

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

JUNE | 2021

WELCOME TO WHEAT COUNTRY

Washington Association of Wheat Growers
109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, WA 99169

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Palouse climate group
seeks farmer input

Delving into NASS's
most popular report

Flying high with GEM Air Inc.

Reflecting on China's Phase One

When the country shut down,
agriculture kept going

WHEAT LIFE

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**WASHINGTON
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WHEAT GROWERS**

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President's Perspective



Carbon discussions lead to more questions

By Ryan Poe

Lately, there has been a lot of discussion about climate-related topics at the state and federal levels. We just saw our state Legislature pass both a low carbon fuel standard and a cap and trade bill. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a climate-focused directive. Carbon markets, a topic that's been around for a few years, are taking more and more air during our National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) meetings.

In all that talk, there's a couple of things that are still concerning to me and, from what I've heard, to other farmers as well. What happens when the cost to implement a practice is as much or more than the grower is paid for the carbon credits? There's a lack of consistency, especially in private carbon markets, on how the price is set. Is the farmer being paid pennies while the middleman reaps the majority of the benefits? And who administers the program—a private company or the federal government?

I'm still looking for answers, but it seems that with every answer I find, I also find 10 more questions. The only thing I know for sure is that I shouldn't be penalized or put at a disadvantage (compared to other farmers) when it comes to benefiting from a carbon market just because my state is already mandating carbon regulations. I know we keep repeating this fact, but as a wheat farmer, I can't pass any extra costs along to my customers. If I'm having to pay more for my fuel or fertilizer because of state regulations, that's likely to eat up any benefit I get from participating in a carbon market.

I also worry our state government is already putting Washington farmers at a competitive disadvantage. How do I compete with an Idaho producer who's growing the same crop in the same region as I am, but isn't having to pay increased input costs because of their state's laws?

Whatever happens with carbon, I feel it is critical that growers be at the table during any discussions. Fortunately, NAWG is working on that. The organization recently formed a climate committee, and one of our own, Marci Green from Spokane County, was appointed to it. It is great to have a Washington grower involved to be able to provide input at the national level, and I thank Marci for being willing to serve on it. I would also encourage all the growers out there to get active when they see an opportunity to tell others how proposed regulations or programs will affect their operation.

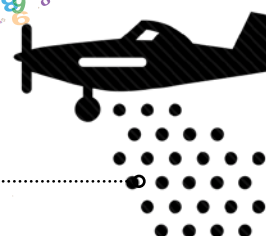
This is the perfect time for all of us to be highlighting the positive benefits of the dams on the Columbia-Snake River System. These dams provide clean, renewable energy that is always on, even during windless or overcast days. Hydropower fills the gaps left by wind or solar energy. Breaching the Snake River dams, in my opinion, is not only detrimental to our ability to transport our commodity to market, but also a big step backwards regarding renewable energy.

As I'm writing this, we are desperately needing rain. We still have a decent looking winter wheat crop in our area, but it is starting to burn up. Just by looking at the drought monitor map, I know that we are not alone in this. I feel for all the growers that have essentially already lost their crop. It is awfully hard watching all your hard work and inputs run out of gas. With temperatures on the rise, I hope we get a much-needed rain and soon. ■

Cover photo: There are few things more beautiful than a mid-May field of Eastern Washington winter wheat. We pay ode to some of the sights in Lincoln County in this issue on pages 34, 47 and 58. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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WAWG's current top priorities are:

- ✓ Protecting agriculture from liability for complying with state overtime laws.
- ✓ Fighting mandatory carbon regulations that would raise prices on fuel and fertilizer.
- ✓ Maintaining a safe and sound transportation system that includes rail, river and roads.
- ✓ Protecting existing tax policy.
- ✓ Preserving the Snake River dams.

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Wheat College moves online; pesticide credits to be offered

Due to continuing travel and meeting restrictions, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) regrets to announce that this year's Wheat College will be held as a webinar, rather than as the in-person event originally planned. The date has also changed from June 15 to June 9.

The new offering will see Washington State University Extension researchers discussing herbicide resistance, stripe rust and Hessian fly management in wheat production systems. Pesticide credits will be available. The webinar runs from 9-11 a.m.

The annual Wheat College is part of the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) schedule. Normally, it is a mix of indoor and outdoor presentations, although, like most things, it was online in 2020. Peter Johnson, aka Wheat Pete, was scheduled to be the featured speaker this year, but travel across the U.S.-Canada border is still being restricted. Johnson hosted an online AMMO seminar in January as a precursor to Wheat College, talking about the building blocks of yield. A recap of that session is available on our website at wheatlife.org/t_0321_AMMO_Johnson.html.

"Peter has been well received by our members, and WAWG has been working to host the popular podcaster in a live format for more than a year. Unfortunately, travel restrictions and other meeting challenges in place at the time we needed to advertise forced us to reevaluate," explained Lori Williams, WAWG's outreach coordinator. "We identified the need to offer pesticide credits to growers due to the lack of in-person opportunities and will be partnering with Washington State University to do that. We appreciate being able to collaborate with Extension researchers to meet this grower need."

The Wheat College webinar is free of charge to attend,

The next Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) state board meeting will be June 8. While we are hoping for an in-person event, as of press time, that decision was still outstanding. If you are interested in attending, please contact the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610 closer to the date of the meeting for more information. WAWG board meetings are open to the public. ■

but registration is required. Participants don't have to be WAWG members to attend. Registered participants will be included in a drawing to win a Blackstone Grill. To register, visit wawg.org/ammo-workshops/. ■

WAWG leaders to take part in commodity tour of dams

The Washington wheat industry continues to push back against the plan proposed by Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) to breach the lower Snake River dams and establish a \$33 billion dollar fund to help mitigate the effects of removing the dams.

Later this month, Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) leaders will take part in a commodity and industry tour hosted by the Idaho Grain Producers Association. The tour will include a discussion of Simpson's plan, a tour of the Port of Lewiston and a tour of Lower Granite Dam. Simpson is expected to attend, as well as other wheat industry and Farm Bureau leaders from Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Montana. Chandler Goule, CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers, and a variety of other national agricultural and river stakeholders have been invited, including Zippy Duval, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, and Michael Seyfert, CEO of the National Grain and Feed Association.

"It is important that the Pacific Northwest wheat industry works together to show Rep. Simpson and other officials how vital the lower Snake River dams are to our farmers and the communities that rely on them," said Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director. "We are looking forward to engaging with Rep. Simpson on this tour and discussing some of the issues we see with his proposal."

Last month, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) released a statement regarding the need for action on salmon and the future of the Columbia River Basin. They called for regional collaboration relying on science-based, community-driven forums to reach a comprehensive, long-term solution, but said Simpson's proposal should not be included in the proposed federal infrastructure package. ►

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Wheat ambassador program now accepting applications

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is excited to announce that the application period for the 2021/22 Washington Wheat Ambassador Program is now open.

Washington students who are entering their senior year of high school are encouraged to apply. Two scholarships from the Washington Wheat Foundation



will be awarded. Wheat ambassadors will represent Washington wheat farmers at various civic and community events through the winter of 2021 and the spring of 2022 and will also participate in an advocacy trip to Olympia with WAWG leaders. This is a fantastic opportunity to get an inside view of how WAWG advocates on behalf of growers, said Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director.

“Every year, we look forward to welcoming two new ambassadors and involving them in the work we do on behalf of growers,” Hennings said. “Understanding the importance of establishing relationships with legislators and seeing that work happen in real time can open the ambassadors’ eyes to agricultural career opportunities that they weren’t aware of.”

Applicants will need to fill out a written application form and submit a short video. The top two applicants will give a speech at the 2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, where the scholarships will be awarded. Only children of WAWG members are eligible to apply. For more info and to download an application form, visit wawg.org/washington-wheat-ambassador-program/. ■

Washington winter wheat production down 19 percent

From the National Agricultural Statistics Service

Based on May 1 conditions, production of winter wheat in Washington was forecast at 108 million bushels, down 19 percent from 2020. Yield was expected to average 64 bushels per acre, down 12 bushels from the previous year. Growers planted an estimated 1.75 million acres in the fall of 2020, down 50,000 acres from the previous year. Harvested acres were forecast at 1.69 million acres, down 60,000 acres from 2020.

In Idaho, production was forecast at 64.6 million bushels, down 3 percent from 2020. Yield was expected to average 95 bushels per acre, down 6 bushels from last year. Growers planted an estimated 730,000 acres in the fall of 2020, up 10,000 acres from the previous year. Harvested acres were forecast at 680,000 acres, up 20,000 acres from a year ago.

In Oregon, production was forecast at 39.5 million bushels, down 15 percent from 2020. Yield was expected to average 56 bushels per acre, down 8 bushels from last year. Growers planted an estimated 720,000 acres in the fall of 2020, down 20,000 acres from the previous year. Growers expected to harvest 705,000 acres, down 20,000 acres from the previous year.

Nationally, production was expected to be 1.28 billion bushels, up 10 percent from 2020. Yield was forecast at 52.1 bushels per acre, up 1.2 bushels from last year. Growers planted an estimated 33.1 million acres in the fall of 2020, up 2.66 million acres from the previous year. Harvested acres were forecast at 24.6 million acres, up 1.59 million acres from 2020.

U.S. white winter wheat production is forecast at 220 million bushels, down 10 percent from last year. Of this total, 14.2 million bushels are hard white, and 206 million bushels are soft white. U.S. hard red winter, at 731 million bushels, is up 11 percent from 2020. Soft red winter, at 332 million bushels, is up 25 percent from 2020. ■

FSA county committees seeking producer involvement

County committee elections are now underway. The election of responsible agricultural producers to the Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers with large or small opera-

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tions. It is crucial that every eligible producer takes part in this election because county committees are a direct link between the farm community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

From June 15 through Aug. 1, growers can nominate themselves or a candidate of their choice for their local FSA county committee. Persons participating or cooperating in FSA's programs and of legal voting age can be nominated. This includes farmers and ranchers who may be participating in other USDA agency programs but have their farm on file with FSA. FSA encourages all interested agricultural producers, including women and minority growers, to seek nomination.

Committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. Farmers who serve on committees help decide the kind of programs their counties will offer. They work to make FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers.

Information about the county committee election process can be found on our website, fsa.usda.gov/news-room/county-committee-elections/, or at your local county office. ■

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With their annual membership, Washington Association of Wheat Growers members can receive industry updates through the weekly digital Greensheet ALERT via email. If you are not receiving this ALERT, either we don't have your current email address, or our ALERT is going into your spam folder. Call our office at (509) 659-0610 to make sure we have your current email address. ■

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Tim Murray – Biology and Management of Stripe Rust in Wheat

Dale Whaley – Biology and Management of Hessian Fly in Wheat

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POLICY MATTERS

Legislature adjourns, passes budgets, climate legislation

By Diana Carlen
WAWG Lobbyist

The 2021 Legislative Session, which adjourned on April 25, was brutal for agriculture. In the final week of the session, despite strong opposition from agriculture, the Legislature hit the industry with a double whammy by adopting both a low carbon fuel standard and cap-and-trade legislation, both of which will increase fuel and energy prices dramatically. Moreover, the Legislature also passed a capital gains tax on the final day of the session, which could impact some agricultural land, despite statements made by proponents that that was not their intention.

Notably, the two bills authorizing a low carbon fuel standard and cap and trade included language that tied the programs to a transportation funding package. However, the Legislature did not reach an agreement on a transportation revenue package this session, and during signing of the bills, Gov. Inslee vetoed the subsections that contained this provision, meaning the legislation could go into effect immediately.

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle expressed concern about executive overreach. Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig (D-Spokane) issued a statement saying, "...The constitution is clear that the governor is permitted only to veto a full section of a bill. In this case he has vetoed a subsection." Legislative leaders have indicated they are considering taking the governor to court over the matter.



Budgets passed

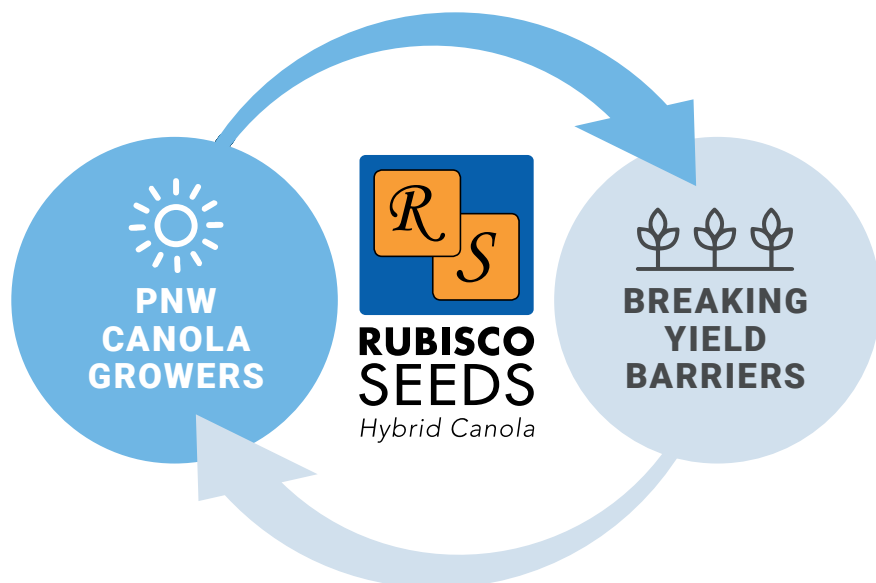
During a long session, the Legislature's primary task is to pass the state's biennial budgets: operating, capital and transportation. All three budgets were negotiated in conference committee, which means no amendments could be offered, and legislators could only vote for or against the budget during final passage. Notably, each of the respective budgets utilizes a portion of the \$4.25 billion in funding that the state received through federal funding.

