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APRIL 1, 2021

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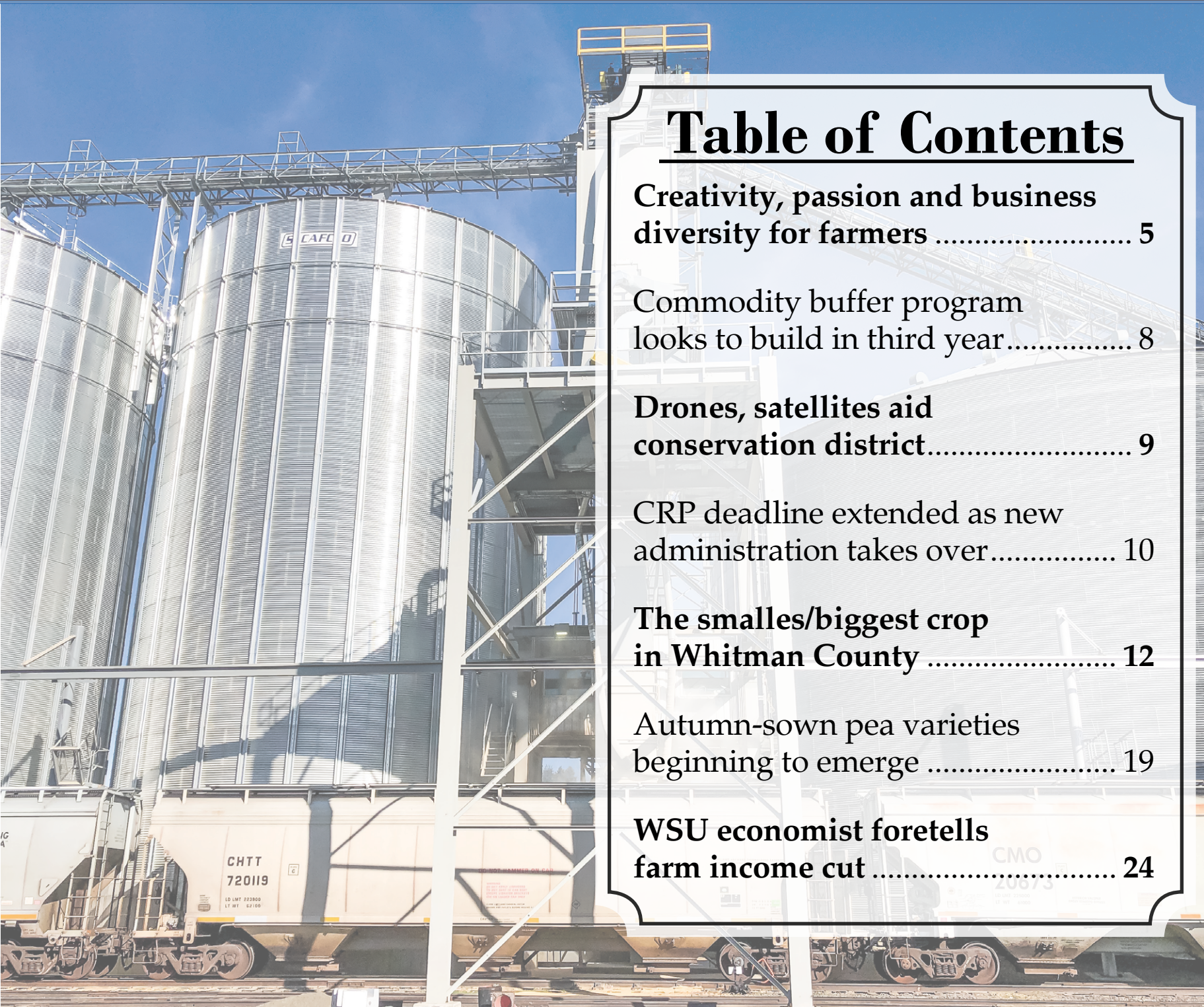


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Our Staff

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Garth Meyer, Reporter
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Creativity, passion add business diversity for farmers

Area farmers have multiple avenues of pursuit

BY JANA MATHIA
GAZETTE CORRESPONDENT

WHITMAN COUNTY — Farmers and financial advisors alike are familiar with the idea of diversifying—having your eggs in more than one basket to safeguard against losing everything if one basket should break. While diversity is a sound business practice, farmers also diversify based of new ideas and old habits.

Soldiers of Dirt

"I think farmers are always up for a new challenge," Nate Klaveano, Colfax farmer, said.

Klaveano is an example of someone branching out beyond the kind of diversity traditionally found with farmers. A farmer for more than 30 years, in 2020 he started Soldiers of Dirt apparel line with friends Joel Warwick and Basant Dhillon.

"I kinda wanted to do it just for fun," Klaveano said. A conversation about clothing lines planted the seed of the idea which germinated while Klaveano was at his main job in the seat of a tractor.

"I have a lot of time to think in the tractor," he said.

"We all feel like we're soldiers of something," he said, and the idea for Soldiers of Dirt apparel sprouted.

With the knowledge and connections of his partners and the name already in hand, they created a logo and

started producing merchandise.

