



IN THIS ISSUE

Alexis Taylor welcomed as ODA's new Director—1

Board of Ag profile: Bryan Harper—2

Animal disease control focuses on traceability—2

Oregon agriculture alive and well in Korean export market—4

Trade managers connect with regional agriculture—5

Bridges to Opportunity Program connects farmers to more resources—5

Oregon olive oil ripe with potential—6

ODA reaches out to booming cannabis industry—6

Traps come up empty for Asian gypsy moth—7

ODA lab achieves top level accreditation—7

ODA Biennial Report now available—8

Announcements—8

Alexis Taylor welcomed as ODA's new Director



Alexis Taylor becomes the 15th director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture and will officially begin on January 23, 2017. Taylor previously served as the Deputy Under Secretary for the Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services at the US Department of Agriculture. In her role at USDA, she was responsible for advancing international trade policy and international market opportunities for American farmers and ranchers. Additionally, Taylor led the USDA's Women in Agriculture Initiative, dedicated to fostering and growing a mentoring network for women pursuing careers in agriculture across the country. Taylor served in the United States Army Reserves from 1998 to 2006 and did one tour in Iraq with the 389th Combat Engineer Battalion. She is a graduate of Iowa State University and grew up on her family farm in Iowa, which has been in the family for more than 150 years. The Agriculture Quarterly recently interviewed Director Taylor upon her arrival to Oregon:

How do you describe yourself to those who have yet to meet you?

I'm an Iowa farm girl. My roots are deeply tied to agriculture and rural communities. That's who I really love working for because that's where I came from. I'm also a veteran. So something about public service really speaks to me. I've wanted to give back to communities, to US agriculture, and to our country as well.

What are your thoughts about becoming the Director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture? What attracted you to the position in the first place?

My attraction to the job and Oregon itself is summed up in one word—diversity. Diversity of how food is grown, where food is grown,

the types of conditions it's grown under geographically, and also who is growing it. Oregon agriculture is diverse, but it's also innovative. Coming to a state that has over 220 crops is pretty exciting. There's a ton of opportunities associated with that, and some challenges. Also, I've known (former Director) Katy Coba for several years. She was a phenomenal leader for Oregon and really worked to put Oregon on a national stage. I'm excited to continue that legacy for farmers and ranchers and Oregon's rural communities.

What are the strengths and experiences you bring to the job that will best serve the agency and Oregon's agriculture industry?

I believe I bring a unique international perspective. I worked the past three and a half years at the US Department of Agriculture focusing on international activities for the department as well as domestic farm policy. I've gotten to travel the world and that experience can help market Oregon food and agriculture products. Looking at 95 percent of the world population living outside the United States, there are huge opportunities for us. Those international markets are a key to farmers' and ranchers' bottom line in Oregon. I'm excited to bring that experience to further promote those products internationally, but also locally here in Oregon and regionally in other states throughout the country.



Can your experience in the federal government help ODA and Oregon's ag industry?

Yes. The first six months are going to be hectic for me. Certainly, I'll be drinking from a fire hose, but I'm excited about that. I've got a great team at ODA around me—people who have a lot of expertise and knowledge. I'm really going to rely on them. But once we get through the legislative session, I'm excited to look at where there are resources at USDA. Maybe there are things we aren't leveraging

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The AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY

Board of Ag profile: Bryan Harper

From running the 400-meter relay for the University of Oregon track team to running his family's hazelnut orchards, Bryan Harper is bringing a fresh perspective and an interesting background as a new member of the Board of Agriculture.

"My family has been farming in the south Willamette Valley for more than 125 years," says Harper. "I'm the sixth generation on my maternal grandmother's side, fifth generation on my paternal grandfather's side. Over the decades, we've farmed just about everything that has come along in the valley."

Harper Farms Incorporated in Junction City is still somewhat diversified. But Bryan, as vice-president of the family business, is focused on hazelnuts. His grandfather mainly grew for a limited, local market. Harper says the operation has evolved.

"I see our family operation as more of an enterprise. It's a different ballgame than what my grandfather was doing."

Harper's story actually begins across the Atlantic Ocean, a continent away. He was born in

Nairobi, Kenya, but was just 17-days old when his dad, mom, and four brothers and sisters relocated to the U.S. He's been in Oregon ever since, growing up on the farm and watching with interest how his father handled the operation. He also inherited his dad's love of flying airplanes—something Harper continues to pursue.

"Dad pushed me to get an experience outside of agriculture, try different things, and then decide what to do," says Harper. "He was not one of those who said I was going to be a farmer and that's all there was to it. Dad was very supportive of other potential careers."

The opportunity to attend the University of Oregon as a psychology major, and as a sprinter on the track and field team, taught Harper about competition, something that those who farm for a living can appreciate.

"Being a student athlete is like a full-time job. I was also getting more serious about aviation. Ultimately, I decided to come back to the farm while my dad was still somewhat youthful and a major player in the operation. I wanted to learn that upper-level farming detail from him, the management part. It's been awesome getting that experience from him."

Part of what Harper has learned is the importance of getting involved

in agricultural organizations. He has been active as a board member of the Lane County Farm Bureau. His youth stands out, and he hopes other young farmers and ranchers will follow his example.

"Most of the meetings I go to, I'm the youngest person by several years, if not decades," says Harper. "Being a younger member on the Board of Agriculture, I hope that I can be a beacon for other younger farmers."

Harper is especially interested in promoting co-existence in agriculture. With Oregon farms being so diverse—not only in what is grown but how it is grown and marketed—he wants to understand and appreciate those who do things differently.

