

# Business Oregon awards grant for open-source ERP software

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
Capital Press



**Scott Cooper**

**Abisha Stone**

SALEM — Managing complex businesses and supply chains is a process fraught with potential pitfalls and human error, says Abisha Stone with the Salem-based Strategic Economic Development Corp., or SEDCOR.

For example, a grass seed or hazelnut farm in the Willamette Valley might have to schedule applications of fertilizer and pesticides during the growing season, hire labor for harvest, process and sort seeds and nuts after harvest, and match warehouse inventory and purchase orders for shipping.

“Many (companies), in my experience, are doing all those functions in Excel documents,” said Stone, Yamhill County economic development director for SEDCOR. “To have different people in different places in your business, doing separate documentation and trying to pull that together.



“There just tends to be a much more complex, complicated and time-exhaustive process for capturing all that data and sharing it with one another,” Stone said. “For small businesses, even just managing the procurement and scheduling is a huge juggling act.”

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
For more information about OregonERP, contact Abisha Stone at 503-507-4175, or Scott Cooper at 503-474-6814.

and modify the program. In December, Business Oregon awarded a \$211,250 grant to finish the final two phases of development, including implementation and marketing. Stone said the modules for OregonERP should be tested and completed by the end of September.

“It really is a true game-changer for small to mid-size businesses to have access to systems like this, that they can actually afford,” she said. According to SEDCOR, Oregon has approximately 6,200 manufacturing businesses — including value-added farms and food processors — that employ more than 200,000 people, making

up 21% of the total value of goods produced across the state.

Of those, 5,000 manufacturers, or roughly 80% of the state’s total, employ 20 people or fewer.

While typical ERPs may cost between \$75,000 to \$750,000 a year, OregonERP will cost clients less than \$12,000. And since the software is open source, it can be easily customized.

“We believe all manufacturers, regardless of their size, should have access to a tool that helps them understand all of their costs so they enter the market at the right price,” Stone said. Other partners in the project include the Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership and McMinnville Economic Development Partnership.

“This will have a really meaningful impact on the manufacturing community, not only in Yamhill County but across the state,” said Scott Cooper, executive director of the MEDP.

# Bovine manure tax credit encounters opposition

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press



A proposal to extend Oregon’s tax credit for collecting cow manure for energy has come under fire from critics who say it’s mostly beneficial to large dairies.

The tax credit of \$3.50 per wet ton of bovine manure collected is intended to promote the construction of methane digesters that produce renewable energy. It’s slated to end in 2022.

Senate Bill 151, which would change the sunset date to 2028, is supported by the Oregon Farm Bureau and Oregon Dairy Farmers Association.

“Manure digesters provide very clear environmental, renewable energy, and economic benefits to the dairy industry and the public,” the groups said in written testimony.

Oregon currently has three methane digesters in operation, one of which annually sequesters 136,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide — the amount emitted by about 29,000 cars, the groups said.

Extending the tax credit helps ensure these digesters will remain online and may encourage others to invest in the technology, the letter said.

However, critics of the tax credit claim it amounts to a subsidy for the largest “confined animal feeding operations,” or CAFOs, in the state.

The biggest benefactor of the tax credit is a dairy with 70,000 cows, and digesters are only economically feasible for facilities with well over 500 cows, said Amy Van Saun, an attorney with the Stand Up to Factory Farms Coalition, which

**A methane digester collects gas from decomposing cow manure at a dairy and uses it as fuel to generate electricity. Oregon lawmakers are considering a bill to extend until 2028 a tax credit for collecting cow manure rather than have it lapse next year.**

opposes major CAFOs. The bill creates a “perverse incentive” to continue siting major CAFOs in Oregon at the expense of rural testimony.

At best, such digesters only capture the added methane generated by the development of factory farm systems, Van Saun said.

CAFOs should be required to trap their emissions if they choose to raise animals in this manner, rather than be paid for it by the public, said Amy Wong, policy director of the Friends of Family Farmers nonprofit.

Natural gas from factory farms is not “truly clean energy” and the state government should instead encourage pasture-based farming and technologies such as wind and solar electricity, Wong said.

“Oregon should not use public dollars to support large, private corporations at a time Oregon is facing a budget shortfall,” she said.

# PLC sets 2021 Legislative Conference

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**  
Capital Press



**Niels Hansen**

The Public Lands Council will hold its 2021 Legislative Conference virtually March 23-25 to give livestock producers an inside look at the federal policy-making process.

PLC volunteer leaders, staff and affiliates will conduct legislative strategy sessions and workshops on how to successfully advocate for the livestock industry in the nation’s capitol.

Attendees will hear from members of Congress, policy experts, scientists and other industry professionals who are dedicated to western lands, waters and perspectives. This also gives public lands ranchers the opportunity to catch up after a busy start to the year.

“This is always such a great event because it provides a chance for ranchers

to meet with members of Congress and agency officials as we work to develop policy and develop long-lasting friendships,” Niels Hansen, PLC president, said in a press release.

