

People & Places

Dairy rep looks ahead after ‘rough year’

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

ELMA, Wash. — Washington dairy farmers are “shellshocked,” says Jay Gordon, policy director of the Washington State Dairy Federation.

In the past 12 months this has happened to Washington dairies:

Five judges decreed dairies will pay overtime.

Three judges said dairies weren’t regulated enough by the Washington Department of Ecology.

Three judges said dairies that were allegedly misled by the Environmental Protection Agency waited too long to sue. The case was dismissed while in the starting blocks.

Plus, dairies and other farm groups lost the legislative battle over a low-carbon fuel standard and cap-and-trade. The two climate laws will raise the cost of fossil fuels and transfer more money from businesses to government.

“We’ve had a rough year,” Gordon said.

“I think we’re going to have to get louder. If you want agriculture here, if you want farmers to invest, if you want the next generation to make farming their career, you can’t keep having costs added with no new revenue.”

Gordon, 60, farms the 480 acres his great-great-grandfather came from Kentucky in 1872 to farm. Not by coincidence, the dairy federation’s office is 3 miles away in Elma, a town 30 miles west of Olympia.

For decades, the farm was a dairy. Gordon’s grandfather closed the dairy in 1970s. Jay Gordon, armed with degree in dairy science from Oregon State University, suggested restarting the dairy in the 1980s.

“My grandfather cussed



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington farmer Jay Gordon, policy director for the Washington State Dairy Federation, samples a watermelon he grew on his farm 30 miles west of Olympia.

me up one side and down the other, viciously,” Gordon recalled.

By the late 1980s, Gordon was in charge and reopened the dairy and ran it for 30 years before getting out, too.

He grows feed corn and sweet corn, and alfalfa. He cultivates produce for a roadside stand and pumpkins for U-pick. He belongs to a new cooperative experimenting with growing malted barley. He tried hemp; the plants grew, but the market shriveled.

As policy director of the dairy federation, he’s a lobbyist. He got into lobbying by accident, he said.

As a young farmer, he got involved in conservation districts at the state level. When something came up in the Legislature, he was closer than the other farmers, so he put on a tie and drove 30 minutes to testify at the Capitol.

He became the dairy federation’s director in 2000

and has been representing dairies ever since. A few years ago, he swapped positions with Dan Wood. Wood became executive director, and Gordon became policy director.

Like farming, lobbying has rhythms and seasons, he said.

“It’s a lot like farming. You plow the ground. You get it fertilized. You plant seeds. You tend it. And hopefully you get a harvest,” he said.

The dairy federation was founded in 1892. Gordon said the earliest mission statement he can find for it was, “Keep an eye on the Legislature.” The mission remains the same, though government agencies and courts bear watching, too.

Especially courts, lately. It’s been almost a year since the Washington Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that dairies must pay overtime. The ruling effectively applied to all of agriculture. Other states, including

California, have removed agriculture’s exemption from paying overtime wages. No other state, however, abruptly changed the law by a one-judge majority.

With the decision came an indictment of agriculture from Justice Steven Gonzalez, now chief justice of the Washington Supreme Court. Gonzalez wrote that farmworkers were “impoverished,” “socially excluded” and “subjugated to second-class worker status.”

He blamed racism for agriculture’s historic exemption from overtime laws, likened adult farmworkers to vulnerable children and opined the decision should be retroactive, exposing farms to back-pay lawsuits.

Gonzalez’s opinion was an add-on to the court’s majority opinion.

“The word ‘arrogant’ is an understatement,” Gordon said.

After the ruling, farm lobbyists persuaded lawmakers to bar the back-pay claims



Western Innovator

JAY GORDON

Age: 60

Position: Farmer and Washington State Dairy Federation policy director

Education: Degree in dairy science, Oregon State University

and to phase in overtime for the rest of agriculture.

Lawmakers declined to follow some other states and suspend overtime pay for limited times during peak harvest seasons. The issue likely will be revisited in future sessions. “To remain competitive, I hope the Legislature will see we need a seasonality provision,” Gordon said.

Farm groups in the past session also fought a losing battle against low-carbon fuel mandates and cap-and-trade.

It’s time to move on from that debate, Gordon said. “The voting is over.”

The question now is: Can farmers profit from climate policies?

