

# Organic dairies welcome USDA final rule on cows

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

## INFORMATION

More information about the Origin of Livestock rule is available at: [www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/national-organic-program-origin-livestock](http://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/national-organic-program-origin-livestock)

It's been more than two decades in the making, but organic dairy farmers now have a final rule from USDA clarifying how conventional livestock are transitioned into organic production and how they are managed in the organic system.

The rule does away with the practice of continually transitioning or cycling dairy animals in and out of organic production.

The Origin on Livestock final rule specifies that a producers can transition nonorganic cows to organic production only once.

It further clarifies that once an operation is certified organic, a producer cannot source transitioned animals from other operations and can only add livestock that have been organically managed from the last third of gestation.

"The Origin of Livestock rule has wide support across the organic industry, from small family farms to some of the largest organic dairies across the country," said Johanna Mirenda, farm policy director at the Organic Trade Association.

"Over our years of advocacy on this rule, OTA members and organic industry leaders have submitted over 2,700 comments across three different comment periods in support of this rule," she said. "We are extremely pleased that USDA has today issued this long-awaited final rule."

The National Organic Standards Board began working to clarify origin of livestock standards in 1994. The first of six recommendations came in 2002.

In 2006, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service stated inconsistent allowances for replacing organic animals was a significant concern and additional clarification was needed.

USDA published the Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule in 2015, reopened the com-

ment period in 2019 and reopened it again in 2021.

In an earlier interview, Gwendolyn Wyard, vice president of regulatory and technical affairs for the Organic Trade Association, told Capital Press some organic certifiers allow dairies to routinely bring in nonorganic animals and transition them for one year, rather than raise their own replacement animals under organic management.

Farmers who do not raise their own organic replacement animals have lower costs of production, creating an economic disadvantage for organic farmers who comply with the regulations, according to an OTA analysis.

"Additionally, some farmers are allowed to remove organic dairy animals from a herd, raise them using conventional feed and other prohibited management practices and then retransition them back to organic," she said.

A fair and final Origin of Livestock rule has been the top priority for the Organic Farmers Association every year since the organization was founded in 2016, Kate Mendenhall, the association's executive director, said on Tuesday.

"We are delighted to see it finalized today at USDA," Mendenhall said. "This is a huge win for organic farmers and the organic community as a whole."

The key will be uniform enforcement, she said.

"We have already lost too many organic dairy family farms to unfair competition. Strong enforcement of the Origin of Livestock rule is imperative to regain economic competition for family farms within the organic milk market," she said.

# How Oregon nursery growers are handing rising costs, supply woes

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN  
Capital Press

Facing increasing costs and supply shortages, Oregon nursery growers say they are forced to make difficult decisions.

According to Oregon Department of Agriculture, nursery and greenhouse products remain the state's top agricultural commodity. The industry made \$1.18 billion in sales in 2020, and demand remains strong.

But high demand doesn't always mean more profitability. Instead, many growers see profit margins tightening amid rising prices on freight, labor and other inputs.

"Our (profit) margins are definitely going to get squeezed here going forward," said Noah Fessler, in sales at Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas.

Noah and his brother, Kyle Fessler, said that in 2019, if the cost to send a truck of nursery stock from Oregon to the East Coast hit \$6,000, "we thought that was crazy high." This spring, according to their broker, that trip costs \$10,000 to \$12,000.

Amanda Staehely, a grower at Columbia Nursery LLC in Canby, said her average freight price to the East Coast increased 45% to 55% between 2019 and 2021, and her Northwest freight rates — within Oregon, Idaho and Washington — increased 60% to 80%.



Robinson Nursery Inc.  
**Chris Robinson, left, and Josh Robinson, right, of Robinson Nursery Inc. in McMinnville, Ore.**



Courtesy of Amanda Staehely  
**Amanda and Wayne Staehely, co-owners of Columbia Nursery LLC in Canby, Ore.**

Like most nursery growers, Staehely ships the majority of her product east of the Rockies, and she is concerned customers won't want to pay the high shipping costs.

This January, at a trade show in Baltimore, Staehely said many people said they liked her product but wouldn't buy from Oregon because other states, including Tennessee, have lower shipping rates.

"It's not an even playing field," she said. "Oregon is at a competitive disadvantage."

International shipping costs are also up.

The Fesslers said that a few years ago, they paid \$10,000 to \$11,000 to ship one container of coconut coir — a potting fiber — from Southeast Asia. This spring, it cost \$25,000.