"I'm part of a conventional farm, but I'm near organic operations and farms with different practices than I use. We need to live harmoniously as part of the industry. As our population grows, we aren't gaining any more farm ground. We need to be able to co-exist, work together, and try to understand each other's issues instead of just minding our own business."

Co-existence is one of the key issues often discussed by the Board of Agriculture. Harper wants to be



part of the conversation.

"I believe in all of Oregon agriculture. I'm also happy to be on the board because I want to learn. It's not just me trying to educate others about how our farm operates, I want to be a student. The other board members are so experienced and have done very well with their operations. The public members on the board also have successful backgrounds. Coming from a place like Junction City, it's eye opening and ear opening. This experience will help satisfy my desire to help all of Oregon agriculture more than just what I can do as a hazelnut farmer."

Harper's enthusiasm, combined with his willingness to work with others, will serve the Board of Agriculture very well. •

Animal disease control focuses on traceability

If you know where livestock animals are, where they have been, and perhaps where they are going, chances are you can better respond to an animal disease outbreak. Welcome to the world of people like Dr. Brad LeaMaster, state veterinarian with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and Jack Noble, ODA's Animal Identification Program Manager. The development and implementation of an electronic tracking system for cattle has put ODA and Oregon's livestock industries well ahead of other states in the event that animal traceability is needed.

"It all comes back to our mission," says LeaMaster. "We promote and protect the livestock industries of this state against domestic and foreign animal diseases. People may not realize that Oregon's livestock industries—if you add them all up—represent our top agricultural commodity in value. So we have a huge responsibility to protect an important economic engine of the state."

Highly publicized animal disease outbreaks in recent years—ranging from a case of BSE in the Pacific Northwest more than a decade ago to highly pathogenic avian influenza that resulted in Midwest poultry operators euthanizing 50 million

birds in 2015—have highlighted the need to respond rapidly to prevent spread. One of the best tools for animal disease control officials is traceability.

"With these highly contagious diseases, the quicker we can move, the quicker we can initiate controls on the movement of animals," says LeaMaster. "That also means the quicker we can control the disease and the quicker we can get the farmer back in business."

Electronic transfer of information is not quite the speed of commerce in the cattle world, but it's close. When animals are moving into Oregon—or any state, for that matter—it can take 10 days for the required health certificate to show up. In those 10 days, the cattle can be in several different states or parts of the country. If officials know by the end of the day where those animals are moving, they can get ahead of any potential disease problem.

Eleven years ago, ODA's Noble began working with LeaMaster's predecessor, Dr. Don Hansen, to look at the way cattle are traced in Oregon. If ODA had the funding, how could traceability be improved?

"We quickly decided the greatest chance for spreading disease was at locations where animals congregate," says Noble. "In Oregon, that means the auction yard."

Working with Fort Supply Technologies, a company based in Utah, ODA developed an electronic brand inspection system that captured the most important information regarding cattle that go



through livestock auctions, including their individual identification and their intended destination. What used to be a paper-based system is now electronic.

"Everything we've done for years had all the elements, but was all done on paper," says Noble. "Over the past 10 years, we have used technology to create a system that turns paper-based information into an electronic data point."

With the help of a federal grant, ODA has been able to purchase hand-held computers and other electronic equipment designed to collect and process information from brand inspections done at the auction yard. That information not only resolves ownership issues—one of the key functions of ODA's Brand Inspection Program—it helps trace the locations of animals that may need testing to rule out major diseases like tuberculosis or brucellosis. As soon as the

information is transferred from the hand held-computers to the ODA database, animal disease control officials have access to it. What used to take days under the old paper-based system now takes mere minutes.

"When individual identification of animals is required, as it is now for beef cattle over 18 months of age or all dairy cattle, that information is put into our database," says Noble. "So if, for example, an animal is harvested and then found to have tuberculosis and we have that permanent ID for that animal, we can ping our system to find out where the animal came from and trace back to any other animals that may have been exposed to the disease."

As of now, Oregon's electronic brand inspection system only tracks cattle. Eventually, it could be expanded to other animal species. Midwest states track hogs, other

Alexis Taylor: Continued from page 1

that well here in Oregon but have the opportunity to, and really see what else we can bring to Oregon agriculture. It might be help for local and regional food systems, further expanding farmers' markets, or new market opportunities overseas. I'm excited about using my knowledge of the federal system and leverage that for the betterment of all Oregon agriculture.

From what you've learned, what is your assessment of ODA? How about your assessment of Oregon agriculture?

By all standards that you can measure against, ODA is a great agency. There are dedicated people working here who love agriculture, really love what they do, and work tirelessly. I think it is a well-managed organization and I hope a year from now when I've been on the job, people will say the same thing. It has a standard of excellence in Oregon state government, and I really want to continue that standard of excellence.



For the industry, that diversity is a strength. We need all types of farmers and farm operations. Consumers want to spend their food budget all different kinds of ways. They want choice and variety in that grocery store, and Oregon producers give them that choice. It gives them the opportunity to buy local blueberries and hazelnuts and mint and green beans, and the list goes on and on. That's really exciting. Sure, it brings challenges as well, but that's part of what was so exciting about this opportunity—to be that advocate for all farmers, for all

ranchers, no matter how big or how small they are.

What are some of your top priorities for the job? What do you plan to do in the first three months? First six months? First year?