The 2021-23 capital budget, which funds brick and mortar construction (excluding transportation), appropriates \$6.3 billion for the biennium, utilizing \$3.9 billion from general obligation bonds, \$589 million in federal funds and reserves approximately \$82 million in bond capacity for the 2022 supplemental capital budget. One of the wheat industry's priorities, the demolition of Johnson Hall at Washington State University Pullman Campus in preparation for the construction of a federally funded replacement science facility, received \$8 million.

The state's operating budget funds all state agency operations, including K-12, higher education, human service programs and more. Leading up to the beginning of the legislative session, there were concerns that the operating budget would face a significant revenue shortfall. However, the March economic revenue forecast reflected a rebound from the pandemic. This, combined with revenue from the federal government, provided the state with revenue to have one of the largest increases in state budgeting in recent history. The 2021-2023 operating budget appropriates a total of \$59.19 billion, which is an increase of \$3.2 billion.

The budget assumes passage of the capital gains tax, which is estimated to increase revenues by \$415 million in 2021-23 and by \$840 million in 2023-25.

The operating budget drains the budget stabilization account (or the rainy day



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fund) in 2019–21. Of the \$1.820 billion transferred to the general fund–state, \$1 billion would then be transferred to a new account called the Washington rescue plan transition account that requires only a simple majority of the Legislature to access.

The 2021–2023 transportation budget appropriates \$11.7 billion, much of which is utilized to fund projects from the 2015 Transportation Revenue Package (Connecting Washington) and to fund the replacement of state-owned culverts. This budget utilized \$1 billion in federal funds to backfill revenue shortfalls due to COVID-19.

To read more about the end of the session, go to wawg.org/legislative-report-04-26-session-ends/.

Governor signs overtime bill

In mid-May, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed SB 5172 into law, making the Evergreen state one of the few states that requires agricultural employers to pay their workers overtime.

Beginning in 2022, employers will have to pay overtime to workers who accrue more than 55 hours in a week. That drops to 48 hours in 2023 and 40 hours in 2024. The bill also protects the agricultural industry from retroactive liability.

The legislation was in response to a Supreme Court decision in November 2020 (Martinez-Cuevas, et al. v. DeRuyter Brothers Dairy) requiring dairy workers to be paid overtime and overturning a state law in place since 1959 that exempted all agriculture from paying overtime. The court did not make clear if the ruling applied to the entire agriculture industry or just to dairy. In addition, the question of whether or not employers would be required to retroactively pay overtime was still to be decided. The legislation was critical as lawsuits were already being

filed, seeking retroactive overtime wages in response to the case.

Unfortunately, the agricultural industry was unsuccessful in getting a seasonal exemption included in the bill that would have allowed farmers to choose 12 weeks a year to pay time-and-a-half after 50 hours.

Pesticide fees to go up

Gov. Inslee also signed legislation to increase pesticide fees in order to bolster funding for applicator training by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and Washington State University.

The fees will take effect in 2022 and will raise more than \$2 million. The money will be used by WSDA to hire additional trainers and employees, as well as to update the department's records. Commercial pesticide applicators' licenses will rise to \$243 from \$215, while registering a pesticide for two years will rise to \$650 from \$350. This legislation was supported by many ag groups, including the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. ■

NAWG names policy director

Last month, National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) CEO, Chandler Goule, promoted **Jake Westlin** to senior director of policy and communications. Westlin joined NAWG in October 2019 and has been a key part of NAWG's policy team and has managed a host of projects during his tenure. Through Westlin's six years working with Capitol Hill and his work on two farm bills as part of Sen. Heidi Heitkamp's (D-N.D.) legislative team, he has brought a



Agriculture presses for renewal of trade authority legislation

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is joining with other agricultural groups to advocate for the renewal of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), which is set to expire in July.

"Renewal of TPA is critical for the approval of future trade agreements," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG. "It is one of our top priorities, and something we discussed in our meetings with members of our Congressional delegation earlier this year. We encourage the Biden Administration to engage with Congress as soon as possible on this legislation so Washington wheat farmers can continue to reach new

customers through additional trade agreements."

Under TPA, Congress sets trade objectives that permit the current administration the freedom to negotiate agreements without Congressional interference. At the end of the process, Congress gives the agreement an up or down vote, but can't change it or filibuster to delay it.

Last month during a House Ways and Means Committee, the new U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai did not answer lawmakers' queries about when the Biden Administration would begin work on renewing TPA, saying only that there's an opportunity to rethink the way TPA works. ■

fundamental understanding of ag policy to NAWG. Westlin has an extensive background in agriculture and public lands, as well as food and nutrition policy. In his new role, he will oversee the policy and communications team and continue being a voice for growers on the Hill. ■

Biden outlines conservation plan

In a report released in May, the Biden Administration outlined a goal to conserve at least 30 percent of America's land and waters by 2030 through voluntary, locally led conservation and restoration efforts.

"The president's national conservation goal also provides an opportunity to better honor and support the people and communities who serve as stewards of our lands and waters," wrote Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Brenda Mallory in the report.

To help measure and track progress toward the conservation goal, the report calls for the establishment of an interagency working group that will develop the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas, a tool that will better reflect the voluntary contributions of farmers, ranchers, forest owners and private landowners; the contributions of fishery management councils; and other existing conservation designations on lands and waters across federal, state, local, Tribal and private lands and waters across the nation. Progress reports are to be published annually.

The plan has come under attack from some groups as a "land grab." Vilsack has refuted that, saying the plan honors private property rights.

A copy of the plan can be found at usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/conserving-restoring-america-the-beautiful.pdf. ■



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George Bush was a compassionate frontiersman, wheat farmer

Less than a decade after the Whitmans established their mission at Waiilatpu in southeast Washington, a group of pioneers left Missouri in search of a new life at the end of the Oregon Trail. The co-leader of the group was George Bush, a military man, trapper, wheat farmer and free Black American. He, his wife, Isabella, and their five sons joined friend Michael T. Simmons and three other families on the journey west, eventually settling in what is now Tumwater. Tumwater was the first permanent American settlement in Washington state.



George Bush

Historians believe Bush, a seasoned frontiersman and successful farmer, was one of the wealthiest pioneers to enter the territory. The Oregon Territory, however, had recently enacted laws making it illegal for Bush to settle there because of his skin color. Arriving at the Columbia River in the fall of 1844, the group decided to settle only where the Bush family could settle. They spent that winter at Washougal, north of the Columbia River, where the Oregon government's rule was not enforced. In the summer, Simmons and Bush explored the southern area of the Puget Sound, and in the fall of 1845, their group trekked north. They settled in a spot just south of Budd Inlet, eventually naming it Tumwater.

The Bush family started a farm on 640 acres nearby, calling it Bush Prairie. It was known as one of the most valuable and productive farms in early Washington. With Simmons, Bush built the area's first gristmill (flour mill) and sawmill. Bush was well known for his compassion and generosity.

In 1846 the northern boundary of the Oregon Territory was extended to the 49th parallel (the modern northern boundary of the state of Washington), and so were its racist laws. Bush's land claim was suddenly illegal according

to the laws of Oregon. Fortunately, Simmons had been appointed a Justice of the Peace and was able to temporarily prevent the loss of Bush's claim.

The Bushes lived under these tense circumstances for years, but their loyalty and commitment to their neighbors never wavered. According to historians, in 1852, there was a grain shortage. Speculators offered Bush a high price for his wheat, but Bush told them that he would keep his grain, "so my neighbors will have enough to live on and for seeding their fields in the spring. They have no money to pay your fancy prices, and I don't intend to see them want for anything I can provide them."

The Washington Territory separated from Oregon in 1853. A group of Bush's neighbors and friends passed a memorial through the Washington

Territorial Legislature requesting that the U.S. Congress grant the Bush family title to their land in 1854. Congress passed this special act the following year.

George died on April 5, 1863, and Isabella followed three years later. Their sons carried on their tradition of farming and public service. William Owen Bush, their eldest son, was a member of the first Washington State Legislature and farmed the Bush Prairie farm until his death in 1907. The farm is still in operation today. Visit the Foundation's website at wawheat.org/history-of-wheat/george-bush to learn more about the Bush family and their story. ■



Michael T. Simmons

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DATA DRIVEN

NASS's most popular report has been published weekly for almost 150 years

By Trista Crossley

If you grow it, they will come. And ask for numbers. And likely write a report about it.

And while there might be some grumbling from some quarters about repetitive and somewhat invasive questions, the information published by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is essential for understanding what's happening on the farm, and how that could affect the economy. Most, if not all, U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) farm programs utilize the data collected by NASS. Some NASS reports are published with fanfare, such as crop production estimates, prospective plantings reports and the biggie, the Census of Agriculture. But the agency's most popular report, the Crop Progress and Condition Report, has been quietly published in various formats, week after week for almost 150 years (see sidebar on page 22).

Currently, a national crop progress report is published every Monday through the growing season and lists planting, fruiting and harvesting progress and overall condition of selected crops in major producing states. Approximately 3,600 respondents from across the U.S. contribute to the nonprobability surveys included in the report. The Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin, which is jointly prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and USDA, is published on Tuesdays and includes a national summary; state narratives; current data for weather, temperature and precipitation; and international agricultural weather. Finally, using elements of the national reports, each state publishes some version of their own crop progress report every week through the growing season.

In Washington state, the crop progress report is published Monday afternoon from April through November and monthly in December, January, February and March. The report tracks soil moisture, pasture and range

conditions and the conditions of some of the state's largest commodity crops. It also tracks the progress of those crops, from planting to harvesting, and provides comparisons to last week and last year, as well as a five-year average.

"(USDA) wanted to find a consistent way to report what was happening out there, what conditions are, and how the progress was," explained Christopher Mertz, director of NASS's Northwest Regional Office. The Northwest office covers Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Alaska. "Since we were the data collectors, I think we were a natural way to get some of that information."

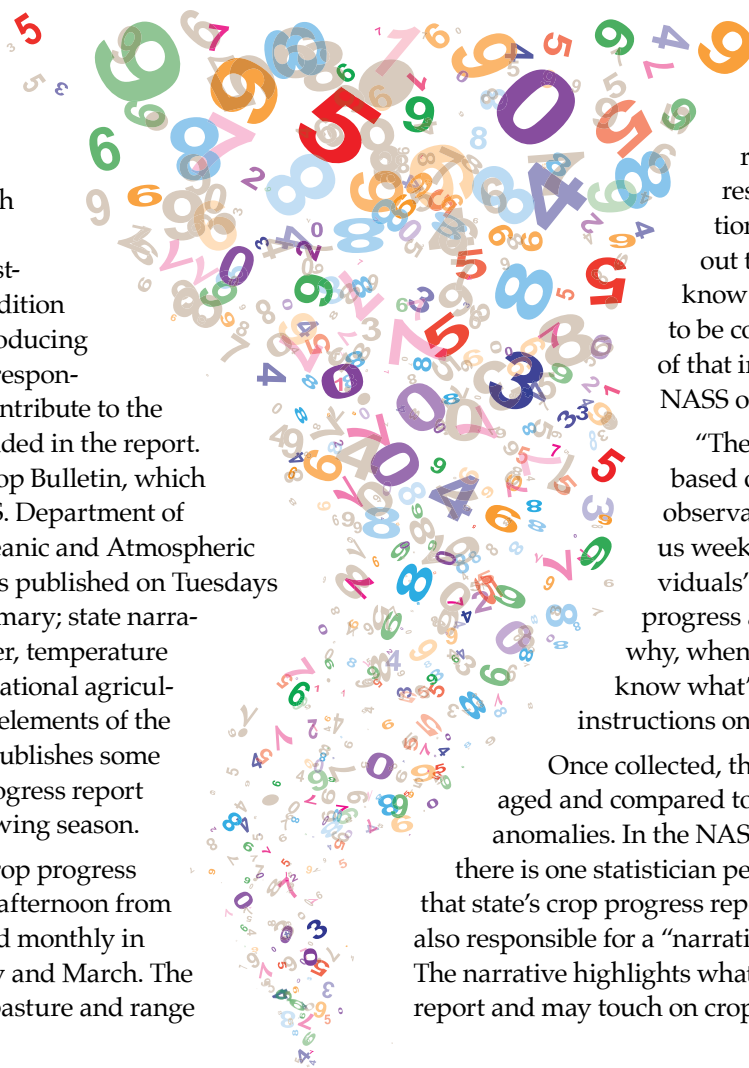
Washington has 34 respondents who contribute information to the report, mainly Extension and Farm Service Agency employees or other USDA service center personnel who routinely interact

with producers and

have the opportunity to observe what's happening in farmers' fields on a regular basis. NASS provides respondents with weekly questionnaires that change throughout the season so respondents know what information needs to be collected. These days, most of that information is submitted to NASS online.

