

# 'Outlook' sees steady ag commodity prices for 1982

Prices of agricultural commodities produced in the Pacific Northwest likely will be no higher in 1982 than in 1981, and could go lower, predict Extension and agricultural specialists in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, stated a news release from Oregon State University.

Producers of most commodities—particularly meats, processed fruits and vegetables—may be able to keep prices from sinking below 1981 levels only if they hold down production, suggests the "1982 Pacific Northwest Agricultural Outlook" issued recently.

Decreasing consumer demand is expected to have a negative impact on some commodities, particularly meat and fruit, the "Outlook" predicts.

The "Outlook" is published annually by Extension and agricultural specialists in Oregon, Washington and Idaho and examines regional trends in agriculture for the coming year. Jim Cornelius, Oregon State University Extension agricultural economist coordinated OSU's participation in the "Outlook."

The relatively poor economic conditions of 1981 are expected to prevail through most of 1982, the "Outlook" predicts, and continue to have an adverse effect on consumer disposable income and the costs of doing business.

The "Outlook" forecasts that agricultural production costs will continue to rise in 1982. Fertilizer, agricultural chemicals, farm machinery, fuel and power, farm labor wages and farm credit are all expected to continue increasing at the 1981 level of five percent.

Agricultural exports from the United States are expected to climb about four percent and the value of imports to remain the same, giving this country a \$28 billion agricultural trade surplus, up \$1.4 billion from 1981.

Prices could increase for feeder cattle, hogs and sheep if production doesn't outstrip demand and feed costs decrease as expected, the "Outlook" says. But if growers increase production because of low feed costs, prices are expected to fall below last year's levels.

The overall livestock feed situation for the coming year will likely see relatively large amounts of feed grains, primarily midwestern corn but also northwest barley. As a result, feed grain prices will be lower, encouraging greater use by livestock feeders.

Increased livestock numbers could contribute to increased hay demands. However, alfalfa and other hay acreage is expected to decline in 1982 due to lower hay prices this year.

Other "Outlook" forecasts for 1982 include:

Nursery industry—Prices probably have bottomed and should firm early in 1982.

Fresh and processed tree fruits—Both demand and price expected to be down.

Berries—Moderate demand levels seen for processed berries in 1981-82 marketing season.

Filberts—Grower prices expected to be approximately 25 percent lower than in 1981.

Vegetables—Some upward pressure on prices expected in the 1981-82 marketing year.

Potatoes—Lower yields in 1980-81 kept prices up, but the "Outlook" suggests growers

may increase 1982 acreage, causing prices to drop.

Sugarbeets—Sugar prices in 1982 expected to range from \$25 to \$30 per ton, not high enough for growers to break even, the "Outlook" says.

Onions—If worldwide onion acreage remains at levels of

last year and yields are normal, prices will face downward pressure.

Dairy—Prices for milk are expected to change little.

With a favorable outlook for feed prices, dairy producers will get some help from the

impact of the developing cost-price squeeze during at least the first half of the year.

Poultry and eggs—Egg and broiler prices are expected to move up.

Forest Products—The outlook continues gloomy for the forest products industry, the

"Outlook" says. Even if the prediction of a housing market upswing in mid-1982 is correct, little relief will be forthcoming to the forest products industry until 1983.

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