The first six months are really going to be focused on the legislative session—also first getting to know the stakeholders in the Salem-Willamette Valley area, because they are close by, getting out on some of those farms and seeing what production really means, where and how ODA interacts with those farms, what's working and what's not. I really want to be that advocate for Oregon agriculture at the State Capitol. Then once we get past the session, my goal is to visit every county in Oregon. It goes to that diversity point. A farmer in Eastern Oregon is very different than someone in the Willamette Valley who is growing Christmas trees or blueberries. I want to see it all, that's how I learn. I want to get on farms. I want to talk to farmers and ranchers. I want to hear the challenges associated with farming, but also the opportunities, and see how ODA can continue to help them stay in business and pass those farms onto future generations, which is what it's all about. success, that's what we are all about.

Are there any particular challenges facing Oregon agriculture that you feel need your utmost attention?

As I've talked to people during some initial rounds of meetings with stakeholders and legislators, water quality and ODA's Water Quality Program tops everyone's list. There are dozens of other issues that come below it, but really, water quality and water quantity as well are going to be at the top of my list of issues to quickly get up to speed on. But there are many other issues, from marketing to pesticides, which will also be important right away. The first six months is going to be a steep learning curve with the legislative session, but I'm going to come out of that with a great understanding of the different issues surrounding Oregon agriculture. While it will be challenging and fast-paced, it's going to be a great six months to learn on the job.



What opportunities for Oregon agriculture are you most excited about?

Oregon agriculture has this great brand that we can expand upon. It's about clean water, it's about clean air, it's about safe food products, it's about diverse agriculture. How do we take that Oregon brand and expand it to other states and to the rest of the world? That's an exciting opportunity. As an example, when you look at Asia, there is a booming middle class and it's going to continue to grow over the next few decades. By 2030, over 60 percent of the world's middle class will live in Asia. That represents huge opportunities for the US, particularly for Oregon and its proximity to those Asian countries. What's the first thing people want to do when they make a little more money? They want to buy higher quality, safe food products. Oregon is ripe to capture a lot of that new middle class purchasing power.

Oregon is a diverse agricultural state in terms of the wide array of crops and livestock it produces, having small and large farms, using organic and conventional growing practices, and marketing locally, domestically, and internationally. What is your vision for advancing all this diversity? Is it possible for all to be successful and co-exist?

I do believe in co-existence. As I mentioned, consumers are interested in spending their food dollars differently and want diverse food products. Some people want to buy organic, others will buy conventionally produced food. Consumers want those options.

Farmers and ranchers also want those production options. It's important for agriculture to have those options and those choices. So I think co-existence can happen, I think it needs to happen.

Okay, now it's time for our lightning round of questions about some of your favorite things:

Favorite movie—It was not a movie but an HBO mini-series on John Adams. It was so fascinating to look at one of our Founding Fathers who I didn't really know much about. I'm kind of a historical-political nerd and I found that really interesting. I wish they would do a mini-series on all the Founding Fathers.

Favorite book—I don't really have a favorite book. I go in spurts where I read for nine months back to back. I like light reading because I do so much critical reading for my job. Right now, I'm reading a lot of books by Jojo Moyes. I've also really enjoyed Game of Thrones and I'm reading through those novels right now.

Favorite musical artist—I like a little bit of everything. Right now I'm listening to a lot of country music that I grew up listening to, like Brooks & Dunn, and Garth Brooks.

Favorite sports team—I grew up watching hockey, so I was a Philadelphia Flyers fan. But having lived in DC for the past 12 years, I'm now a big Washington Capitals fan as well.

Favorite meal—It would include opening a bottle of Oregon pinot noir, probably a steak with some green beans or asparagus, and definitely bread on the side. Just a real meat-and-potatoes kind of meal. •

Animal traceability: Continued from page 2

large poultry states are tracking the movement of groups of birds.

"Traceability is important for tracking all agricultural commodities," says LeaMaster. "But if we can get a handle on beef and dairy cattle, that will go a long way in protecting the industry from disease outbreaks."

ODA has also enhanced traceability efforts through a new import permit database launched this year. The database matches import permits, which are required for most types of animals coming into the state, with certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs). Any animal crossing state lines is required to have the CVI, which ensures the animal has been checked for disease and okayed by a veterinarian in the originating state. The new import

permit system links permits to CVIs, including individual animal identification information on that CVI. The system provides another tool to quickly trace back animals to the state of origin.

Stephanie Page, Director of Food Safety and Animal Services programs for ODA, says the electronic traceability system is evolving every day.

"We can provide a piece of the puzzle—where did the animal come from and where did it go? That information can patch into information from another state's systems, if they have one available."

That means ODA is able to tell

whether an animal in Oregon came from Colorado. Colorado could check to see that it came to them from Kansas. Kansas can confirm that the animal was born there. The life span of the animal of concern can be fully traced in that scenario and, in the event of a disease outbreak, whether other animals may have come in contact and exposed.

"Assuring healthy animals come into the state, that's what our folks do every day," says Page.

The US Department of Agriculture is interested in what Oregon is doing. A stated USDA goal is the ability for states to trace and control outbreaks of animal diseases of concern within 48 hours of discovery. USDA is currently in the performance-measuring mode. Frequent testing

of ODA's traceability protocol and system has resulted in high marks—in fact, one of the best in the country at this point.

Mining additional information from those CVIs could make the system even stronger.

"The next key element in all this would be electronic CVIs," says LeaMaster. "Those could be generated quickly by the veterinarian and downloaded into our database directly without anyone having to do any data entry. We are looking at that function in the next year or two."