They experienced a setback early on when the Fonk's building in Colfax, where all the merchandise was stored, burned down early in March 2020. Then the pandemic cut off importing from China and they had to find new outlets for the Soldiers of Dirt hats, sweaters and shirts when manufacturing was put on hold.

"It's been challenging to find anybody who does the clothing," Klaveano said.

Klaveano credits the positive influence of his partners and their encouraging each other for the business carrying on. He is really excited to see where it goes. The brand is starting to take off, he said, and has been put in a Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint, Idaho, area magazine.

"You don't know until you try," Klaveano said.

Wisota Farms

Mitch Engel, Oakesdale, also diversifies in and out of the farming genre. Before returning to the family farm in 1988 and settling down, he sold business signs for six years. That salesman bug has stayed with him and he sells tractor and combine parts and pellet grills in addition to farming.

"Dad just enjoys selling stuff," said his son, Luke.

The selling of an idea and his farming led to a partnership with Spokane's Dry Fly Distillery. Engel was looking for a more direct market for his wheat, noting each bushel lost 60 cents to \$1 by the



JANA MATHIA | THE GAZETTE

Luke and Mitch Engel, right, stand next to a truck which will deliver their locally-grown wheat to Dry Fly Distillery in Spokane.

time it hit the coast. If he could sell more directly, it would be a way of adding value without adding value, he said.

He read about Dry Fly Distillery in an article when it opened in 2007 and how it made whiskey from wheat. Engel thought, 'I raise wheat,' and decided Dry Fly needed to get its wheat from him.

"I just kept bothering them," he said. He would visit the distillery when he went to Spokane, pushing the idea of using his locally-grown wheat. It paid off in 2008 when Engel became the sole provider of wheat for Dry Fly. He also grows triticale for the distillery now. The distillery only takes about 5% of his overall wheat production, but that is expected to in-

Continued on Page 6

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Business diversity cont.

crease to 30% when the business expands. The partnership is mutually beneficial as Engel does not lose money on shipping wheat to the coast and Dry Fly is able to market its products as farm-to-table and identify the exact source.

Before Dry Fly, Engel was diversifying in farming, although in much more traditional

ways than Klaveano. He used to buy broken tractors and then needed to find quality, reasonably priced parts to fix them. That evolved into finding parts for other farmers and he now deals tractor and combine parts.

"I really enjoy trying to find things for other people," he said. He does not deal with

parts like engines or transmissions, but in things like clutch replacement, fender ruts, gauges, etc.

He got into selling Green Mountain pellet grills after eating steak cooked on a pellet grill and buying some with a handful of other guys.

"You can only do

Continued on Page 7



JANA MATHIA | THE GAZETTE

Soldiers of Dirt apparel on display at The Leif in Colfax.

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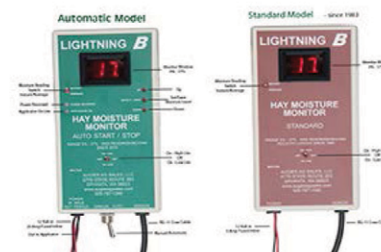
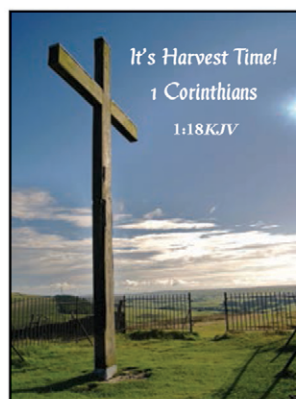
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Business diversity cont.

so much with raising wheat and lentils," he said. Engel finds it nice to be able to diversify. If he knows something that works well, he wants to talk to others about it.

Business Direction

Klaveano had knowledgeable partners and Engel experience and drive, which helped develop their side businesses. Those who have ideas or desire to diversify, but are not sure where to start or how to go about it can access resources like Southeast Washington Economic Development Association (SEWEDA).

"What I see is a lot of creativity," said Suzy McNeilly, managing di-

rector for SEWEDA in Whitman County, when it comes to side-businesses and diversity.

McNeilly deals with both ends of business and farm diversification. With SEWEDA, she brainstorms with people to identify their passions, ideas and opportunities.

"I help them see what they might want to do and get them to resources," she said.

McNeilly also helps diversify McNeilly Ranch with husband, Dick. While the ranch diversifies with crops and livestock, Suzy adds another level to it by offering an AirBnB rental. When possible, she offers farm tours to the guests and Dick uses the farm tours

to educate the out-of-towners about agriculture. Suzy noted Dick is always looking for ways to diversify, studying to find the next step in some aspect of the operation. That step may not endure, but another may.

In her SEWEDA role, McNeilly sees many side-businesses for farmers including welding, event centers, and niche markets.

"What are the opportunities in our community?" is a question she works with others to find answers to.

Anyone interested in speaking with McNeilly about business or idea development can contact her at whitman@seweda.org or 509-330-0507.

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Commodity buffer program looks to build in third year

Growers may get paid to plant buffers on land

STAFF REPORT

PULLMAN — Growers interested in planting buffers along draws, streams or wet sections of their farm may be able to get paid to do it.

