



INTERCROPPING HAZELNUTS OFFERS CASH FLOW DURING ORCHARD ESTABLISHMENT



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Paul Kuehne, a farmer in Dayton, Ore., at a hazelnut orchard that's intercropped to produce grass seed during establishment. With him are his wife, Brynn, and children, Rhatt and Sailor.

'YOU STILL HAVE TO MANAGE THAT AREA, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL PUT THE MONEY TOWARD SOMETHING YOU CAN HARVEST AND SELL.'

— Paul Kuehne of Dayton, Ore.,

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Juggling two crops in the same field isn't for the faint of heart, particularly when one is as enduring and expensive to establish as hazelnuts.

Yet farmers planting hazelnuts have a powerful incentive to simultaneously grow another crop in their young orchards: generating cash flow for four years or so while the trees mature enough to produce a commercial hazelnut crop.

Cultivating seed crops between rows of trees is the only way Paul Kuehne of Dayton, Ore., says he can justify committing property to orchards for years without harvesting hazelnuts.

Over roughly a decade, Kuehne has established 2,400 acres of hazelnut orchards that were inter-

cropped with perennial ryegrass, annual ryegrass, tall fescue, red clover and ryegrass.

"That's a lot of land to not have income for four years. I couldn't financially have done it," he said.

Intercropping requires an elevated level of care and won't fit every operation, but in reality, the space between tree rows must still be flailed and dragged to remove weeds, Kuehne said.

"You still have to manage that area, so you might as well put the money toward something you can harvest and sell," he said. An acre of fully mature hazelnut trees yields about 2,700 pounds with prices ranging from about 90 cents to \$1.03 per pound.

The key is never losing sight of the fact that the hazelnut orchard must take priority if rodents or other problems threaten the trees, he said.

"We're always going to make the decision that's best for the tree. As for the intercrop, it's always

going to be secondary," Kuehne said. "We'll pull the plug on the intercrop at any point if we needed to."

Seed crops

Grass and clover grown for seed dominate intercropped orchards these days, though there was more crop diversity when the hazelnut planting boom began about a decade ago, said Mike McDaniel, a geographic information system specialist who studies hazelnuts.

"It seemed like it was a pretty short window of crop experimentation," he said. "It's quieted down."

Hazelnut acreage in Oregon has roughly tripled over the past decade, from 30,000 acres to 90,000 acres, McDaniel said. The pace of planting has now leveled off at 3,000-5,000 acres a year, down from as many as 11,000 acres at the height of the boom.

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Oregon FFA State Convention returns to in-person

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

REDMOND, Ore. — Watching the opening session of the 2022 Oregon FFA State Convention, Hayden Bush could feel tears welling in his eyes.

"I'm an emotional person," said Bush, an agriculture teacher and FFA adviser at Tillamook High School. "There is something about being in that session hall and feeling that excitement that you can't get virtually."

More than 2,500 Oregon FFA members and guests gathered starting March 17 for the first in-person



Hayden Bush

son convention since the start of the pandemic, bringing a rush of energy and unbridled enthusiasm to the Deschutes Fair & Expo Center in Redmond. The convention culminated Sunday in the election of state officers.

For Codie-Lee Haner, a freshman at Sherman County High School in Moro, it was her first live convention experience. She likened it to a rock concert, particularly in the main session hall where mem-

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bers crowded around the stage to dance with their friends.

"So far, I've made a lot of friends along the way," Haner said. "I'm not good at making friends, but I've opened up to a lot of people here."

It is precisely that element of togetherness that FFA members and advisers say can't be duplicated online.

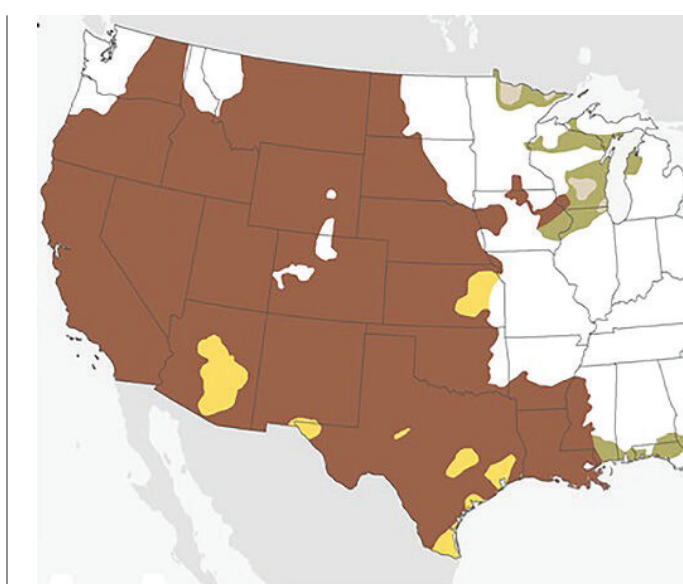
Two years ago, Oregon FFA members were preparing for the

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Ryan Brennecke/EO Media Group

Students gather to enter the First Interstate Bank Center for the opening session of the Oregon FFA State Convention at the Deschutes Fair & Expo Center on March 17.



Drought outlook for spring. NOAA

Forecasters expect West's drought to deepen

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts that drought will worsen in the West this spring. The exceptions include Western Washington, northwest Oregon and Northern Idaho.

Already, 89% of the West is in drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor on March 17. Drought is expected to persist in most places and return to the one-quarter of Arizona that's now classified as "abnormally dry."

The West had a wet December, but has been relatively dry since, according to the monitor, a partnership between federal agencies and the National Drought

Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska.

The snowpacks in many basins in the West have declined and are now below normal, according to the monitor.

Among all Western states, Oregon has the highest percentage of area in "exceptional drought," the worst classification, at 15%, followed by Nevada with 7.5%.

NOAA's spring outlook was driven by a La Nina, which is expected to persist through the summer. A La Nina generally leads to cooler temperatures in the northern U.S. and warmer temperatures in the southern U.S.

Between now and June 30, most of the Lower 48 will have above-average

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