A shoestring budget, yet a solidly built, fundamental system to track animals. ODA's Animal Service programs are giving other states a blueprint for efficiency and effectiveness. •

Oregon agriculture alive and well in Korean export market

As one of the state's top export markets for agriculture, South Korea is already home to a number of Oregon products. But there is great potential to expand the volume of those products and make way for new ones given the current tastes and trends of the Korean consumer. A November trade mission to South Korea organized by the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) reinforced the importance of penetrating a market that includes more than 50 million people who crave many of the products Oregon can provide.



ODA represented Oregon as part of a western states trade mission to South Korea, a key export market.

"The products that we already export to Korea are in high demand and we can continue to increase that market share, but there are great opportunities for additional products, based on what we saw and heard," says Erick Garman, trade manager with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and member of the WUSATA delegation.

Korea remains the third-largest market for food and agriculture products shipped from Oregon with more than \$300 million of ag exports in 2015. Only Japan and Canada rank higher.

Korean food trends speak directly to Oregon

Why should Oregon agriculture pay attention to the export market in South Korea? A briefing provided by USDA's Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) in Seoul as part of the WUSATA trade mission provided plenty of answers. The presentation, "What's Hot: Korean Food Market Trends" was packed with the kind of information that ODA can take back to food producers and manufacturers who might be looking for a new or expanded market.

- While South Korean consumers are tightening their overall spending because of an economic downturn, they still spend 27.5 percent of their household expenditures on food.
- An aging population is one chief reason Korean consumers are fixated on improving their diet and overall health. Healthy and functional foods are in demand including fruits and tree nuts.
- The health consciousness is leading to more consumer interest in natural or minimal-processed food products. Organic foods are likely to be perceived as healthier in Korea.

- More women are joining the workforce, resulting in more demand for quick meal solutions. It also means more men in the kitchen—something that would have seemed inconceivable a generation ago. Products that are deemed "good for kids" are important to Korean families.
- Because of the preoccupation with wellbeing and healthy, healing food products, Korean consumers are looking for small treats and indulgence for self-rewards. Certain foods that may seem to run counter to "healthy" are nonetheless accepted and often desired by consumers who look forward to something sweet and snacky once in awhile.
- While there is more demand for price and value, Korea's high-income groups are expanding. More consumers have become exposed to international cultures and cuisines. They are less loyal to local agriculture and have a demand for new tastes.

A quick consideration of Oregon food products that might meet the present and future Korean market include more fresh and frozen fruits—especially berries—and for the higher-income groups, there may be opportunity for more Oregon wines and craft beers.

A quick consideration of Oregon food products that might meet the present and future Korean market include more fresh and frozen fruits—especially berries—and for the higher-income groups, there may be opportunity for more Oregon wines and craft beers.

A fruitful market

Like an intercontinental flight from Oregon with a layover in California, dried Oregon blueberries and cherries are making their way to the Korean marketplace with the help of a Bay Area trading company. World Import-Export Trading Company of Belmont, California is one of several west coast companies that participated in the WUSATA trade mission. For more than 25 years, the company has been exporting edible nuts and dried fruits, relying on a select group of high quality suppliers and processors. That includes Meduri Farms of Dallas, Oregon, which supplies all of the dried blueberries to World Import-Export. Those berries are 100 percent Oregon grown.

"There is a big difference between quality of Pacific Northwest fruit and other sources," says Roy Jorgensen, president of World Import-Export. "Meduri is the premium for me. They are the Cadillac in the dried fruit business. I've never had quality issues with them and their customer service is great."

Although not all the cherries and cranberries provided by Meduri are

grown in Oregon, the dried fruit supplier is helping to fulfill the demand of a Korean population fixated on healthy eating. World Import-Export is the vehicle for delivering that product.

"Dried blueberries is a no-brainer," says Jorgensen. "Koreans already know about the blueberry and its health benefits. That product should go over well. I'm excited about its potential. Koreans want to eat healthier, do things healthier. They are changing their diets because they need to. The products that we handle fit right in."

The dried fruits and nuts also go into the ingredients sector with bakeries and other food processors interested in a healthy supply of a healthy food.

Oregon's blueberry industry has taken advantage of export opportunities. Oregon remains the only US state, so far, to gain access into the Korean market for fresh blueberries, which seasonally can be found in large Korean stores like Costco, Emart, and Shinsegae. For the past three years, Oregon has exported between 1 million and 1.3 million pounds of fresh blueberries to South Korea. But as tariffs continue to drop from 35 percent prior to the Korean-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS-FTA) to elimination in 2022, Oregon blueberries will become even more competitive in the future. The blueberry success story can hopefully open the door for other Oregon berries.



Roy Jorgensen, president of a California-based export company, relies on Oregon dried fruit for sales to Korea. A major part of the trade mission was meeting with potential buyers.

Koreans love tree nuts as well, which could provide an opportunity for Oregon hazelnut growers if the production is high enough to meet the demand. Koreans are not familiar with hazelnuts, so the same kind of promotion and education effort done for blueberries would be necessary to launch the product.

Koreans thirsty for Oregon beverages

The WUSATA trade mission clearly showed that the potential of Oregon wines and craft beers is starting to be realized in a country that has developed a thirst for imported alcoholic beverages.

Shinsigae is a large upscale department store in Seoul that also sells food and beverages. Five



ODA Trade Manager Erick Garman shows that it's easy to find Oregon wines and craft beer, especially in some of the upper-scale retail stores in Korea.

years ago, pre-KORUS-FTA, there were no Oregon wines to be found in Shinsigae's well-stocked wine section. Now, several Oregon wines can be located without much effort. Granted, the price is still steep and the Korean consumer is more apt to look for more affordable wines. (A 2012 pinot noir from Lange Estate Winery in Dundee, Oregon goes for more than \$100 a bottle.) But as the tariff's continue to tumble, Oregon wines are more often on the consumer's radar.