Those with buffers already in place may also qualify for a third-year program from the Palouse Conservation District.

The program, with biannual funding from the Washington State Conservation Commission, will extend into next year.

"It's pretty unique, there's nothing else like it in the country, really," said Anthony Hatcher, conservation coordinator for Palouse Conservation District. "Most other programs don't pay what this pays. That's the big difference."

The price differential is illustrated in that, for the longtime federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), "soil rental" payments are at \$100 per acre at the top level, with most around \$75.

For the local Commodity Buffer Program, the minimum is \$200 per acre.

"(The purpose) is to get folks to want to put buffers in and actually pay them for what

the land is worth," said Hatcher.

So far, a total of 10 acres in Whitman County has been enlisted.

The ceiling of payment within the Palouse Watershed, with includes much of Whitman County is \$50,000.

So what if suddenly 100 acres gets signed up, can they pay for all of that?

"We'll cross that bridge when we get there," said Hatcher. "We have a cap but we haven't gotten close to it."

Participant

Sheryl Hagen-Zakarison started the program last year, sowing grasses and mixed-broadleaves in a draw between a spring barley

"It's pretty unique, there's nothing else like it in the country ..."

— Anthony Hatcher,
Palouse Conservation
District Coordinator

and winter barley field between Pullman and Palouse.

She is one of the Board of Supervisors for the Conservation District, in this case recusing herself of votes regarding this program.

Once signed up, Zakarison worked with Hatcher, who decided the majority needed to be in grass. Hatcher

recommended a couple mixes to satisfy the program's criteria — including plants for pollinators and beneficial insects.

Seeds planted were blanket flowers, perennial asters, perennial flax and sanfoin (a perennial legume).

The planting stretches 35 feet on each side of the seam

and 400 feet long. All of it was used as cropland before.

The zone is in strips where the Zakarison land had water collecting and running down.

"The goal is to keep that water in place," Zakarison said.

The plan is that once the grasses are established, she will put in shrubs and trees.

Buffers may be at the banks of streams, or not.

"A buffer is just those areas that maybe aren't keeping soil in place," Zakarison said.

The Zakarisons' buffer is not along a stream.

"It's pretty wet but not a stream," she said.

Continued on Page 9



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Commodity buffer program cont.

After it was seeded last spring, the Zakarisons mowed the buffer zone to keep weeds down, which will be less of a requirement as the plants get more established.

Flowers were still blooming last fall.

"My expectation is that everything should

fill out," said Zakarison, adding that the plan is to keep it as a buffer from here on out, unless the stand of plants do not establish.

The span covers two to three acres total, running down and alongside some CRP ground.

"Because CRP was

not quite enough to keep the soil in place," Zakarison said.

For the buffer, the next step is for the Palouse Conservation District to come out and evaluate the stand in June or July.

Participants sign up for a three-year time period.

Drones, satellites aid conservation district

The BIOAg project will help monitor and report info about riparian ecosystems

STAFF REPORT

PULLMAN — Researchers at WSU use drones and satellites to help conservation districts watch areas along streams and rivers in an effort to improve sustainability in agriculture.

Named the BIOAg project, under the wing of WSU's Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, the work is designed for counties included in Washington's Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) – to monitor and report participation and compliance for riparian ecosystems.

"The state's program is really a bottom-up approach, where the state encourages local stewardship to improve riparian areas and monitor them," said Alexander Premier, an associate professor in WSU's School of the Environ-

ment (SOE). "Stakeholders, including counties, districts, or landowners, propose areas that they can help improve, then monitor the results of their actions."

To reduce time and resources needed for monitoring, Premier and his team use data from satellites and a program named Google Earth Engine to check on riparian areas far more expansive than if people had to visit and take measurements.

"Google created a platform to access satellite imagery from the entire globe," said Premier. "We can start to analyze those images in real-time using simple computer code."

To begin, a pilot program was undertaken by WSU, the Palouse Conservation District and Whitman County, with the hope that it may expand to other counties participating in the VSP.

"We wanted to see how far we could take the analysis and what level of technical expertise is required for people working on the ground to use it," said Amanda Stahl, who was an SOE Ph.D. student

studying with Premier. "Riparian areas tend to be very narrow, but new technology provides much more detailed satellite photos that are updated at least once a week."

A post-doctoral researcher, Stahl, helped write the code that the district will use to put together future reports on their work.

Farther out, with more hoped-for grant funds, the group wants to build a mobile-friendly application for each district to make reports for state agencies. Initial funds have been received to work on the app.

Beyond satellite images, Premier and his team have considered the use of drones to report on the same areas. Satellites and drones, combined, may provide the data needed to represent results of the conservation programs.

"We're still relatively early in the process of developing tools for local agencies to use," he said. "But we think this will have a positive impact and help them direct limited funds to places that will improve the land."

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Four-million acre change during Trump era CRP deadline extended as new administration takes over

Sign-up period
for now left
open-ended

STAFF REPORT

COLFAX — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has extended the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Sign-up period, adding time to what had been a Feb. 12 deadline.

