

Public-private partnerships bolster U.S. wheat breeding

By SEAN ELLIS
EO Media Group

World wheat production is increasing while U.S. production is declining and the domestic industry needs a new model to reverse that trend.

That's what Frank Curtis, executive vice president of Limagrain Cereal Seeds, the world's fourth largest seed company, told Idaho-Eastern Oregon Seed Association members Dec. 2 during the group's annual meeting.

Federal and state funding for wheat research is declining and fewer wheat variety royalties are going back into breeding programs because farmers are growing less wheat, he said.

U.S. wheat production totaled 65 million metric tons in 1980 but only 55 million metric tons now, while world wheat production has increased from 440 million to 725 million metric tons during that time, he said.

According to USDA projections, he said, the U.S. share of world wheat exports will fall from about 22 percent now to 15.6 percent in 2021.

"Wheat production is declining in the United States because it's less profitable than" other crops such as corn and soybeans and that's a symptom of decreased wheat research, Curtis said.

According to Curtis, about 34 percent of royalties from the sale



A tractor pulling a bank-out wagon offloads wheat in to a grain truck while working the harvest in 2014 outside of Lexington.

EO file photo

of wheat varieties goes back into wheat breeding programs in the U.S. That's compared with 93 percent in the United Kingdom, 92 percent in France and 85 percent in Australia.

The declining wheat production in this country is a result of a "lack of investment in one of the world's biggest crops," Curtis said.

To reverse that trend, he said, the industry needs to develop more public-private partnerships, such as the one developed four years ago between Limagrain, the University of Idaho and the Idaho Wheat Commission.

Such partnerships allow each party to take advantage of the

strengths of the others, he said, and ultimately will direct more money toward breeding programs by producing superior varieties that farmers will want to purchase.

"The university can do things Limagrain can't do and Limagrain has access to things that the university doesn't," said Cathy Wilson,

director of research collaboration for the commission. "That synergy is the thing that makes this really powerful."

Curtis believes such partnerships will result in the U.S. wheat seed market increasing from 750,000 metric tons in 2015 to 1.5 million metric tons in 2020.

"That is an achievable potential for the industry given that the public-private partnerships will facilitate the (development of new varieties) that will offer agronomic benefits for growers," he said.

Limagrain has access to a huge genomics data base and has billions of genetic marker data points, Curtis said.

But that information on its own is of little value without the agronomic scores, yield and disease resistance, plant maturity, respiration rates and other information that universities possess through their extension programs.

Limagrain's partnership with UI and the wheat commission is already producing results. The company will release four new wheat varieties next year that work well in the Pacific Northwest, Curtis said.

Wilson said the partnership sped up the development of those varieties by about two years. Royalties from the sale of those varieties will go back into UI's breeding program.

"This idea of public-private partnerships is not a pipe dream," Curtis said. "It is happening now."

BRIEFLY

Law enforcement receives new officers

SALEM — Starting in October, new law enforcement officers have joined area agencies after graduating from Oregon's Public Safety Academy.

Parole and probation officer Danny Madore joined Umatilla County Community Justice, according to an announcement from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training. He graduated on Oct. 30.

Oregon State Police in Pendleton and Hermiston each received a new recruit following an Oct. 2 graduation. State police in La Grande also received a new patrol recruit and the Ontario Area Command received two.

And the Union County Sheriff's Office had a deputy graduated from the academy's basic corrections class in November and another from the basic police class this month.

Art council bakes up cookie social

PENDLETON — A cookie social is planned during the annual meeting of the Art Council of Pendleton.

The public is welcome to attend Saturday from 1-2 p.m. at Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St. The meeting also includes board member appointments, a review of the past year and upcoming year.

For more information, call 541-278-9201.

Sam Boardman welcomes Santa Claus

BOARDMAN — A Family Holiday Night is planned at Sam Boardman Elementary School.

Have your photo taken with Santa Claus, which costs \$5 for the first photo and then \$1 for each additional one. Also, the event includes a small ornament-making activity for kids, hot chocolate, cookies and a movie with popcorn available.

The event is Tuesday from

5-7 p.m. at the school, 301 Wilson Lane, Boardman. Sponsored by the Sam Boardman & Windy River elementary schools Parent Teacher Organization, they are accepting donations to raise money for upcoming activities.

For more information, call 541-314-5446.

Santa serves flapjacks and fun

HERMISTON — Santa Claus wants to share his favorite breakfast with kids of all ages.

