

Takasugi Seed Farms: Growing many crops

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

WILDER, Idaho — Takasugi Seed Farms continues to operate years after the death of its owner, Pat Takasugi, the well-liked owner and long-time head of the state Department of Agriculture.

Pat Takasugi grew up in Wilder, Idaho, on the farm his father, Mitch, started. He earned a degree in political science from the College of Idaho in 1971, and enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was in the Special Forces.

He returned to the family farm in 1976, and later was director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, from 1996 to 2006. He was elected to the state House of Representatives in 2008.

After his passing in 2011 at age 62, Pat's wife, Suzanne, took over his role on the farm, and Snake River Produce Co. She continues to manage the farms in Wilder and Homedale, Idaho, with the help of farm manager Leo Sandoval, who has managed the farms for 40 years.

"We grow wheat, onions, alfalfa seed, beans, peas and a little corn," Sandoval said. "The beans, peas and corn are for seed. The only crops we grow that are not for seed are onions and wheat."



A field at Takasugi Seed Farm.



Leo Sandoval

At one time the farm grew alfalfa seed on 1,000 acres. Alfalfa currently averages about 300 acres. The farm has 150 acres of peas, about 100 to 150 acres of beans, and the same amount of onions. The corn is just a 5-acre

plot of sweet corn for crossbreeding.

All the crops are rotated with alfalfa.

"Normally we keep a stand of alfalfa about three years. It depends on the company we've contracted with and how long they want it," he said. "Currently, most of the companies are doing three-year contracts, but depending on their inventory, if they need that variety they extend it

another year."

The company specifies the variety they want. The farm is currently contracting with Forage Genetics and Corteva.

The farm has had many different challenges over time. Weather and markets are always changing, and costs go up — like the price of fertilizer recently. This past year was dry, which made farming more difficult, even with irrigation.



Takasugi Seed Farm

The onion crop at the Takasugi Seed Farm.

"We did OK, but it was definitely a lot more work than ever before, to keep everything wet enough," Sandoval said. "There was not much rain, and the wind kept drying everything out."

The farm uses siphon tubes to irrigate crops, because the moisture lasts longer than with pivots.

It was almost impossible to keep up this year, using any type of sprinkler," he said. "There was a lot of evaporation loss."

On the plus side, the farm has good employees, he said.

"There's me and six other guys. Some are my relatives," Sandoval said. "After Pat passed away, many people were surprised that

Suzanne wanted to keep it going, but she did. She knows the business side, and keeping the books.

"The employees were already managing the farming side, so we were able to keep it going," he said.

This is excellent farm ground, actually two farms about 5 miles apart. Each farm has more than 500 acres.

"We don't take equipment back and forth; each farm is set up with its own equipment. It's two operations," Sandoval said.

"We hope to continue at least another couple years and then see how it goes," he said. "I am getting close to retirement, but I don't know whether I want to retire!"



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