"The crop progress report is based on respondents' visual observations that they report to us weekly," Mertz said. "It's individuals' subjective estimates on crop progress and development. That's why, when we find good reporters that know what's going on, we give them instructions on what we want."

Once collected, the data is weighted, averaged and compared to historical data to check for anomalies. In the NASS Northwest Regional Office, there is one statistician per state that is responsible for that state's crop progress report. Those statisticians are also responsible for a "narrative" that begins the report. The narrative highlights what's happened since the last report and may touch on crops that aren't generally





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included in the rest of the report. Out of Washington's approximately 300 commercial crops, only about a dozen are actually tracked in the report:

- Pasture and range.
- Winter and spring wheat.
- Barley.
- Oats.
- Potatoes.
- Field corn.
- Dry edible beans and peas.
- Onions.
- Sugar beets.
- Alfalfa.

Mertz explained that to cover all the crops in a state would be an overwhelming burden, and because the report is a national program, NASS focuses on the biggest crops as a measuring resource.

Once the data has been crunched, the Northwest states' statisticians meet to review each other's reports. The reports then get approval from the regional office before sending them to NASS headquarters in D.C. for national release and then for the state release. Mertz said most statisticians at NASS regional offices will eventually spend time putting together a crop progress report because it's a good way to familiarize themselves with a state's agricultural industry.

"You get to dive in and learn about different counties and figure out where they are at and what's happening in them. It's just a good overall training and learning project," he said.

Crop progress reports are posted online (you can also subscribe to have NASS reports emailed to you). According to USDA, at the national level, it is the top downloaded NASS report. In Washington state, it is third in downloads. ►

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New NASS tool to help predict soil moisture

A new National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) tool aims to give producers greater access to in-depth soil moisture data.

The Crop Condition and Soil Moisture Analytics tool, or Crop-CASMA, is a web-based geospatial application that uses high-resolution data from NASA to help predict soil moisture conditions and water availability.

According to a press release, U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers and statisticians will incorporate the tool into a range of applications such as identifying areas that couldn't be planted because of wet, saturated, frozen, excessively dry or inaccessible fields resulting in improved planted statistical acreage estimates. It will also enable research on sustainability and the impact of extreme weather events.

The tool can be found at <https://cloud.csiss.gmu.edu/Crop-CASMA/> ■

Mertz said agricultural stakeholders, like grain elevators and grain merchandisers, use the crop progress report data to help estimate production based on current conditions. The report can help predict if harvest will be early or if the crop is going to be larger or smaller than normal. Producers can use the data to compare their progress with their neighbor or use it as supporting material when dealing with farm safety net programs, such as filing a drought claim for crop insurance.

"To me, (the crop progress report) actually tells a pretty good story. It gives us some idea on what to be expecting during the year," Mertz said.

Crop progress and condition reports from 2019 for the Northwest can be downloaded at nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Washington/Publications/Crop_Progress_&_Condition/index.php

National crop progress reports dating back to 1995 can be downloaded at usda.library.cornell.edu/concern/publications/8336h188j

And the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin, going back to 1971, can be found at usda.library.cornell.edu/concern/publications/cj82k728n?locale=en ■

More than a century of crop condition reporting

In the Dec. 9, 1997, issue of the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin, author Brad Rippey highlighted the history of crop and weather reporting in the U.S. Here is what he wrote, reprinted with permission from the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

U.S. crop weather reporting began 125 years ago on Nov. 18, 1872, with the Signal Corps' publication of the two-page *Weekly Weather Chronicle*. The publication has continued through myriad changes in name, organization and physical makeup, becoming the *Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin* in 1924. Until the 1970s, its primary purpose was to report the current crop and weather conditions across the nation, at which time, the *Bulletin's* scope expanded to encompass important agricultural areas of the world.

The publication began under the jurisdiction of the War Department (Weather Service of the Signal Corps), moving to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1891. When the Weather Bureau (now the National Weather Service (NWS)) was transferred to the Commerce Department in 1940, the *Bulletin* became an interagency effort. The effort was formally recognized in 1958, fostering cooperation between the Agriculture and Commerce departments that has resulted in a product that neither agency could produce alone. The *Bulletin* is issued under the general authority of the Act of January 12, 1895, 53rd Congress, 3rd Session.

The *Bulletin's* "modern era" began in 1978 with the creation of the Joint Agricultural Weather Facility (JAWF), comprised of employees from the NWS's Climate Analysis Center (CAC) and the USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board. Under an NWS reorganization, CAC became the Climate Prediction Center in October 1995. JAWF and USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service have continued this cooperative effort for nearly 20 years. ■

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Going green(er)

PALOUSE CITIZENS GROUP SEEKS INPUT FROM PRODUCERS ON CLIMATE ACTION

By Trista Crossley

The Palouse is more than just rolling hills, small towns and exceptional crops. It's also the home of an organization making a determined effort to include the agricultural industry in climate change discussions.

The Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) describes itself as a grassroots, nonpartisan advocacy organization focused on national and local policies to address climate change. With approximately 200,000 members nationwide, the CCL establishes relationships with local, state and federal officials to build political support for climate action in keeping with local culture and politics. The Palouse chapter of the CCL, established in 2012, has approximately 700 members from Whitman County in Washington and Latah County in Idaho and counts a number of large scale commodity producers among them.

"Agriculture is the backbone of our economy," explained Judy Meuth, co-leader of the Palouse CCL. "It seems like if we are going to have a climate solution, we need to take care of everybody. Agriculture is a critical industry in the world, and if we don't take care of agriculture and help it become more sustainable over time, whether we have climate change or not, we are not going to be able to sustain the human population. As a biologist, I think about it

in terms of this is our habitat. We have to take care of the habitat just like we would for deer."

Meuth grew up in a farming and ranching family in Texas, where they raised sorghum, field corn and cattle. She was a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as a professor from Washington State University's College of Arts and Sciences. She said that as early as 2017, the Palouse CCL was meeting with farmers and ranchers to talk about the challenges they were facing, and what climate solutions seemed reasonable to them. The group would then take that information to members of Congress.

In February of this year, the Palouse CCL held an online Agriculture, Soil Health and Climate Policy meeting. In addition to several guest speakers, attendees at the meeting, which included farmers and ranchers, were invited to share their thoughts about climate legislation and carbon sequestration. The overall takeaway, Meuth said, was people were very much interested in soil health and trying to figure out how to do the best thing they can to keep their soil in good shape.

"But the challenge of working for carbon sequestration on your place has a lot of bumps in the road, everything from capital to invest in new equipment to tons of dif-

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During an Agriculture, Soil Health and Climate Policy online meeting in February, Judy Meuth, co-leader of the Palouse Citizens' Climate Lobby, explained how the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (HR 2307) that was introduced in the House in April satisfies the criteria on this slide.

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ferent kinds of small things, like 'I don't know how to do it. I don't know what would work on my farm. What if I want to change crops, can I do that?' Just on and on, so figuring out how to do that came out to be one of big problems. How do I get money to do that? How do I figure out what the best thing to do is, and what can I switch off if I want to?" she explained. "Several people said they would like to get involved, but were worried about being locked into some type of program that would keep them in a particular practice that didn't work as well as they thought it would."

The CCL is endorsing several pieces of climate legislation, including the Growing Climate Solutions Act (S 1251) and the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (HR 2307). Both bills have been introduced in Congress. S 1251 would create an advisory board and provide startup funds for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help solve technical entry barriers to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who want to participate in carbon credit markets. HR 2307 puts a fee on carbon pollution, and the money collected would be returned to Americans in the form of a monthly dividend.

Although S 1251 has been endorsed by several national groups, including the American Farm Bureau, the National Corn Growers and the Environmental Defense Fund, the wheat industry has not endorsed it. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) supports recognizing agricultural practices as a benefit to the environment and believes that any policy or regulation regarding conservation practices and technological advances that aid in the reduction of carbon emissions should be administered through the farm bill or the private sector. The wheat industry should be fully involved in discussions and the development of any policy or legislation relating to climate change. WAWG also believes that any carbon mitigation program should be voluntary, based on sound science principles and that growers need to have the flexibility to decide what practices work best on their farm.

Meuth said that the main concern they keep hearing from farmers regarding carbon regulation is the potential increase in transportation costs and cost of inputs, such as fertilizer, although HR 2307 does exempt on-farm fuel. As she pointed out, however, farmers aren't like other busi-

"Agriculture is a critical industry in the world, and if we don't take care of agriculture and help it become more sustainable over time, whether we have climate change or not, we are not going to be able to sustain the human population. As a biologist, I think about it in terms of this is our habitat. We have to take care of the habitat just like we would for deer."

*—Judy Meuth, co-leader
Palouse Citizens' Climate Lobby*

nesses that can simply raise the cost of their product to compensate for the increased input costs.

"I'm not going to, in good conscience, ask anybody to back something that leaves them high and dry when it's not the same way for most other industries. Most other industries say, 'yes, if you make fossil fuels a little more expensive, I can change my price,'" she said. "One of the things we are advocating for, especially from our particular group, is when we go to Congress, we say let's make sure we are taking care of what farmers' needs are. I am completely in support of price on carbon, but we need to have a companion bill that goes with it that says we will protect commodity farmers because they can't change their price."

Other concerns that the Palouse CCL has been hearing from farmers is that any carbon program needs to be voluntary; that agricultural research is well funded and being done at universities; and that farmers want technical assistance and financial aid as they transition to more sustainable farming practices.

In the February online session, according to notes compiled by the Palouse CCL, producers said they wanted assistance in these areas:

- How carbon credit markets, and particular companies, work, and how to access them.
- Ways to accurately test for soil health and carbon sequestration.
- Crop rotations that work best with reduced tillage.
- Cover crops and mixes designed for specific areas/farms and ranches.
- Market incentives or government program incentives to create more diversity in our food production system and to regenerate the soil.
- Perennial crops.
- More crops that are economically competitive and market development for those crops.
- Integrating livestock in a cropping system to help manage resources, reduce fuel loads to help prevent wildfires and increase water retention from hoof disturbance of soils.
- Maximizing the benefit of inputs to reduce waste.

- More on-farm trials.

While some farmers Meuth meets are skeptical about climate change, she thinks most of them are seeing the changes, such as dryer, hotter summers, but not calling it a climate change issue. While farmers are supportive of research and technical assistance that helps them and their crops adapt to less moisture and warmer temperatures, Meuth believes adapting to a changing climate will only get farmers so far. She said that without decreasing carbon, temperatures will continue to rise to the point where the nutritional level of crops are negatively impacted.

"The actual data that farmers have been collecting in their own experiences goes along with climate change, but they aren't framing it that way," she said. "There are some folks that just see it as variability, and certainly it is that, but one of the hallmarks of climate change is more and more variability in weather over time."

The Palouse CCL is still seeking farmer feedback on the Growing Climate Solutions Act and the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act. For more information about the Palouse CCL, a video recording of the February online session and a link to a feedback form, visit their website at ccpalouse.org. ■

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Couple flies into aerial aviation business

Erin and Gavin Morse, GEM Air Inc.

By Trista Crossley

The success of Gavin and Erin Morse's aerial application company, GEM Air Inc., didn't happen without a little turbulence.

Neither of the Morses grew up in agriculture or aviation. Erin graduated from Quincy High School in 2000. From there, she went to Big Bend Community College (BBCC) in Moses Lake and (later) Eastern Washington University in Cheney. Gavin grew up in Spokane where his father was a contractor. He was homeschooled instead of attending public high school, but took and passed the GED at 16 so he could get to the thing he had loved from the time he was a child—flying. His mother wasn't very pleased.

"At the time, I thought high school was in the way of becoming a pilot," he said. "I took the test and passed, packed my things and moved myself, at 16, to Seattle to be closer to where airplanes were."

Upon arriving in Seattle, Gavin went straight to the Renton Municipal Airport to find a job. He was hired on the spot as a fuel line technician, responsible for making sure airplanes had enough fuel to get to where they were going. He worked in Renton for a year before enrolling in the flight school at BBCC in 2001 where he met Erin. One summer, Gavin took a job reloading planes for the U. S. Forest Service on the Super Air Tanker Base outside Moses Lake and realized that kind of flying appealed to him more than being a pilot for an airline did, especially since the airline industry was changing in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001. By this time, Erin and Gavin's relationship had turned serious



Gavin and Erin Morse are the owners of GEM Air Inc., an aerial application company based out of Warden. They are shown here with their two daughters, Maggie and Adi. Photo courtesy of Leah Stussy Photography.

"The pilots (at the Super Air Tanker Base) told Gavin that to fly fire, you either need to get time as a bush pilot or as an ag pilot. I said, 'let's please not move to Alaska,'" Erin recalled, laughing. At the time, Erin was working at US Bank in Royal City. She had a regular customer who had checks with an airplane on them, and after inquiring about that and explaining about Gavin, she got an invitation that would change their lives. "At that point, Gavin had his private and commercial license, but we didn't know anything about agriculture."