"People who know and love wine know all about Oregon pinot, which is still more expensive than many other wines in the Korean market but is priced more competitively than it was five years ago," says Shawn Kim, who works for the State of Oregon's Korea Representative Office in Seoul.

Oregon is on everyone's map when it comes to craft beers. South Korea is no exception.

"Rogue was one of the first American craft brewers to enter the Korean market," notes Sang Yong Oh, senior marketing specialist at the US Agricultural Trade Office in Seoul. "They have a very solid foundation for their export business to Korea because they were ahead of others. Rogue is a very good example of how American suppliers can benefit from the export opportunity in this country by being active in Korea."

The key for a craft brewer seems to be supplying enough volume to satisfy the demand. There is plenty of competition from beers exported by other countries, but Oregon can be a big player in a market where it's trendy to ask for an imported craft brew.

A valued relationship

Overall, KORUS-FTA has increased US exports to Korea by nearly 5 percent and greatly reduced tariffs, leading to more competitive prices for American exports.

"The free trade agreement has absolutely been good for Oregon agriculture," says Oh. "The volume of business has really grown the past two or three years. Both sides have to work together to fulfill the opportunity, but I think Oregon is in the right position to meet the changing taste and demand among Korean customers."

Oregon agriculture has demonstrated success in the Korean marketplace, but it's no time to stand still.

"We have a lot of work to do, but there remains a great deal of potential and opportunity," says ODA's Garman. •

Trade managers connect with regional agriculture

The Agricultural Development and Marketing Program of the Oregon Department of Agriculture has a goal of making sure everyone connected to the state's ag industry is aware of all the ways ODA's trade managers can help. With that in mind, the program has assigned its trade managers to geographic regions across the state as key contacts who can help Oregon's producers, processors, packers, and shippers.

"We are putting forth a concerted effort into going out and engaging everyone within Oregon agriculture to make sure they know the portfolio of products we have available and the ways we can offer support," says ODA Marketing Director Terry Fasel. "If we can't help them with our programs, the next step is to connect them with someone who can, even if it's a different state agency."



ODA Trade Manager Gary Neuschwander (left) visits a Marionberry farm in the Willamette Valley.

In essence, ODA trade managers have established themselves as key points of contact in all regions of the state. In addition to their other responsibilities—which, for some, includes occasional travel to international markets—trade managers are now taking frequent trips to their assigned areas of the state and become aware of each region's unique challenges:

- Theresa Yoshioka: Central Oregon and Southeast Oregon
- Erick Garman: Portland Metro
- Amy Gilroy: Southern Oregon (Farm to School Program Manager)
- Sue Davis: Mid-Columbia and Columbia Plateau
- Yelena Nowak: Oregon Coast
- Gary Neuschwander: Willamette Valley
- Terry Fasel: Northeast Oregon (Agricultural Development and Marketing Program Manager)

Connecting with Oregon's regions on a regular basis is an effort to be more responsive to the needs and issues of local agriculture. It means meeting people on their own turf, doing a lot of listening, and then responding as effectively as possible. It's also a recognition that many producers and processors know best



Theresa Yoshioka (center) provides tours an Oregon winery to learn how ODA can help.

where they want to be, and ODA can try to get them there.

"We are beating the bushes trying to connect with every company we can to help them—not to push everyone into being an exporter or even a bigger company, for that matter—but to listen and figure out exactly where they are in the process, and how we can support them," says Fasel.

Collaboration is as important as ever. ODA's trade development efforts are an important link in a chain of assistance for Oregon agriculture. State partners include Business Oregon, the Port of Portland, the Governor's Regional Solutions Teams, Oregon State University, and various state and local agencies. Trade managers also promote other ODA programs—from food safety to water quality and everything in between—that can help solve problems and provide

assistance to those in the business of agriculture.

"Our goal is for everyone involved in Oregon agriculture to know the portfolio of products and services we have, and then help them along their path," says Fasel. "We don't just tell them what the Marketing Program can do, but what the rest of the agency and other agencies bring to the table. We connect."

Whether it's a desire for certification, water issues, or infrastructure needs, the regional contacts—also known as ODA trade managers—will not only be aware of what is important to local producers, processors, packers, and shippers, they will be in a position to help.

To reach ODA's Agricultural Development and Marketing Program call: (503) 872-6600. •

Bridges to Opportunity Program connects farmers to more resources

From the Oregon State Office of FSA Oregon farmers and ranchers have a new one-stop shop for connecting with important programs and services. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has launched a new service that combines resources offered by national, state, and local agricultural organizations to help farmers and ranchers start, improve or expand their operation.

Bridges to Opportunity is a partnership of USDA and non-USDA agricultural agencies, coming together to help provide the information farmers and ranchers need. The Bridges service is supported through a customized software application that houses information from partner organizations, making the information easily accessible to customers seeking agricultural resources while in FSA county offices.

Oregon was one of five Phase 1 pilot states to begin using Bridges to

Opportunity, with the Washington County office beginning to use the program in September 2014. In March 2016, Bridges to Opportunity was rolled out to 20 additional states and Wasco, Central Oregon, Marion/Polk, Umatilla, and Malheur County Offices in Oregon gained access to the program at that time. Beginning in January 2017, all states and all FSA County Offices in the nation will have access to this new program.

