

Lamb Weston Holdings Inc. acquires Australian potato processor

By BRAD CARLSON
EO Media Group

Lamb Weston Holdings Inc. recently acquired Australia-based Marvel Packers Pty Ltd., which operates potato processing and storage facilities in Hallam, Victoria.

The acquisition enables Eagle, Idaho-based Lamb Weston to boost global production capacity, increase its presence in the sizable Australian market by adding in-country production, and create new opportunities to serve customers, President and CEO Tom Werner said in a news release. Transaction details were not disclosed.

Lamb Weston is a major supplier of frozen potato, sweet potato, appetizer and vegetable products to restaurants and retailers worldwide. The company now owns and operates 16 processing facilities worldwide and has nine others with joint-venture partners. Zacks Equity Research



EO Media Group Photo/Capital Press, File
Lamb Weston, based in Eagle, Idaho, has announced the purchase of an Australian processor.

reported that Lamb Weston expects to offset current challenges — such as a poor potato crop at European joint venture Lamb Weston/Meijer — with solid pricing, cost-saving initiatives, and opportunities in its North

American and export ventures. The company continues to invest in innovation, and in enhancing capacity and customer service.

Lamb Weston stock closed at \$73.56 Dec. 31, down 5 cents, compared to a

one-year range from \$52.92 to \$83.86. The company plans to report fiscal second-quarter financial results Jan. 4. It recently announced it would raise its stock's quarterly dividend and start a share-repurchase program.

Merkley stalls 2020 presidential run decision until March

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley said Wednesday that the high cost of campaigning for president is one of the big factors that could keep him out of the Democratic primary field in 2020.

Merkley last year made several visits to early primary states and indicated at one point that he would decide before 2018 ended. But in his first public appearance after the holidays, Merkley said he is now looking toward the end of March for a decision.

In an interview with OPB before holding a town hall in east Portland, Merkley said he's still weighing several concerns. Perhaps chief among them is the high cost of mounting a presidential challenge — something he said could cost tens of millions of dollars.

"You would really have to build a vast operation to be competitive given the design of our primary system," Merkley said, "and

that would require an all-out effort. And so it's balancing that effort against putting all my efforts in through the Senate."

He noted that at least three of his potential rivals are billionaires and that several others have built national followings allowing them to raise large sums of money on the internet.



Merkley

Contentenders have to build large staffs to compete at the grassroots level in Iowa and New Hampshire. And California has moved its primary to March 3, requiring candidates to mount expensive advertising and get-out-the-vote efforts in the nation's largest state early in the primary season.

Also complicating Merkley's decision is the fact he is up for re-election in 2020. He could test his appeal in a presidential race in the early primaries and still file for re-election by March 10.

But spending so much time out of state on the campaign trail could affect his political standing in Oregon.

Three stranded women rescued near Indian Lake

East Oregonian

Three women were rescued New Year's Day after the vehicle they were riding in got stuck in the snow on Indian Lake Road, the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

Lynette Minthorn, of Pendleton, was driving her Jeep Liberty about 1.5 miles west of Indian Lake when it became stuck in the middle of the road. Minthorn called 911 to report the incident about 3:50 p.m.

Minthorn said that neither she or her two passengers — Chelsea Hallam and Cecilia Hoffman — were dressed for the cold weather, although the Jeep had plenty of gas.

Umatilla County Search and Rescue volunteers Bob English and Eric Skaggs responded to the scene after a local tow company declined the job because of poor road conditions, the sheriff's office said.

English and Skaggs were able to reach the stranded Jeep at about 6:20 p.m. with a Utility Task Vehicle (side by side

that the pair towed to the area with a search and rescue vehicle. The side by side is equipped with snow tracks.

The women were transported from the scene via the side by side. All were in good condition, and later taken to Pendleton at their request.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Then-Hermiston Chamber of Commerce director Debbie Pedro, right, and Kelly Schwirse take phone calls Tuesday in the office at the Hermiston Conference Center on April 4, 2017.

Former Hermiston chamber director hired as economic director for CDA

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Debbie Pedro, former executive director of the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce, will continue her work in economic development in a new position with the Columbia Development Authority.

Pedro will serve as director of economic coordination as the agency prepares to take control of most of the former Umatilla Chemical Depot outside of Hermiston. She starts Jan. 3, working under the CDA's executive director Greg Smith.

"People will still be seeing me in Hermiston," she said, noting that her previous job at the chamber helped her get to know a wide variety of people in Umatilla and Morrow counties. "I think it's great I already have those connections with folks. I still have the opportunity to support our businesses and the growth of our region."

Pedro worked for the chamber of commerce for 18 years, including 10 as director. She said in a news release that the chamber's membership grew from 240 to 440 during her time as director and had reached new levels of financial stability.

"I have enjoyed my time with the chamber and it was tough deciding to

leave," she said in a statement released Wednesday. "I saw some things I could do on a regional basis with the new position and with the chamber being in good hands, I decided it was time to make a change."

Her new role will take her to the Columbia Development Authority's offices at the Port of Morrow in Boardman.

The CDA is a partnership between Umatilla County, Morrow County, the Port of Umatilla, the Port of Morrow and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. About 7,500 of the 19,700 acres of the former Umatilla Chemical Depot were transferred to the Oregon Military Department for a training facility, but the CDA's board has been working with the U.S. Army to transfer the remaining acres to local control.

Some will be used for a wildlife refuge, while other sections have an industrial zoning, and a strip of land along Interstate 82 will also be available for commercial development. The CDA plans to recruit businesses to the property once the land is transferred, and Pedro will play a part in that in her new role.

Greg Smith, who serves as the CDA's executive director as part of a contract



Pedro

between the CDA and Gregory Smith & Company, said in a statement he was pleased to be able to hire Pedro.

"The Columbia Development Authority and I are lucky to have Debbie join the team," he said in a statement. "She brings to the job a wealth of knowledge of the area and the people

associated with the Umatilla Depot. Debbie is someone who will jump into the job immediately."

To fill the vacancy left by Pedro at the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce, the chamber plans to have marketing director Kelly Schwirse and board chair Paul Keeler oversee operations while the chamber searches for a new executive director.

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