The reason was stated by the USDA as a chance to continue to accept offers as the new Biden Administration considers ways to build enrollment in the program.

Under the previous administration, rental payments and incentives were reduced. The program later reported a shortfall of four million acres.

The longtime program, administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency, gives yearly rental payments in exchange for land devoted to conservation purposes for 10 to 15 years. Other types of payments are part of CRP as well.

The general CRP sign-up period has been left open-ended for now, as growers and producers may resubmit or adjust offers to tap planned changes to the program.

These have not been announced.

"We haven't been told what those changes will be," said Jonelle Olson, CRP program technician for the past

"The Conservation Reserve Program provides a tremendous opportunity to address climate change ..."

— Robert Bonnie,
Deputy Chief of Staff,
Office of USDA Secretary

16 years in Whitman County. "That's why they haven't announced a new deadline. I haven't even heard any rumors."

Landowners may enroll acreage for the first time or re-enroll under existing contracts, set to expire Sept. 30.

"The Conservation Reserve Program provides a tremendous opportunity to address climate change both by retiring marginal cropland and by restoring grasslands, wetlands and forests," said Robert Bonnie, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the USDA Secretary. "CRP has a 35-year track record of success beyond just climate benefits, by providing income to producers, improving water quality, reducing erosion, and supporting wildlife habitat and the hunting and fishing opportunities that go along with it. By extending this sign-up period, we'll have time to evaluate and implement changes to get this neglected program back on track."

A total of 117,743 acres of farmable land

in Whitman County is in CRP, representing 12 percent of overall farmland.

No county is allowed a percentage above 25 percent.

The shortfall nationally may be attributed to the drop in rental rates or otherwise.

"I would hazard a guess it's that the rates have gone down. It could be that farmers are taking advantage of TIP (Transition Incentive Program) or just decided to farm it," Olson said.

Land in CRP is managed in 10-year minimum contracts, with maintenance on the land required, such as weed control.

CRP, one of the largest private-lands conservation efforts in the U.S., is aimed at creating conservation and economic benefits by removing land from ag production.

Program activities, as stated by the USDA, include:

- Sequestering in soils and plants over 12 million metric tons of

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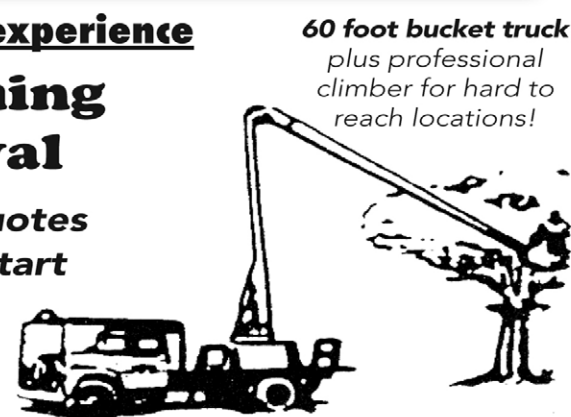
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Deadline extended *contd.*

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- Increasing populations of ducks and other game birds, prairie chickens, and such

grassland songbirds as Baird's Sparrow. CRP in the Northern Great Plains supports an estimated 8.6% of the grassland bird population.

- Increasing habitat that supports economic opportunities, such as job creation, related to hunting and fishing activities.

For more information, landowners and producers - including trust lands and on Indian Reservations - may contact their local USDA Service Center.



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The smallest/biggest crop in Whitman County

14 active forest applications span 1,089 acres

BY GARTH MEYER
GAZETTE REPORTER

Is there timber in Whitman County? Commercial timber?

None was reported for 2013, 2014 or 2015, nor for 2016.

In 2017, it was 444,000 board feet and in 2018, 2.65 million.

"There was a pine market at that time – as much wood as could be crammed into containers was sent to China to make plywood forms for concrete house construction," said Andy Perleberg, WSU Extension Forestry Specialist.

In 2020, something else happened.

On Labor Day,

northwest of Rosalia.

The Babb Fire, which destroyed much of Malden and Pine City, left swaths of burnt trees – mostly just on the outside.

Since then, 14 active Forest Practices Applications (FPA) have been filed from Whitman County with the state Department of Natural Resources, spanning 1,089 acres. Of these, 10 applications are for salvage harvests.

Four of the FPAs are non-salvage, representing 163 acres – just regular timber harvests in Whitman County.

Nearly 1,800 families control 200,000 acres of timberland here, according to a state-legislature ordered report from the University of Washington School of Environmental and Forest Sciences (2020).

"There's a lot of pine in these draws and ravines," said Perleberg.

Chuck Schmidt

Chuck Schmidt had a consultation with a logger one day in February to cut burnt timber from the Babb Fire, which started on his property.

"We normally don't harvest trees, other than for management every 40 years or so," Schmidt said.

As for the consultation, at the time, it had not brought results.

"We had a very brief meeting and I haven't heard a thing back," said Schmidt. "There's three of us waiting."

Way it Works

Whitman County often comes in on state statistics with the least

Continued on Page 13



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Andy Perleberg, WSU Extension Forestry Specialist, instructs how to use a Biltmore Stick to measure tree diameter.