One of the features that made the Bridges to Opportunity program a huge success in Oregon has been the bundle feature. Bundles are agricultural resources that are compiled together by subject and allow the FSA user to send an entire packet of information via a hyperlink, versus the past process which required searching for and attaching or printing multiple fact sheets or forms. Oregon's success in utilizing bundles led to improved delivery of farm loan packets to prospective borrowers, with disaster information that includes both USDA resources and State of Oregon resources for producers affected by drought in the past few years, and in the delivery of FSA farm program application materials. In addition to bundles,

events, single files, encrypted producer forms, and referrals can all be included in the summary that is provided to the producer at the conclusion of the visit, if it fits the producer's inquiry. There is no limit to resources that can be included, and data provided can be in the form of Word documents, PDF files, FSA forms, and links to videos.

Partnering with FSA's Bridges to Opportunity provides a central location for USDA and local, state, and national agricultural organizations to offer support to farmers and ranchers and help with disaster assistance, grants, technical help, financial advice, and educational courses.

Agricultural organizations that partner with FSA are providing access to programs, upcoming events, workshops, and other resources with farmers and ranchers that come through the doors of FSA county offices. Vetted partners will also have access to Bridges to Opportunity for limited self-service tasks; such as adding events,

resources, and updating contact information for their organization.

Bridges to Opportunity, in addition to being a vehicle that connects producers to the services they need, also provides a Receipt for Service to producers, which was mandated by the 2014 Agricultural Act. A Receipt for Service is required when any current or prospective producer or landowner requests a USDA benefit or service. Bridges to Opportunity is an efficient mechanism for delivery of the resources and services that producers need and request, and automatically generates a Receipt for Service for the producer as a time saving function of this new program.

To learn more about Bridges to Opportunity and how it can help you, contact your FSA County Office with the following link: www.fsa.usda.gov/or. You may also visit the FSA website for more information at: www.fsa.usda.gov/or •

**BRIDGES TO
OPPORTUNITY**
FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Oregon olive oil ripe with potential

By Liz Beeles

Imagine arriving at a dinner party with a bottle of something produced in Oregon, but it's not wine. You stand out when you present your host with a bottle of extra virgin olive oil. Ten years ago, this wouldn't have been an option, but today with at least 15 olive growers in Oregon, the momentum is building for this specialty crop.

So why now? The demand for extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) in the US is growing rapidly. A pioneering group of growers and producers (including the late Larry Monagon of Victory Estates in Keizer, and David Lawrence of Amity) recognized the potential of growing olives in Oregon as well as the opportunity to produce premium EVOO.

"Oregon olive growers and producers are following a path similar to that taken by pinot noir winemakers 40 years ago," says Bogdan Caceu of the Willamette Valley's La Creole Orchards and Executive Director of Olive Growers of Oregon.

"Why make Oregon olive oil? Because we can, because it's a great product, and it's healthy," says Caceu.

Oregon olive oil may also offer unique characteristics such as higher levels of antioxidants with a richer, more intense flavor due to olives grown in a cooler climate.

Approximately 15 varieties are grown over roughly 50 acres now, primarily in the Willamette Valley, but a big question remains of which varieties are best suited to the cooler climate. Freezing temperatures are the biggest threat to Oregon olive trees, but Caceu believes that varieties grown in Northern Italy and



Paul Durant, co-owner of the Oregon Olive Mill at Red Ridge Farms, gives a tour of one of the farm's olive orchards.

higher altitudes in France may also work well in Oregon. After a serious freeze event in Oregon in 2013, growers began propagating starts to try to replicate the best individual varieties from those that survived. Paul Durant, co-owner of the Oregon Olive Mill at Red Ridge Farms in Dayton, is one of those growers. Red Ridge Farms has approximately 17 acres of olive trees in two locations where they lost trees due to low temperatures in 2013. Even though root systems often survive a freeze, it's a serious setback, as trees take four years to start producing again. Durant said cold-tolerant trees don't yield as much oil per pound of olives as those from warmer climates, but



Paul Durant breaks open an olive to show that the oil comes from the fruit, not the pit.

the oil is "special and so unique."

Despite the challenges, growers have carried on and continue to learn and improve. In its ninth year of business, the Oregon Olive Mill is having success with several varieties. While the mill continues to build its own

olive production, a portion of the olives are sourced from California producers. Arbequina, Koroneiki, and Frantoio varieties were all showcased at the annual Olio Nuovo (new oil) Festival at Red Ridge Farms. Olio nuovo is the freshest form of EVOO

and is noticeably different due to the fine organic particulates that remain in the oil, giving it a cloudy appearance. This unfiltered form also adds vibrancy and richness to the texture and taste of the oil. Durant spoke about the festival and his hope for sharing his love of olive oil with others.



A visitor at the Olio Nuovo (new oil) Festival at the Oregon Olive Mill in November.

"We want consumers to know about the variation in taste, the history, and the emotional connection to olive oil. We want people to understand the reasoning and the 'why' behind what we do."

Durant says his primary focus is on making delicious olive oil, followed by educating consumers on what makes a good olive oil and how to

use it to enhance the flavor of food.

Caceu shares this passion for Oregon olive oil and was recently awarded a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the Oregon Department of Agriculture for an Oregon EVOO awareness campaign. Caceu grows nearly 6 acres of olives at La Creole Orchards and believes in Oregon's potential to become a producer of ultra-premium EVOO, locally sourced, from small growers. This is in contrast to most of the olive oil currently in the market, which comes from larger competitors and industrial farms in California, Italy, and Spain. The grant money will be used for a variety of projects, including market research and outreach events intended to increase awareness and sales of Oregon olive oil. Caceu hopes an increase in demand will also encourage more people to grow olives. "You don't need a large

amount of acreage to get a high-quality product. It would benefit everyone to have more growers and more acreage."

