” he said.

The list is intended for malting barley growers when setting up contracts so that they know which varieties are being used, Heisel said. The majority of malting barley acres are contracted.

THE RECOMMENDED TWO-ROW VARIETIES:

• AAC Synergy	• Moravian 165
• ABI Growler	• ND Genesis
• ABI Voyager	• Newdale
• AC Metcalfe	• Pinnacle
• Bill Coors 100	• Puffin (winter)
• CDC Copeland	• Scarlett
• Charles (winter)	• Thunder (winter)
• Conlon	• Wintmalt (winter)
• Conrad	Recommended six-row barleys:
• Endeavor (winter)	• Celebration
• Expedition	• Innovation
• Explorer	• Lacey
• Hockett	• Legacy
• LCS Genie	• Quest
• Merit 57	• Stellar-ND
• Moravian 37	• Thoroughbred (winter)
• Moravian 69	• Tradition

End-users determine which varieties they want, Heisel said. Most companies contracting acres are

members of the association, he noted.

“We want to make sure they yield well and have

good disease resistance and things that growers like, but we also need certain quality attributes,” he said.

The malting barley market is fairly diverse, Heisel said, including traditional brewers, those using other sources for adjunct beers, all-malt beers and distillers.

The USDA Risk Management Agency and Federal Grain Inspection Service also use the list for crop insurance and to differentiate between malting and feed varieties.

Leaving the list this year are two-row varieties Harrington and Propino, a Syngenta variety which was added to the list last year and has been recommended for brewing in the United Kingdom since 2010.

“I think one of our members wanted to give it a shot and it wasn’t going to pan out,” Heisel said. “I think it’s primarily an issue with seed availability.”

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