People & Places

Attachment saves time handling hay

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Don Larson demonstrates how the SwingSpear attachment for tractors and loaders efficiently manages hay bales on his farm in Fruitland, Wash.

FRUITLAND, Wash. — Normally, when a hay farmer picks up two hay bales in the field, it is a multi-step process.

First, he has to pick up one bale and place it beside the other. Then he has to reverse the tractor, drive it into position and spear both bales to put them on a stack.

Fruitland, Wash., farmer Don Larson thought it could be done more efficiently.

"I was just tired of all the jockeying of the equipment in the field to get the bales collected," he said.

That's when he developed SwingSpear, a hydraulic attachment that pivots in the middle, allowing him to pick up the first bale and drive to the second. He then swings the first bale up and out of the way, allowing him to spear the second without stopping, backing up or repositioning the tractor.

"You're in forward motion the whole time you're gathering hay bales in the field," Larson said.

Larson has been haying for five seasons. In the spring of 2020, he and a co-worker discussed finding a way to move the first bale out of the way to get to the second.

Larson made a small cardboard model, which looked like it would work. He drew on the shop floor with chalk and started cutting pieces and welding them together. He then attached the first SwingSpear to his tractor.

Larson contacted a college friend, Chris Henjum, president of Hydrafab Northwest in Spokane Valley, Wash. His engineers then manufactured Larson's official prototype.

"Lean farming — the faster someone can load a truck, get things out of the field and burn less fuel, the better off they are," Henjum said. "Don's an in-the-trenches kind of owner, designer and developer. He's going to get in there, turn a wrench and also add value on design and ideas."

Larson has 10 SwingSpears available for sale that fit various tractor models. He has applied for a patent.

Larson conducted time trials loading hay bales. He estimates the device provides a "good savings" and the ability to pick up 25% more hay in the same amount of time compared to using the old method.

"The thing with the forward and reversing of the tractor, you're clutching, you're steering, the operator is turning his head and looking around to make sure he doesn't back over someone or something," he said. "Continually driving forward and picking up hay is so much safer. And it does increase the amount of hay you can pick up in a day."

Larson works as a logger in the fall and winter and farms during haying season. He purchased the farm in 2015 and is the third generation farming on the property.

"I would just like to have a happy retirement," he said of developing SwingSpear.

SwingSpear is designed for 5-foot diameter bales. Larson hopes to design a model for 6-foot diameter bales for markets in the Midwest.

Family friend John Jensen, a retired Fruitland farmer, wasn't surprised that Larson came up with the attachment. He cites Larson's "phenomenal" meticulousness with equipment maintenance.

"You take that same person, that same brain, and you have that person design an implement for a tractor, and what do you have?" he said. "You have an extremely well-built, extremely durable piece of equipment. This thing's for real. It's built to last generations."

Jensen helps Larson with haying and logging. He believes the tool will save farmers time, fuel and wear and tear on their equipment.

"I drive the truck in the field," he said. "I was just absolutely blown away at how much faster it was."

Western Innovator

DON LARSON

Occupation: Owner, Enterprise Valley Farms; inventor, SwingSpear hay bale attachment

Age: 50

Hometown: Fruitland, Wash.

Education: Salutatorian, Columbia High School, Hunters, Wash.; degree in fluid power, Spokane Community College

Family: Engaged to be married; one daughter, 21

Website: https://swingspear.com/

NASA climate research scientist wins World Food Prize

By DAVID PITT
Associated Press

Cynthia Rosenzweig

DES MOINES, Iowa — A NASA climate research scientist who has spent much of her career explaining how global food production must adapt to a changing climate was awarded the World Food Prize on Thursday.

Cynthia Rosenzweig, an agronomist and climatologist, was awarded the $250,000 prize in recognition of her innovative modeling of the impact of climate change on food production. She is a senior research scientist at the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and serves as adjunct senior research scientist at the Columbia Climate School at Columbia University, both based in New York.