You can learn more about the Oregon Olive Mill and purchase EVOO online at: redridgefarms.com and in Whole Foods Markets in Portland and Seattle. See photos from Oregon Olive Growers online at: [instagram.com/olivegrowers](https://www.instagram.com/olivegrowers) •

ODA reaches out to booming cannabis industry

When Oregon voters approved Measure 91 in 2014, it set off a massive, coordinated effort by the state to get a newly legalized cannabis industry up and running. There have been plenty of growing pains, but state agencies have worked together to provide a regulatory framework designed to facilitate a new industry while protecting consumers. While the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) are the lead agencies for the implementation of both medical and recreational marijuana laws and rules, a handful of other state agencies are also busy applying their own programs to all things cannabis.

For the Oregon Department of Agriculture, those efforts include industrial hemp testing and regulation, the licensing of facilities that produce

edible cannabis products, pesticide use regulation and investigations, and licensing and inspection of scales that weigh cannabis products. Other ODA programs and services may intersect with cannabis production, including water quality; pest, noxious weed, and disease identification; and certification. Specific handouts are available for commercial scale licensing and food safety licenses. Those and other resources can be found online at: bit.do/CannabisODA

In administering its programs, ODA treats cannabis like other agricultural products. The programs and services that touch cannabis producers and processors have long been in place for other commodities.

ODA's Cannabis Policy Coordinator Sunny Jones is available to answer questions and concerns regarding cannabis as they apply to the department's programs and services. She can be reached at (503) 986-4565. •

OREGON CANNABIS

Cultivate your business with the Oregon Department of Agriculture

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) administers many programs that affect agriculture producers and processors. These programs could apply to your cannabis business.

Oregon Department of Agriculture
More info online: bit.do/CannabisODA
 Sunny Jones, Cannabis Policy Coordinator, 503-986-4565

Traps come up empty for Asian gypsy moth

After checking approximately 19,000 traps statewide, and about 3,000 specifically in the north Portland area, the Oregon Department of Agriculture is happy to report no detections of Asian gypsy moth following an 8,800-acre eradication project last spring. The good results indicate there will be no need for ODA to come back in 2017 with additional treatment for the invasive, plant-eating pest.

"In Forest Park and the north Portland area where gypsy moths were trapped in 2015, all our traps came up empty," says Clint Burfitt, manager of ODA's Insect Pest Prevention and Management Program. "We will do two more years of high density trapping in the area before we can officially declare gypsy moth eradicated, but right now,



it looks like our treatments were successful."

Last year, ODA found 14 gypsy moths statewide, five in the greater Portland area. Two of the moths were trapped in or near Portland's Forest Park, another two in the St. Johns area and the Port of Portland's Terminal 6. The most significant was the detection of Asian gypsy moth—one in Forest Park, the other near St. Johns. Additionally, an Asian gypsy moth was trapped across the Columbia River near the Port of Vancouver in Washington.

Trapping results appear to show that three aerial applications of the biological insecticide *Bacillus*

thuringiensis var. *kurstaki* (Btk) not only eradicated an existing population of gypsy moths in the area, but that there are no new introductions of the exotic insect this year.

"It looks like the pest pressure from Asia has decreased and inspections by US Customs and Border Protection and USDA-APHIS (Animal Plant Health Inspection Service) of vessels coming into Oregon from infested areas of Asia have been effective," says Burfitt.

Oregon is more familiar with the European gypsy moth, which is usually introduced when new residents or travelers from areas of high gypsy moth populations in the eastern US unwittingly bring the pest with them on outdoor household furniture or other items that may harbor gypsy moth eggs. Asian gypsy moth is potentially a much more dangerous insect. Unlike its European cousin, the female Asian gypsy moth has the ability to fly, which can lead to a more rapid

infestation and subsequent spread. The Asian gypsy moth also has a larger appetite for what grows in Oregon, including a taste for conifers.

Reports that Asian gypsy moth populations in the Pacific Rim are down is welcome news to Oregon and Washington—two states that conducted large eradication projects this past spring. Oregon's neighbor to the north caught 10 Asian gypsy moths last year.

"Had Forest Park, north Portland, and the port area not been treated this past spring, it would have been a different story," says Burfitt. "I would expect there would have been an increased number of Asian gypsy moth detections and it would have made it far more difficult to achieve eradication of this invasive species."

With no plans for gypsy moth eradication in 2017, Oregon can return to a quieter spring. •

ODA lab achieves top level accreditation

The certificate is not unlike others you might see hanging on a wall. But in order to receive it, the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Laboratory Services Program put nearly three years of effort into reaching strict standards required for its Portland lab to be accredited as a high level facility. With the accreditation, ODA's laboratory can now demonstrate it has a quality management system to help ensure confidence in food safety testing.

"The end result is a much more efficient and high quality laboratory," says Jason Barber, ODA's Director of Internal Service and Consumer Protection. "Since we often times are working with human health issues—food safety, pesticide residues, whatever the case may be—there really isn't a lot of room for error in our laboratory procedures. This third-party accreditation and the quality management system we've developed is going to bring our lab and the results it produces to a higher level."

ODA's regulatory lab runs a variety of tests on a myriad of samples. Its expertise includes chemistry and microbiology. Its primary client is ODA. Ultimately, the testing it does serves the agriculture industry and the people of Oregon, since those are the customers of ODA itself. Quick response is desired, but accurate and defensible results are the ultimate goal. Programs ranging from food safety to pesticides have relied on the expertise provided by those who wear the ODA white lab coat.

