

World's largest spud plant nears completion

The Fitzgerald Corporation is nearing completion of construction of the world's largest fresh potato storage building offices and maintenance facility at Boardman, OR. It represents a joint venture of a \$3 million investment for Sim-Tag Farms.

The new addition raises Sim-Tag's investment at Boardman, OR to \$16 million since August 1974.

The announcement was made jointly by J.R. Simplot, P.J. Taggares, and Jim Fitzgerald. Simplot is president of J.R. Simplot Company and its many subsidiaries, Boise, ID. Taggares is president of Chef-Reddy Foods Corporation and P.J. Taggares Company of Othello, WA and also has an investment in Snake River Vineyards in Pasco, WA. Fitzgerald is president of the Fitzgerald Corporation and several other firms with headquarters in Bellevue, WA.

The storage building will have a capacity for 80,000 tons of fresh potatoes and it will hold the potatoes at a 45 degree temperature and at a humidity of 95-97 per cent. The project also includes a giant maintenance facility for trucks, farm machinery and a new headquarters office building.

The project scheduled for completion Dec. 1, is two weeks ahead of schedule despite the fact that financing had not been accomplished at the beginning of the project. This caused some delays and self-inflicted labor problems, Fitzgerald said. In order to overcome the delays, the Fitzgerald Corporation went to two shifts and weekend overtime which is double the normal rate.

The expansion is the latest phase in the development of the 16,600 leased acres, 13 miles west of Boardman by the joint venture.

P.J. Taggares Co. is a diversified farming company with substantial farming and storage facilities in the Columbia Basin. At Othello, a 20 million pound capacity cold storage facility is leased for 15 years to Chef-Reddy Foods Corporation by Northern Enterprises, Inc. of which Jim Fitzgerald is a major owner and president. A 60,000 ton fresh potato storage building is leased to P.J. Taggares Company by Techbuilt Corporation which is owned by Fitzgerald. The Fitzgerald Corporation is adding 20,000 tons of storage capacity as a \$7.35 million addition to the Techbuilt facility which the P.J. Taggares Company leases.

Sim-Tag is growing the potatoes for use by the allied firms in the processing of frozen french fries and related products such as hash browns.

At Boardman, the company now has 13,000 acres under irrigation. The first crop of potatoes is presently being harvested. Approximately 112,000 tons will be trucked to Caldwell, ID and to Othello, on a prorated basis and will go directly into the processing plants at those locations.

80,000 tons of potatoes will be stored in the Boardman facility and 20,000 tons will be stored in the addition to the Othello facility. The stored potatoes will be, along with thousands of tons of other potatoes in storage, drawn upon during the year. It is anticipated that the plants in Caldwell and Othello will be running two or even three shifts until they are shut down for maintenance in late summer, 1976.

The 16,600 acres are sub-leased from Boeing-Agri-Industrial Company on a 30 year lease. Boeing-Agri-Industrial Company in turn leases the ground from the State of Oregon Department of Veteran Affairs which in turn leases the ground from the State of Oregon. The Boeing-Agri-Industrial Company lease has approximately 67 years remaining with the State entities.

BLM lands provide market for public

Bureau of Land Management national resource lands in Oregon and Washington are providing a virtual supermarket of renewable products and uses for the public, according to BLM FACTS, an income, expenditure and statistical booklet released this week by the federal agency which manages 15.7 million acres in Oregon and 306,000 acres in the State of Washington.

Timber, the nation's most valuable natural renewable resource, is the largest item. Nearly 1.2 billion board feet, valued at \$186,659,506, were sold in the two states during the fiscal year ending June 30. Nearly all of this was marketed in Oregon to produce lumber, plywood and various building boards for home and industrial construction.

Smallest item in the tally was 210 split rails valued at \$10. Two cords of wood for arrows sold for \$22 and there were other such items as \$32 worth of pitch and \$271 worth of huckleberry branches used for floral displays.

The spirit of pioneering is still alive with the sale of 31,000 linear feet of log cabin logs bringing \$208. The 21,608 cords of fuelwood sold for \$23,097 to hundreds of do-it-yourself woodcutters, compared with 8,705 cords the year before, indicating rising fossil fuel costs.

Altogether, an income of \$108,338,955 came from BLM lands in Oregon and \$63,716 from Washington. A total of \$34,180,975 was spent for investments in the land, resource protection, and management of the resources in the two states.

In addition, \$50,332,180.03 was returned to Oregon and its counties as their share of BLM income from timber sales, grazing fees, mineral fees, rental and sales of land, and other sources during the fiscal year.

Douglas County was the largest recipient with a total of \$12,532,354.89, trailed by

Jackson with \$7,734,494.15, Lane with \$7,535,433.52, and Josephine with \$5,961,314.29. Hood River County drew the smallest check—\$5.

The State of Washington and Washington counties drew \$24,333.59 from all sources.

The Fitzgerald Corporation provides turn-key facilities for the food processing industry, food growers, and business parks for industrial users. The staff consists of architects, engineers, legal, financial and construction specialists.

Under the name Techbuilt Corporation, the same staff designed and built the Boardman Gourmet Food Products, Inc. plant—during the trying inflationary days of 1974 and early 1975. The Gourmet plant is comprised of three 15,000 ton capacity fresh potato storage buildings, a 10,000,000 pound capacity cold storage facility and a 100,000,000 annual pound capacity frozen french fried potato processing plant. Recently U & I, Inc. (formerly U & I Sugar Co.) purchased a 34 per cent interest in the Gourmet Boardman and Meolious, Oregon facilities and the leasehold interests of Fitzgerald in the cold storage building.