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Whitman County timber *cont.*

amount of timber harvests of the 15 counties east of the Cascade Mountains, for which nearly all pale in comparison to the western counties.

"The best growing grounds out there have peas, chickpeas, lentils, not trees," said Kenny Ocker, communications manager for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The Washington Forest Protection Association reports 22,000 acres of "working forest" in Whitman County, along with 4,500 acres of federal/state protected forest (habitat, wildlife refuge, etc.)

If a landowner cuts or takes out less than 5,000 board feet per year, it does not require an FPA.

When harvest- ing wood does happen around here, it is a matter of timing – and often infestation.

Steve Van Dyke

Steve Van Dyke has 400 acres of family tim-

berland, the vast majority of it which burned in the Malden-Pine City (Babb) fire, his property stretching to the city limits of Malden.

"Because pine blues real quick, we got a logger in there soon," said Van Dyke. "We were able to recoup some but we lost a lot too."

He refers to pine trees in Whitman County which get a fungus that turns streaks of wood blue, which puts it into a niche market at best.

Before all of this, Van Dyke's property was common private forestland.

If a tree got infested by beetles, it might be time to cut it.

"My grandfather used to log every ten years," Van Dyke said.

In general, with or without active logging, landowners watch for beetle-kill trees, which are marked by pitch-outs or pitch scabs.

"The beetles will take over a whole tree," said Van Dyke. "There's

beetles in Whitman County in the pine trees 'til hell wouldn't have 'em."

When a tree dies, it is best to cut it in the winter since that is when beetles hibernate.

The key is to cut it and move it to open ground, so beetles don't infest other trees.

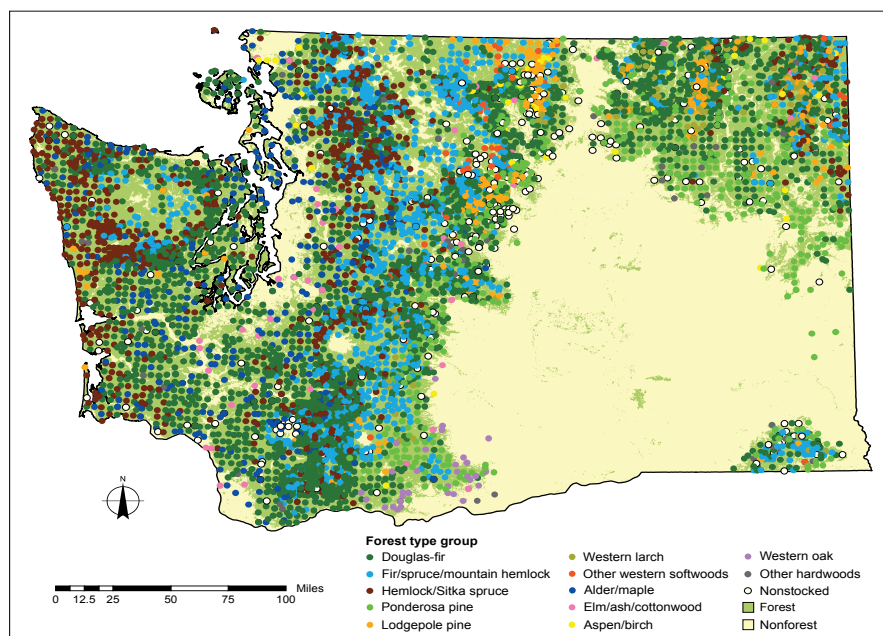
"If you find an infestation, you get them out of there, you cut it down, drag it away into the sunlight to kill any other beetles," said Van Dyke, who retired in 2017 as the Rosalia School District transportation supervisor after 37 and a half years.

Once cut and dragged free, a log may be left to decompose or be cut for firewood. Even stacked, firewood needs to be kept away from other trees.

After the Malden fire, Van Dyke and his family got to work.

They hired a forest consultant?

Continued on Page 14



COURTESY OF USDA WASHINGTON FOREST RESOURCES, 2007-20016:
10-YEAR FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS REPORT



(Left to right): John Kragt, Sharon McKeirnan, Kathy Kroll, Ruth Holmes, Margo Roberts, Matthew Johnson and Bruce Ensley

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The smallest/biggest crop in Whitman County *cont.*

"We were such a complete burn so we didn't really need one," he said.

So they hired a logger. Not finding a local one who was not on contract with mills, they ended up with someone based in Cheney.

"It went well, it's never fun to log, it leaves a mess. It isn't what we wanted. It was gorgeous, but it'll be pretty again," said Van Dyke.

Another reason to cut is the danger of the fire-weakened trees falling.

The wood pulled off of Van Dyke's land was ultimately sold for lumber.

"Some of the trees we got deductions for, some we didn't," he said. "They don't know until they peel the bark off."

Before the fire, how much management did Van Dyke do of the timber?

"I don't think about it, you just take care of it," he said.

He also spot-sprayed weeds on the 400 acres.

"You go out there with a four-wheeler and a tank," he said.