Josh and Chris Robinson, brothers and growers at Robinson Nursery in

McMinnville, Ore., said that a few years ago, their nursery paid \$3,000 to \$5,000 to ship a 40-foot container from China. This year, it cost \$16,000 to \$25,000.

Input costs are up, too.

Staehely, of Columbia Nursery, said pricing on her baskets, containers and burlap has increased 7% to 15%, fertilizer costs have tripled and some chemical prices have quadrupled in one year.

The cost of off-road diesel has also been volatile, forcing growers to buy in bulk every time they see a dip in fuel prices.

Supply shortages have also rocked the industry.

Todd Nelson, grower at Bountiful Farms Nursery in Woodburn, Ore., said he ordered fertilizer six months ago. It finally arrived March 14.

"In-time buying is a thing of the past," he said. Nursery owners are now order-

ing supplies months in advance and carrying higher inventories.

Most growers say they're also concerned about the availability and cost of labor. In response, many are investing in automation.

Nelson, of Bountiful Farms, and the Fesslers, of Woodburn Nursery and Azaleas, have both invested in pruning robots that they'll use for the first time this year.

But not everyone can afford automation. Because Staehely runs a small nursery, she said she can't afford machinery that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"That's not within the reach of some of us," she said.

Growers say that to keep up with demand and maintain healthy profit margins, they'll need to keep innovating.

# U.N. designates 2026 international year of rangelands, 'pastoralists'

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

Half of the planet is rangeland, he said.

"It's the dominant ecosystem in the world," he said. "Far more carbon sequestration happens on rangeland than any other ecosystem."

O'Rourke is emeritus professor and founder of the range management program at Chadron State College in Chadron, Neb. He and his wife manage a ranch south of Chadron.

A well-managed and grazed ecosystem continually stores carbon, O'Rourke said.

"The segment of society that wants to do away with livestock, you're giving away an active carbon sink by doing that," he said.

A carbon sink absorbs more carbon from the atmosphere than it releases.

"People look at the drive between, let's say, Lincoln, Neb., and Reno, Nev., as drive-through country," O'Rourke said. "They don't realize how important that country is for off-setting the carbon dioxide produced by their cars, buses, airplanes and industrial pollution."

"A lot of people think of rangelands as the 'leftovers' of culture — in fact, in rangeland textbooks, that used to be how they were defined," said Tip Hudson, rangelands and livestock specialist for Washington State University Extension in Ellensburg. "Everything else that didn't fit some perceived higher value of land use could be called rangeland. ... That's no longer the definition."

Within the last 50 years, a more modern definition emerged, calling rangelands landscapes and plant and vegetation communities dominated by grasses, forbs and shrubs that are not forests.

The people who use the rangelands tend to be similarly marginalized or forgotten around the world, Hudson said.

The international year designation could raise the

visibility of rangeland in useful ways, he said.

"Rangelands-based livestock production is probably by definition the most sustainable form of agriculture," he said. "It relies on producing food and fiber from naturally occurring plant communities. If we do it right, we can produce food and fiber in a landscape without diminishing the other ecosystem goods and services that we expect from that landscape, like habitat values, clean air and aesthetic values (and) recreational opportunities."

The international year is a good way to highlight the "fundamental shift" from how things were done 100 years ago to how they're done today, Hudson said.

The designation process for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists began in 2008, O'Rourke said. The IYRP resolution passed March 15.

The government of Mongolia submitted the resolution.

"It's a rangeland country, it's dominantly rangeland," O'Rourke said. "Mongolia has been very progressive in developing ecological site descriptions, mapping and grazing management."

## LEGAL

### NOTICE OF CLOVER COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING TO: ALL OREGON CLOVER SEED GROWERS

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at 7:00 a.m., at West Salem Roth's Events Center, Founder's Room "O," 1130 Wallace Road, Salem, Oregon, upon a proposed budget for operation of the Clover Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. At this hearing any producer of Oregon grown Clover seed has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Clover Commission business office, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944.

## LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces a meeting of the Washington State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) on Thursday, April 21, 2022 from 9:30am to 2:30pm. This meeting will be held remotely. For more information, contact Nick Vira at 360-704-7758.

## LEGAL

### PURSUANT TO ORS CHAPTER 87

Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/11/2022. The sale will be held at 10:00am by  
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