

Pandemic's aftermath still hinders ag shipping, experts say

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Though the burdens imposed on transportation workers have eased since the peak of the COVID pandemic, the lingering effects continue to bedevil agricultural shipping, experts say.

Nurseries are among the farm sectors that most depend on a robust U.S. transportation system, since they must quickly deliver plants to consumers across the country.

Apart from dealing with their own labor shortages, nursery producers also face shipping constraints caused by insufficient numbers of transportation workers, including truckers, experts say.

"It will be a long road back until we get enough truckers," said Dale Parra, nursery specialist with Truck Transportation Services, a freight brokerage firm focused on food and agriculture.

Hardships associated with the coronavirus pandemic convinced many truckers to retire or leave the industry, aggravating a nationwide shortfall that was already significant, experts said Aug. 25 during the Farwest Show, an annual nursery industry conference in Portland.

"Next time you see a truck driver, thank them for staying in business,"



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

From left to right, Jana Jarvis of the Oregon Trucking Associations, Dale Parra of Truck Transportation Services, Teresa Carr of the Port of Portland and Jeff Stone of the Oregon Association of Nurseries participated in an Aug. 25 transportation panel at the Farwest Show in Portland.

said Jana Jarvis, president of the Oregon Trucking Associations.

Coronavirus restrictions across the country often prevented truck stops from offering anything but fuel, leaving truckers with nowhere to eat, sleep or even use the restroom, she said.

"It was very adverse working conditions," Jarvis said.

Even before COVID, the U.S. trucking industry had about 60,000 fewer drivers than it needed, she said. Since the start of the pandemic, that deficit has increased to 80,000 drivers.

Some companies exacerbated their shipping problems by mistreating truckers, some of whom remain reluctant to load and unload at those businesses, Parra said.

"Truckers are under-appreciated and without them, we would be in a world of hurt," he said. "Go out of your way to be real nice."

As many truckers retire, the industry also has a recruiting problem due to outdated stereotypes about the career, Jarvis said.

Many transportation companies will pay for the training required for a commercial driver's license,

but it's still difficult for people to find time for this education, she said.

The industry needs to find ways to become more attractive to younger workers, Jarvis said.

Financial incentives are part of the answer to the trucker shortage, she said. "How do we solve that? We offer more pay."

Other transportation sectors have also encountered recruitment problems, experts say.

Railroad companies are likewise struggling to fill positions as workers retire, said David Anzur,

founder of Anzur Logistics, a freight services company focused on rail.

"That has plagued moving product across the system," he said.

The Port of Portland, which handles several transportation modes, has about 750 employees and 60 open jobs that it's competing to fill, said Teresa Carr, its director of business development and commercial properties.

The port doesn't directly employ the dock workers who operate its container terminal, which is running again after losing ocean carrier service several years ago, Carr said. The facility is also encountering a wave of retirements among members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Members of ILWU are hired by the Pacific Maritime Association, whose board of directors includes major ocean shipping firms, she said. "We're trying to convey to them that more labor is needed in this region."

Inflation has been challenging for the port's investment in airport upgrades, increasing the cost from about \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion, due to the rising price of steel and other materials, Carr said.

"The big projects came right online just as COVID was hitting," she said.

Calif. board drives EV mandate in Northwest

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A California state board voted Aug. 25 to require all new cars, pickups and SUVs to be electric by 2035, effectively setting the same policy for Washington.

Gov. Jay Inslee said in a tweet that Washington will adopt the same regulations by the end of the year. "This is a critical milestone in our climate fight," he said.

The Democratic-controlled Legislature in 2020 committed Washington to automatically changing its vehicle-emission rules to match rules adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

The California board has 14-voting members appointed by the governor, Senate and Assembly. Board chairwoman Liane Randolph called the unanimous vote "world changing."

Inslee spokesman Mike Faulk said the Department of Ecology will initiate rule-making to adopt California standards. A public comment period likely will open in early September, he said.