That customer was Jock Warren, owner of Royal Flying Service in Royal City, an aerial application company. Gavin met with Jock and was hired as a loader in 2003. In aerial application, a loader is usually responsible for mixing the products to be applied and loading them into the planes. The Morses began checking out the agricultural industry. Besides falling for each other (they married in 2005), they also fell in love with the world of agricultural aviation.

Gavin did groundwork for Royal Flying Service for four years learning what different crops looked like, their life cycles and what plants did and didn't get what products.

"That's why being an ag pilot is such a unique line of work as far as agriculture and aviation, it's a blend of the two. Really, as an ag pilot, you are so much more a farmer who is flying rather than a pilot who is flying," Gavin said. "It's far more important to know chemistries and chemicals and the plants and the ag part than to know how to fly the airplane. Flying the airplane should be second nature. What you are really doing is paying attention to the surrounding crops and the pattern behind you as you are spraying to make sure everything is going as it should be." ▶

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Gavin Morse making an aerial application. Morse and his wife, Erin, are the owners of GEM Air Inc., an aerial application company based out of Warden, Wash. Photo courtesy of Leah Stussy Photography.

By this time, Erin and Gavin were determined to one day own their own company. Erin said they scrimped and saved every penny they could so they could put as much money as possible towards Gavin's flight time and practice hours in various airplane models to build his qualifications.

"We loved the lifestyle and the people, and we realized that was really more our personalities than flying fire. When flying fire, you have to follow the seasons. It's hard for families," Erin said. "As busy and as many hours that ag pilots work, in our part of the world, they are home at night. So even if dad's really tired, the kids can still see him. That was important for us to have something family-oriented. We decided we wanted to do something with flying, and we wanted to be our own business, so we started tailoring our work careers to get the experience we needed. Gavin leaned into flying and ag, and I started leaning into business and ag."

Gavin began flying for Warren in 2007. Unfortunately, Warren didn't have enough business to support two full time flyers, so in 2010, when Gavin was approached by B & R Aerial Crop Care in Connell, he left, with Warren's blessing.

"He (Warren) didn't have a whole bunch of work in

Royal City. He was sharing his own flying time with me. If something came in that was at my skill level, he'd jump out of the airplane, and I'd jump in and go do the job. He didn't have to do that," Gavin said. Warren told Gavin that he needed to take the job with B & R, which would also include a step up to flying a turbine engine, not to mention giving Gavin an opportunity to become a full-time production pilot.

Gavin worked at B & R for five years. But the Morses were still working towards owning their own company. In 2015, they heard about an aerial applicator in the Palouse who wanted to retire and was looking to sell their company. The Morses moved to Oakesdale and began learning about that business, the area and the customers. But things just didn't seem to be fitting properly.

"We had to have a serious talk with ourselves," Erin said. "Do we sign the paperwork and muscle this into what we want, or do we have a really frank conversation?"

In the end, the Morses admitted the company wasn't the right fit for them and backed away. It all worked out as the owners decided they weren't quite ready to retire. But now, the Morses had a problem. Gavin no longer had a seat at B & R, and the Palouse deal had fallen through.

But like many fortuitous events in life, the closing of one

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door often blows another door open. Out of nowhere, they received a call from a father and son aerial application business in the Columbia Basin that was interested in selling as the son wanted to move into farming.

"These operations don't just come up for sale," Gavin explained. "This one was right in the area we wanted to be in. We already knew a lot of the people here, and I had flown here. It was neighbors to B & R. It was closer to family. It checked all of the boxes."

While the business looked like a fantastic opportunity, the purchase price was sobering, and the Morses weren't sure how they were going to make that work.

"But we are not quitters," Erin said. "We exhausted a lot of avenues. I don't think it's in a Morse not to be persistent. We just tried to think outside of the box to find a unique fit that would meet both of our needs."

Their persistence paid off, and the Morses acquired the business at the end of 2015. They renamed it GEM Air Inc. and hit the ground flying, almost literally, as the 2016 wheat crop was a bad year for rust. Aerial ag applicators were suddenly very much in demand. The couple rose to the challenge, contracting five planes out of several local airports and spraying 10,000 to 15,000 acres a day.

"We knocked it out of the park. By this point, Erin was more than capable of handling the office and business, and I was fairly experienced in the airplane. We were basically a ready-made dream team," Gavin said. "Nobody waited more than three days (for service). We flew daily from 5 a.m. to when the sun went down. It was a heck of a good way to show everybody what we were capable of right out of the gate."

These days, GEM Air Inc. has several employees (besides Gavin

and Erin). They call themselves a 1 ½ plane operation as they "share" another aerial applicator with B & R Aerial Crop Care. Their season runs from "when the snow melts until the snow falls," approximately from the end of January to the beginning of December. When Gavin isn't flying, the Morses spend their time doing customer calls, attending conferences, talking to legislators about the pesticide application industry, training and performing maintenance on their equipment. Both of them are active in professional associations and advocate on behalf of their industry, especially Erin, who takes care to "humanize" the aerial application industry, letting legislators and the public know the real facts and data.

"When I'm talking to anyone, especially legislators, my goal is to say we are real people. We are a family. We are part of our community. We are not some fly-by-night operation, mindlessly putting things in the air. We are highly trained professionals. Whatever concerns they have, we can meet them with facts and truth," she said.

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The Morses believe the services the aerial application industry provides to agriculture are critical, especially when timeliness is important. Aerial applicators can apply pesticides more quickly than ground spraying, they don't compact the soil, and they can often access hard-to-reach areas more easily than vehicles. Erin referred to a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service report that estimates that without aerial applicators, the U.S. economy would see a \$23 billion hit due to crop losses, and selected crops (corn for grain, wheat, cotton, soybeans and rice) would have a 91 percent chance of occurring a loss.

For the Morses, their customers are almost like family, and they are proud to contribute to such a critical industry as agriculture.

"I'm not just flying an airplane to get to point a or b, I'm taking an airplane and doing something with it that has tangible results at the end of the day," Gavin said. "I'm helping my neighbor raise a crop that's going to make a difference. It's going to feed people. It's flying for a purpose. I'm lucky to be able to do what I do. I see things every day that nobody else gets to see. I'm out in the middle of nowhere, south of Benge, flying rye patches in canola. It's beautiful. It's the best office window you can have."

Erin and Gavin have two daughters, ages 8 and 6. GEM Air Inc. is based out of Warden, Wash. For more information, visit their website at gemairinc.com. ■



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CHAIRMAN

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Mike
Carstensen



How many times have you heard that the U.S. provides the highest quality wheat for every customer's needs, backed by transparent pricing, trusted, third-party certification and unmatched service before and after the sale? Okay, maybe you've never heard it, but it's true. The reason, beyond U.S. farmers growing quality grain, is an efficient supply chain. From the farmer to the consumer, the grain chain is made up of separate but essential links, the absence of any one of which could derail the entire enterprise.

The country elevator system is one of those vital links. Made up of private and cooperative storage and shipping facilities located throughout the U.S., country elevators serve as the first point of contact for the U.S. wheat crop after it leaves the farm.

There, the crop is received, sorted and stored. The country elevator system also provides elasticity to the market by flattening the supply/demand curve, letting the wheat settle and enabling it to be shipped at any point throughout the year. It is also the first gathering point where blending can occur to enhance the value of the overall crop.

Across the country, at hundreds of elevators, thousands of samples are collected and analyzed as part of a process designed to inform millers and bakers about the crop that is coming at them. Because just as every year's weather is different, so is every year's crop.

U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), the export arm of the American wheat farmer, collates that data into reports that traders, consultants and customers around the world read. No other country is as transparent about its crop quality.

Grain merchandisers at country elevators, like Ty Jessup, who serves as an industry representative on the Washington Grain Commission and works for HighLine Grain, are a conduit between farmers and exporters. They are constantly evaluating local conditions and the world market, as well as transportation alternatives needed to get the wheat to the next link in the chain.

As complicated as wheat movement is at country elevators, the logistics at the region's exporters is compounded by the sheer volume of wheat they receive, which comes not just from within the Pacific Northwest, but from states as far afield as Kansas and Nebraska, to name a couple. Working from tender specifications of individual countries, the exporters assemble cargoes while cleaning and further blending takes place to meet precise thresholds.

Keep in mind that as wheat is loaded on vessels, the law requires inspection by the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) to certify the grain meets the quality standards specified in the customer's contract. FGIS is responsible for establishing standards for quality assessments and managing grain inspection and grading. The U.S. is the only wheat exporter in the world with an independent, neutral grain inspection system.

The transportation system is another fundamental link to our customers' tables. Trucks, trains, barges and ocean-going vessels are integral parts of the wheat supply chain. According to USW, the U.S. grain handling system in marketing year 2018/19 moved about 56 percent of annual wheat exports through ports in Oregon and Washington; about 31 percent through ports in Louisiana and the Texas Gulf; about 9 percent from the "interior," mainly via direct rail from the Plains to Mexican buyers; and 4 percent through the Great Lakes.

It should be mentioned that more than 90 percent of Pacific Northwest wheat is exported. About 56 percent comes to port from truck/barge, while 44 percent is shipped by rail. Because both river and rail transportation is available, the cost of freight movement in the region remains lower than in most parts of the country.

Rather than a link, it might be more appropriate to call the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) the lubricant that helps the system run smoothly. That's because the WGC labors on behalf of the entire grain chain. From research to marketing to solving transportation problems and anticipating customer needs, the WGC ultimately works for the farmers who support the organization.

Country elevators, transportation and exporters are all parts of an intertwined whole as the WGC completes its mission. I urge you to examine the WGC budget line by line. You can find it at wagrain.org, under "About WGC," then "Budget" from the dropdown menu. Look line by line at the value the combined assessments of farmers and landlords working together provide to the industry. There you can see numerous examples of the grease the WGC applies to assist the supply chain.

I opened this column by pointing out how the U.S. provides the highest quality wheat for every customer's needs, backed by transparent pricing, trusted third-party certification and unmatched service before and after the sale. This is the result of a very successful supply chain, a wheat store that never closes and organizations like the WGC that work constantly to provide customers value for the grain they buy. ■

Inspired to help by hard work and a hero

Editor's note: This is the seventh in a series of posts profiling U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) technical experts in flour milling and wheat foods production. USW Vice President of Global Technical Services Mark Fowler says technical support to overseas customers is an essential part of export market development for U.S. wheat. "Our customers must constantly improve their products in an increasingly competitive environment. We can help them compete by demonstrating the advantages of using the right U.S. wheat class or blend of classes to produce the wide variety of wheat-based foods the world's consumers demand," Fowler says.

By Steve Mercer
USW Vice President of Communications

Where and who we come from makes so much difference in each life. For Dr. Ting Liu, the skills she observed in her family as an only child in southeastern China's Zhejiang province led directly to a doctorate degree in food science and her position as technical specialist with U.S. Wheat Associates (USW).

"I grew up with parents who produced and sold all kinds of furniture in our town, so they showed me how to stay in harmony with customers," Dr. Liu said. "My love of food started as I watched my grandmother form dough for the many different Chinese wheat foods she made and sometimes helped me make."

Filled with the traditions of her grandmother's baking and a focus on schoolwork, Dr. Liu earned a spot in the Food Science and Engineering program at Zhejiang Gongshang University. Learning professional skills and participating in efforts to develop new products, including nutritious drinks and snacks as she earned her bachelor's degree, helped convince her that she should focus on food research and development.

"In order to build more food knowledge, improve my competitiveness and broaden my horizons, I decided



Name: Ting Liu, Ph.D.

Title: Technical Specialist

Office: USW China, Hong Kong Region, Beijing Office

Providing Service to: People's Republic of China

to do graduate study in food science abroad," Dr. Liu said.

U.S. connections

Dr. Liu chose the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities because it served a large agricultural state that was home to the headquarters of many large-sized food companies, such as Cargill and General Mills. Ultimately, the connections she made there helped lay the foundation of her work today representing U.S. wheat farmers in China.

"I decided to do my post-graduate research on whole wheat products because of my childhood memories and my understanding of the health benefits of whole grains," Dr. Liu recalled. "That is how I met a very important advisor in my life, Dr. Len Marquart. Under his guidance during my doctoral study, I improved my English writing and communication skills, my abil-

ity to think independently, solve problems and how to develop professional networks of influential people. He also made it possible for me to do my research as a visiting scholar at the Wheat Marketing Center (WMC) in Portland, Ore., from June 2014 to January 2016."

Dr. Liu's work at the WMC was productive and transformative. Working with Dr. Marquart and former WMC Technical Director Dr. Gary Hou, she completed three research projects on improving the quality of whole wheat tortillas using different particle sizes of flour milled from U.S. hard red winter (HRW), hard red spring (HRS) and hard white wheat, sprouted whole wheat flour and a chemical leavening system.

Through this research, Dr. Liu published six peer-reviewed technical papers and one book chapter in English on whole wheat products. She presented research results at the annual meetings of the American Association of Cereal Chemists (AACC) International and the Institute of Food Technologists. She was also actively involved in

the AACC International Milling and Baking Division.