Most of the (beetle-infested) trees he cut before – himself – would be used for family firewood.

His property is on the northeast edge of Malden. He knows of four other landowners who hired loggers after the fire. He estimates more than 1,000 acres were logged.

"They've never really stopped cutting trees since November,"



GARTH MEYER | THE GAZETTE

Continued on Page 15

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The smallest/biggest crop in Whitman County cont.

Van Dyke said.

He now looks out his window to a different view, at the start of a two-year time frame to see what is needed for what remains of the burnt area.

"Pine trees do a really good job of re-seeding themselves," he said.

As fire pops open pine cones, it spreads seed. Also, in the process of logging, heavy equipment – from skidders to deckers to feller-bunchers – smash pine cones and spread more seed.

The fire burned Van Dyke's 30 X 60 shop and his mother's former house (where he grew up) a ¼-mile away. He lost a travel-trailer too.

He got his wife and daughter out of his house, and was able to save it.

He noted a smaller market now for pine.

"They used to make

railroad ties out of it, now it's all going to concrete," Van Dyke said.

A pine tree can blue in a month or two, depending on weather.

Personal Use

The Whitman County assessor's office does not have a tax classification for designated forest land.

Trees represent a fraction of most county landowners' property.

"They think of themselves as cattlemen, but happen to have a section and a half of timber. And they don't have a plan for it," Perleberg said.

Before a timber harvest, trees first are drawn into two groups; eight inches in diameter and above are deemed "commercial" while anything below eight inches is "non-commercial."

For non-commercial, a landowner may

"There's beetles in Whitman County in the pine trees 'til hell wouldn't have 'em."

— Steve Van Dyke,

Land owner near Malden

cut up to 5,000 board feet for personal use and not re-plant if they cut less than 50 percent of the forest volume. These are the rules for Eastern Washington.

For more than 50 percent, the requirement is to replant 150 trees per acre.

If a timber stand is commercial, first a landowner or a hired consultant will inventory it, then file an FPA. From there, a plan is drawn up, to figure out where to cut a road if need be, and more. Then, phone

calls are made to mills, to set a contract beforehand for what the trees will sell for.

A landowner might call and say, "What are you offering for this species of board feet?"

The forester works for the landowner and the log buyer works for the mill.

A full log truck carries from 750 to 1,250 board feet. An average pine tree on the Palouse – 16 inches diameter, 80 feet tall – would reap 260 board feet.

Reasons to thin

trees range from commercial to controlling disease to clearing room for sunlight – to manage density and allow a chance for other trees to grow to full maturity.

"Every once in a while, you kind of need a haircut. It's the same for trees," said Sean Alexander, Extension Coordinator, WSU Forestry Unit. "Usually forests self-thin themselves (by wildfire)."

Some commercial forests, outside of Whitman County, are managed on a rotation.

"Much like a crop. Like our wheatfields," Alexander said.

Perhaps in 60-year cycles, types of commercial trees planted may shift due to how a disease affects a particular species at the time of replanting.

Trees seen on the back of a log-truck or

a towering stack near Lewiston or at the side of Highway 95 at the Plummer, Idaho mill are 60 to 80 years old, generally 16-20 inches thick.

"This is the bread and butter commercial size," Alexander said.

Downturns

Pine is not as high-quality wood as Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar (the most valuable from the Pacific Northwest) or others.

"The previous administration put the screws down on exports," said Perleberg. "Specifically to China, which bought a lot of white woods (pine). We'd send them logs and they'd send us back white furniture."

For the landowners affected by last year's wildfires, Perleberg sug-

Continued on Page 18

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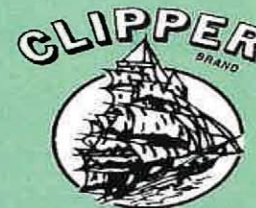


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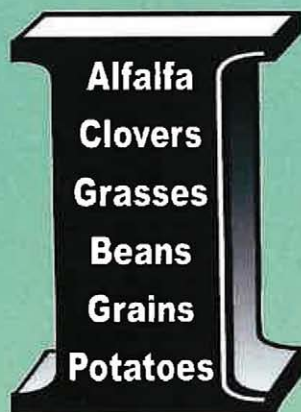
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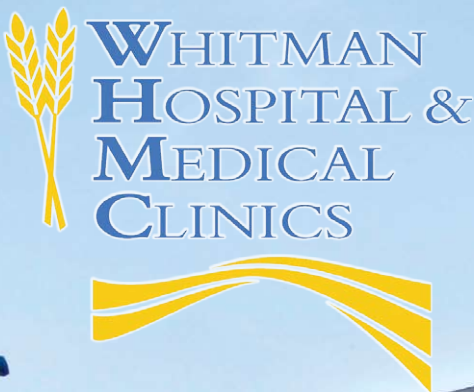
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Timber in Whitman County *cont.*

gested this is new for many of them.

"They're not used to selling trees," he said.

'Clock Ticking'

The least quality/valuable, compromised trees are deemed pulp wood, which is sold by the ton, to make paper products.

Right now, for example, it sells at \$70 per ton, as opposed to board feet.

