

## People &amp; Places

## Creating 'chemoscape' pastures

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN  
Capital Press

MONMOUTH, Ore. — Some farmers believe forage is more than salad — it's also medicine.

Grazing experts say Jon Bansen, an Oregon dairy farmer, is pushing the boundaries of pasture management — including harnessing natural medicinal properties of forages to boost animal and environmental health.

Bansen, 57, manages a 600-acre farm with more than 200 dairy cows and speaks in Oregon State University classes.

Bansen has been experimenting with pasture mixes for more than two decades, and he's lately been innovating with chemical landscapes known as "chemoscapes."

"I think that this is a highly innovative pasture management system," said Serkan Ates, OSU assistant professor of livestock and forage systems.

A chemoscape works like this.

Plants have primary and secondary metabolisms. The primary metabolism is involved in growth and development, and the main metabolites produced are carbohydrates and proteins.

The secondary metabolism involves a plant's defense against environmental stresses. Plant secondary metabolites, or PSM, such as tannins and terpenes, often have natural medicinal prop-



David Nevala/Organic Valley

Julianne and Jon Bansen on their farm near Monmouth, Ore.

erties with the potential to enhance livestock production.

Different plants produce different PSMs. Chicory is a de-wormer, plantain helps reduce nitrogen concentration in urine and some forb varieties lead to fewer mastitis cases.

Growing plants with varying types and concentrations of PSMs creates a diverse array of medicinal chemicals in the landscape — thus the name "chemoscape."

Researchers say that in most animal grazing systems, farmers focus feeding efforts "almost exclusively" on primary metabolites — planting forages high in protein, for instance.

What's often overlooked in grazing, experts say, is the potential to use secondary metabolites at appropriate doses to provide medicinal benefits to animals.

And that is where Bansen shines.

He has seeded plant varieties intended to boost his dairy cows' immune systems. Over time, he said, the improved forage mixes have lifted his profits, increased organic matter in his soil and led to cows with fewer health problems.

"It's hard to stick your finger on it and say: 'This is exactly when our cows gave us less trouble with this or that.' But we've seen big

changes over time," he said.

Some plants work together synergistically. For example, it takes multiple plants' bio-chemicals working together to kill cattle ticks.

On his farm, Bansen has tested many plant interactions.

"Biology's a concert," he said. "The plants are in concert amongst themselves."

Classical music was playing from his truck.

Bansen also is strategic about pasture flavor profiles.

"Ruminants don't want to eat the same darn forage every day of their lives," said Bansen.

He sometimes uses flavors to sway cow behavior.

Cows don't like the bit-



Western  
Innovator

JON BANSEN

Age: 57

Hometown: Ferndale, Calif.

Family: Wife, Julianne, and four children

Occupation: Runs Double J Jerseys Inc., Monmouth, Ore.; an owner-member of Organic Valley

Education: Biology degree from Dana College in Blair, Neb.

ter taste of curly dock, for example, so it often grows unchecked. To prompt his cows to eat curly dock, Bansen planted plantain and chicory alongside it to offset curly dock's bitterness. It worked.

"Training cows to eat weeds seems like a crack-a-doodle-dandy idea until you try it," said Bansen.

Ates, the OSU researcher, said while chemoscaping is rare in the U.S., he's excited it's catching on.

"Jon is more advanced than many of us in trying new ideas," he said.

## Co-op celebrates 100 years in business

By CRAIG REED

For the Capital Press

ROSEBURG, Ore. — Adapting to its customers' needs through the years.

Melvin Burke, the general manager of the Douglas County Farmers Co-op, said that's been the key to the cooperative reaching its 100-year anniversary this month. Burke has been the general manager of the Roseburg-based business for the past 19 years.

"There's not very many businesses that can talk about and celebrate 100 years," said Burke. "It's just a good success story. There have been years that were lean, but through loyal customers the co-op has been able to survive. We're going to celebrate that success and that 100-year milestone all year."

It was back in 1921 that a handful of Douglas County farmers decided a cooperative would get them a better response when ordering seed, livestock feed, fertilizer and equipment. They figured ordering in bulk would also save them some money. The co-op was named the Douglas County Farm Bureau Cooperative Exchange.



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

**Douglas County Farmers Co-op General Manager Melvin Burke says the business has survived for 100 years because of its ability to adapt to customers' needs. Burke has been the co-op's general manager for the past 19 years.**

It proved to be a successful venture.

While there have been ups and downs through the years, today the Roseburg-based business, now known as the Douglas County Farmers Co-op, continues to be viable. It had sales of \$20.7 million in 2018, \$21.7 million in 2019 and \$22.9 million in 2020.

The co-op has proven to be a survivor, having endured the Great Depression, World War II, the Roseburg Blast in 1959, major floods and snowstorms in

the county and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

The blast leveled the co-op's building on Southeast Washington Avenue. The business re-opened three days later at three temporary sites. A year later, the co-op returned to its newly constructed building on Southeast Washington Avenue.

The co-op expanded in 1977 by opening a fertilizer storage and sales facility in Wilbur, Ore. Further expansion followed when 5 acres alongside Northeast Stephens Street in

Roseburg was purchased. A 24,000-square-foot store, convenience store, deli and fuel station were built and opened to the public in 2003.

