

U.S. hop production sets record in 2019

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — U.S. hop production set a record high above 100 million pounds for the third year in a row in 2019, apparently continuing a reasonable balance between supply and demand.

At 112 million pounds, the crop was up 5%, according to a Dec. 18 report from USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service.

“In weeks leading up to harvest we anticipated a crop of around 115 million pounds as mature fields in particular looked very strong while we knew

the babies (new plantings) looked a bit weak,” said Pete Mahony, vice president of supply chain and purchasing for John I. Haas, Inc., a leading hop producer in Yakima.

As harvest data came, it was evident cool spring temperatures took a greater toll on baby plantings than expected, Mahony said.

Production of 107 million pounds in 2018 was up 1% from 106 million pounds in 2017, which in turn was up 20% from 87 million pounds in 2016.

Washington produced 73% of the 2019 national crop at 82 million pounds, Idaho grew 15% at 17 mil-



Courtesy of Petar Marshall
A top cutter makes its way through the hop yard at Cornerstone Ranches in Toppenish, Wash., during the 2018 harvest. U.S. hop production set a record in 2019.

lion pounds and Oregon grew 12% at 13 million pounds, according to the

NASS report.

Hop supply has increased because of tremendous growth in craft beer but the rate of that growth has been slowing.

“While acreage growth has recently slowed into low single-percentage digits, we do expect this smaller growth to be sustainable in the near term to keep supply in relative balance with brewing demand that has also slowed but is still growing,” Mahony said.

It’s encouraging to see some demand momentum overseas for U.S. varieties, he said.

Total acres harvested

was 56,544 with 40,880 of that in Washington, 8,358 in Idaho and 7,306 in Oregon.

Acreage has been increasing since 2012 when it was at 29,683. It declined to that from 40,898 in 2008. Avoiding over supply can be difficult since it takes a couple years for new plantings to produce.

Total value of 2019 production was \$637 million, up 9% from the prior year, the report stated. Of that, Washington was \$475 million, Idaho was \$89 million and Oregon was \$72 million.

Average price per pound was \$5.80 in Washington, \$5.50 in Oregon and \$5.25

in Idaho.

Citra, Cascade, Zeus, Simcoe, C/T/Z and Mosaic were the six leading varieties in Washington in 2019, accounting for 50% of production, the NASS report shows.

In Idaho, C/T/Z, Mosaic, Chinook, Zeus, Citra and Casade made up 65% of production. In Oregon, Nugget, Cascade, Citra and Willamette were 50% of production.

The average yield per acre was 2,034 pounds in Idaho, 2,006 in Washington and 1,783 in Oregon.

The 64th annual American Hop Convention will be in Portland on Jan. 22-24.

New Oregon Farm Bureau president leads diverse family operation

Iverson Family Farms home of successful Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival

By GEORGE PLAIVEN
Capital Press

WOODBURN, Ore. — Barb Iverson says she has the experience that comes with a long career in farming.

Over the years, Iverson Family Farms — home of the famous Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival that drew approximately 150,000 visitors last year — has evolved with the times, growing dozens of different crops while riding the boom-and-bust cycles of agricultural economics.

Those experiences have prepared Iverson, 60, to lead the Oregon Farm Bureau as producers continue to deal with headwinds, from low commodity prices to extreme weather.

Iverson was elected president of the state Farm Bureau during the organization’s 87th annual convention Dec. 12 in Gleneden Beach. She has previously served as president of the Clackamas County Farm Bureau, and was first elected to the OFB state board of directors in 2005, most recently serving as its first vice president.

The Oregon Farm Bureau serves 6,600 farmer and rancher members statewide.

“It’s an honor,” Iverson said in an interview with the Capital Press. “Farm Bureau is really a family. We talk a common language.”

Iverson Family Farms was started by Barb’s parents, Ross and



George Plaven/Capital Press
Barb Iverson, of Iverson Family Farms in Woodburn, Ore., was elected president of the Oregon Farm Bureau during the organization’s annual convention.

Dorothy, in 1950. It is run today by Barb and her brothers, Nels, Ken and Paul, and their nephew, Jon. Together, they farm 1,200 acres near Woodburn, Ore., growing primarily grass seed, vetch seed, tulips and, most recently, industrial hemp.

The farm also has a few blocks of table grapes, winegrapes and hazelnut orchards.

But perhaps the best-known feature of the farm is the Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival, which has grown into a bright and colorful rite of spring in the Willamette Valley. What started strictly as a retail business for flowers took on a whole new identity when the farm began opening its fields to the public in 1985.

Now the festival attracts families, gardeners and photographers

from all 50 states and 140 countries over six weeks in late March and April.

“There’s just something about flowers that connects people,” Iverson said. “You talk to people who have been out here, and they just light up. It’s those types of memories that you just can’t create anywhere else that we strive for.”

Agritourism is just one way the farm has adapted to stay profitable amid changes in markets. For years, Iverson Family Farms earned the majority of its income from growing potatoes. When that soured, it forced the family to sell one of its farms or risk losing everything.

“We got through it,” Iverson said. “But farming overall is tough.”

Iverson graduated from Ore-

gon State University in 1982 with a degree in horticulture. She said the farm has tried more than 100 different crops, including nursery stock, green beans and sweet corn.

The family quit growing row crops a few years ago, and has since turned its focus to what could become Oregon’s next most valuable agricultural product — industrial hemp.

They began growing hemp in 2016, after seeing how the extract cannabidiol, or CBD, helped Barb’s father, Ross, when he was diagnosed with liver cancer. Whereas before he could barely get out of bed, CBD allowed Ross to move more freely, eat and spend a month and a half of quality time with the family before he died.

“It was just a game-changer for us,” Barb Iverson said.

Despite an explosion of registered hemp in Oregon in 2019 that has flooded markets and strained infrastructure, Iverson Family Farms has positioned itself well amid the “green rush,” incorporating CBD oil extraction facilities on the farm and creating its own brand of CBD-infused retail products, called Red Barn Hemp.

The CBD extraction business, named FSOil, employs 80 people year-round and contracts to sell the oil to Charlotte’s Web, a company in Colorado.

From tulips to hemp, Iverson said she has learned the importance of diversification in farming. As president of the Farm Bureau, she said her main goal is to help growers be competitive while ensuring healthy rural lands and communities.

“I just want to make their journey easier,” Iverson said.

Iverson takes over as president from Sharon Waterman, who is retiring. She was chosen by members from a pool of candidates that included Angi Bailey, a second-generation nursery owner near Portland, and Dylan Wells, president of the Marion County Farm Bureau. Bailey was elected first vice president under Iverson.

Dave Dillon, OFB executive director, said Iverson “brings the knowledge and wisdom from a complex, dynamic, and forward-looking family farm operation.”

“In this era when communicating farm issues to the non-farm public is so important, Barb brings a perspective about public engagement that we haven’t had before,” Dillon said. “Her leadership style is collaborative and collegial, and she is going to be a great president as Farm Bureau starts its second century in Oregon.”

One of Iverson’s first duties as OFB president will be to participate in the national American Farm Bureau Federation House of Delegates as one of four seated representatives from Oregon during the 2020 AFBF Convention in Austin, Texas. It takes place Jan. 17-22.

Iverson said she is also looking forward to helping the Oregon Farm Bureau expand its outreach and education programs.

“I really want to focus on some education, so people understand what we do and why we do it,” Iverson said. “There’s just not that connection anymore. (People) are three and four generations removed from farms. I think it’s important to get them out on the countryside to see what we’re doing.”

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