Dr. Liu said working at the WMC exposed her to flour milling and wheat and flour quality analysis. She also helped prepare short courses and workshops on wheat products, prepared a range of wheat food products and completed a research project on pan bread with added whey permeate. Much of that work was done under WMC's educational partnership with USW.

Understanding the mission

"One of my favorite things about working at the WMC was helping host teams of wheat growers and students from all over the U.S., as well as U.S. wheat customers from all over the world," Dr. Liu said. "In 2015, I had the chance to meet the people working with USW in China when they brought three teams to the WMC for different programs. This helped me better understand the USW mission and ignited my interest in joining the USW team in China."

Fortunately, as Dr. Liu completed her doctorate program in August 2016, a technical position was available in the USW Beijing office.

"Dr. Marquart believed that I would be well suited to a job serving as a liaison between U.S. farmers, their wheat and the milling and wheat food industries in China," Dr. Liu recalled. "During my job interview, USW Regional Vice President Jeff Coey told me the greatest asset of USW lies in its people who are truly good at what they do; are eager to share their knowledge with their teammates and customers; and tend to devote many years to the organization. I took the job as technical specialist without hesitation."

"Ting already had a keen understanding of our mission from her work at the WMC, and it was



Dr. Ting Liu as a child with her grandmother.

apparent right away that she would bring a tremendous value to our team and to our customers in China," Coey said.

The need for additional classes of wheat in China was increasing as Dr. Liu was settling into her new position with USW in September 2016. According to *IBIS World Industry Report*, China's bread and bakery product manufacturing industry grew rapidly at an annualized rate of 6.6 percent between 2013 and 2018. And, until the government implemented retaliatory tariffs in March 2018, China was importing an annual average of 1.6 million metric tons of U.S. HRS, soft white and HRW.

With that growth comes an opportunity for USW and Dr. Liu. USW continues to have a strong working relationship with the leaders and faculty at the Sino-American Baking School in Guangzhou and baking consultants to help China's flour millers and wheat food processors better understand how to best utilize the characteristics of U.S. wheat classes to help grow their businesses. Under the guidance of Coey and USW Country Director Shirley Lu, Dr. Liu has taken on more and more of those responsibilities.

"Our team has great confidence in providing technical service that customers need to meet new consumer demand using U.S. wheat," Lu said. "Ting has the expertise, language ability, nice personality and high sense of responsibility that fit perfectly in the organization and our unique markets."

It is clear that customers in China consider Dr. Liu a valued addition to USW's service. They appreciate her undeniable professional credentials and achievements, but above all, they enjoy her sincere, friendly personality.

"Dr. Liu is very keen to use her professional expertise to solve practical problems in our technology research and development," said one general manager of a flour mill in Guangdong province. "We want to express our heartfelt thanks to her and to U.S. Wheat Associates."

Dr. Liu made a strong impression on the research and development manager at a very influential wheat buying and flour milling organization in China. She noted that Dr. Liu "takes the initiative to determine the technical needs of our company and provides cutting-edge information to solve problems and

help the company. She always teaches complex knowledge with concise language and a sweet voice."

Continuing education

In her own generous way, Dr. Liu said USW has made it possible for her to get the best training and exposure to real world milling and baking challenges as part of her work.

In 2018, USW sent Dr. Liu to a Baking Science and Technology course at AIB International in Manhattan, Kan., an intensive, 16-week program combining science, hands-on lab work and baking tradition. She represented herself and USW with distinction, earning top student honors and an "Excellence in Laboratory Leadership" award for her participation in the course.

"I was also able to assist in the USW Baking Science and Technology, Cookie & Cracker, Frozen Dough, and Advanced Prepared Mix courses developed by our Bakery Consultant Roy Chung at the UFM Baking School in Bangkok, Thailand," Dr. Liu said. "There is no doubt Mr. Roy is a master of baking and teaching and is very nice to share his technical service expertise and experience with me. Moreover, our Regional Technical Director Mr. Peter Lloyd has also provided tremendously valuable guidelines on troubleshooting and solving challenges in flour mills."

Dr. Liu's enthusiastic accounting of the training she has received and the wide range of technical support she provides, make it clear she loves the work she does on behalf of U.S. wheat farmers.

"By visiting and providing technical services to customers, we can better understand customer needs and reflect these requirements to U.S. wheat farmers," she



Dr. Ting Liu and her bread at the BST course at AIB International in 2018.

noted. "At the same time, we can enhance our customers' effective processing of U.S. wheat flour and how its functional attributes perform for the baker.

"In addition, the seminars and short courses I have conducted can help current and potential customers further understand the characteristics of U.S. wheat and flour; the flour milling process; testing methods; and ways to adjust formulas and processes according to flour specifications. This is of direct benefit to U.S. wheat growers by promoting their wheat to customers in international markets."

An excellent bridge

In fact, after one recent USW Crop Quality Seminar and a special technical session attended by top Chinese flour mills and food processors, a food company executive commended Dr. Liu's professional analysis and insight on the supply, quality and application of U.S. wheat classes.

"She was clear and confident in her presentations and is a knowledgeable expert. I believe she will be an excellent bridge between U.S. Wheat Associates and customers."

Even in the face of difficult political realities and complex commercial dynamics, customers in China continue to seek information and advice from USW.

"No customer is compelled to work with USW," Coey said. "The fact that they choose to accept our service and the products we promote is a testament to everyone on our team. Ting complements our ability to earn that trust, to understand the constraints and to grasp the opportunities in this market for U.S. wheat. She just has a naturally winning way of opening doors for us wherever she goes." ■



Dr. Ting Liu presenting at the 2017 Sino-Foreign Whole Grains Industry Development Experts Forum.

Reflecting on Phase One

TRADE DEAL, WORLD FEED GRAIN MARKETS HAVE HELPED INCREASE WHEAT SALES TO CHINA

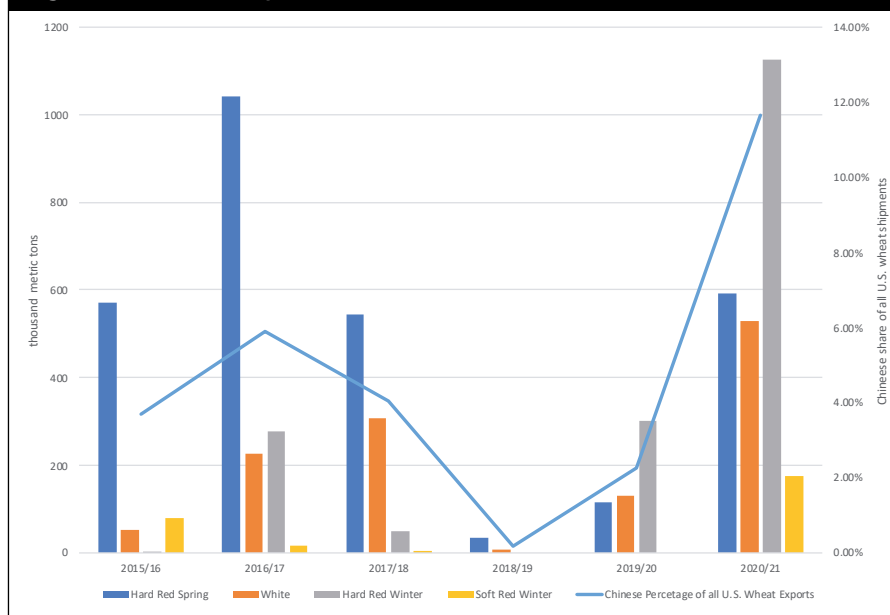
By T. Randall Fortenbery,
Professor and Thomas B. Mick
Endowed Chair, WSU School of
Economic Sciences

The Phase One trade deal between the U.S. and China has generally been seen as a major step forward after the trade friction between the world's two largest economies beginning in 2018. This is especially true for the U.S. agricultural sector given that exports of agricultural products to China had virtually dried up beginning the second half of 2018. In the 2018/19 wheat marketing year (June 1, 2018–May 31, 2019), for example, China effectively imported no U.S. wheat, after accounting for about 5.5 percent of total U.S. wheat exports in the 2016/17 marketing year, the last full marketing year before trade was disrupted (Figure 1).

The Phase One deal was signed Jan. 15, 2020, and went into effect Feb. 14, 2020. The deal is quite broad, but a centerpiece of the agreement committed China to purchase a total \$200 billion more in goods and services from the U.S. over two years (2020 and 2021) than they purchased in 2017.

The agreement allows for two different approaches to calculating the 2017 baseline, so there is some debate as to the actual purchase levels required. The first calculates the baseline using U.S.-generated export statistics, and the second uses Chinese-generated import statistics. Not surprisingly, the two sets of statistics do not match

Figure 1: Chinese imports of U.S. wheat



up, but regardless of which is used, the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) calculates that China only met between 58 to 59 percent of their total committed import volume in 2020.¹ They have done a bit better in 2021—through March, they had imported about 75 percent of their year-to-date target based on Chinese import statistics and about 61 percent based on U.S. export statistics.

The specific target for Chinese agricultural imports from the U.S. was an increase of between \$32 and \$36 billion over the 2017 baseline. This roughly translates into at least a \$12.5 billion increase over the baseline in 2020 and \$19.5 billion in 2021.² According to CARD at Iowa State University, China achieved about 74.8 percent of the target in 2020, but was closer to being on target for 2021 early in the year.³

A particularly bright spot for Pacific Northwest farmers has been a significant increase in Chinese wheat imports from the U.S. recently, particularly white wheat. Figure 1 shows the significant uptake in Chinese wheat imports from the U.S. compared to the years just prior to the trade disruption. While improvement across all classes of wheat imports is impressive, the increases in both white and hard red winter wheat relative to earlier levels is particularly noteworthy. Figure 2 (on the next page) shows the percentage of U.S. wheat exports accounted for by Chinese purchases in the 2016/17 marketing year compared to 2020/21 through the end of April each year (one month before the end of the marketing year—end-of-year data for 2020/21 was not avail-

¹US-China phase one tracker: China's purchases of US goods, Chad P. Brown, PIIE, April 27, 2021.

²China Briefing, Dorcas Wong, Melissa Cyrill and Zoey Zhang; Dezin Shira and Associates, March 2, 2020.

³China's Agricultural Imports under the Phase One Deal: Is Success Possible? Xi, Dermot J. Hayes and Wendong Zhang, CARD, Iowa State University, February 2021.

Figure 2: U.S. wheat exports (through April 30 each year)

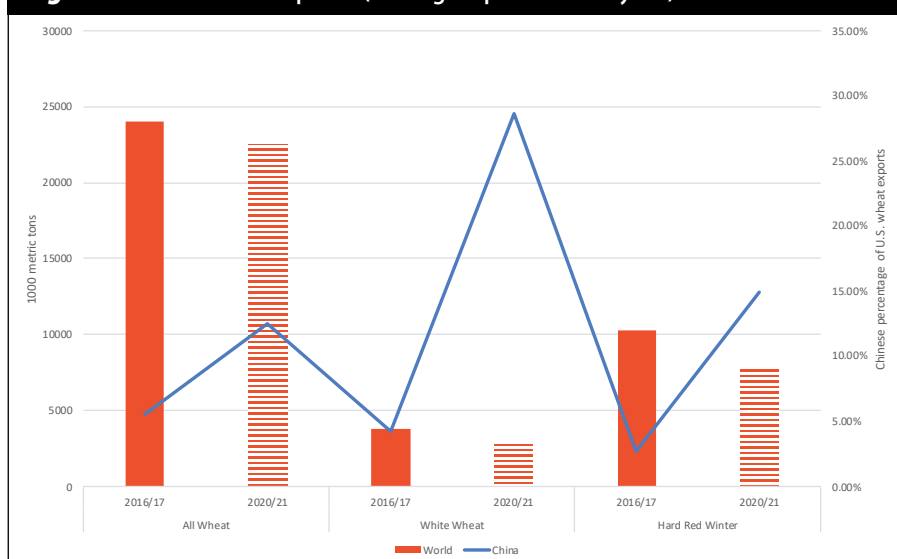
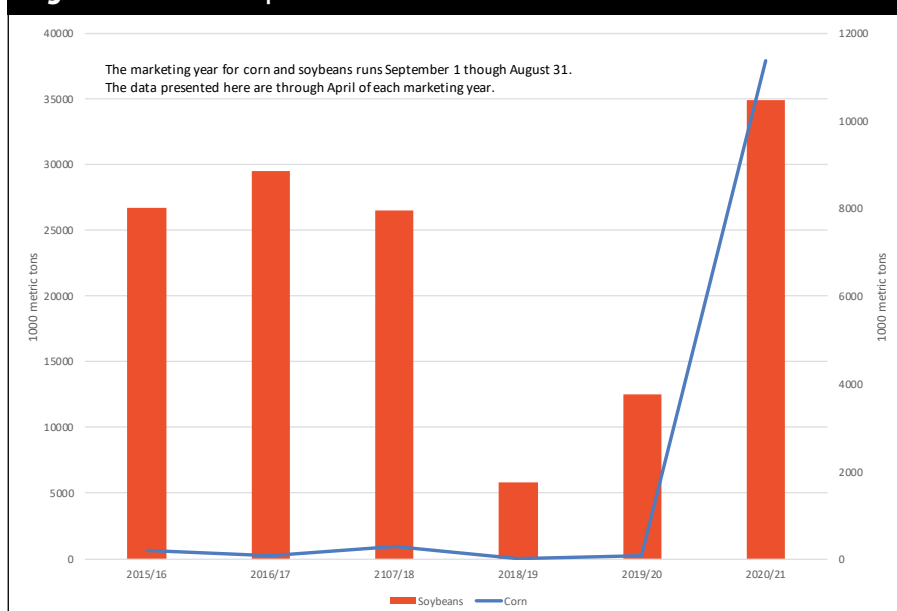


Figure 3: Chinese imports from the U.S.



able at the time of this writing). Based on current estimates, total U.S. wheat exports for the 2020/21 marketing year were off about 6 percent compared to 2016/17 (the last full marketing year before trade disruptions). However, U.S. wheat exports to China were up 113 percent in 2020/21 compared to 2016/17. This includes a 318 percent increase in white wheat imports and a 319 percent increase in hard red winter wheat purchases.