Elk season off to good start

The week before the Rocky Mountain elk season opened, snow was falling heavily in every popular elk hunting area east of the Cascades. Elk hunters looked forward to a tracking snow and a spectacular opening weekend.

On Thursday the weather warmed, the snows began to melt, and by Saturday few traces of snow remained below 4,500 to 5,000 feet. The snow at higher levels had softened and retrofused so that walking on it was like treading on potato chips.

The weather was balmy and pleasant throughout eastern Oregon over the weekend and, where there was no snow, at least the ground was wet and quiet, providing excellent stalking conditions.

Opening weekend success was more than usually spotty, according to observations by Department of Fish and Wildlife Biologists and State Police. In some areas hunters killed more bulls than anyone had anticipated and in others nary an elk was to be found.

The Ukiah unit near Bridge Creek Flats was the scene of spectacular hunter success. In camps along a three-mile stretch of road in that area, 37 bulls were counted hanging in camps on the second day. Elk were found at lower elevations than usual, apparently lured there by growth of early fall grasses.

The newly opened Noregard Area in the Sled Springs Unit saw heavy hunting pressure as anticipated but hunting success was also fairly good over the weekend. Vehicle access was restricted and few violations were reported.

In the popular Chesnimnus Unit of Wallowa County, hunting success was unusually poor. The elk were not in the higher country as they usually are on opening weekend but had apparently dropped into the deep canyons where many hunters never found them.

In general, hunting pressure was up in some northeastern areas and down in others. The same was true of hunter success. There was a greater percentage of branch-antlered bulls in the harvest than there was last year. This was the result of a good escapement of bulls in many areas last hunting season which appear as more mature animals this year.

In the either-sex units of southeast Oregon hunting pressure appeared to be up, especially in the Grant County portion where biologists said it had doubled. In spite of good weather, however, hunting success was only fair. After Nov. 5, the either-sex portion of the season closes and only bulls are legal for the season's remainder.

Hood River unit, which is also open for either-sex during the first five days of the season this year, produced little for the hunters who tried it opening weekend. Two elk were all that biologists or State Police learned of.

In nearby Wasco Unit, hunting was more productive and hunters were checked with 18 elk in the country from Friends on south. More than half these elk had branched antlers.

Overall, hunter conduct was excellent over the weekend. The incidence of illegal cow elk and out-of-season deer kills was very low and compliance with road closure restrictions was very good. Most hunters voiced approval of the road closure program, which is designed to restrict the overuse of vehicles in heavily roaded areas, and said they would like to see more closures.

Hunters who have not filled their tags are hoping for a tracking snow before the season closes Nov. 19. Success during the remainder of the season will hinge on the weather.

Chickens without feathers

Featherless chickens are nervous birds, but they might mean cheaper dinners.

Raising chickens without feathers eliminates one step on processing the birds for market. And since a fourth of the protein in a broiler goes into its feathers, a nude bird would yield more meat.

Research into featherless chickens began in 1953 when Ursula Abbott, a professor of bird genetics at the University of California at Davis, found on a batch of chicks she had ordered from New Hampshire.

Since then, scientific breeding has produced hundreds of the genetic freaks, the National Geographic Society says. Entire flocks in laboratories wear only an occasional wispy feather.

But there are several reasons why none of the smooth-skinned birds have appeared on supermarket shelves. Whether from embarrassment or whatever, the denuded fowl are extremely nervous and prone to develop stomach ulcers.

Without their protective coats, they also are susceptible to chills. Their feathered brethren can survive even freezing weather, but naked chickens shiver if the henhouse temperature dips even slightly.

"They get so miserable that they stop eating and simply waste away," reports Dr. Ralph Somes, Jr., who is studying the mutants at the University of Connecticut.

Although pre-plucked broilers could save processing costs, the birds use up so much energy rushing about trying to keep warm that they eat more than other chickens their weight.

Any profits to be made from featherless chickens are further reduced by the added cost of the fuel needed to keep

their quarters adequately heated.

But the strange-looking birds may have a future. Scientists are experimenting with economical methods of fattening them for marketing.

At the University of Maryland, Drs. Max Rubin and Daniel E. Bigbee have found that under the right temperatures feed bills for featherless chickens need not be higher than for ordinary birds.

When slaughtered, the featherless birds weighed up to six per cent more than conventional chickens fed the same test diet. When cooked, the mutants provided up to 16 per cent more meat.

The researchers believe that because denuded chickens are more energetic they develop less fat, which leads to less shrinkage in the oven. Added servings delivered to the dinner table might more than make up for those higher heating bills. And the featherless chickens might thrive in sunny, southern regions.

Science has drastically altered poultry raising before. As late as 1934, more than 90 per cent of the chickens on American tables were former layers, slaughtered after their egg production declined. Chicken was a costly meal reserved for holidays and special occasions.

Today, chickens are specially bred to be layers or broilers, raised in "factories" on assembly-line feeding for quick results. A chicken dinner now is an inexpensive meal.

In 1973, a four-legged chicken was hatched near Indianola, Iowa. Someday, scientists may turn their attention to this phenomenon, for the benefit of drumstick-lovers everywhere.



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