“I am excited to hear from our speakers and talk with PLC ranchers about the benefits that livestock grazing on public and private land have for our country,” he said.

Panel discussions will focus on how grazing facilitates opportunities for other multiple uses and how permittees help protect open spaces, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and promote biodiversity.

To register for the free event, visit [www.publilandscouncil.org](http://www.publilandscouncil.org).

# Speaker urges FFA members to lead environmental discussions

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File

SPOKANE — FFA members should devote one hour per week to advocating for agriculture as part of their college and business career path, a long-time forester says.

“Don’t fight the environmental discussion, lead it,” third-generation logger and author Bruce Vincent said. “We are the environmental answer to what America thinks are problems, but we can only do that if we lead the discussion.”

Vincent spoke during the Spokane Ag Show, held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He previously spoke to FFA members during the 2019 show.

Rural and urban residents have a “collision of visions,” Vincent said. “They want to save the environment,

and they have no idea what makes it work,” he said. “We love to consume, it’s just production we don’t like.”

The public has a desire to protect “the last best places,” Vincent said. “The most consumptive society on earth has fallen in love with the environment,” he said. “They demand rules and regulations to protect their environment and health. And who can blame them?”

Public policy is not defined by reality, but by the public perception of reality, he said.

Well-intentioned groups, causes and laws have been “bastardized” to the point where the “thin line between environmental sensitivity and environmental insanity” is being crossed, Vincent said.

Leaders hijacked the environmental movement by selling fear, not stewardship and conservation, he said. It’s now dependent upon conflict and things going wrong to make money, through 20-second sound bites and imagery without context.

# We have a new crop of materials for the Worker Protection Standard.

# Cattle industry to engage with new administration

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**  
Capital Press



The White House.

Courtesy White House

The cattle industry had some big regulatory wins during the Trump administration, including navigable water protections, revisions to the National Environmental Policy Act and delisting of the gray wolf.

And cattle producers are understandably nervous about losing those gains under the Biden administration.

“The industry needs to remind itself nothing is going to happen overnight, Colin Woodall, CEO of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, said during NCBA’s Winter Reboot virtual conference. “The president started off by signing a stack of executive orders ... but there’s only so much that he can do,” he said.

People are worried the Biden administration is “going to just wipe everything away with the

stroke of a pen,” said Ethan Lane, NCBA vice president of government affairs.

But if something took two or three years to get done in the first place, it’s going to take at least that long to undo it. The rulemaking process takes time, he said.

“The big stuff is going to take

years for it to really work its way through the system,” he said.

NCBA is building relationships in the new administration because even during the Trump administration, most of the industry’s big wins came in the last two years, Woodall said.

The Biden administration is

heavily focused on climate change, and there was a memo circulated among Biden’s transition team about how agriculture fits in that mix, he said.

“It was made very clear that they see agriculture as part of the solution to climate issues, not a part of the problem. And they even went one step further and tackled wildfires and talked a lot about how grazing is an important mitigation tool,” he said.

“It already has given us a seat at the table. The question is: Are we going to be able to maintain the administration’s position that we truly are a part of the solution?” he said.

It is incumbent upon the industry to do so, he said.

“This is ours to lose at this point,” Lane said.

The Biden administration has made it clear that conservation objectives can’t be accomplished without grazing and cattle produc-

tion, he said. “To hear that as affirmative recognition right out of the box from this administration really gives us an opportunity to engage,” he said.

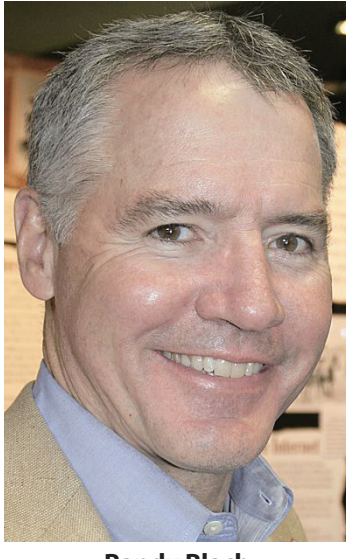
That engagement is not just in what else cattle producers can do but to educate the administration about what producers are already doing. That’s been a piece of the puzzle that’s kind of been missing until now, he said.

“Engaging with the new administration and helping them understand how we apply those technologies, how we apply that knowledge to improve conditions on the ground, how we produce the best beef in the world with the lowest environmental footprint is going to be really important to keep us in that conversation,” he said.

The conversation is going to happen with or without the industry, and cattle producers can’t afford to be absent from the discussion, he said.

# Analyst sees better times ahead for cattle producers

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**  
Capital Press



Randy Blach

Cattle producers have had a tough time over the last couple of years, but better times are ahead, according to one industry analyst.

The COVID-19 pandemic backed up nearly a million head of fed cattle last spring, Randy Blach, CEO of CattleFax, told the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association Winter Reboot conference last week.