The Phase One agreement has been a critical component in the increase in Chinese wheat purchases from the U.S., but current world feed grain markets have also contributed to Chinese demand for wheat. African Swine Fever was reported in China in August 2018, and within a year, the Chinese hog herd was officially reported to be down by more than 40 percent. Many market

analysts believe the official Chinese statistics significantly underestimated the actual size of herd reduction, and the total reduction is closer to 50 percent.⁴ China had the largest swine herd in the world going into the crisis, and pork was the favored meat among Chinese consumers. In fact, the Chinese exhibit the largest per capita consumption of pork in the world.

According to the American Farm Bureau, the disease is still prevalent in some parts of China.⁵ Despite this, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is currently projecting a 14 percent increase in China's pork production in 2021, as well as smaller increases in both beef and poultry production. The result has been a significant increase in Chinese imports of feed grains and plant protein this past year. Much of the import volume has come from the U.S. (Figure 3). However, a smaller-than-expected U.S. corn crop last fall, coupled with a worldwide increase in feed grain demand, has resulted in a significant increase in global corn prices over the last several months. The result has been an increase in global wheat use as a feed grain, including in China. This likely explains the soft red wheat exports to China this year (Figure 1). Corn prices in China have exceeded wheat prices since the beginning of 2021, and corn is currently 10 to 12 percent more expensive than wheat. This, in turn, has led to an increase in wheat feeding and has contributed to the U.S. wheat price improvement experienced over the last several months.

Looking forward, we can think about current wheat trade with China in two ways. On the positive side, if the Phase One deal

⁴African Swine Fever Shrinks Pork Production in China, Swells Demand for Imported Pork, Mildred Haley and Fred Gale, Amber Waves, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, February 3, 2020.

⁵African Swine Fever in China Increasing Uncertainty of 2021 Production, Michael Nepveux, March Intel, U. S. Farm Bureau, March 18, 2021.

is honored and the trade war is behind us, we will continue to experience good demand for wheat from China. However, it is unlikely that the demand for wheat as a feed grain will persist unless other grains continue to be priced at a premium to wheat. Thus, total Chinese demand for U.S. wheat, and specifically soft red winter wheat, may dissipate a bit going into next year's corn harvest. Even so, USDA is currently projecting China to account for a growing share of U.S. wheat exports in coming years.

Figure 4 shows the current USDA estimate of total world wheat trade and the Chinese portions of both world exports and imports through the 2029/30 marketing year.⁶ According to the projection, world wheat trade will grow over the next decade. Chinese exports of wheat are expected to remain quite low at about .8 percent of total trade, but imports of wheat by China are expected to grow—from about 1.8 percent of total world trade in 2019/20 to 2.1 percent in 2029/30. This translates into a 17 percent increase in the Chinese market share of total world wheat imports.

The USDA's long-term baseline forecasts an increase in the absolute volume of wheat exports from the U.S. over the next decade, but a decline in the total world market share of U.S. exports. The decline mostly comes at the expense of market share increases on the part of Russia and the EU, and as a result, U.S. growth in wheat exports flattens the last few years of the next decade. The U.S. share of total world wheat exports is expected to fall from about 14.7 percent in 2018/19 to 12.3 percent in 2029/30. However, U.S. wheat trade with China is expected to grow significantly over this same period.

Figure 4: World wheat trade

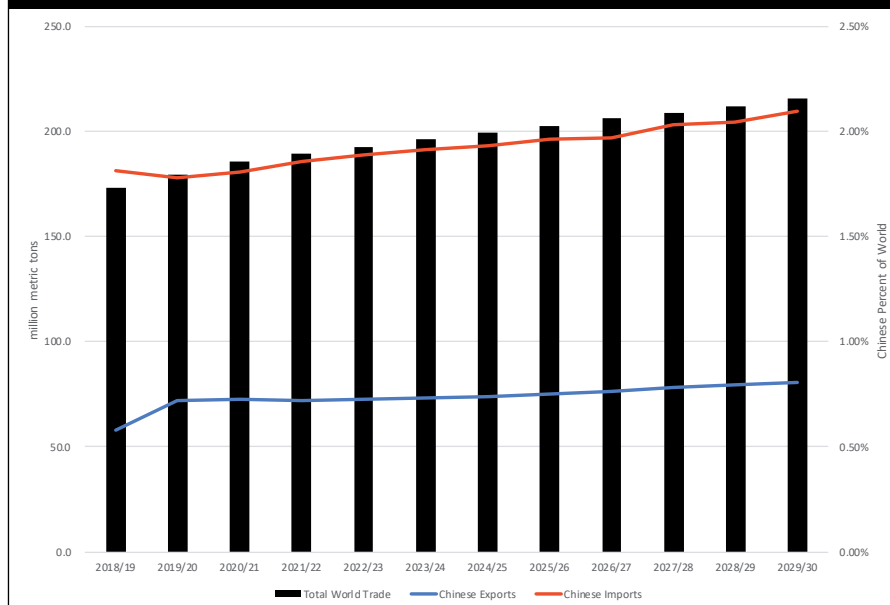


Figure 5: U.S.-Chinese wheat trade

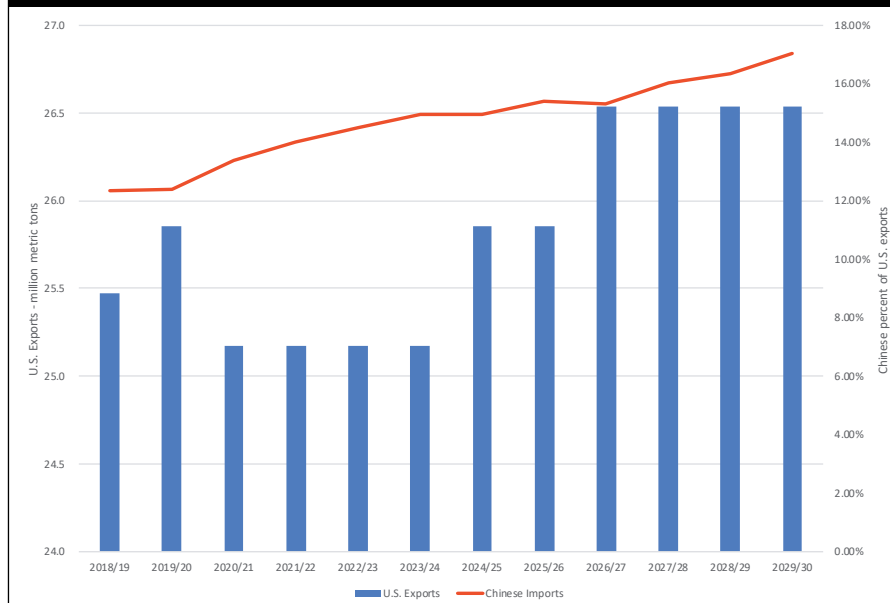


Figure 5 shows the USDA projection for future U.S. wheat trade with China. The percentage of total U.S. wheat exports captured by China is expected to grow over the next 10 years, and by 2029/30, account for more than 17 percent of U.S. wheat trade. This compares to less than 6 percent prior to the 2018/19 trade disruption.

Most all the future growth in Chinese wheat trade is expected to come from quality varieties, not wheat for livestock feed. This is good news for Pacific Northwest producers because it will lead to increased diversification among important white wheat customers, and if realized, can help stabilize markets going forward. ■

⁶International Baseline Data, Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, May 10, 2021. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/international-baseline-data/international-baseline-data/#2021%20International%20Long-Term%20Projections%20to%202030>

WSU to host in-person field days

By Clark Neely

After careful consideration, the Extension Cereal Variety Testing Program at Washington State University (WSU) is pleased to announce it is planning to host in-person field days this year at select locations around Eastern Washington. We know that many growers and industry representatives are eager to resume in-person events, and we believe that we can safely conduct these events if adhering to current COVID-19 health guidelines.

Potential attendees are encouraged to check on government guidelines and the current phase each county is in at the time of their respective field day. You can find out what your county phase is by visiting coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/county-status-and-safe-start-application-process. Current guidelines for each phase (coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/safe-start/whats-open) indicate field days can occur if in Phase II or Phase III, but will be cancelled if downgraded to Phase I.

To comply with Washington state requirements, participants are asked to adhere to current CDC guidelines while attending a WSU field day, including mask wearing and social distancing if required. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own masks, but disposable masks and hand sanitizer will be provided at each event.

WSU is responsible for and hosting educational events

at the field variety trials themselves. Any activities associated with and conducted before or after the in-field event is up to the sponsor and/or the county association, and attendees should reach out to them for additional information on those arrangements.

For those unable to attend this year, WSU will again be producing virtual field days at four sites: Ritzville, Reardan, Walla Walla/Dayton and Farmington. The variety trial portion will be recorded as Dr. Neely walks through the plots with growers, while additional topics and researchers will be recorded at other locations and times and compiled into playlists for each virtual field day and posted on to the CAHNRS YouTube Channel at youtube.com/user/WSUCAHNRS/playlists. These virtual field days will include WSU and U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists in plant breeding, plant pathology, weed science, agronomy and soil fertility. Expect these to be posted up to 10 days after the event to allow for video editing.

Please check with the contact listed prior to the tour to verify the time, location and agenda or reach out to your local county wheat growers association or other co-sponsor. Location maps for the WSU Cereal Variety Trials are available at smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety. We would like to thank the wheat growers and the Washington Grain Commission for funding to support the trials and tours, and we look forward to seeing you in the field! ■



2021 WSU Variety Testing Program PNW Crop Tour Schedule

The 2021 crop tour season will soon be starting and provides opportunities to view field trials and interact with Washington State University personnel. WSU is committed to providing a quality experience for stakeholders this year, while still complying with current CDC guidelines. The list below provides an outline of when each small grain variety tour will be offered in Washington.

Please check with the contact listed prior to the tour to verify the time, location, and agenda or reach out to your local county wheat growers association or other co-sponsor. Location maps for the WSU Cereal Variety Trials are available online at <http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety>. We would like to thank the wheat growers and Washington Grain Commission for funding to support the trials and tours, and we look forward to seeing you in the field!

– Clark Neely, WSU Cereal Variety Testing

<u>Date</u>	<u>Tour</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Contact</u>
3-Jun	Horse Heaven	10:00 AM	Clark Neely, 814-571-5628
3-Jun	Connell	3:00 PM	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
9-Jun	Ritzville	3:00 PM	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
16-Jun	Moses Lake	8:30 AM	Sarah Smith, 509-754-2011x4363
16-Jun	Harrington	1:00 PM	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
17-Jun	Fairfield	8:00 AM	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
22-Jun	Reardan	8:00 AM	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
22-Jun	Creston	12:00 PM	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
22-Jun	Almira	3:00 PM	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
24-Jun	Dayton	8:00 AM	Clark Neely, 814-571-5628
24-Jun	Walla Walla**	1:00 PM	Clark Neely, 814-571-5628
25-Jun	Eureka**	3:00 PM	Clark Neely, 814-571-5628
28-Jun	St. John	10:00 AM	Steve Van Vleet, 509-397-6290
28-Jun	Lamont	2:00 PM	Steve Van Vleet, 509-397-6290
29-30-Jun	Wilke Farm Field Day	TBD	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
30-Jun	Mayview	10:00 AM	Mark Heitstuman, 509-243-2009
30-Jun	Anatone	3:30 PM	Mark Heitstuman, 509-243-2009
1-Jul	Farmington	1:00 PM	Steve Van Vleet, 509-397-6290
8-Jul	Bickleton (TBD)	1:00 PM	Hannah Brause 509-773-5817

**Cooperative tours with Northwest Grain Growers

<http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety>



Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication or program information or reasonable accommodation need to contact the coordination person listed under Contact above at the telephone number listed at least two weeks prior to the event. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Wheat ends marketing year on a high



By T. Randall Fortenbery

The 2020/21 wheat marketing year (June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021) ended with the highest wheat prices since the 2012/13 marketing year (Figure 1). Like 2012/13, the wheat market not only responded to its own fundamentals, but was also influenced by a strong U.S. corn market. The domestic corn market, in turn, has been impacted by strong global feed demand, particularly in China. This is a bit different than the situation back in 2012/13—the corn market in the summer of 2012 was driven by drought fears, and the higher corn prices supported wheat prices as wheat became viable as a livestock feed. This year, the corn market is driven more by the demand side of the balance sheet, but there has still been spillover support to the wheat market.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) May 2021 World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE), U.S. corn exports for the 2020/21 marketing year will be up about 36 percent compared to a year earlier (the corn marketing year runs from Sept. 1 through Aug. 31; we are about 75 percent of the way through the marketing year). Through the first weeks of May, however, U.S. corn exports are up about 78 percent year over year (Figure 2). The current USDA forecast calls for a reduction in total U.S. corn exports for the 2021/22 marketing year, but USDA still expects the average U.S. farm price for corn to be about \$5.70 per bushel in 2021/22, compared to \$4.35 for the 2020/21 marketing year.

