

People & Places

Dona Lacayo's team runs a different kind of port

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN
Capital Press

PORT HUENEME, Calif. — Dona Toteva Lacayo and her coworkers at the Port of Hueneme run a tight ship.

Born in Bulgaria, Lacayo moved to the U.S. as a young woman to study at South Carolina's College of Charleston.

While there, she was exposed to Charleston's bustling maritime trade economy, which captivated her interest, prompting her to major in international business with minors in German language and global logistics and transportation.

Today, alongside a crew of other innovators, Lacayo, 40, helps manage Southern California's Port of Hueneme — pronounced why-nee-me — a small, deep-water cargo port about 60 miles northwest of the Los Angeles metro area.

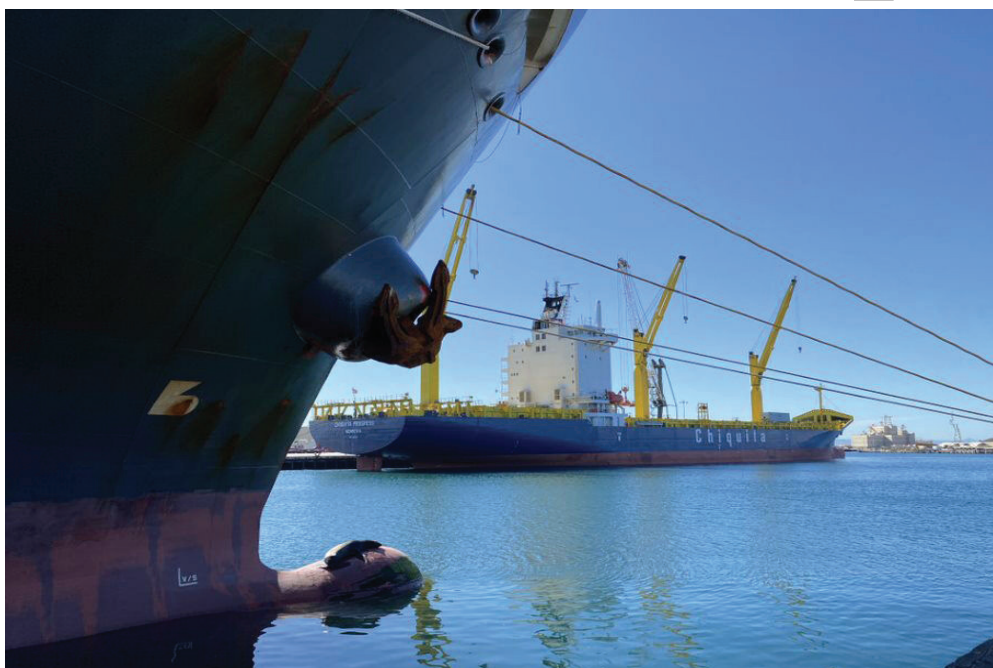
Agricultural exporters say Hueneme stands out from other ports because of its timely operations and lack of congestion, even during the global supply chain crisis.

"Our services are very much on time," said Lacayo, the port's chief commercial and public affairs officer. "We're not congested."

Ocean transport data show that charter vessels traveling between Asia and America often cut transit time for shippers by at least 15 to 20 days by using Hueneme versus the other more congested ports.



Dona Lacayo



Port of Hueneme

The Port of Hueneme.

Truckers also have shorter wait times at gates, and cargo moves quickly through Hueneme.

"As a user of this port, we have found that Dona (Lacayo) and the operation of this port has been as smooth as possible," a representative from United Cargo Management, a cargo and freight company, said at the Agriculture Transportation Coalition's recent conference in Tacoma, Wash.

Peter Friedmann, executive director of the Agriculture Transportation Coalition, agreed, saying he appreciates Hueneme's efficiency. He called Lacayo "a big hero."

"One-stop shopping: Dial D-O-N-A, Dona," Friedmann joked. "She gets (the exporter) to the carrier, she gets them to the terminal ... gets a trucker there, and it's

just terrific. I mean, that's an operating port."

The Port of Hueneme is growing in popularity. From 2017 to 2021, the port's fresh fruit exports have increased 285%, and in the past year alone, general exports have increased 136%.

What is the Port of Hueneme's secret sauce?

There are many pieces that enable smooth operations, according to Lacayo.

"It's like an orchestra," she said.

The first factor is that, rather than transporting every kind of cargo imaginable, the port's leaders have chosen to be experts rather than generalists, specializing in just two categories: automotive and refrigerated cargo.

