

WSU study: ‘Systemic oppression’ underlies food production

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A Washington State University study says “systemic oppression” underlies food production and that government should do more to include minorities in agricultural programs.

The report cites racism and white supremacy, without going into specifics. WSU Food Systems Director Laura Lewis said in an interview that the land grant university itself was the product of a “land grab” and that historical wrongs continue to be felt today.

“I don’t think we can turn a blind eye to them if we want to make progress,” she said.

The state Department of Agriculture funded the \$35,000 study to identify barriers that minorities face in the “food system,” which

means everything from farming to eating.

The study was done under the auspices of WSU Food System Program, but led by Mercy Kariuki-McGee, the founder of the Haki Farmers Collective in Thurston County.

Washington benefited from white supremacy, the report asserts, and acknowledges slaves who labored “for the sake of American capitalism.”

Although it was not a report recommendation, Kariuki-McGee suggested in an interview that Black and brown farmers be allocated land and given other government help.

“It is such a struggle to own land,” she said. “Government owns a lot of land.”

The report has six recommendations for the agriculture department. The recommendations generally



Washington State Department of Agriculture Director Derek Sandison talks to the media at a food warehouse Aug. 7, 2020, in Fife, Wash. The department commissioned reports on the pandemic.

call for the department to financially support and consult minorities, though do not offer any specific policy proposals.

The agriculture department should require its “partners” to show “consistent growth in applying racial and equity mea-

surements to narrow equity gaps,” according to the report.

“This must go beyond simply attending training without changing behavior and systems,” the report states.

WSU should increase contacts with people

they’ve had limited contact with in the past, Lewis said.

“Historically, the underserved, they are typically not white,” she said. “I think we have a challenge that we will face for decades to come.”

Congressional acts in 1862 and 1890 granted states land to sell to establish the colleges.

WSU, Oregon State University and the University of Idaho are land grant universities. The Northwest Indian School in Bellingham, Wash., is a land grant community college.

Agriculture department spokesman Hector Castro said the agency asked for the report and will review it. “I don’t think it’s imperative we agree with every statement they make,” he said.

The WSU report was finalized along with a sep-

arate \$100,000 study funded by the agriculture department and done by the University of Washington School of Public Health.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that many people live on the brink of not having enough to eat, according to the report.

Agriculture department Director Derek Sandison said he intended to use the studies to “inform our decision-making.”

“These studies make it clear that, although many people and organizations have worked diligently for years on hunger relief, there is still work to be done to bring resilience and equity to all aspects of our food systems,” he said in a statement.

Links to the reports are online at agr.wa.gov/about-wsda/focus-on-food.



Cows feed at a dairy near Kuna, Idaho. A dairy analyst says milk prices will increase this year.

Milk prices rising on limited supply

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

Global contraction in milk production and strong demand bode well for milk prices, but feed prices and other input costs will take a bite out of profits in 2022.

From a global perspective, the big takeaway is the U.S. has a competitive advantage in what it costs to produce different dairy products, said Dustin Winston, commodity finance analyst for StoneX Financial.

“This is really beneficial because it means we could potentially gain some market share,” he said, during the University of Idaho’s Ag Outlook virtual seminar.

A big part of U.S. dairy products’ significant price advantage in the global market is due to a contracting global milk supply, he said.

High feed costs that haven’t backed down and weather are keeping milk production down in the European Union, where a significant pullback is expected through the first quarter of 2021, he said.

New Zealand and Australia have started the season, which began in July, very poorly in terms of milk production. Production in Argentina has been very strong, but its exports have been severely impacted due primarily to logistics, he said.

Limited supplies bring on a bidding war, and prices will likely come up over the next six months and stay strong through June, he said.

“We’ll likely see import volumes dip a little bit here,” but demand is strong, he said.

In the U.S., input costs are a big issue. For average farms with 500 to 1,000 cows, the increase in input costs is about \$3.30 per hundredweight of milk, he said.

“Now a large factor of that is feed, and we know that feed costs have been extremely high,” he said.

But labor and other costs are also having a significant impact on the balance sheet for producers, he said.