USDA has also forecast a significant improvement in farm level wheat prices. They currently project prices for the 2021/22 wheat marketing year to average \$6.50 per bushel, compared to an estimated average of \$5.05 for 2020/21.

The large price increase comes despite an anticipated reduction of about 65 million bushels in U.S. wheat exports this year. However, the export reduction is more than offset by a 70 million bushel increase in the wheat feed and residual category. This suggests that the current wheat price estimate is being partially supported by corn prices as wheat is again an attractive feed grain.

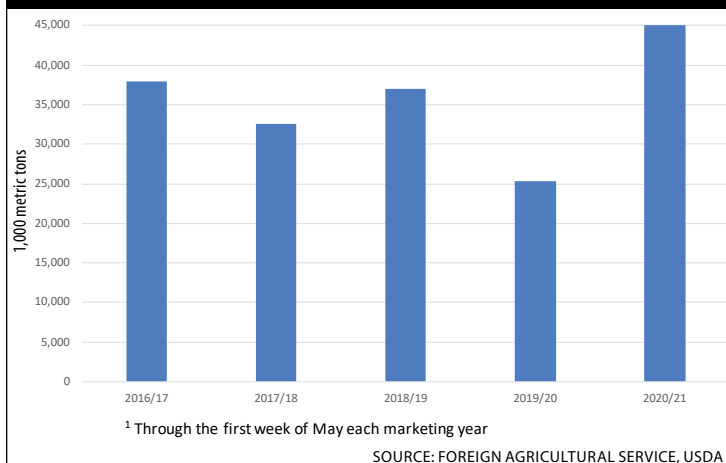
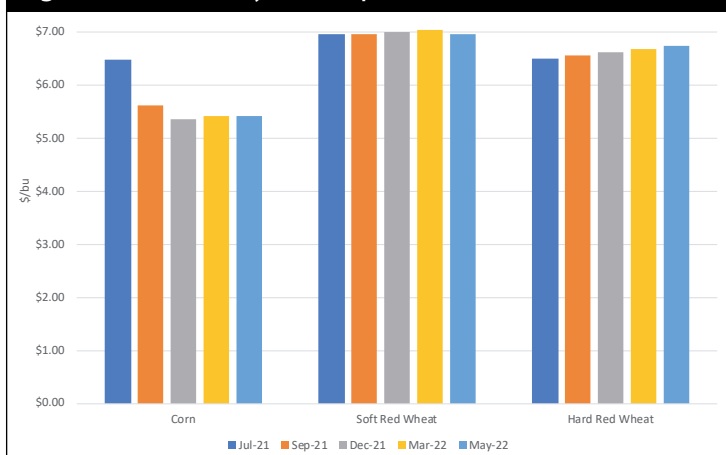
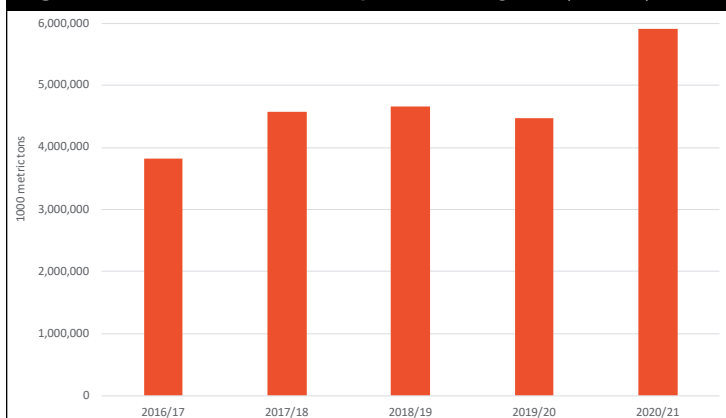
Looking forward, the futures market for corn suggests lower prices going into the 2021/22 marketing year despite USDA's optimism concerning average farm level prices. Figure 3 shows both corn and wheat futures prices for the coming months (prices were reported on May 17, 2021). In general, the soft red wheat prices are flat going forward, while hard red shows some improvement. Corn prices, on the other hand, are more than \$1 per bushel lower in later months compared to prices for this summer. As a result, hard red winter wheat prices go from being about equal to corn prices this summer to a premium of \$1.30 per bushel by the time we get to next May.

The lower corn prices traded for next winter and spring come even as world trade of corn is expected to improve in 2021/22. The May WASDE forecasts total world imports of corn to be 189 million metric tons in 2021/22, compared to 168 million in 2019/2020 and 184 million this marketing year. China is expected to increase its market share of world corn imports from about 5 percent in 2019/20 to 14 percent in 2021/22.

The divergence in corn and wheat

Figure 1: Nearby corn and soft red wheat futures prices¹



Figure 2: U.S. corn exports¹**Figure 3: Commodity futures prices****Figure 4: U.S. white wheat exports (through May each year)**

prices later in the 2021/22 marketing year suggests corn market activity may become less influential in determining wheat prices going forward. However, if corn prices fall to a point that USDA revises the feed and residual category for wheat down in later months, that would be a price negative change.

A significant positive for wheat is USDA's current projection

that imports of wheat worldwide will increase in 2021/22 compared to earlier marketing years. Total imports are expected to exceed imports in 2019/20 by about 6 percent and improve over last year about 3 percent. In addition, China's market share of total global imports is expected to grow from about 3 percent in 2019/20 to 5 percent this year.

In 2020/21, world ending stocks of wheat fell for only the second time in nine years, and while not projected to fall again in 2021/22, they are also not expected to increase significantly. Thus, world demand is expected to increase enough this year to offset any increase in world production for 2021/22, and that should help support prices. Any production problems among major wheat exporters and the year-over-year carryout could fall again in 2021/22.

U.S. wheat exports have done well to date, but in the May WASDE, USDA reduced its total export projection for 2020/21 from 985 million bushels to 965 million. This matches the export volume from the 2019/20 marketing year.

In contrast to the reduction in the total U.S. wheat export estimate for 2020/21, white wheat exports have been quite good relative to previous years. Through the first week of May 2021, U.S. white wheat exports were running about 32 percent above year ago levels and a whopping 55 percent above the 2016/17 marketing year pace (the last full marketing year before the imposition of trade restrictions between the U.S. and many of its trading partners). Figure 4 shows U.S. white wheat exports through early May for the last five marketing years.

There is significant optimism moving into the new marketing year concerning wheat prices and an outlook for continued strength. This comes not only from the robust demand currently being experienced, but also concerns about growing conditions over the summer. There are serious drought regions across the entire western half of the U.S.

Despite the optimism, it may still be time to consider pricing at least some of your 2021 harvest if you have not already done so. We will continue to see substantial price volatility going forward, and even though a case can be made for continued price appreciation, it does make me a bit nervous to see significantly lower corn prices in the winter months while wheat prices remain unchanged. ■

Randy Fortenbery holds the Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Grain Economics at Washington State University. He received his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign.



The necessity of farmers

As country shutdown, agriculture kept going

By Julia Klein
Wheat Ambassador

As COVID-19 shut down businesses, restaurants and, frankly, our entire nation, I had a front-row seat watching as the farmers continued working and tending to their crops. COVID-19 has helped further my perspective of farming to better understand the entirety of the job and how necessary farmers are for our country and the entire world.

Prior to COVID-19, I helped work harvest on my family's dryland wheat farm for several summers. I started out driving the grain cart and moved up to driving combine. Last summer, my dad, Jake Klein, needed another truck driver so I filled the position and quickly realized I love driving a semitruck. I enjoy the social interaction with different people at the local elevators and Ritzville Warehouse's Templin Terminal.

When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, I spent my time in quarantine helping in the shop office on our farm. I worked with my grandpa, Bob Walli, learning how to pay bills, reconcile accounts and financially manage the farm's business structure. Before working in the shop office, I was mainly only exposed to field work and manual labor. Spending the spring months in the office allowed me to



better understand the business side of operating a farm. I didn't realize the complexity or the amount of paperwork, bills and office work that successful farming requires from my dad and other producers. I couldn't get over the amount of bills we had to pay for fertilizer, herbicides, employment, equipment, taxes and other miscellaneous expenses.

My dad always explained, "A lot of money comes in, a lot of money goes out, and you just hope to make it out on top to provide for your family and continue farming another year." Farmers have to be exceptional in managing their finances, because they get one harvest or one payday a year, and they have to ensure that gets them to the next harvest.

Working in the office not only helped me better understand the business side of operating a family farm, but through the global pandemic, I also realized how crucial farmers are for our world. When COVID-19 first spread through the U.S., I watched as everything shut down, but the producers in my agricultural community continued to work diligently. Even when the entire country was placed under a nationwide quarantine, there were still 7.8 billion people depending on U.S. farmers.

One of my favorite agriculture quotes by Paul Harvey is, "And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker.' So God made a

*"In every conceivable
manner, the family is
link to our past, bridge
to our future."*

—Alex Haley



At the corner of Olsen Hills Road and Level Road N in Lincoln County.

farmer." Farmers take care of the land and supply food to the entire world so that people have the opportunity and flexibility to achieve new heights in other careers such as engineering, medicine and the arts. Farmers are crucial "caretakers," and they tend to the land and animals that God has provided. Being more involved on the farm and living through the changes that came with COVID-19 made me realize just how essential producers are for our society. When it comes down to global pandemics, farmers are necessary for survival.

As the next generation, I am equipped to use my experience and knowledge from being raised on a farm to educate those around me about agriculture. Throughout this past year doing Running Start online, I have had the opportunity to work at Jen's Java Junction, our local coffee stand, in Ritzville, Wash. I have had several curious free-way customers ask, "Do you live here? What's it like growing up in a small town?" When people ask these questions, it opens the door for me to share what it's like growing up in a small agricultural community. It amazes me that some people don't know what a combine is or where their food comes from. This is all the more reason for me to share my agricultural experience and the importance of our farmers.

As I go off to college this fall at Southern Nazarene University in Oklahoma, I will be sure to continue sharing my experience and background as a farmer's daughter. I will not forget to share how farmers are hard workers that work long hours, with patience, faith, wisdom and diligence to raise crops and provide food security for others.

Throughout the past year, the pandemic has provoked several challenges and altered life as we know it, but I am grateful for the way it has broadened my perspective and understanding of farming. Producers not only manage countless hours of fieldwork, but also the business side

of operating a family farm. COVID-19 made me aware of how farmers can be taken for granted or forgotten, when in reality, billions of people depend on them. As a wheat ambassador and an individual who cares about agriculture, I will continue to talk about the industry and people who are essential to feeding the world. ■

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(509) 659-1987

2021 TRI-STATE Grain Growers Convention



Watch for additional event highlights at
www.wawg.org/convention

2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention



Sara Wyant

As a veteran farm policy reporter, she is recognized on Capitol Hill, as well as with farm and commodity associations across the country. The newsletter and website she founded, Agri-Pulse, include the latest updates on farm policy, commodity and conservation programs, trade, food safety, rural development, and environmental and regulatory programs.



Eric Snodgrass

Principal Atmospheric Scientist for Nutrien Ag Solutions, where he develops predictive, analytical software to help agricultural producers manage weather risk. His frequent weather updates focus on how high-impact weather events influence global agriculture productivity.



Steve Miller

Recognized throughout Idaho as an ag event emcee, he was born and raised on a farming/ranching operation in North Dakota. While retired from the animal health pharmaceutical industry, Steve has remained closely tied to the ag community and his rural roots. He currently resides in Middleton, Idaho, with his wife. He is a father to 3 and grandfather to 7.

November 30-December 3, 2021 • The Davenport Grand Hotel, Spokane, Wash.

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Shriners' pediatric work supported by cropland

By Trista Crossley

For most people, mention of the Shriners brings to mind children's hospitals or men riding miniature vehicles in local parades.

What many don't realize is that the philanthropic arm of Shriners International, the Shriners Hospitals for Children, owns approximately 61,000 acres of farmland across the country—including nearly 20,000 acres in Washington state—that it leases out to help fund specialized pediatric care, research and education. Most of the properties are donated to the organization through members' wills or as estate gifts, although it has occasionally purchased property that fits within its portfolio, said Mel Bower, chief communications and marketing officer for Shriners International and Shriners Hospitals for Children.