Rosenzweig, whose win was announced during a ceremony at the State Department in Washington, said she hopes it will focus attention on the need to improve food and agricultural systems to lessen the effects of climate change.

"We basically cannot solve climate change unless we address the issues of the greenhouse gas emissions from the food system, and we cannot provide food security for all unless we work really hard to develop resilient systems," she told The Associated Press during an interview ahead of the ceremony.

Jose Fernandez, the undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, said more than 160 million people worldwide experienced food insecurity last year, a 19% increase over the year before, and one of the root causes is a decline in food production due to global warming.

"Climate change has already had a significant and negative impact on global agricultural production and its impact is only going to get worse. We're seeing rice fields drown in floods. We're seeing other crops wither in drought. We're seeing shellfish die in more acidic oceans and crop diseases are spreading to new regions. We likely would not understand all these problems as well as we do today without the work of Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig, this year's World Food Prize laureate," he said.

The Des Moines-based World Food Prize Foundation award recognized Rosenzweig as the founder of the Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project. The organization draws scientists from around the world and from many disciplines to advance methods for improving predictions of the future performance of agricultural and food systems as the global climate changes.

The foundation credited her work with directly helping decision-makers in more than 90 countries establish plans to prepare for climate change.

In her work, Rosenzweig has studied how farmers can deal with climate change and how agriculture worsens the problem. For example, she contributed to a research paper published last month that said global agri-food systems create nearly one-third of the total global greenhouse gases emitted by human activity.

Rosenzweig said the world needs to reduce such emissions and adapt to the changing climate. She noted that greenhouse gases come from many parts of food production, including the release of carbon and carbon dioxide through the clearing of forests for farmland and the oxidization of carbon through the plowing of fields. The use of fertilizer also releases atmospheric nitrous oxide, farm equipment emits fossil fuels and cattle release methane.

Rosenzweig, who describes herself as a climate impact scientist, grew up in Scarsdale, N.Y., a suburban area that she said led her to seek out life in the country. She moved to Tuscany, Italy, with her husband-to-be in her 20s and developed a passion for agriculture. Upon returning to the United States, she focused her education on agronomy.

She worked as a graduate student at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in the early 1980s, when global climate models were beginning to show the effects of human generated carbon dioxide on the global climate. As the only team member studying agronomy, she researched the impact on food production and has been working since then to answer those questions, she said.

Rosenzweig's work led to the Environmental Protection Agency's first projections of the effect of climate change on the nation's agricultural regions in the agency's assessment of the potential effects of climate change on the United States in 1988. She was the first to bring climate change to the attention of the American Society of Agronomy and she organized the first sessions on the issue in the 1980s.

She completed the first projections of how climate change will affect food production in North America in 1985 and globally in 1994, and she was one of the first scientists to document that climate change was already impacting food production and cultivation.

The research organization she founded, AgMIP, develops adaptation packages, which could include the use of more drought-tolerant seeds and improved water management practices. In Bangladesh the group is working with rice farmers to develop new practices for managing rice paddies to reduce the significant release of methane produced by the existing process.

She said even the largest agribusiness corporations have shown a willingness to listen. She said some models colleagues have developed show how businesses could be effected by climate change and how they too have a role to play in reversing the impact on climate.

"It's really a global partnership of all the global food system to come together to restrain climate change and maintain the food security for the planet," she said.

World Food Prize Foundation President Barbara Stinson, who announced the winner, credited Rosenzweig for innovations that helped countries respond to climate change.

Nobel Prize laureate Norman Borlaug created the World Food Prize in 1986 to recognize scientists and others who have improved the quality and availability of food. Rosenzweig will receive the award and make a speech during an October ceremony in Des Moines.