The Washington Legislature this year set a "target" for all new passenger cars and light-duty trucks to be electric by 2030. State agencies were told to come up with a "scoping plan."

California's vote sets a mandate for zero-emission vehicles. The board cited its authority coming from an executive order issued by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

"We've basically given up our sovereignty," said Washington state Rep. Tom Dent, R-Moses Lake. "It's absolutely wrong what's happening here."

OPB reported that Gov. Kate Brown's office said Oregon regulators are also considering similar rules.

According to the California rule, the electric vehicles must be able to travel at least 150 miles on a charge. Dent said 150 miles pass quickly outside urban areas.

"It just doesn't work for rural America, agricultural America," he said. "It's not that unusual to drive to Montana to pick up parts."

The California Farm Bureau opposed the



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington will automatically follow a mandate passed Aug. 25 by the California Air Resources Board. All cars, pickups and SUVs sold in the states must be electric beginning with 2035 models.

mandate at a public hearing that preceded the vote, warning that farmworkers will be hurt and that farmers will be more dependent on an electric grid prone to blackouts.

The African American Farmers of California and the Nisei Farmers League submitted comments criticizing the mandate.

"As gas-powered vehicles become scarcer, will used electric vehicles be affordable for farmworkers?" asked Nisei Farmers, founded by Japanese-American growers in California.

"Will they withstand the dirt roads and neglected roads that California farmworkers drive to reach job sites?" the league asked.

Senate Bill 5811, passed by the Washington Legislature in 2020 on mostly party-line votes in the House and Senate, committed the state to mirroring California's vehicle-emission laws.

Democrats said the bill was necessary because climate change is a crisis. Republicans complained that letting California dictate changes in Washington law was fundamentally wrong.

According to the Washington Department of Licensing, the most-popular electric car registered in the state is the Model 3 Tesla. The retail price of the 2022 model starts at \$48,490, according to Kelley Blue Book.

Beef Northwest purchases family-owned Carlton Farms

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

CARLTON, Ore. —

Two of Oregon's best-known meat companies have combined. Beef Northwest Feeders, based in North Powder, has purchased Carlton Farms, makers of high-end pork and beef products, in a merger of two longtime family-owned companies.

Financial terms were not disclosed.

Zach Wilson, a partner and co-owner of Beef Northwest, said the two families have known one another for 30 years, and have a history of doing business together.

Carlton Farms was founded in 1956, and works with approximately five Northwest farmers raising pigs without hormones or antibiotics. For the last 15 years, Wilson said Beef Northwest has also provided finished cattle for Carlton Farms' line of beef products.

The sale ensures that Carlton Farms will remain

local, Wilson said. It will also allow Beef Northwest to diversify and expand its footprint into the Willamette Valley.

"They have a very strong team there," he said. "We look forward to working with them, and going forward with them."

Rita Duyn, president and CEO of Carlton Farms, said in a statement that she is confident Beef Northwest "has the resources and core values that will take Carlton Farms to a new level."

"It is a great fit for all," Duyn said. "I take comfort knowing this company will continue in their hands and be part of the Wilson family legacy."

Beef Northwest was established by Wilson's father, John, and John's cousin, Jim, in 1991. The company has grown from one initial feedlot in Nyssa, Ore., to six locations across Eastern Oregon and one in Quincy, Wash., with 300 employees and a collective one-

time capacity of 110,000 cattle.

Carlton Farms has a slaughterhouse and retail store in the city of Carlton, about 45 miles southwest of Portland. Wilson said they do not plan to make any immediate changes to Carlton Farms' products or operations.

"Consumers can expect the same quality products that they've been seeing for 60 years," he said. "Nothing is going to change in that regard."

Julian Garcia, Beef Northwest CEO, said the acquisition "reflects our continued commitment to investing in local agriculture."

Wilson said Carlton Farms represents Beef Northwest's first foray into the pork business, which he described as a unique challenge. However, he said what won them over was the high quality and values of the Carlton Farms employees.

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