“Lately, we’ve been saying \$18 milk isn’t what it used to be,” he said.

The cost of milk production is rising and will likely rise again next year, he said.

“The higher price of milk that’s being sold might not be as favorable as five or 10 years ago, but it’s definitely going to help alleviate some of that margin pressure,” he said.

It’s not the greatest outlook, but there are a lot of bullish factors, especially if input costs get a little cheaper.

Judge refuses to declare Oregon state forest logging ‘takes’ coho salmon

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — A federal judge has refused to declare that logging activities in Oregon’s Clatsop and Tillamook state forests have unlawfully harmed threatened coho salmon.

Though U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman has rejected a motion by environmental groups to declare that timber sales in those state forests violate the Endangered Species Act, his ruling doesn’t put an end to the litigation.

The Center for Biological Diversity, Cascadia Wildlands and the Native Fish Society have a “strong case” they’ll succeed on the merits, but at this point, their evidence of illegal “take” isn’t beyond dispute, Mosman said.

The plaintiffs must prove that logging road construction caused landslides that harmed streams enough to kill or injure coho salmon, he said.

“You just can’t get there from here without something more,” Mosman said at the conclusion of oral arguments in Portland on Dec. 16.

However, the judge has agreed to revisit the issue after hearing expert testimony next

year from the environmental nonprofits and the State of Oregon, as well as Tillamook County and the Oregon Forest and Industries Council, which have intervened in the lawsuit.

Amy Atwood, attorney for the environmental nonprofits, argued that findings from the National Marine Fisheries Service, numerous studies and documentary evidence all prove that landslides from logging roads adversely affect coho salmon.

“It’s apparent from our photography that sediment was delivered,” Atwood said. “Our contention is that fine sediment is always harmful.”

If the environmental nonprofits convince the judge that ODF’s management resulted in unlawful take, it could have impli-

cations beyond state forestland. Similar logging activities on private forestland could then also be vulnerable to lawsuits.

Attorneys for the defendants and intervenors countered that the environmental plaintiffs have not established a sufficient causal link between the Oregon Department of Forestry’s logging authorizations and the alleged “take” of coho salmon.

“They just haven’t done the who, what, where, when and how,” said Jay Waldron, Tillamook County’s attorney. “Landslides occur in Tillamook County every day. It doesn’t automatically result in take or habitat modification.”

The fact that sediment has entered streams alone

isn’t enough to prove that coho salmon were killed or injured in violation of the ESA, said Deanna Chang, attorney for the state government.

“They have not established that landslide occurred due to any activities of ODF,” she said. “Not all steep slopes are prone to landslides. Not all areas to be harvested are on steep slopes.”

Chang said the court briefs filed by the plaintiffs are not sufficient for the judge to rule that ODF violated the law. To make such a conclusion, he must consider expert testimony from both sides, she said.

“It’s not just the introduction of sediment to a stream,” Chang said. “It has to have an adverse impact on listed species.”



Thank you for reading The Capital Press

This month we end another year of uncertainty. The pandemic still looms large and its impacts will be with us for the foreseeable future. For too many the resulting economy means precarious days are ahead. The political divides — East and West, right and left — seem at times more bitter than ever.

Nonetheless, the decorations are up, the trees are lit and the faint sounds of reindeer hooves and sleigh bells in the distance raise the spirits of even the oldest children among us. Hope remains, and at this time of year it seems that we can put our differences aside in favor of all that continues to unite us.

As we look ahead, tradition demands that we take at least a brief look back.

Each year produces its own set of important news stories, and 2021 has been no exception. Our records indicate that Capital Press reporters have filed more than 1,700 stories so far this year.

No matter what this year brings, we will be here to report about the events, the issues and the personalities that shape 2022.

Though the news is ever changing, our approach remains unchanged. The Capital Press is dedicated to fair, unbiased and thorough reporting of the issues. We strive to be honest in our dealings with subscribers and advertisers. It is our honor to serve you.

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On behalf of everyone here at the Capital Press, I hope you have a very Merry Christmas and wish you the happiest of New Years. Thank you for your patronage.

Joe Beach
Editor & Publisher



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