Gordon said he hopes so. The carbon-reduction laws create a demand for renewable energy and carbon sequestration, which are both commodities, like milk. And dairies can provide both if they pay off, Gordon said.

“I’d like it be a profitable stream,” he said. “We’ve got to deal with how to get back to being competitive, and it’s going to be a struggle.”



Capital Press
EMPOWERING PRODUCERS OF FOOD & FIBER
Established 1928

Capital Press Managers

Joe Beach Editor & Publisher
Anne Long Advertising Director
Carl Sampson Managing Editor
Samantha McLarenCirculation Manager

Entire contents copyright © 2021
EO Media Group
dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper
published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is
published weekly by EO Media Group,
2870 Broadway NE, Salem OR 97303.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR,
and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to
Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR
97308-2048.

To Reach Us

Circulation.....800-781-3214
Email.....Circulation@capitalpress.com
Main line503-364-4431

News Staff

Idaho

Carol Ryan Dumas208-860-3898

Boise

Brad Carlson208-914-8264

Western Washington

Don Jenkins.....360-722-6975

Eastern Washington

Matthew Weaver509-688-9923

Oregon

George Plaven406-560-1655
Mateusz Perkowski800-882-6789
Sierra Dawn McClain503-506-8011

Designer

Randy Wrighthouse.....800-882-6789

To Place Classified Ads

Telephone (toll free).....800-882-6789
OnlineCapitalPress.com/classifieds

Subscriptions

Mail rates paid in advance
Easy Pay U.S. \$4 /month
(direct withdrawal from bank
or credit card account)

1 year U.S.\$ 65
2 years U.S.\$115
1 year Canada.....\$230
1 year other countriescall for quote
1 year Internet only.....\$ 52
Visa and Mastercard accepted

To get information published

Mailing address:

Capital Press
P.O. Box 2048
Salem, OR 97308-2048

News: Contact the main office
or news staff member closest to you,
send the information to
newsroom@capitalpress.com
or mail it to “Newsroom,” c/o Capital Press.
Include a contact telephone number.

Letters to the Editor: Send your
comments on agriculture-related public
issues to opinions@capitalpress.com, or
mail your letter to “Opinion,” c/o Capital
Press. Letters should be limited to
300 words. Deadline: Noon Monday.

Capital Press ag media

CapitalPress.com
FarmSeller.com
MarketPlace.capitalpress.com
facebook.com/CapitalPress
facebook.com/FarmSeller
twitter.com/CapitalPress
youtube.com/CapitalPressvideo

Index

Markets12
Opinion6

Correction policy

Accuracy is important to Capital Press
staff and to our readers.
If you see a misstatement, omission or
factual error in a headline, story or photo
caption, please call the Capital Press news
department at 503-364-4431, or send
email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.
We want to publish corrections
to set the record straight.

Small farm focuses on treating animals humanely

By ALIYA HALL
For the Capital Press

OREGON City — Knowing that they are feeding people nutritious food that has been raised humanely is important to farmers Paul Chamlies and Jim Wilburn.

“Every one of our animals gets loves every day,” Wilburn said. “Whether it’s breeding stock or not. Our goal is to give it the best life while it’s here with the intention of having it nourish us one day.”

Their operation, ChamBurn Farm, is on 6.5 acres in Oregon City. They raise pastured lamb and pork, free-range chickens for eggs and meat, as well as alpacas, Katahdin hair sheep and Great Pyrenees livestock guard dogs. Their farm is a member of the Oregon Pasture Network and the Food Animal Concerns Trust, a nonprofit that promotes humanely raised livestock.

Wilburn and Chamlies started as backyard farmers during the summer of 2014. Wilburn said after a few years they became more interested in where their food came from and wanted to expand to a farm of their own.

The name of their farm came from a mash-up of their last names. Although Chamlies said it doesn’t “roll off the tongue” the name has always been how they identify themselves.

ChamBurn Farm practices rotational grazing, and their sheep and alpacas are on a grass/hay-only diet while the chickens and pigs are fed



Aliya Hall/For the Capital Press

Paul Chamlies and Jim Wilburn own ChamBurn Farm on 6.5 acres in Oregon City. The farm was established in 2016 and they raise pastured lamb and pork, free-range chickens for eggs and meat, as well as alpacas, Katahdin hair sheep and Great Pyrenees livestock guard dogs.

a premium non-GMO feed from Mosaic Farms in Corvallis, Ore.