Another factor is that the Port of Hueneme has partnered with other entities that

own 550 off-port acres within about an 8-mile radius of the port. These sites are used for inspections and as terminal space, allowing Hueneme to quickly move cargo off port.

To prevent a shortage of chassis — trailer frames that carry shipping containers — from slowing operations, Hueneme requires carriers to provide their own.

Shipping experts say the port's success may also be attributable to its size, because it operates at a smaller, more manageable scale.

"We can't handle the large ships L.A. or Long Beach can handle," said Lacayo. "But we're not trying to be L.A., Long Beach or Oakland. We are the Port of Hueneme, and we're just trying to help as much as we can with the sizes of vessels that we can handle."



Western Innovator

DONA LACAYO

Born: Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

Hometown: Sofia, Bulgaria

Age: 40

Education: Bachelor of science in international business; minors in German language and global logistics and transportation, College of Charleston in South Carolina. Master of Business Administration, Saint Mary's College of California in Moraga

Occupation: Chief commercial and public affairs officer for the Port of Hueneme, which handles \$11.39 billion in trade annually

Top trade partners include:

South Korea, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, Guatemala, Nicaragua, China, Peru, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador

Top agricultural exports:

Potatoes, cotton, fresh apples, pears, cheese and curd, citrus

Tradition will continue after sale of Kruse farm market stand

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

ROSEBURG, Ore. — The agricultural tradition established by the Kruse family in Douglas County over the past century will continue even after the recent sale of the family's farm market stand and bakery and 93 adjoining acres of river bottom ground.

The John Blodgett family purchased the property that includes the produce stand, bakery and gift shop, a cold room, three greenhouses, covered storage, a hay barn and the ground that lies next to the South Umpqua River. The sale was finalized and recorded Aug. 2 at the price of \$1.5 million.

"We bought it as a family investment," John Blodgett said. "We don't have a concrete plan for the property, but we want to carry on the agricultural legacy of Don Kruse."

The farm market had provided locally grown fruits and vegetables to local consumers since that property was purchased in 1987, expanding the Kruse family's productive ground to several hundred acres. Kruse farmed for about 70 years before health issues limited his mobility. He died in 2018 at age 87.

Blodgett, a long-time lumberman and co-owner of Douglas County

Forest Products, and Kruse, a long-time farmer, were friends. They served together on the Douglas County Fair Board for several years.

Kruse's son, Jeff Kruse; daughter, Karen Kruse Corpron; and grandson, Evan Kruse, were co-owners of the property. They decided last year to put the property up for sale in early 2022. Jeff Kruse, 70, and Corpron, 65, were wanting to retire from the business and Evan Kruse, 42, the family's fourth generation to farm the ground, wanted to concentrate on just a few crops rather than the many crops that are needed to operate the produce stand.

Jeff Kruse had been farming in the family business since he was a youth. Corpron had managed the farm's produce market and bakery for the past 13 years.

While Blodgett is considering agricultural options for his investment, Evan Kruse is continuing to farm a couple hundred acres, including the original 15 acres his great-grandfather, Bert Kruse, first farmed in 1923.

Evan Kruse is focusing on growing alfalfa and grass hay for long-time Douglas County and coastal customers. He's also growing specialty grass seeds, the golf industry being the main consumer of that product. He'll continue to maintain an established

cherry orchard and a blueberry field for community U-pickers.

Evan Kruse said he has heard of concerns from community members that the property that sold would be developed into houses. He emphasized that the ground is zoned as exclusive farm use.

"The likelihood that it would be anything except farm use is exceedingly slim," he said. "It'll have to stay in farming."

Blodgett agreed. "The success of what Don (Kruse) did here was in part due to his ability to grow food," Blodgett said. "It's a nice piece of ground that can be irrigated. When the right person comes along, we'll continue its agricultural legacy."

Evan Kruse said being part of the Kruse Farms market was "an extremely fulfilling activity" but with Jeff Kruse and Corpron wanting to retire, it was a time for change. He said he wants to continue farming, extending the Kruse family's tradition in that industry to 100 years in 2023 and then beyond.

"Direct market farming, where you grow and sell what you grow, is a very satisfying form of farming," he said of the Kruse Farms market. "But I figured I had to go in a different direction so I could continue to farm."



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press
John Blodgett, left, and Evan Kruse discuss details of the Kruse Farms Market property that the Blodgett family recently purchased. Blodgett says he has "no concrete plans" for the property, but plans to continue its agricultural tradition.

CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on www.capitalpress.com or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com. All times reflect the local time zone unless otherwise noted.

AUG. 19-28

Western Idaho Fair: 11 a.m. Western Idaho Fairgrounds, 5610 Glenwood St., Boise. Western Idaho gets together annually for this celebration of country living. Website: <https://idahofair.com>

WEDNESDAY AUG. 24

Oregon State University Malheur Experiment Station Onion Variety Day: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. OSU Malheur Experiment Station, 595 Onion Ave., Ontario, Ore. 97914 Website: <https://bit.ly/3PDBkLb>

AUG. 26-SEPT. 5

Oregon State Fair: 10 a.m. Oregon State Fair & Exposition Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem. The Oregon State Fair continues through Sept. 5. Website: <https://oregon-statefair.org/>

SEPT. 2-10

Eastern Idaho State Fair: Eastern Idaho Fairgrounds, 97 Park St.,

Blackfoot, Idaho. It's fair time in Idaho. Website: <https://funatthefair.com/general-info/>

SEPT. 2-25

Washington State Fair: 10:30 a.m. Puyallup Fairgrounds, 110 9th Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. The Washington State Fair is the largest single attraction held annually in the state of Washington. Closed Tuesdays and Sept. 7. Website: <https://www.thefair.com/>

THURSDAY SEPT. 8

Farm & Ranch Succession Planning and Working Lands Easements: 12:30-4 p.m. OSU Malheur County Extension, 710 Southwest 5th Ave., Ontario, Ore. Attorney June Flores will present on the topics of succession and estate planning, and how to prepare your operation to be resilient for future generations. Easement specialist Marc Hudson will answer your questions about working lands conservation easements — what they are, what they aren't, and how they may be helpful in executing your agricultural business plans. These in-person events are part of a free 6-workshop series in Lake, Harney and Malheur counties. All are

welcome, and the events are free. RSVP for these or any of OAT's other events and refer any questions about the event to diane@oregonagtrust.org 503-858-2683

FRIDAY SEPT. 9

Farm & Ranch Succession Planning and Working Lands Easements: 12:30-4 p.m. Burns Elks Lodge, 18 N. Broadway Ave., Burns, Ore. Attorney June Flores will present on the topics of succession and estate planning, and how to prepare your operation to be resilient for future generations. Easement specialist Marc Hudson will answer your questions about working lands conservation easements — what they are, what they aren't, and how they may be helpful in executing your agricultural business plans. These in-person events are part of a free 6-workshop series in Lake, Harney and Malheur counties. All are welcome, and the events are free. RSVP for these or any of OAT's other events and refer any questions about the event to diane@oregonagtrust.org 503-858-2683

SATURDAY OCT. 1

Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in White City: Rogue

Transfer and Recycling, 8001 Table Rock Road, White City, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners, farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov Registration for this event is required by Sept. 16. Website: <https://bit.ly/3FloyFE>

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY OCT. 5-6

National Cooperative Business Association IMPACT Conference (in person and online): National Press Club, Washington, D.C. The conference provides a platform to re-energize the cooperative movement. Website: <http://ncba-clusa.coop>

WEDNESDAY-SUNDAY OCT. 5-9

Trailing of the Sheep Festival: Ketchum, Idaho. The five-day festival includes activities in multi-

ple venues and culminates with the big sheep parade down Main Street in Ketchum. Website: <https://www.trailingofthesheep.org>

FRIDAY OCT. 14

Federal Milk Marketing Order Forum: 12:30 p.m. local time Kansas City Marriott Downtown, Kansas City, Mo. Hosted by American Farm Bureau Federation, the forum will explore solutions to FMMO shortfalls. Registration closes at noon on Sept. 23. Website: <https://bit.ly/3QC08Xp>

SATURDAY OCT. 15

Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event in Roseburg: Douglas County Fairgrounds, 2110 Frear St., Roseburg, Ore. The Oregon Department of Agriculture through the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership is sponsoring a Free Waste Pesticide Collection Event. This event is an opportunity for landowners, farmers and other commercial pesticide users to rid storage facilities of unwanted or unused pesticide products. Contact: Kathryn Rifenburg, 971-600-5073, kathryn.rifenburg@oda.oregon.gov Registration for this event is required by Sept. 16.



Capital Press Managers

Joe Beach Editor & Publisher
Anne Long Advertising Director
Carl Sampson Managing Editor
Samantha Stinnett Circulation Manager

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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 Wriughthouse 800-882-6789

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