CALENDAR

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

THROUGH SATURDAY MAY 12-14

92nd Washington FFA Convention: Location to be determined. Join us for the live, in-person 92nd Washington FFA Convention. Website: https://www.washingtonffa.org/

SATURDAY MAY 14

Agricultural Pesticide Collection Event: There will be a free Agricultural Pesticide Collection Event on May 14 in Clackamas, Ore. This is an opportunity for forest landowners, farmers and other commercial and institutional pesticide users to search out their barns, sheds, and basements for old, restricted or unusable pesticides. Participation is free and anonymous, but participants must pre-register for an appointment. Pre-register for the event by May 1 at https://conservationdistrict.org/.

WEDNESDAY MAY 18

NRCS-WA Local Work Group Meeting for Puget Sound (online): 7 p.m. Producers from Thurston, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, King counties and conservation districts are invited to participate. Local Work Group Meetings are a valuable part of the NRCS planning process, providing an opportunity for local land managers to be part of a collaborative effort to improve natural resources within their area. This year's meeting will be on Zoom: https://bit.ly/3kjqlIU Contact: 253-256-6741 or amy.hendershot@usda.gov

Dairy Tech 2022 Conference: Austin Marriott Downtown, Austin, Texas. Hosted by the International Dairy Foods Association and dairy.com, the conference will focus on the impact of technology and innovation in the industry. Website: https://www.idfa.org/events/dairytech-conference

FRIDAY MAY 20

NRCS-WA Local Work Group Meeting for SW Washington (online): Noon. Producers from Clark, Underwood (Skamania), Lewis County, Cowlitz, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Grays Harbor counties and conservation districts are invited to participate. Local Work Group Meetings are a valuable part of the NRCS planning process, providing an opportunity for local land managers to be part of a collaborative effort to improve natural resources within their area. This year's meeting is on Zoom: https://bit.ly/3OGiQtD Contact: 360-557-3282 or bobette.parsons@usda.gov

TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY MAY 24-25

Habitat Working for Farmers (online): 8 a.m.-noon. Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Oregon IPM Center have teamed up to bring you a virtual conference on practices Western farmers are currently using to develop habitats that conserve agricultural biodiversity and their associated benefits. Website: https://bit.ly/3ifLti9

WEDNESDAY MAY 25

Becoming Firewise — Fire Resistant Landscapes and Homes: 6-8 p.m., Treasure Valley Community College Science Center, Room 104, 650 College Blvd., Ontario, Ore. Scheduled instructors are Al Crouch, fire mitigation specialist with U.S. Bureau of Land Management Vale District, and John Rizza, regional wildland fire specialist with Oregon State University Extension. Contact: 541-881-5755 Website: http://tvccfirewise.eventbrite.com

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY MAY 25-26

Roots of Resilience Grazing Conference: Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate, Pendleton, Ore. Dave Pratt, a Ranching for Profit emeritus, will kick off the conference Wednesday morning with "Three Secrets to Increasing Profit," how livestock managers can improve sustainability by improving their financial bottom line. After lunch, Chris Schachtschneider, OSU Extension, will demonstrate low-stress livestock handling in the Happy Canyon Arena. Thursday's events move north to the Gardena School, Touchet, Wash., for a presentation by internationally known soil health expert Nicole Masters. After lunch, the conference moves to Tumac Farms, where there will be a field practical with Masters. Website: https://rootsofresilience.org/grazing-conference-2022

THURSDAY JUNE 2

Sustainable Produce Summit: 1-7:30 p.m. Marriott Desert Springs Resort, Palm Desert, Calif. The summit will focus on sustainability. Website: https://www.events.farmjournal.com

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To Reach Us

Circulation.....800-781-3214
Email..... Circulation@capitalpress.com
Main line.....503-364-4431

News Staff

Idaho
Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise
Brad Carlson 208-914-8264

Western Washington
Don Jenkins.....360-722-6975

Eastern Washington
Matthew Weaver 509-688-9923

Oregon
George Plaven 406-560-1655
Mateusz Perkowski 800-882-6789
Sierra Dawn McClain 503-506-8011

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

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