“To me, knowing where my food comes from and what my food eats are two of the primary considerations,” Wilburn said.

Labeling is important to Wilburn, and he said he enjoys educating customers on what labeling is regulated and what is unregulated. He said terms like “uncured” and “all natural” are just nomenclature and the organic label has been diluted.

“The public is more trusting of non-GMO than organic now, and it’s interesting to talk to people and get their opinion on labeling,” he said.

ChamBurn Farm also holds

Farm-to-Table events and private events on the farm. At those events Wilburn cooks and said that over 90% of the ingredients are grown on the farm.

The farm plans to add cooking classes.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the events for them is showing people the process of getting food to the table and watching them enjoy it. One childhood friend told Wilburn that their chicken was “the most chicken-y tasting chicken he ever had.”

They even had one longtime vegetarian leave the farm with \$90 worth of chicken.



Aliya Hall/For the Capital Press

The ChamBurn laying flock is free range and fed a premium non-GMO feed from Mosaic Farms in Corvallis, Ore.

For Chamlies, who works as a pharmacist — he dubs himself a “farmercist” — said his philosophy has changed a lot since starting the farm because he’s more interested in educating people about their food to prevent them from needing the drugs he prescribes.

“It’s a little ironic that my entire profession revolves around feeding people (drugs),” he said. “But as I’ve learned more about how our food is what actually affects our health, that’s the easiest way to care for yourself so you can avoid having to take pills. ... It really starts with food.”

CALENDAR

is the keynote speaker. Website:
https://bit.ly/3vgZC4C

MONDAY-THURSDAY
NOV. 1-4

Western Dairy Management Conference: Peppermill Resort Spa Casino, Reno, Nev. The conference will include presentations on animal health, fertility, genetics and production systems. Website: www.wdmc.org

FRIDAY-SATURDAY
NOV. 5-6

Farm and Food Conference: Centennial Hotel, 303 W. North River Drive, Spokane Wash. The two-day in-person event will focus on regenerative farming. Sponsored by the Spokane Conservation District. Soil scientist Ray Archuleta

FRIDAY NOV. 12

Food Regulations and Labeling (online): 10 a.m.-noon. Product claims are advantageous to a company because they signify a higher perception of quality. However, such claims can have profound legal implications that a company should be aware of. Learn about the requirements necessary to add these essential marketing claims on sales material, a website and product labels. Our presenter will also compare certifying bodies to help navigate certification for specific claims. Website: https://bit.ly/3hBM4uV Contact: 208-426-2181

TUESDAY-THURSDAY
NOV. 16-18

Washington Farm Bureau Annual Meeting: Yakima Convention Center, 10 N Eighth St., Yakima, Wash. Washington Farm Bureau members will get together for their annual meeting. Website: https://wfbannual-meeting.com/

Willamette Valley Ag Expo: Linn County Fair & Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road E, Albany, Ore. Exhibitors, equipment, seminars, classes, food and fun. In addition to the exhibitors and classes, attendees can enjoy other attractions such as “Dine Around Oregon,” an antique farm equipment display and an educational area from Oregon Women

for Agriculture. Website: www.wva-expo.com

FRIDAY NOV. 19

Denim and Diamonds Dinner and Auction: 5 p.m. Salem Convention Center 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. Oregon Aglink hosts Denim & Diamonds, an awards dinner and auction, which raises funds for the Oregon Aglink Foundation, supporting programs like Adopt a Farmer. In addition to dinner, there will be an online silent auction at aglink2021.ggo.bid and an in-person auction. The annual Ag Connection and Agriculturist of the Year awards will also be presented. Website: https://aglink.org/events/denim-diamonds/

Submit upcoming ag-related events on www.capitalpress.com or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

THROUGH OCT. 30 National AFA Convention and Expo: Indianapolis, Ind. The National FFA Organization hosts an in-person 94th National FFA Convention & Expo, with a virtual program. Website: https://convention.ffa.org/

SATURDAY OCT. 30 Ag in the Classroom Fall Harvest Dinner and Auction: 5 p.m. Linn County Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road E, Albany, Ore. Celebrate and support Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom. Website: https://bit.ly/3y0uJYy