

Grain Growers celebrates 75th anniversary

By Ellen Morris Bishop
Wallowa County Chieftain



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Wallowa County Grain Growers manager, Mike Hayward, explains how Grain Growers has changed and grown over the past 75 years. Grain Growers now has equipment dealerships/retail outlets in LaGrande and Baker City.

Established in 1944, Wallowa County Grain Growers is one of the longest continuously operating businesses in Wallowa County. In keeping with its practice of changing and growing with the times, Grain Growers just celebrated its 75th anniversary, introducing a new line of user-friendly fishing tackle. Like everything else it stocks, the mostly trolling tackle—poles, reels and lures—fits the needs and budgets of most local folks. There's not a fly rod or reel to be found. But if you want spinning gear for kokanee or crappie or you're planning to catch trout at Marr Pond, Grain Growers can outfit you. "It's a line of gear that won't compete with the serious fishing and sporting goods stores", said Terry Potratz, Grain Growers retail manager. "But it's good quality, some is suitable for kids, and it's pretty affordable overall. We've tried to offer lures that will appeal to local fish, too."

Wallowa County Grain Growers was established as a farmer-owned cooperative in mid-February of 1944. The board of directors included Vic Searles, Raymond Kooch, and Alfred Butterfield. The newly founded business took over the local Woolgrowers Warehouse, and issued shares for two types of memberships: a voting membership or a preferred non-voting, preferred membership, each for \$25 per share. Then, as now, only "agriculturalists"

could be members. Within three weeks, the group had sold 928 shares, and Wallowa County Grain Growers was on its way. It was the dark days of WWII. D-Day was yet to come. A 50-pound bag of potatoes could be had at the Enterprise Safeway for 84 cents. Valencia Oranges cost 10 cents per pound. Charlie Chaplin's movie "The Gold Rush" was playing at the Vista Theatre in Enterprise; in Wallowa, the McLean Theatre offered "King of the Cowboys," starring Roy Rogers. A 100 acre farm in Wallowa Valley, with 60 acres irrigated, could be bought for \$5250.

From the get-go, Grain Growers looked toward expanding their services and offerings. In July, 1944, only a few months after their founding, they merged with Grange Supply, the local purveyor of fuels to Wallowa County farms. The gas and

oil tanks were moved to the site along the railroad tracks. Grain Growers was now serving most of agriculture's needs here. Those services have included grain storage, equipment sales and service, custom-mixed feeds, and retail sales of hardware and supplies for livestock and farm animals.

In 1978 they opened an agronomy department in Island City. Then, in 2011, Grain Growers purchased the John Deere dealerships in Union and Baker County, to complement their Wallowa County dealership. The Deere dealerships are operated as a subsidiary, Tri-County Equipment and are separate from the co-op.

Grain-Grower's growth and success can be attributed to its penchant for changing with the times, said manager Mike Hayward. He noted that Pendleton Grain Growers ultimately failed because



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Grain Growers sporting-goods salesman T.J. Miller helps Joannah Vaughn choose a fishing pole for her grandson. Fishing equipment suitable for Wallowa County's favorite fishing spots is a new specialty at Grain Growers.

it continued to rely on grain storage as a major component of its income at a time when grain prices have fallen, and marketing strategies have changed. "We still mix custom feeds for our clients," he said. "Sometimes, if there's a demand and an agreement

with the customer, we sort of package their blend and sell it to other people. And of course, give the blend-originator a royalty." The special chicken-feed mix used by the Hawkins Ranch is one example of that, he said.

More than 300 people

enjoyed tri-tip sliders, hot-dogs, coleslaw, and other goodies at Grain Grower's 75th anniversary bash May 4th. "We enjoy sharing our success with our members and the community," Potratz said. "We're looking forward to many more years here."

Tariffs slow U.S. beef, pork exports; medium-sized markets see growth

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

U.S. beef and pork exports in the first quarter of 2019 fell below levels a year earlier on fewer ship-

ments to some large customers. But there were also significant gains in some other key markets.

Beef exports were down 3% in volume and 1% in value, and pork exports

were down 6% in volume and 14% in value.

"On the beef side, considering all the noise out there on the trade front and some of these countries that have duties, we're relatively

encouraged by that performance," Dan Halstrom, president and CEO of the U.S. Meat Export Federation, told reporters in a media call from the federation's spring conference in Kansas City, Mo.

On the positive side, beef export volumes were up 2% to Japan, 1% to Mexico, 8% to South Korea and 17% to the Caribbean region.

"I think we made some broad-based gains in some key regions," he said.

But two regions that stand out with a downward spiral are Hong Kong and

China and the Middle East, which decreased import volumes of U.S. beef 34% and 11%, respectively.

U.S. beef shipments to China face a 37% tariff compared with 12% or less for competitors, he said.

On the pork side, exports the first quarter also saw significant growth in some markets and challenges in others, he said.

There's been significant growth in some of the more medium-size markets. Specifically the South American region was up 41% in volume. And some of the medium to small markets

including Taiwan, Central America and the ASEAN region are all showing significant growth, he said.

But exports to Mexico and Hong Kong and China saw challenges, both duty related.

Pork shipments to Mexico were down 17% in volume and 29% in value, attributable to the 20% duty leveraged last summer, he said.

"This has been a real focus for our industry and USMEF in particular. We're seeing share decline a bit year over year, to the tune of about 4%," he said.



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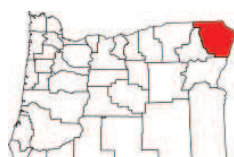
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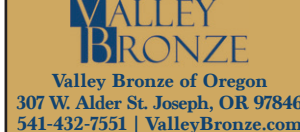
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