



# Celebrating National Agriculture Day

Thanks to the agriculture industry that keeps America growing strong!

## GUEST COLUMN

# Don't forget who raises your food

In recognition of National Ag Day, March 22, the Oregon Farm Bureau invites readers to remember the importance of farmers and ranchers to their daily lives.

Because of the productivity, efficiency, and reliability of agriculture producers, many of us don't have to give a second thought to where our food comes from. As long as the grocery store shelves are stocked, the origin of food is the furthest thing from our minds.

So, who are Oregon's farmers and ranchers?

There are 67,595 farmers and ranchers in Oregon, according to the latest U.S. Census of Agriculture. Their average age is 57.9 years and 44% are women. Despite representing less than 2% of the state population, these families contribute enormously to Oregon's economy, landscape, and quality of life.

While inflation has driven up the cost of food, Oregon's farmers and ranchers are not getting richer. After accounting for input



Anne Marie Moss

costs, ag producers receive an average of only 8 cents out of every dollar spent on food at home and away from home. The rest goes for costs beyond the farm gate: wages and materials for production, processing, marketing, transportation, and distribution.

As "price-takers, not price-makers," most farmers and ranchers also have no control of the price they get for their products. A farmer is not like a shoe retailer who can simply increase a price in a store to offset increased supply costs. These are businesses that sell their goods through domestic or international commodity markets, which determine the product's price. Some farmers don't know until months after delivery what they'll get for their harvest.

Another factor that distinguishes agriculture from other industries is the fact that 97%

of Oregon farms and ranches are family-owned and operated. What other sector can boast that level of family ownership? The Oregon Century Farm and Ranch Program has recognized 1,247 farms as remaining operational and in the same family for at least 100 years, and it has bestowed 47 farms with a sesquicentennial award for reaching the 150-year mark.

Few jobs involve wearing so many hats. Besides tending to their crops and animals, farmers and ranchers are business owners, marketers, agronomists, climate scientists, mechanics, breeding specialists, pest experts, purchasing officers, market forecasters, water administrators, accountants, human resources leads, risk analysts, and 24/7/365 optimists at the same time. Most farmers can't afford to hire consultants to do these things for them; they simply figure them out and do it themselves.

Farmers are also innovators. For a sector that's based on the most basic of components —

soil, water, sunlight — farmers and ranchers are frequently early adopters to technology. They're continually looking to produce more with less: less water, less fertilizer, fewer pesticides, less fuel. This means using drones to check field health, smart-phone-controlled irrigation systems, GPS-driven tractors, or sophisticated sprayers that control chemicals down to the droplet.

And whether a farm is organic, conventional, biotech, no-tech, or a combination thereof, ag producers have more that unites them than divides them.

One commonality is an unshakable respect for, and love of, the land. When your livelihood directly depends upon healthy soil and ample water, you do what it takes to preserve it. To squander natural resources or harm the environment would make no sense, especially when you live where you work. It also would be against the law.

Another binding trait is immense pride in their product.

While there are innumerable state and federal laws that ensure food safety, no one cares more about the quality of the end product than does the family who raised it. This goes for nonedible crops, too, like nursery products, hay, grass seed, and Christmas trees. The unparalleled commitment to quality has elevated the international status of Oregon agriculture, and consumers around the world seek out Oregon-grown blueberries, wheat, and grass straw.

A third shared value is love of the lifestyle. Talk with farmers and ranchers about what they like most about their jobs and you'll hear "being your own boss," "being outdoors," "growing something from nothing," and "every day is different."

This year March 22 is National Ag Day, but we at the Oregon Farm Bureau urge you to remember and thank farmers and ranchers all year long.

Anne Marie Moss is the communications director for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

**Duke Warner Realty**  
Dayville, Oregon

Licensed in the State of Oregon

Where people and places have been coming together for over 50 years  
Lori Hickerson, Principal Broker, GRI • Office: 541-575-2617 • ljh@ortelco.net  
Sally Knowles, Broker, GRI • Office: 541-932-4493 • sknowles@ortelco.net  
Babette Larson, Broker, GRI • Office: 541-987-2363 • ddwr@ortelco.net  
dukewarnerrealtyofeasternoregon.com 5284938-1

**SOUTHWORTH BROS., INC.**  
Ranching with a passion for regenerative use of our natural resources since 1885.

**Jack & Teresa Southworth**  
Ed Newton, Brad Smith, Lucas Moore,  
Trevor Widder, Don Lovins, Amanda Born  
and Garrett Carniglia.

Seneca, Oregon

5284939-1

**Malheur Lumber Company**

Celebrating 39 years of sustaining Grant County's Agriculture Industry

60339 US-26  
John Day  
541-575-2054

5285712-1

**Mills Building Supply**

Build With The Best For All Your Agricultural Needs

Horse Barns • Storage Buildings • Hay Barns • Sheds & Building Supplies  
Metal Roofing & Siding

751 W Main St. • John Day  
541-575-1021

5285782-1

EST. 1983

**IRON TRIANGLE LLC**

John Day, OR ~ 541-575-2102

**Is hiring for full-time positions in a variety of different jobs within our company**

- **CHIP TRUCK and LOG TRUCK DRIVERS** for deliveries across Eastern Oregon mill locations. We offer competitive pay and benefits! Must have a valid CDL with a safe driving record on public highways.
- **HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATORS** with road construction experience. Full time - Minimum of 3 years work experience recommended - Must have valid driver's license.
- **HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATORS** with logging experience. Full time - Minimum of 3 years work experience recommended - Must have valid driver's license.
- **HEAVY DUTY DIESEL MECHANIC/TECHNICIAN** - to work on logging trucks and heavy equipment. Full time - Minimum of 3 years work experience recommended - Looking for: Knowledge of heavy equipment repairs - Skilled in Heavy Duty general electrical, hydraulic systems and troubleshooting -Work in an organized and

If you are interested in joining our team, contact Zach Williams at 541-620-4138 or pick up an application at our office, 60643 Highway 26 in John Day.

5284930-1

timely manner, must be able to lift/move 50-100 lbs. -Must have valid driver's license (CDL preferred or the ability to obtain one).

- **HOOK TENDER** with on the ground experience required. Must have a valid ODL.
- **SWING SHIFT LABORERS** at our Seneca plant. Ideal candidates will be able to work in a fast-paced environment.
- **CARPENTERS** who have an understanding of, and working knowledge with framing and concrete. The desirable candidate possesses a strong background in construction with the ability to take direction, and work independently if needed.

Pay is based on experience. Pre-employment drug screening. Benefits: Health insurance, holiday pay, sick and vacation, 401k plan (eligible upon 1 yr anniversary).

5284930-1