The ISO17025:2005 accreditation granted late September by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) is just as technical as its name implies.

ODA's lab is now recognized for its competence in the field of biological testing. It joins several laboratories in other states that are now set up to respond to the demands of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)—the most far-reaching overhaul of the nation's food safety laws to date. Federal grants connected to FSMA allowed ODA to pursue the ISO accreditation.

"A lot of work related to FSMA will require an ISO lab to do the testing," says Barber. "So the food industry as a whole, along with government regulatory programs from now and into the future, are going in the ISO direction. We felt it was imperative for our Portland lab to get on board. This accreditation basically allows the lab to do all that testing down the road."



The long, arduous process of becoming accredited began in 2012, when the US Food and Drug Administration made funds available in preparation for FSMA. Some of the money was used to train staff on policies and procedures required for the lab to conduct its business at the highest and most effective level. The initial push was the need to document processes in greater detail than ever before. Equipment was evaluated to ensure it was fit for purpose and placed on maintenance and calibration schedules. During the process, it became clear that some lab equipment needed updating.

"We are replacing balances and incubators that are close to 30 years

old," says Virginia Tarango, ODA's Quality Assurance Officer. "Striving for ISO accreditation required determining if equipment can perform as uniformly as needed. Some of the older units met the requirements, others didn't. ISO accreditation is focused on the quality of a result, which is client specified. Our processes are geared to use appropriate resources to meet that need."

The laboratory staff embraced the goal of becoming ISO accredited. Certain states with labs already accredited became mentors. In particular, the Washington State Department of Agriculture was very helpful in getting ODA's lab ready. Once the application was made to A2LA, it didn't take long for an auditor to show up in Portland for

the two-day assessment in August.

"The auditor watched our analysts go through our procedures," says Tarango. "He also asked for evidence and records that prove we were actually implementing the procedures we said we were under the quality management system."

The auditor found three items that needed to be addressed out of a check list that was 165 pages long. In other words, nearly everything met the standards of ISO accreditation. The items in need of correction were important, but easily remedied. On September 23, the accreditation became final.

"This was the lab's first ISO attempt," says Barber. "Many times,

you come in and get your initial audit, and they find several things wrong. You have to go back and fix them all. Then maybe three months, six months, a year down the road, you try it again. We nailed it on the first attempt. Quite frankly, that's very impressive."

While the accreditation may have benefits in other areas of ODA responsibility, the biggest focus remains on food safety. When a food illness outbreak occurs, ODA's Food Safety Program and the lab team up to respond as quickly as possible to help pinpoint the source, collaborating with the Oregon Health Authority or FDA in an effort to prevent additional illnesses. ISO accreditation improves that process.

"We rely tremendously on the lab as we work to protect Oregon's food supply," says Stephanie Page, Director of ODA's Food Safety and Animal Health Programs. "In achieving a higher standard, the lab is poised to meet the demands of the Food Safety Modernization Act, which is ultimately good news for Oregonians."

The value of the accreditation boils down to standardized processes, more fully documented data, process transparency, and more efficiency. It also sets up a process of continual improvement and doesn't allow the lab to simply rest on its laurels.

"This keeps the lab on its toes and up to speed, working on having the best trained staff, document control, backup systems, equipment, and more," says Barber. "You are always working to improve."

And for the laboratory staff, achieving the goal of accreditation is worth celebrating.

"Everyone here is very proud," says Tarango. "No lab receives ISO accreditation unless everybody in the lab is working towards that goal. It's a testament of this group's ability to work together to make it happen." •

ODA Biennial Report now available



The Oregon Department of Agriculture 2015-2016 Biennial Report provides a summary of ODA's programs, responsibilities, accomplishments, and goals for the next biennium.

For a free copy, call (503) 986-4550 or send an email request to: info@oda.state.or.us
The ODA Biennial Report is also available online at: bit.do/ODABiennialReport

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Announcements

Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC) Board meeting

Date January 18, 2017
 Time 9:00 am–12:00 pm
 Location Oregon Department of Forestry, Building D Santiam Room, 2600 State St, Salem, OR
 Contact Theodore Bunch Jr., (503) 986-6470
 Website www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Pesticides/Pages/PARC.aspx

Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) meeting

Date February 8, 2017
 Time 12:00 pm–4:00 pm
 Location 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd, Portland, OR, 97232
 Contact Manette Simpson, (503) 986-4715
 Website www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/NaturalResources/SWCD/Pages/SWCC.aspx

Oregon State Board of Agriculture

Date February 15–17, 2017
 Location Salem, OR
 Contact Kathryn Walker, (503) 986-4558
 Website www.oregon.gov/ODA/AboutUs/Pages/BoardAgriculture.aspx

Oregon State University Small Farms Conference

Date February 18, 2017
 Time 9:00 am–5:15 pm pm
 Location OSU LaSells Stewart Center 875 SW 26th St, Corvallis, OR
 Contact (541) 766-3556
 Website smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sfc

Pesticide Analytical and Response Center (PARC) Board meeting

Date March 15, 2017
 Time 9:00 am–12:00 pm
 Location Portland State Office Building, Room 1-D 800 NE Oregon St, Portland, OR
 Contact Theodore Bunch Jr., (503) 986-6470
 Website www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/Pesticides/Pages/PARC.aspx

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Board members may be contacted through the Oregon Department of Agriculture Director's Office at: 503-986-4558

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