

U.S. economic growth slowed to 2.3% pace

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy slowed to a moderate 2.3 percent annual growth rate in the first quarter as consumer spending turned in the weakest performance in nearly five years. Still, the January-March increase came in better than expected, supporting hopes for a solid rebound for the rest of the year.

The Commerce Department reported Friday that the gain in the gross domestic product, the economy's total output of goods and services, followed a 2.9 percent rise in the fourth quarter and gains above 3 percent in the previous two quarters.

Many economists had forecast that growth would slip below 2 percent in the first quarter, reflecting a big pullback by consumers after a torrid pace of spending in the fourth quarter. Recent history has shown a pattern of weakness in the first quarter, reflecting in part seasonal data quirks. Analysts expect growth to surpass 3 percent in the current quarter.

Consumer spending, which accounts for 70 percent of economic activity, decelerated sharply from a 4 percent growth rate in the fourth quarter to a 1.1 percent pace in the first quarter. That was offset somewhat by gains in inventory building by businesses and a lower trade deficit.

Analysts viewed the first quarter slowdown as temporary, with consumers expected to boost their spending amid a low unemployment rate and the initial impact of the \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts that Congress approved in December.

Over the past four quarters, GDP growth has averaged 2.9 percent, just below the 3 percent projection the Trump administration used in its budget for next year.



This 2014 file photo shows a hive of honeybees on display at the Vermont Beekeeping Supply booth at the annual Vermont Farm Show at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction, Vt.

EU moves to full ban on bee-harming pesticides

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Union made a key breakthrough on Friday to completely ban pesticides that harm bees and their crop pollination.

The 28 member states got a large majority, representing some three-quarters of its population, backing the ban on the three prevalent neonicotinoid pesticides that will take effect at the end of the year. The decision builds on a limited ban which has been in effect since 2013.

Antonia Staats of the Avaaz campaign group called it a “beacon of hope for bees. Finally our governments are listening.”

Over the past several years, there's been an alarming drop in bee populations and there were fears it would start to seriously affect crop production since bees are necessary for the spread of pollen and reproduction.

The EU says it used a scientific review to identify pesticides as one of the factors causing the decline along with disease and climate

change among others.

Swiss agribusiness company Syngenta called the decision “disappointing” and added that “evidence clearly shows that neonicotinoids pose a minimum threat to bee health compared to a lack of food, diseases and cold weather.”

Others disagree. “There is abundant evidence from lab and field studies that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees, and a growing body of evidence linking them to declines of butterflies, aquatic insects and insect-eating birds,” said Dave Goulson, biology professor at the University of Sussex. “The EU decision is a logical one,” he said.

The European Commission is set to adopt the decision in the next few weeks and the ban will kick in by the end of the year.

The three pesticides will only be allowed for use in greenhouses where there is no contact with bees.

EU nations, environment groups and industry have been bickering over the issue for almost a decade now.

BRIEFLY

Bank of EO elects new board chair

HEPPNER — BEO Bancorp and its subsidiary, Bank of Eastern Oregon, upon completion of the annual shareholders meeting in Heppner, elected Joel Peterson as chairman of the board and Joe Gonzalez Jr. as vice chairman, according to a press release.

Peterson joined the board in 1993 and is the current board's longest serving director. He is president of Daily Bread Farms, a family owned farm near Lone. Joel and his wife, Lea, a middle school teacher, have three children.

Gonzalez joined the board in 2015. He owns an electrical contracting business in Richland, Wash. Joe and his wife Delia, live in Richland.

“We are excited to have Joel and Joe lead the board of directors for the next year. Both gentlemen are active and engaged board members. Joel continues his service as chair of the funds management committee, also serving on the compensation and loan committees. Joe serves on the audit and funds management committees,” said President and CEO Jeff Bailey. “The vast experience and leadership qualities of these two men will serve our shareholders well.”

Ordnance Brewing founding brewer departs for new venture

BOARDMAN — The original brewer of Boardman's Ordnance Brewing is starting up his own brew pub.

Logan Mayfield started with Ordnance four years ago. The company announced this week he departed on Tuesday to open Burnt Field Brewing less than a mile away in Boardman's historic train depot. Craig Coleman with the Ordnance's management team said the company is pleased Mayfield has the opportunity to pursue his dream.

The transition has been in process for the last several months, according to the announcement, and Ordnance holds onto a solid brewery team under the leadership of Paul Anderson, formerly of Deschutes Brewing.

Mayfield said he aims to open Burnt Field in the summer and will start with a pizzeria and contract brew, as well as some of Ordnance's beers.

“But eventually,” he said, “we'll be brewing all of our beer in house.”

Students present reports on their work experience

HEPPNER — Students working with Rita Van Schoiack of Blue Mountain Investment Management will provide an update during the upcoming Heppner Chamber of Commerce meeting.

The student consultants receive school credits for work experience with Van Schoiack. The program helps in identifying personal finance topics that are of interest to students and assists them in preparing for the future.

In addition, the meeting will include an all-entities report. The no-host luncheon event is Thursday, May 3 at noon at Heppner City Hall. The meal costs \$10. To ensure there's enough food, those planning to attend need to RSVP by Tuesday at heppnerchamber@centurytel.net or 541-676-5536.



AP Photo/Richard Drew, File

Happy trails, Ford Taurus

In about a year, a car that once was the most popular in America will die for a second time. Ford Taurus, rest peacefully in heaven's salvage yard. Blame the full-size sedan's slow death on the national obsession with SUVs and Ford Motor Co.'s need to slash costs and remake itself for a new era of self-driving cars and shuttles. Ford announced the car's demise on Wednesday as part of major restructuring plan to focus capital spending on more popular SUVs and technology needed to morph into a mobility company.

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