

Rates: ‘I think the demand for land ... is really driving the price’

Continued from Page 1

“I think the demand for land in the Willamette Valley is really driving the price,” he said.

Rental prices per acre exceed state averages in some agritourism and specialty crop regions, including Hood River, where prices this year are \$717 per acre.

The contrasting drop in

rental costs for non-irrigated cropland can be attributed in part to low-yield expectations for dryland crops.

“I think drought plays a part in it, too,” said Losh.

According to the University of Nebraska’s Center for Agricultural Profitability, drought can hold down the price of non-irrigated cropland, which relies on rainfall.

In Washington, the aver-

age cropland rental expense is \$222 per acre for 2021, up \$15 — or a 7% increase — from 2020.

Irrigated Washington cropland, estimated at \$395 per acre this year, is up \$5. Non-irrigated cropland, in contrast, is down \$5 from \$80 per acre last year to \$75 this year.

In Idaho, cash rent expenses for all cropland

are at \$180 per acre, up \$9 per acre from 2020. Irrigated cropland is up \$11 per acre in price this year, at \$236, while non-irrigated cropland rental, at \$63 per acre, is up \$1 per acre from last year.

“(Higher prices are) not a surprise,” said Sean Ellis, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation spokesman. “It’s not welcome news, but it’s not a surprise either.”

As with Oregon, experts say drought, markets and demand for irrigated farmland have impacted rental price changes in Washington and Idaho.

Pastureland

This year’s pasture cash rent expense in Idaho is estimated at \$13 per acre, up \$1 from 2020.

Washington producers are

paying \$8 per acre for pasture rent, unchanged from 2020.

Oregon has seen a decrease in pasture rental costs: from \$15 per acre in 2020 to \$11 per acre in 2021. Losh, of USDA, said this can likely be attributed to a decrease in the number of dairy cows and dairy farms in Oregon along with drought making pastures less productive.

Duvall: Q&A with the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation

Continued from Page 1

First elected in 2016, he expects to run for a new term as president in January at the organization’s annual convention in Atlanta.

Duvall spoke with the Capital Press about the Snake River dams and other topics important to farmers, including a new Farm Bill, climate change and farm labor.

The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Capital Press: What odds would you give any proposal to remove the Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor dams on the Snake River? Is it 100%? Zero? Somewhere in between?

Duvall: I think it’s somewhere in between. I would hope people evaluate the value those dams have, carrying agricultural products out to the rest of the world or to bring inputs up to the farm so they can grow those products.

And (they can) also evaluate the intense work they have done to protect the movement of fish up and down that river, through fish ladders and all the ways they’ve helped make that successful.

CP: Did you learn anything new about the dams?

Duvall: I had no idea that 10% of all U.S. agricultural exports went down that river, and I had absolutely no idea of the extent they went to to make sure that salmon could come up the river, and the juvenile fish could return back out to the ocean.

CP: Lasting impressions from your visit?

Duvall: Here in Washington (D.C.), we have a lot of discussion around climate and policy. We talk about climate-smart farming, renewable energy, electric vehicles.

Just to think, in all that discussion that’s really dominating the conversation here in town, that we would on the side have a conversation about tearing out dams that have been very successful in protecting the fish flow, and adding 150,000 trucks to the road or over 30,000 train cars to haul the same agricultural products down to the river that are being barged right now. Who knows what it would take to bring inputs back up the river?

It just seems like we’re saying one thing about climate on one hand, and turning around and trying to do something just as detrimental on the other hand. That just doesn’t make sense to me.

CP: What priority do you give crop insurance in the Farm Bill?

Duvall: Crop insurance



American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall



Zippy Duvall, left, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, views juvenile fall chinook salmon June 16 as part of the tour of the Lower Granite Dam.

is the cornerstone of our Farm Bill. ... It is vital that we continue to make crop insurance a strong piece of the next Farm Bill, and look for ways that we might improve it.

