

Farmland values up an average of 12%

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

U.S. farmland values jumped 12.4% this year compared to 2021, with an average value of \$3,800 an acre nationwide, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Cropland value, at \$5,050, is up an average of 14.3%, and pasture value at \$1,650 is up 11.5%.

The \$420 an acre average increase in real estate value is the largest since the reporting series began in 1997 and the largest year-over-year percentage increase since 2006, according to a report by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Real estate values vary significantly across the country, with the highest values in areas with large volumes of high-dollar crops — such as wine grapes and tree nuts in California — and areas experiencing upward price pressure due to their proximity to

urban areas with little remaining developable land, the report said.

Much of the Midwest had the highest real estate values, followed by the South and Pacific Northwest, and finally the Plains and Mountain states.

“Part of this increase can be linked to the rise in commodity prices that have translated to a higher farming value for land in row crop-heavy heartland states like Iowa, Illinois and Indiana,” said Danny Munch, Farm Bureau economist and author of the report.

“Incentives added to government programs — such as those added in 2021 to the Conservation Reserve Program — that provide financial compensation to landowners who voluntarily enroll and retire highly erodible and environmentally sensitive lands also contributed to increased competition for active cropland, increasing land prices,” he said.

Other factors contributing to rising land values include competing land-use interests, which includes urban and suburban sprawl, and the increased investments into hard assets like land for a safer return on investment during a period of high inflation, he said.

Of the 48 contiguous states, 23 experienced double-digit percentage increases in value. The largest increases were in Kansas, up 25.2% to \$2,630 an acre; Iowa, up 21.4% to \$9,400; Nebraska, up 21% to \$3,750; and South Dakota, up 18.7% to \$2,600, according to USDA.

The states with the highest farmland values were Rhode Island at \$17,500 per acre; New Jersey at \$15,400; Massachusetts at \$15,200; Delaware at \$13,700; and California at \$12,000.

Like overall agricultural real estate values, average U.S. cropland values increased sharply in 2022,

rising to \$5,050 per acre.

“The distribution across the country follows a similar pattern as overall farmland value, with California and Northeast urban states claiming the highest average cropland values. Again, following that top category is much of the Midwest and Northern Plains, followed by the South and then the rest of the country,” Munch said.

Similar to overall agricultural real estate values and cropland values, pastureland values posted strong gains from the previous year, coming in at \$1,650 per acre on average for the U.S.

“However, the distribution of pastureland values across the country differs from the cropland values and real estate values,” he said.

Some of the more valuable pastureland is concentrated in the South and the mid-South, areas with less density of high-value row crops and more regular precipitation, he said.

Farmland values 2022

Farm real estate value, per acre

Location	Dollars	% change from 2021
Calif.	12,000	10.1
Idaho	3,700	10.4
Ore.	3,040	9.0
Wash.	3,100	6.9
U.S.	3,800	12.4

Cropland value, per acre

Location	Dollars	% change from 2021
Calif.	15,410	11.2
Idaho	4,950	11.2
Ore.	3,650	10.3
Wash.	2,940	8.9
U.S.	5,050	14.3

Pasture value, per acre

Location	Dollars	% change from 2021
Calif.	3,550	14.5
Idaho	1,970	15.9
Ore.	900	8.4
Wash.	820	9.3
U.S.	1,650	11.5

Source: USDA-NASS

False advertising lawsuit allowed to proceed against Tillamook cooperative

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A false advertising lawsuit against the Tillamook dairy cooperative can proceed, though the Oregon Court of Appeals has upheld the dismissal of certain allegations.

Three years ago, several consumers filed a complaint against the Tillamook County Creamery Association for allegedly misrepresenting its livestock practices and its products’ geographic origins.

Specifically, the four plaintiffs — Sonja Bohr, Tamara Barnes, Karen Foglesong and Mary Wood — claim that most of the cooperative’s milk is produced by cows confined in an “industrialized dairy factory” in Morrow County, rather than living on small family farms with access to pastures in Tillamook County.

The dairy cooperative vowed to aggressively defend against the lawsuit, which seeks class action status that would allow other consumers to join in the litigation.

The lawsuit was filed at the behest of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, which advocates for people to stop eating dairy products altogether, the cooperative said.

The cooperative said its “farmer-members and suppliers all take good care of our animals,” including Three Mile Canyon Farms in Boardman, Ore., which is recognized for leadership in “environmental stewardship and sustainable agriculture.”

While the arguments in the court of public opinion centered on animal care, the disagreements in state court have been more technical. The litigation has largely focused on whether the lawsuit’s legal theories are plausible violations of the Oregon Unfair Trade Practices Act.

Multnomah County Circuit Judge Kelly Skye dismissed some of the allegations at the cooperative’s request, agreeing they didn’t square with the statute’s requirements.

While the judge allowed some claims to survive, she said a proposed class action must be “limited to con-



The Oregon Court of Appeals has allowed a false advertising lawsuit against the Tillamook dairy cooperative to proceed, albeit with narrowed legal claims.

sumers who purchased Tillamook products in reliance on the Tillamook marketing representations.”

The plaintiffs disagreed the class should be defined more narrowly, arguing that all consumers paid inflated prices for Tillamook products, regardless if they were specifically motivated by the cooperative’s marketing.

Without concluding the lawsuit, the judge referred this legal issue and others to an interlocutory appeal. In exceptional cases, the Oregon Court of Appeals agrees to resolve “controlling questions of law” before a lawsuit is finished.

The Oregon Court of Appeals has now upheld the dismissal of certain allegations and agreed the proposed class must be limited to consumers who’d demonstrated “reliance” on alleged false advertising.