In 2013, the co-op expanded into Winston, Ore., leasing what had previously been a hardware store. The positive customer response to that store led the co-op to purchase 4.7 acres on the west edge of Winston. Plans call for ground breaking and the start of construction this month on a 16,000-square-foot retail store, a 5,800-square-foot convenience store and deli and fuel station.

While the co-op was started by farmers and focused on their specific needs, the business' inventory has broadened through the years and so has the store's visitors. In addition to large and small farm and ranch owners, the co-op caters to those who work in their yards and gardens.

Douglas County Farmers Co-op has almost 6,000 members, but it is open to anybody who is in need of livestock and pet supplies, lawn and garden supplies, hardware, plumbing and irrigation products, seed and fertilizer, fence materials and apparel.

The membership fee is \$50. Members receive an annual financial return based on their purchases and the co-op's net profitability. In 2020, \$169,000 was returned to members.

Helping the co-op's management staff make decisions is the board of directors. They are chairman Guy Kennerly, vice chair Kurt Spencer, secretary Troy Michaels, Richard Holcomb and George Sandberg. All five are involved in agriculture in Douglas County.

Burke said the co-op has made changes in its product inventory according to the needs of customers.

"We know what customers are willing to buy from us and we have to have those products when they are wanted and at a competitive, affordable price," he said.

Burke said many of the co-op's 104 employees are livestock owners, farmers or gardeners themselves so they can provide valuable advice from their own experiences.

"Our loyal customers and employees have helped us be here for 100 years and we're going to be here for the long term," Burke said. "Without either of them we wouldn't be in business."

## Raybould elected as Potatoes USA board chairman

The Potatoes USA board at its March 11 meeting elected Jaren Raybould of St. Anthony, Idaho, as chairman.

He previously served as first vice chairman and acting chairman following the unexpected death of Chairman Marty Myers in December.

Raybould is in his sixth year on the board. He co-chaired its Domestic Marketing Committee for three



Jaren Raybould

years and served on the Administrative Committee.

He has been managing member of Raybould Brothers

Farms since 2003. He grows Russet Burbank and Norkotah potatoes for retail and sup-

plies Five Guys restaurants. He serves on the Yellowstone Soil Conservation District board and Idaho-Eastern Oregon Potato Committee.

"I get to be part of something bigger than myself and witness the day-to-day miracle of growing and raising potatoes that feed thousands of families across the country," Raybould said in a Potatoes USA news release. "The

work I do wouldn't be the same without the phenomenal individuals that are involved in the potato industry. Everyone is independent, competitive and innovative."

As board chair, he said he will prioritize restoring demand to pre-pandemic levels. He said he believes that by continuing to adapt the organization's marketing programs, the industry will con-

tinue to discover new ways to encourage people around the world to eat more U.S. potatoes.

Raybould said he plans to encourage the industry to continue to adapt to meet changing market needs.

Potatoes USA is the national marketing and promotion board for the 2,500 potato farming families operating in the U.S.

## CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on [www.capitalpress.com](http://www.capitalpress.com) or by email to [newsroom@capitalpress.com](mailto:newsroom@capitalpress.com).

**SATURDAY APRIL 10**  
101st Annual California Ram

**Sale:** 9 a.m., 4500 S. Laspinia St., Tulare, Calif. The California Wool Growers Association will host the 101st Annual California Ram Sale on Saturday, April 10, at the International Agri-Center in Tulare, Calif. Ram sale information, including the sale catalog, schedule, lodging information and directions are is

available on the CWGA website at [www.californiawoolgrowers.org](http://www.californiawoolgrowers.org). To request a Ram Sale Catalog, contact the CWGA office at 916-444-8122 or [info@woolgrowers.org](mailto:info@woolgrowers.org)

**FRIDAY, APRIL 16**  
AgForestry Leadership Class  
41 Graduation: 5 p.m. Red Lion Hotel, Wenatchee, Wash. Celebrate the graduation of AgForestry Leadership Class 41. This celebration was rescheduled from its origination April 10 date. Table sponsorships are available. Cost: \$60/adults, \$20/child. Website: <http://agforestry.org/graduation-class-41/>

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY**  
APRIL 23-25  
Oregon Ag Fest (drive-thru): 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Clackamas County Event Center, 694 NE Fourth Ave., Canby, Ore. Join us for the Drive Thru Ag Fest to experience the incredible world of Oregon agriculture, in a fun-filled, drive thru environment, and leave our event with an "Ag-venture" kit filled with activities, seedlings and more to continue the fun at home. The three-day event, aimed to help families

better understand where their food, fiber and flora come from, is a unique learning experience, where drive-by exhibits make learning about Oregon's vast agricultural industry educational and entertaining. Tickets are \$22 per vehicle and are available online at <https://orag-fest.com/>

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY**  
MAY 14-16  
California FFA's 93rd State Leadership Conference (online): This year California FFA members from all corners of the state will

have access to the premier leadership event offered by our association it will be delivered through a multi-faceted online platform. The conference will be three days jam packed with learning, growth and inspiration. Website: [www.cal-aged.org](http://www.cal-aged.org)

**MONDAY-THURSDAY**  
MAY 24-27  
Natural Products Expo West (online): Virtual presentations and an online trade show focusing on natural products and foods. Website: [www.expowest.com/](http://www.expowest.com/)



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