CP: Other Farm Bill priorities?

Duvall: We continue to see disasters across the country, and to find some way to be able to react faster. The hurricane that came through the southeast and through my home state, it took almost 18 months or two years for farmers to get some relief from that disaster. A lot of those farmers were already out of business because of the disaster before they even got any kind of help. When you have a disaster, you need help then, not two years later.

CP: What’s the best thing the Biden administration is doing, and the worst thing?

Duvall: They’re doing a

good job of listening to us. If you look at some of the things they’ve drafted, like “30 by 30” (the plan highlights the role agriculture and forestry can play in countering climate change) and some of the executive orders that came out (in July), all of those are our talking points. Not all of them, but they’ve had a huge influence on the wording and principles in some of those documents.

Of course we all understand that the devils are always in the details, and those documents are very broad, so we’re waiting to ... make sure they continue on the right road that fits our policy and takes agriculture in a positive direction.

I’d say them listening is a good thing. I think the appointment of Secretary (Tom) Vilsack was an absolutely brilliant selection. ... If anyone can walk into a problem, put it to work and get it done, he can. ...

Now my concerns, on the other hand, are WOTUS, the Waters of the United States, and the repeal of the Navigable Waters Protection Rule. We worked really hard with the previous administration to make sure we got rid of a rule that was so complicated that farmers and ranchers had to hire lawyers and consultants to be able to stay within that rule. ... To think they’re going to repeal it gives us great concern.

The second big concern is how are they going to pay for all the money they’re investing into infrastructure for pandemic relief? We know that’s got to be done in taxes, and the direction they’re taking taxes in, talking about doing away with stepped-up basis and making capital gains payable at death, would be terribly destructive to our family farms. We would not be able to pass our farms on to the next generation and be able to continue to produce the food and fiber for this country and a lot of the world.

I know there’s some talk about a cut for agriculture, but that’s just putting that tax liability off to a later generation. We need to make sure the food security of this country is protected by going in and handling the situation and making sure stepped-up basis is always there.

CP: What do you see regarding climate legislation?

Duvall: We have been really involved in that. We knew that regardless of who won the presidential election, Capitol Hill was going to have a discussion about

climate. So we kind of tackled this from a little different direction and partnered up with some other organizations that sometimes we don’t really agree with.

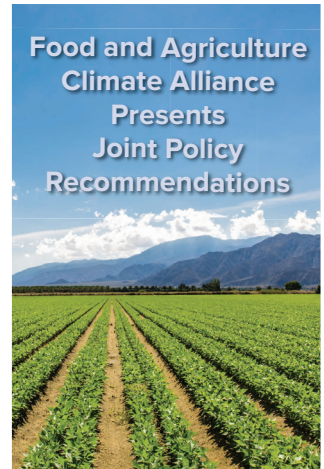
Some environmental, food, forestry and agriculture groups got together and created an alliance, the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance. ... We agreed on three different principles, and from those principles, we developed 40 recommendations that are all supported by our Farm Bureau policy developed by our farmers and ranchers. That process generated those recommendations that went to Capitol Hill, and actually have dominated the conversation. ...

So there is a way to find common ground, and there is a way to lead the conversation. So far we’ve been very successful, and we hope to be able to continue that, especially as they start implementing things.

CP: Are farmers today better off than they were five to 10 years ago?

Duvall: In 2011, we were approaching a couple of seasons of the highest commodity prices we’ve had on record. Ten years ago, we were coming into some good times, and right now grain prices are up, so we have come into some better times now.

The tools we have at our fingertips are a lot better than they were 10 years ago — the traits we have in our seeds, the ability to conserve water, the ability to do precision agriculture is so much better than it was 10 years ago.



That brings me to another concern — the lack of broadband (high-speed internet). We have to seize the moment with all this discussion around broadband, bringing it to our rural communities for education and health-care. We need to make sure we reach outside of our urban communities into the rural parts of our country so farmers and ranchers can utilize the technologies coming to them that are going to require broadband, so they can collect the data and make smart decisions whether planting, taking care of, harvesting or marketing crops.