Is the burned wood from the Malden, Pine City area valuable?

"It could be pulp, depending on what condition it's in," Perleberg said. "Oftentimes fire scorches the outside of the tree and burns the bark, the heat kills the crown – the needles – the inside is in perfectly good shape. But that starts the clock ticking..."

Vulnerable, once the tree is dead, beetles may invade.

"Every once in a while you kind of need a haircut.

It's the same for trees ..."

— Sean Alexander,
WSU Forestry Unit

Also, if the blue fungus arrives.

"Is the wood still good until the spring?" Perleberg said.

For the partially burned wood, if for example a landowner cut 60 acres, it would add up to perhaps 120,000 board feet, depending on its condition, or 5,000 board feet per acre.

"That's enough of a volume to get serious about," Perleberg said.

He calculated, coming up with \$63,000 for the delivered price of the timber, which is the mill's price. The "stumpage" price is with all the costs taken out – for the

logger, trucking, timber consultant perhaps, FPA and any other expenses.

A standard thinning project may be 2-3,000 board feet per acre.

Perleberg is based in Wenatchee.

He calls this family forestry.

"What used to be 'non-industrial private forests'," he said.

In the end, in Whitman County, timber is the subject of perhaps more attention than previously thought.

"But pretty much trees do their own thing," Van Dyke said.



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Autumn-sown pea varieties beginning to emerge

Changes in regulations allow for autumn-sown peas to be marketed

“Food quality winter pea would be ideal ...”
— Rebecca McGee,
USDA-ARS Research Geneticist

BY JANA MATHIA
GAZETTE CORRESPONDENT

After more than a decade of development, autumn-sown peas are becoming available for area farmers to include in their crop rotations, bringing with them many of the benefits of winter wheat compared to spring wheat, including increased yield.

The work began in 2009 after Rebecca McGee, research geneticist with the USDA-ARS (Agricultural Research Service) talked to stake-

holders such as farmers, grain co-ops and processing companies about what they would like to see. The regulations which precluded autumn-sown peas from being marketed in the food quality chains have recently been changed.

“I heard from a lot of people that food quality winter pea would be ideal,” she said.

The first crosses were made in 2009. McGee crossed spring and winter peas with the goal of making a food quality (FQ) winter pea.

The process was not a simple one as the two types bloom at different times and under different environments. McGee said they planted way more spring peas in the hopes of getting something to cross with the winter peas which respond to different day-length triggers than spring peas.

After hundreds of crosses, 30-50 varieties were selected to move from the nursery to testing in 2014.

Continued on Page 20



REBECCA MCGEE | SUBMITTED PHOTO

Advanced yield trials conducted at the Spillman Agronomy Farm, Pullman, May 2020.

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Autumn pea varieties *cont.*

Earlier this month, McGee presented three autumn-sown pea varieties—two green peas and one yellow pea—to the U.S. Dry Pea and Lentil Council's variety release committee. The varieties were approved by the council, and McGee is now preparing to present the peas to the ARS for its approval.

McGee isn't the only belle at the winter pea ball. ProGene Plant Research, Othello, started working on winter pea varieties in 2005 and currently has two green pea and two yellow pea varieties released to certain seed companies in Eastern Washington and North Idaho. Its varieties are called Keystone, Vail, Blaze and Goldenwood.

"It is so much more effective having two of us working on winter

peas," said Kurt Braunwart, ProGene managing owner.

ProGene and McGee took different approaches in developing the peas. According to Braunwart, ProGene focused on eating quality first and then bred in hardiness while McGee started with a focus on hardiness and bred in eating quality. Both still reached the autumn-sown pea goal and another researcher in Montana is working on winter pea development for the harsher winters east of the Rockies.

"A whole bunch of people are jumping on the bandwagon to breed winter peas," Braunwart said.

While autumn planting is usually easier than spring—when too much moisture in the ground can delay and

foil planting plans—one of the biggest benefit of the food quality winter peas is yield. Similar to winter wheat versus spring wheat, the winter peas produce two to three times the yield of spring-planted varieties, according to McGee.

The autumn-sown peas mature earlier than spring peas, therefore avoiding the heat stress and potential drought impact later in the year, McGee said.

However, the winter peas also have to be very hardy and resistant to disease and environmental stressors.

"They're out there for an incredibly long time," McGee said. "They have to have everything you can pump into them."

Continued on Page 21



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Autumn pea varieties *cont.*

The peas can be in the field for up to 290 days, so they need excellent disease resistance packages, she stated. They are typically planted sometime between late August and early October.

Braunwart said these new winter peas make are possible for farmers in dry and intermediate zones to include peas as part of their rotation. By doing so, they reap benefits such as breaking the cycle for wheat disease that builds up with repeated wheat plantings, improving soil biology and leaving behind nitrogen in the soil.

He credited Howard Nelson, now retired from HighLine Grain Growers in Reardan, for pioneering the winter pea effort and proving

the benefits. Nelson scientifically showed farmers in dry regions could get 16% to 30% boost in wheat yields when winter peas were the preceding crop.

