

Impact: Order has received mixed responses from food sector

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competitors.

• Ordered USDA to report on market concentration in seeds and other agricultural inputs with the intent that giants like Bayer and Syngenta won't charge unfair prices.

Following the order, USDA announced it will offer \$500 million in grants, loans and other assistance to help new meat and poul-

try processors enter the market, along with \$155 million invested in existing processors.

The order received a mixed response from the food sector.

Ethan Lane, vice president of government affairs at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, called the order "a vital next step toward securing a steady beef supply chain and increasing opportuni-

ties for profitability for our producers."

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall thanked Biden for the order, specifically for the supply chain and machinery repair provisions, but added his team would "closely examine" all potential impacts.

Scott Bennett, congressional relations director, said AFBF is "very supportive" of investments in meatpacking capacity and excited for

additional clarity on "Product of USA" labels. He said rules about non-competitive agreements could be good as long as they don't unintentionally hurt specific livestock sectors.

Julie Anna Potts, CEO of the North American Meat Institute, which represents processors, warned the new regulations would have "unintended consequences for consumers and producers," potentially increasing

the cost of food and opening floodgates for litigation.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce was also critical. "Our economy needs both large and small businesses to thrive — not centralized government dictates," the chamber said in a release. "In many industries, size and scale are important not only to compete, but also to justify massive levels of investment."

Jim Monroe, spokes-

man for the National Pork Producers Council, said it would be premature to comment on Biden's order until USDA has proposed specific rules.

He did say, however, NPPC "generally opposes any regulations that interfere with pork producer rights to freely enter contractual relationships." Monroe said he can't speculate yet whether Biden's order will interfere with contracts.

Wine: 'If your wine is not world-class, they are not going to buy it'

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High quality

Though their numbers are small, Idaho winemakers have big goals.

Gregg Alger of Huston Vineyards in southwest Idaho said the state is producing "world-class" wines and "can compete on a world level."

He said the industry is benefiting as much from its commitment to quality as from the state's population gains — the populace is up 17.3% in the past decade.

"You could have all the people in the world come. If your wine is not world-class, they are not going to buy it," he said.

Martin Fujishin of Fujishin Family Cellars and Free Dog Winery said more grapes are being planted, "and some of the old vineyards are now being repurposed into newer varieties, which is really helping to propel the industry forward."

A shift from white varieties to red is "driven by consumer demand for new and more well-suited varieties for our region than what we had seen previously," he said.

Hawkins said of his just-added site: "In 1978, when they put that vineyard in, the thought probably was that the Idaho climate was better for white, with a bit shorter growing season" compared to some other regions.

"We have proven with our vineyard next to it that this is ideal" for reds, he said.

Ron Bitner of Bitner Vineyards grows 14.5 acres of his own grapes and 45 acres for another owner. He has done some replanting and white-to-red shifting at both sites in the Caldwell-Marsing area, though more than half his client's ground remains in white grapes.

White grapes drove much of the growth of Ste. Chapelle into Idaho's largest winery. The Symms family sold it in the late 1990s.

"Dad had been to Germany," Dar Symms said of his father, Dick Symms, who died a year ago. "He really felt we could make great white wines here. ... He thought ours was a similar climate to parts of the Rhine in Germany, where they grew great Johannisburg Rieslings."

Ste. Chapelle's 1978 building near Marsing was designed to produce 10,000 cases, "and by the early 1980s, we were at 100,000," prompting an expansion, Dar Symms said.

In 2012, Seattle-based Precept Wine acquired Ste. Chapelle from Ascencia Wine Estates of Healdsburg, Calif. Ste. Chapelle says on its



Martin Fujishin



Melanie Krause



Gregg Alger of Huston Vineyards near Caldwell, Idaho.

Huston Vineyards



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Bee scientist Ron Bitner, of Bitner Vineyards outside Caldwell, Idaho, for years has worked on the industry's promotion and research sides.

website that its annual production capacity is now 150,000 cases.

In 2010, Precept acquired the Corus Estates & Vineyards brands including the Sawtooth Winery in Nampa, the state's second-largest winery.

The Baty family owns Winemakers LLC, Precept, and the Sawtooth and Skyline vineyards. The vineyards, both in Nampa, are 400 acres combined and are the major suppliers to Ste. Chapelle, Sawtooth and many other Idaho wineries, viticulturist and vineyard manager Jake Cragin said.

"The general trend of the industry in Idaho is that we're not seeing whites taken out — but as new vineyards go in and new acreage is planted, people are putting in reds," Cragin said. His team plans to add some red grapes in 2022 and "a lot" of new acres of whites in 2023, he

said. "We are seeing a need for some more whites."

Melanie Krause, winemaker and co-owner at Cinder Winery in Garden City, said she sees a trend toward "planting new acres with new or relatively new varieties for the Snake River Valley, plus a lot of the old classics."

"We are starting to see those plantings come to fruition," she said. "We are particularly excited about the potential of wines getting even better over the next few years."