As an organization, we depend on our grassroots to be engaged, telling their story across their community to their neighbors that aren’t involved in agriculture, but also communicating with congressmen and senators. ...

Today, (compared to) 10 years ago, our farmers and ranchers are in tractors and barns toting smart phones. Within the matter of just a minute, they can make that communication. I think we’re in a lot better position to be more engaged than we ever have been.

CP: Anything else?

Duvall: Farm labor is the biggest limiting factor agriculture has. Not just agriculture, but small businesses across America. We have to create an environment where people want to go back to work. We’ve already discovered over the last two decades that Americans don’t go to school and college to come home and work on a farm.

We have to have some way for people here who want to work and don’t mind working on a farm. That means a guestworker program that works for farmers who are employers and employees who want to come here and work for us, that’s fair to both. Fair to the farmer that he can continue to stay in business and provide that job, and fair to the worker, because that’s the right thing to do. And something that fits year-round agriculture.

Grazing: Ruling leaves open the possibility that new landowner may be entitled to grazing preference

Continued from Page 1

After the U.S. Bureau of Land Management refused to renew their grazing permit, Mike and Linda Hanley of Jordan Valley, Ore., leased their 1,900-acre private ranch to their daughter and son-in-law, Martha and John Corrigan.

However, in 2017 the BLM refused to issue the Corrigan a permit to graze cattle on about 30,000 acres of nearby federal allotments across the border in Idaho.

The agency decided the Oregon base property had lost its grazing preference when the Hanley permit

wasn’t renewed, which both couples challenged in federal court.

The BLM’s decision raised an alarm among ranch organizations, such as the Owyhee Cattlemen’s Association and Idaho Cattlemen’s Association.

The groups argued the agency’s interpretation undermines due process rights and “threatens to subvert the entire system of public land livestock grazing.”

The 9th Circuit has now upheld a court ruling that determined BLM’s actions were consistent with the Taylor Grazing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Man-

agement Act, which govern public allotments.

“After a permit expires, a former permittee does not retain any preference to stand first in line for a future permit,” the 9th Circuit said.

The Hanleys and Corrigan are “disappointed” in the ruling and believe the 9th Circuit “missed the mark,” though they’ve not yet discussed the next steps, said Alan Schroeder, the family’s attorney.

The 9th Circuit said its ruling leaves open the possibility that a new landowner may still be entitled to a grazing preference after buying base property from a rancher

whose permit was terminated.

If that’s the case, it’s unclear why Hanley and Corrigan’s situation is being treated differently, since the permit wasn’t renewed without being explicitly canceled, Schroeder said.

“Either the preference is attached to base property or it is not. You cannot have it both ways,” he said. “The Ninth Circuit erroneously claims you can have both ways, in my view.”

According to the ruling, Congress would have made clear if the relevant statutes required a separate cancellation procedure for grazing preferences.

“Ranchers fail to offer any textually grounded explanation of how a former permittee whose permit expired and was not renewed for bad behavior could exercise a preference,” the 9th Circuit said.

The idea that a grazing preference remains attached to the base property as a “stand-alone interest” is legally incorrect, since BLM’s “discretion over public lands supersedes any preference right,” the ruling said.

The government rightly concluded that “with no valid permit, there was no preference to transfer, irrespective

of who controlled the base property,” the 9th Circuit said.

If base properties had a “non-expiring” priority to new permits, that would contravene the Taylor Grazing Act’s purpose of protecting public lands from overgrazing and soil deterioration, the ruling said.

“It would empower those private parties who have acted in a manner that causes damage to the lands to reserve certain grazing privileges, even after the agency has determined that their bad behavior justifies denying them the privileges of receiving new grazing permits,” the 9th Circuit said.