The appellate court declined to decide other legal questions, such as whether the “source” of a product refers to its manufacturer or its geographic origin.

It’s not yet necessary to resolve such issues, even if the plaintiffs decide to move forward with the narrower class definition, the ruling said.

The lawsuit may still settle or fail to achieve class action status, since it’s tough to prove the purchase motivation of a large number of people, the ruling said.

La Nina getting stronger, expected to stay for fall

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted Aug. 11 that a La Nina has a strong chance of staying through the end of the year, but may fade in the middle of winter.

La Nina, linked to cool and wet weather in the Northwest, has prevailed the last two winters. La Nina rarely reigns for three consecutive winters. That has occurred only twice since 1950.

NOAA said this La Nina has a 60% chance of remaining in place through December. By January, the chances of a La Nina drop

to 47%.

The La Nina should influence fall and early winter weather, though the rarity of a third-straight La Nina makes long-range forecasts difficult, Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond said.

“There have been so few cases, we can’t really generalize,” he said. “Right now, I’m very guardedly optimistic that we’ll have a decent start to the water year,” which begins Oct. 1.

Below-average sea-surface temperatures along the equator in the Pacific Ocean trigger a La Nina. Above-average temperatures trigger an El Nino.

A La Nina is linked to

cool and wet weather in the northern tier of the U.S., but warm and dry seasons in the southern tier. La Nina exerts its greatest influence in the winter.

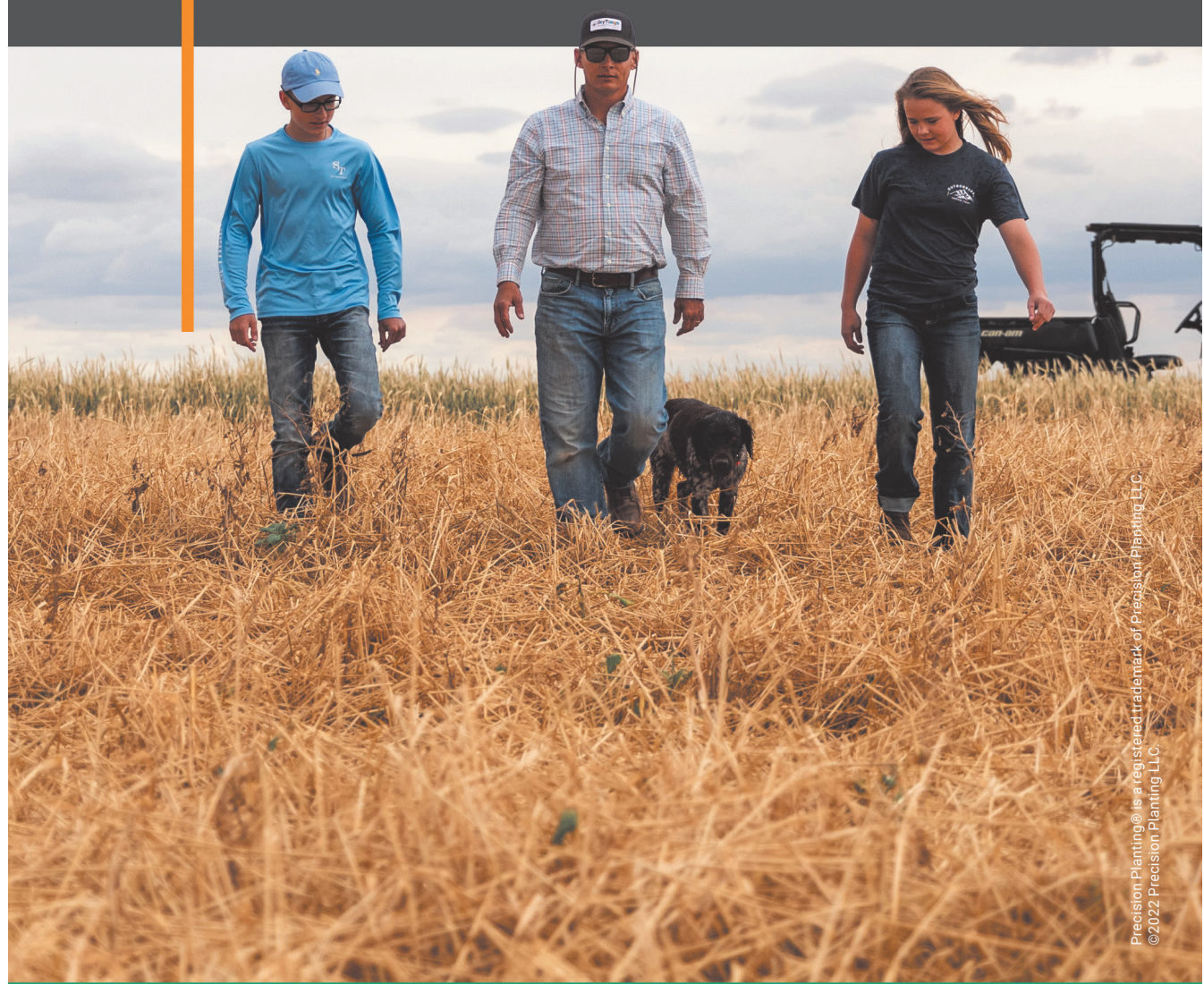
A month ago, NOAA anticipated La Nina might fade in the fall but come back in the winter. In July, however, the ocean cooled, after warming toward normal in June.

NOAA now estimates an 86% chance the La Nina will stay through September and an 80% chance through October.

By January, it’s a toss-up whether the sea-surface temperatures will be cool or neutral. NOAA sees almost no chance for an El Nino to form.

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