Pancakes with Santa is Saturday, Dec. 19 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. at The Arc, 215 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. Tickets are \$8 for kids ages 2-15, \$10 for ages 16 and up or \$30 for a family of four (plus \$5 for each additional child). Seats are limited and tickets must be purchased by Wednesday, Dec. 16.

The holiday breakfast includes pancakes, sausage and toppings to decorate your pancakes. In addition, photos with Santa will be taken and a holiday story will be shared by staff from the Hermiston Public Library.

For tickets or more information, call 541-667-5018 or stop by Hermiston Parks & Recreation at 180 N.E. Second St.

Hospice sets candlelight service

HERMISTON — The public is invited to honor someone special to them during the Candlelight Memorial Service planned by Vange John Memorial Hospice.

In its 20th year, the event offers a time of reflection, inspiration and healing. It is Thursday, Dec. 17 at 7 p.m. at Guardian Angel Assisted Living Facility, 540 N.W. 12th St., Hermiston.

Also, to help support hospice, it's accepting donations throughout the month for its annual "Light Up a Life" fundraiser. People can make a tax-deductible contribution (suggested donation of \$15) in the memory or honor of someone special to them. The names will be included as part of the candlelight service and will

be read during a broadcast Thursday, Dec. 24 at 6 p.m. on KOHU 1360 AM.

To make a donation, stop by or mail checks payable to: Vange John Memorial Hospice, 645 W. Orchard Ave., Suite 300, Hermiston, OR 97838. For more information, call 541-667-3543.

Heppner businesses help the needy

HEPPNER — People can help others less fortunate in the community by dropping off non-perishable food items at Wheatland Insurance and making donations at Community Bank.

The Heppner insurance business is accepting food, which will be distributed through the Neighborhood Center, through Friday, Dec. 18. The office is located at 294 N. Main St., Heppner.

The Community Bank annual charity drive will match donations 50 cents on the dollar, up to a maximum of \$500 per branch. Donations will be accepted through Friday, Dec. 18. The Heppner branch is located at 127 N. Main St.

The goal for this year is to raise at least \$1,000 to support the charity of their choice. For each branch meeting or exceeding this goal, the local charity would receive at least a \$1,500 donation.

Irrigon High School seeks student sponsors

IRRIGON — Irrigon High School is looking for community organizations, clubs and businesses interested in sponsoring an Irrigon sophomore so they can attend the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Conference.

The conference, which is in May 2016 at Willamette University in Salem, provides an opportunity for each Oregon high school to send three sophomores to gain leadership training.

The cost is \$250 per student. For more information about sponsoring a student, call Mike Royer at 541-922-5551.

Rowan named Commander of the Year

East Oregonian

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan is one of Oregon's top sheriffs.

The Oregon State Sheriff's Association recognized Rowan as Commander of the Year at its annual conference banquet Wednesday in Bend.

"It was quite a surprise and quite an honor," Rowan said. "I'm just honored and humbled."

Undersheriff Jim

Littlefield said Rowan earned the recognition. Staff at sheriff's offices provide nominations for the annual award, and the association's Enforcement Command Council sifted through those and selected the Umatilla County sheriff.

Rowan said the award means something extra



Rowan

because of the staff nomination.

Rowan was undersheriff from 2005-2012, before becoming sheriff. On Dec. 1 he filed to seek a second term. As sheriff he has increased the number of inmates the county jail in Pendleton holds and sought to improve communication and relationships with other local agencies.

District receives professional development award

East Oregonian

Desert View Elementary School was recognized as a Model Professional Development Community by Learning Tree, the Bloomington, Ind., company that developed the process.

There are three central ideas of PLCs — a focus on learning, building a collaborative culture and creating results.

The districts that have demonstrated those concepts, implemented them for at least three years and can demonstrate evidence of improved learning can send an application to the PLC Review Committee for consideration.

"My staff members have committed to improve their practice every day, by drawing on each other's strength, experience and enthusiasm," Desert View Principal Michael Roberts



EO file photo

Desert View Elementary School kindergarten students listen to a story read by their teacher, Ashley Nicodemus in August 2014.

said in a press release.

Superintendent Fred Maiocco said the honor signified an important milestone.

"Desert View Elementary School is the first school in Oregon to receive this recognition and be named a 'model' PLC," he

said. "I'm extremely proud of the school's commitment and work in implementing the key tenets of professional learning communities."

Desert View is one of 200 school across the United States and Canada to receive the title.

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