"We have signs on all of our farms that say it's for the benefit of the Shriners Hospitals for Children," Bower said. "We wanted a way to share our mission. We are very proud of those gifts and are thankful for the donors. It's another way for us to say thanks."

Shriners International is headquartered in Tampa, Fla.

The first Shriners temple (chapter) was established in the U.S. in 1872 by a group of Masons who were looking to start a new fraternity centered on fun and fellowship. By the early 1900s, the organization was growing rapidly,

and members were looking to establish an official charity. In 1921, a proposal to establish a network of children's hospitals was approved, with the first hospital opening in Shreveport, La., in 1922. Today, according to its website, Shriners International has nearly 200 temples in several countries with hundreds of thousands of members. There are 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children facilities in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, including one in Spokane.

Bower said the Shriners has always been a forward-thinking organization in terms of stewardship.

"As we began to look at what to do with these types of gifts (farmland), it became apparent that the better stewardship choice was to maintain the farm, leave it workable, generate income and maintain it as an asset," he explained. "A lot of organizations, when they receive an asset, they value its worth to be sold. An organization like us, dependent on donations, could use a gift in a much more sophisticated fashion."

The Shriners Hospitals for Children isn't usually involved in the oversight of its farmland properties, instead, preferring to work through a management company. In most situations, the land is already being farmed, and Bower said depending on geography and the way in which the gift was set up, the organization tends to continue with the arrangements that are already in place. In Eastern Washington, most of its properties are operated



PHOTO COURTESY OF FARMLAND COMPANY

under a crop share agreement.

"In every way, we attempt to maintain the best way to be a steward to that gift," Bower said.

None of the money earned from the farmland or other assets donated to the Shriners Hospitals for Children is used for the benefit of the fraternity—Shriners International—Bower said. The money isn't kept locally, but instead goes into a central budget and is then allocated to hospitals as needed.

All sorts of crops are grown on Shriners Hospitals for Children farmland, from traditional crops in the Midwest such as corn and soybeans, to timber. In Eastern Washington, the crops grown include wheat, canola, peas and garbanzos. Fun fact: the organization owns the largest lettuce farm in the state of California.

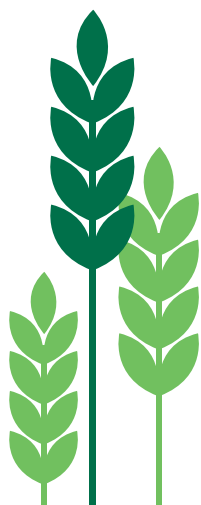
"That's something you wouldn't naturally attribute to us," Bower said.

For information on Shriners International and Shriners Hospitals for Children, visit shrinersinternational.org. ■

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Farm tax issues farmers should be aware of

By Todd King, CPA
Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S.

What a year! As I attempt to dig my way out of tax season and reflect, the changes that have occurred this past year are mind boggling. Some of the changes proposed at this time seem far-fetched, but based on what has happened in the past year, anything may be possible. Here's a brief overview of some timely topics that may be helpful.

Overtime rules for ag

Washington state is well on the way to throwing out the overtime exemption for agriculture labor that is nearly six decades old. New legislation will require overtime rates on hours in excess of 55 hours per week in 2022 and phase down to 40 hours per week by the year 2024. The impact of this change will be huge to high labor agriculture sectors like orchards and dairies.

Capital gain rates

The taxation of capital gains is seeing considerable attention at both



the federal and state level. It is safe to say that capital gain rates will likely go up at the federal level. Original proposals would increase rates as much as twice that of current rates on high income individuals. Washington state is pursuing a capital gains tax of 7 percent. At this time, speculating on the details of these taxes makes no sense. I urge taxpayers to keep an eye on changes as there may be some opportunity in planning for anticipated capital gains in the future.

Estate tax

The current \$11.7 million exemption for federal estate taxes will likely be lowered. Biden's proposal is at \$3.5 million. Amounts above this exemption could see a 45 percent tax on the excess. The state of Washington is also working at taking a larger bite out of estates. Today's large (\$11.7 million) federal exemption has caused many farmers to lose focus on estate planning concerns. If these proposals become the law, many farmers will now be in a position of having taxable estates. Having a taxable estate means writing a check for federal estate tax upon death. Farmers should keep up with any changes in the estate area. There may be opportunity between now and the new legislation to better position your estate for the future. If you have a large estate, now is the time to address the issue.

Employee Retention Credit (ERC)

The ERC provides a real opportunity for many farmers. Farmers with employees should take time to understand the program, and how it may benefit their operation. The ERC is a refundable credit of 70 percent of wages, up to \$10,000

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per quarter, per employee. That is a credit of \$7,000 per quarter or up to \$28,000 per employee per year. It is easy to see that employers with multiple employees could generate large credit amounts.

For farmers to qualify, they need to have a gross income in a 2021 calendar quarter that is 20 percent less than the income in the same quarter of 2019. Please note, we are comparing 2021 income levels to 2019 amounts. The law also allows the taxpayer to elect to use the prior quarter instead of the current quarter in calculating the decrease. With that being said, if you qualify in the first quarter of 2021, you will also qualify for the second quarter. If the farm again qualifies in the third quarter, this could then make the farm eligible for both the third and fourth quarters. Generally speaking, farmers do not sell their crops at the same time from year to year. This inconsistent sale of crops allows many farmers to qualify for the ERC credit when applying the 20 percent decrease income test.

Farmers that received PPP loans should note that wages paid with PPP funds cannot also be used for the ERC credit. This limitation requires thought on where you apply PPP funds. Properly utilizing PPP funds will limit the need for PPP loans to be repaid, and at the same time, maximizing the ERC credit. The ERC credit and PPP loans

have potential to be very beneficial to farmers. The ERC program has many specifics that are beyond the scope of this brief introduction. The team at Leffel, Otis & Warwick is very familiar with this program and its application to farmers. Please give us a call if you need assistance or have questions regarding this program. ■

Todd King, CPA, is the president of Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S., and works out of the firm's Odessa office. He can be reached at (509) 982-2922 or by email at tking@lefflotiswarwick.com. Todd has advised clients on business and tax issues since 1984. For more information, please visit lefflotiswarwick.com.



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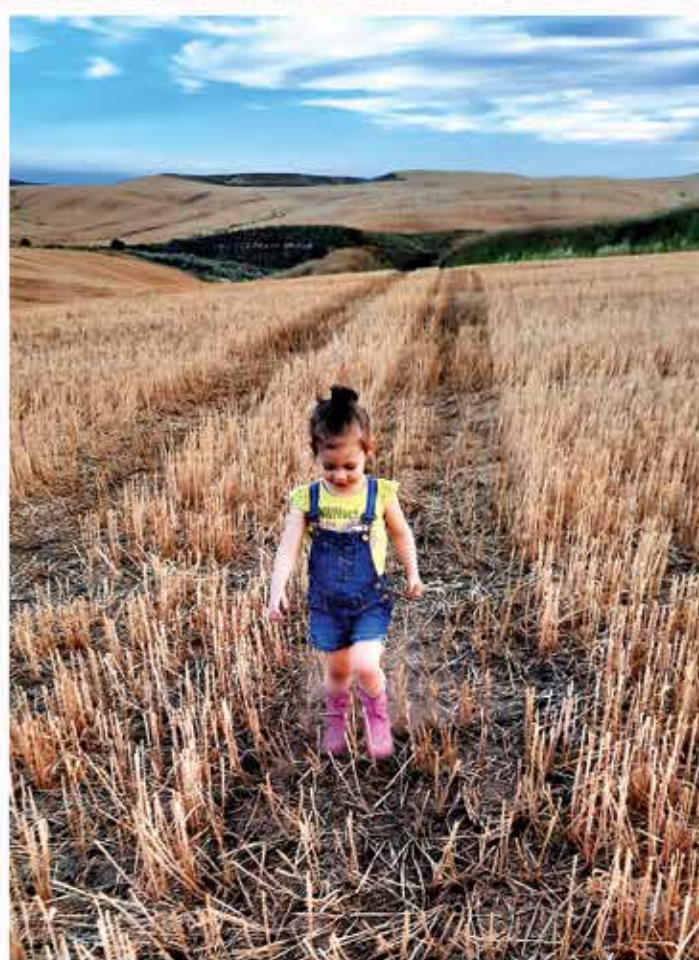
Meredith (17) and Miles Mittelstaedt (20 and a junior at WSU) taking a harvest break in front of our "Cougar Cart" in Douglas.
Photo by Susan Mittelstaedt.



Jacob Heitstuman watching his daddy, Brian Heitstuman, during some early morning equipment moving near Pomeroy.
Photo by Stephanie Heitstuman.



KHEM Farms' harvest outside Rosalia. Photo by Erin Lundt.



Out in Davenport at Kunz Farms, Michaela Goetz (2 1/2), was heading out in her favorite pink boots to see her dad, Nicholas Goetz, and get a ride in the combine. Photo by Natasha Goetz.



Dwan Jantz standing on the platform of her brother Scott's JD 9770 STS as he cuts her wheat field north of Wilbur. Photo by William Bell.

HAPPENINGS

The events listed here are being planned and scheduled in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines with the assumption that they will be able to occur. However, CDC guidelines and restrictions are continually evolving and changing, so please make sure to check the contact information prior to the event for updates. Please observe all social distancing and masking guidelines. All dates and times are subject to change. Please verify event before heading out.

JUNE 2021

3 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Horse Heaven, Wash., at 10 a.m. For information call Clark Neely at (814) 571-5628 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

3 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Connell, Wash., at 3 p.m. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

9 WHEAT COLLEGE. Presented by AMMO in cooperation with Washington State University Extension, this year's event will be held as a webinar. Extension researchers will present on managing herbicide resistance, stripe rust and Hessian fly in wheat production systems. Pesticide credits will be available. 9 to 11 a.m. Admittance is free of charge, but registration is required. For more information, visit wawg.org/ammo-workshops/ or email lori@wawg.org.

9 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Ritzville, Wash., at 3 p.m. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

12 FLAG DAY CELEBRATION. Parade, Jack & Jill softball game, petting zoo, beer garden, live music. Fairfield, Wash. fairfieldflagday.com

15-16 PNDSA CROPPING SYSTEMS SUMMER EXPO. Palouse Empire Fairgrounds, Colfax, Wash. Registration required. directseed.org/events

16 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Moses Lake, Wash., at 8:30 a.m. For info call Sarah Smith at (509) 754-2011x4363 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

16 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Harrington, Wash., at 1 p.m. For information

call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

17 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Fairfield, Wash., at 8 a.m. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

18-20 SLIPPERY GULCH DAYS. Tekoa, Wash. slipperygulch.com

18-21 ALL WHEELS WEEKEND. Car show, golf tournament, antique tractor show, live music, Friday night classic cruise, beer garden, golf tournament, kid zone and more! Dayton, Wash. allwheelsweekend.com/

19 SPRINT BOAT RACING. Reserved bleacher seating, track-side beer garden and a great atmosphere to watch fantastic racing in St. John, Wash. Fun for the entire family! Bring the lawn chairs, sunscreen and blankets. 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or until racing is finished. webbslough.com or (509)648-8900.

22 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Reardan, Wash., at 8 a.m. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

22 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Creston, Wash., at 12 p.m. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

22 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Almira, Wash., at 3 p.m. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

24 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Dayton, Wash., at 8 a.m. For information call Clark Neely at (814) 571-5628 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

24 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Walla Walla, Wash., at 1 p.m. Cooperative tour with Northwest Grain Growers. For information call Clark Neely at (814) 571-5628 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

25 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Eureka, Wash., at 3 p.m. Cooperative tour with Northwest Grain Growers. For information call Clark Neely at (814) 571-5628 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

28 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. St. John, Wash., at 10 a.m. For information

call Steve Van Vleet at (509) 397-6290 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

28 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Lamont, Wash., at 2 p.m. For information call Steve Van Vleet at (509) 397-6290 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

29-30 WILKE FARM FIELD DAY. Davenport, Wash., time TBD. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or wilkefarm.cahnrs.wsu.edu

30 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Mayview, Wash., at 10 a.m. For information call Mark Heitstuman at (509) 243-2009 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

30 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Anatone, Wash., at 3:30 p.m. For information call Mark Heitstuman at (509) 243-2009 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

JULY 2021

1 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Farmington, Wash., at 8 a.m. For information call Steve Van Vleet at (509) 397-6290 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

1-4 IDAHO STATE DRAFT HORSE AND MULE INTERNATIONAL SHOW. Kootenai County Fairgrounds in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. idahodrafthorseshow.com

8 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Bickleton, Wash., at 1 p.m. For information call Hannah Brause at (509) 773-5817 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

9-11 CHENEY RODEO. Saturday parade, cowboy church. Cheney, Wash. cheneyrodeo.com

16-18 PIONEER DAYS. Chalk contest, kids' fishing derby, parade, live music, food and vendors. Davenport, Wash. davenportpioneerdays.org ■

Submissions

Listings must be received by the 10th of each month for the next month's *Wheat Life*. Email listings to editor@wawg.org. Include date, time and location of event, plus contact info and a short description.

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