Seeing red

Other growers continue to see red — grapes, that is.

James and Sydney Nederend own Scoria Vineyards and Koenig Vineyards in southwest Idaho.

"Our vines at both locations are thriving, and we will remain as



Courtesy of James and Sydney Nederend
James and Sydney Nederend of Koenig Vineyards and Scoria Vineyards.

red-focused brands," James Nederend said.

At Scoria this year, they added 6 acres of Syrah, 1.5 acres of Mourvèdre and a half-acre of Grenache, all reds. White grapes "wouldn't fare well in our sandy, rocky soil and warm vineyard site," James said.

They have not added vineyard acres at Koenig, where "we are continuing to focus on our core offerings of Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon while increasing production of Italian varieties like Nebbiolo from the exceptional Lanae Ridge Vineyard," he said. All are reds.

Williamson Orchards & Vineyards in 2018 increased planted acres from 55 to 70. Co-owner and vineyard manager Mike Williamson said plantings typically do not produce the first year.

"In the second year, you can

get some production sometimes, depending on how the plants do," he said. "In years three and four, you are getting close to full production."

Good conditions

IWC says grapes benefit from Idaho's hot days and cool nights that balance acids and sugars, limited rain, and cold winters that promote gradual dormancy while limiting pest and disease pressure.

Bitner, a longtime grape grower, has one of 22 vineyard-sited weather stations in Idaho. The Boise State University-led project started about six years ago. Stations track wind, sunlight, rainfall, temperature and barometric pressure as well as soil moisture and temperature.

Stations track differences in daily high and low temperatures, and their accumulated growing-degree days.

"And with this information, the models can help predict pest hatches of different kinds," Bitner said.

The system helps current and prospective grape growers track a site's seasonal weather patterns to optimize farming decisions.

Hawkins, who is retired from Boise's technology sector, said the wine industry is benefiting from the high-tech weather stations.

"If there was concern our growing season was not long enough, we've kind of dispelled that now," he said.

For example, Hawkins said, if growers had access to similar weather stations in past decades, more of them may have planted red grapes rather than earlier-maturing whites.

Endangered: Marbled murrelets were listed as threatened in 1992

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across its nesting habitat.

"We're relieved that after so many missteps, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will finally move forward with extending marbled murrelets the full protection of endangered status under state law," said Quinn Read, Oregon policy director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Opponents countered that uplisting was not warranted, with current protections in place that have led to modest gains in both marbled murrelet habitat and population.

Marbled murrelets were listed as threatened under the federal ESA in 1992, and listed as threatened by ODFW in 1995.

ODFW staff recommended against uplisting the species, pointing to data in its latest biological assessment that shows marbled murrelet populations increased roughly 2.2% per year between 2000 and 2019.

High-probability nesting habitat also increased from 1993 to 2017, according to the assessment, from 471,220 acres to 517,686 acres, or 9.9%.

Sara Duncan, spokeswoman for the Oregon Forest and Industries Council, a trade group representing private forestland owners and timber companies, said the commission's decision "flies in the face of reality and is a slap in the face for rural Oregonians who

have made decades of costly investments to protect species at the expense of their livelihoods."

"The only conclusion one can draw about a decision to designate a species whose population is increasing as 'endangered' is that it had everything to do with politics and absolutely nothing to do with science," Duncan said in a statement.

Seth Barnes, director of forest policy for the OFIC, testified during the commission's virtual meeting, saying that acreage taken out of timber production and set aside for species habitat over the last two decades "have only just begun to show their early returns."

John Sweet, a Coos County commissioner and

vice chairman of the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties, specified more than 3 million acres of state and federal forestland that has been taken out of timber production, impacting rural coastal communities.

"Keep in mind, this has been at the cost of some of our other populations, our family and children, who too often live in poverty due to lack of job opportunity," Sweet said during his testimony.

However, the same biological assessment conducted by ODFW also suggested future threats such as climate change, adverse ocean conditions, predation and oil spills could put the bird at greater jeopardy.

"Under the best of situ-

ations," the agency wrote, "a small population may be able to sustain itself, but if the cumulative effects or even a single catastrophic event occurs, a smaller population may be unable to recover to previous levels."

That is especially true for a species like the marbled murrelet, according to ODFW. Marbled murrelets do not breed every year, and when they do, they lay only a single egg, meaning populations may not be able to recover from catastrophe quickly or easily.

"There's nothing theoretical about the kind of catastrophe that could doom marbled murrelets to extinction," Read said. "We have to act now."

Risti Kamal, senior representative for the Northwest Program at Defenders of Wildlife, said the uplisting decision was a long time coming.

"Marbled murrelets face significant habitat loss due to excessive logging, and warming ocean waters due to climate change is impacting the species ability to forage and nest," Kamal said. "We applaud the commission for taking a big step in the right direction, which will give this species a much-needed opportunity to recover in the state."

As part of the uplisting requirements, the Fish and Wildlife Commission also voted 5-1 to adopt amended survival guidelines as proposed by staff.