“We’ve pretty much got the slaughter back on pace in here, but we’re still putting record tonnage through these systems,” he said.

That record tonnage is still testing the market, and markets are still underperforming. But fed prices have recovered from the \$95 per hundredweight last summer to about \$114 now, he said.

“So the markets have had a nice recovery, but there’s still significant potential above where we’re sitting today,” he said.

Drought has continued, and

the herd is continuing to contract. But cattle prices are still not where producers want them to be, he said.

With record packer and retail margins, cattle producers have been frustrated. But there’s also been record beef production since mid-June 2020, he said.

“This has been what’s holding us back to some degree,” he said.

Weather impacts in the last couple of weeks are going to shave some tonnage off markets, but there’s still plenty of cattle to harvest, he said.

“But there are better times to come,” he said.

Beef demand in 2020 was the strongest in over 30 years, and it’s going to be another strong year in 2021. The growth in beef demand has added more than \$250 a head to the value of fed cattle over the last several years, he said.

“So this has been pretty phenomenal,” he said.

Retail meat sales were up 10% in volume in 2020, even though foodservice sales were hammered. Retail meat sales were up 18% in value, an increase of nearly \$13 billion. Beef’s share of that increase was almost \$6 billion, he said.

“People voted with their pocketbooks. I think we’ve got to like what we see transpire here,” he said.

Despite higher unemployment, U.S. household wealth increased more than \$620 billion in 2020 due to government

support, he said. “As this economy opens back up again, people are going to want to get out and spend money,” he said.

He expects U.S. gross domestic product growth will be somewhere near 6% in 2021. Some of that will depend on how fast populations in the U.S. and other parts of the world are vaccinated. But he’s expecting two years of strong GDP growth post-COVID.

When the economy opens back up, job markets will improve and people are going to want to spend money, he said.

“The consumer balance sheet is in the strongest position it’s been since the early 2000s,” he said.

Government data would suggest U.S. household net worth has increased \$5 trillion.

“That bodes well for demand going forward,” he said. In the bigger picture, agricultural loan repayments are up, debt is down, land values have increased and global demand is strong, he said.

# Vilsack makes new appointments and policies that impact ag

By **SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN**  
Capital Press

WASHINGTON, D.C. — USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, after his confirmation by the Senate last Tuesday, is already moving forward with appointments and policies that will impact U.S. agriculture.

Monday morning, Vilsack spoke at the National Farmers Union Conference about his priorities.

“Rural America has been forgotten far too long,” he told attendees at the virtual conference.

This first full week in office, Vilsack said, he plans to talk with the Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development in Mexico and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in Canada about their commitments under the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, or USMCA. Vilsack said he will hold them accountable to their trade promises “to the letter.”

Vilsack also named two new USDA appointees: one to focus on fair markets, another to advise on racial equity.

For his senior adviser on fair and competitive markets, Vilsack picked Andy Green, previously a fellow at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank. Green will be responsible for handling antitrust issues, pushing for price discovery and fighting over-consolidation.

Before his work at the think tank, Green gave counsel to Kara Stein, former commissioner at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and worked as an aide to Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.

Vilsack’s pick for the adviser on racial equity was Dewayne Goldmon, an Arkansas farmer who served this past year as the executive director of the National Black Growers Council.

In his conference speech, Vilsack also announced the creation of an equity commission, which he said will “investigate USDA to identify and root out any systemic racism in our programs.”

Vilsack also reiterated a goal he’s referenced in other public speeches — his vision to create viable, voluntary, incentive-based carbon markets so that farmers can get paid to store carbon. He said USDA will soon be asking farmers for input on how to create these markets so that they will be “designed by farmers, for farmers.”

Vilsack said he is already working with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan to strengthen America’s ethanol industry, prioritizing small refinery biofuel waivers and weeding out larger companies that take unfair advantage of those waivers.

As Congress prepares to pass another major coronavirus relief package — this time, \$1.9 trillion — Vilsack said USDA will take time to “figure out who was left out, who wasn’t supported adequately last time” and prioritize those farmers and commodities this time around.

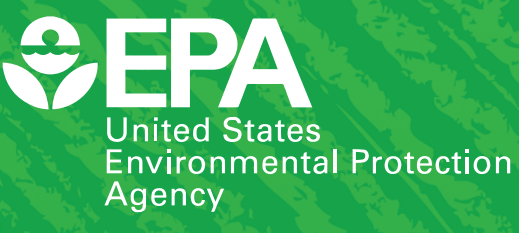
“The goal is, when all is said and done, everyone in the supply chain gets a fair shot at the resources,” he said.

Over the next few weeks, Vilsack said his agency will also reach out to state governors to reiterate the importance of giving essential workers, including farmers, farmworkers and processing plant workers, early priority for COVID-19 vaccination.

Vilsack also looked ahead to goals for the future. These included hiring more USDA staff nationwide, expanding rural healthcare and broadband internet and creating markets for farm waste, such as new fertilizers.



Tom Vilsack



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