Braunwart noted that harvesting is also easier for the dry and intermediate zone farmers as the winter pea varieties stay erect. Older style peas may reach 34 inches tall, but would lay down so they were only six inches off the ground for harvest. This requires special equipment to harvest that

“It makes it way easier to harvest ...”

**— Kurt Braunwart,
ProGene Managing Owner**

may not be practical for dry and intermediate zone farmers to get. With standing winter peas, there is no need for the special equipment.

“It makes it way easier to harvest, Braunwart said.

ProGene released early varieties of food quality winter peas in 2011. Braunwart noted early releases are typical; they are good enough to release, but not quite what is wanted. The va-

Continued on Page 23



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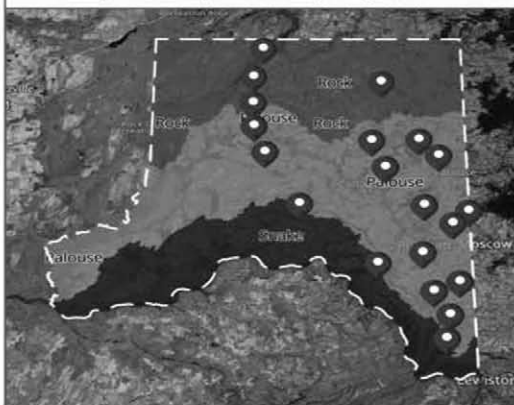
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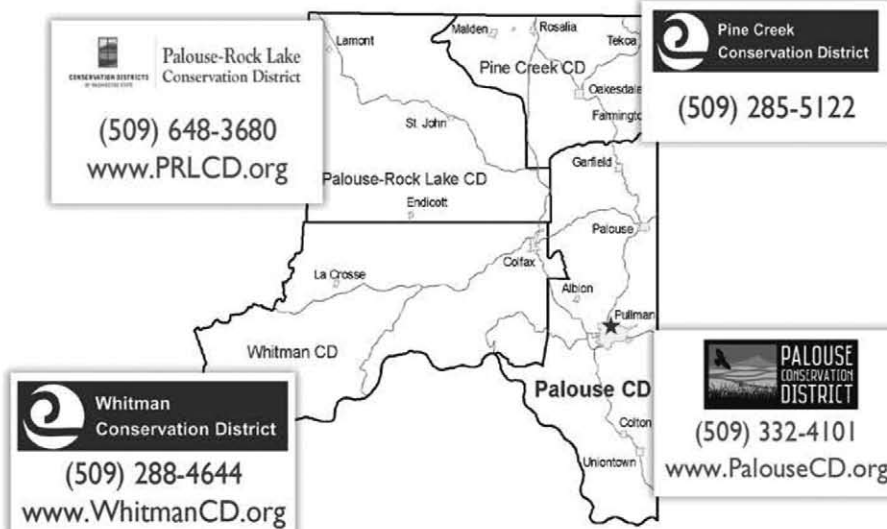
9) They can help **save energy** on your farm by assessing ways to improve efficiency, and some offer help with equipment upgrades.



10) They offer help with **noxious weed management**, and many conservation districts host annual native plant sales.

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Autumn pea varieties *cont.*

ieties out now and the ones McGee is getting approved have “staying power,” he said. ProGene expects to release another variety in fall of 2022 and McGee said the pipeline is always full for up-and-coming varieties.

“There’s always improvements to be made,” McGee said. Braunwart said ProGene’s breeder Nancy Powell has some “really cool stuff” coming up in the next few years.

The ARS and ProGene breeding programs are the primary ones working with autumn-sown peas in the region. While Austrian winter peas have been around since the ‘70s and ‘80s, before development of the FQ peas, the only other winter peas were forage or cover crop types.

“The FQ peas are

very, very new,” McGee said.

To be food quality, the peas must have large, round seed and have an unpigmented, clear seed coat, according to McGee. Austrian winter peas and feed peas do not meet the food quality standards.

Braunwart is already seeing use of winter peas growing. Early releases were planted to 1,000 to 3,500 acres. Available varieties are now up to 15,000 acres is Eastern Washington and North Idaho. He expects the number will double in the next five years.

McGee only develops the peas; while she works on getting the new peas approved, efforts are underway by others to get the varieties licensed. Washington State Crop Improvement Association will

apply to license the seed and start on the final leg of getting the new varieties to farmers

According to Lauren Port, Washington State Crop Improvement Association manager, it will be at least 2023 before seed will be commercially available. WSCIA would receive about 150 to 200 pounds of the breeder seed which would be planted this year to create foundation seed. Whereas wheat produces about 100 times more seed than planted, peas only increase about 10 times seed production.

The foundation seed goes to seed dealers who plant it to create certified seed which is then sold to farmers. Those with questions about the seed can contact WSCIA 509-334-0461.



Submitted Photo

As corn prices went up last year, more wheat from Whitman County was exported for cattle feed.



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WSU economist foretells farm income cut

Forecasts call for \$12 billion drop

Future prices for spring 2022 are above or equal with delivery prices

BY GARTH MEYER
GAZETTE REPORTER

The reputation of the year 2020 got a boost when it set a non-adjusted farm income record, but 2021 may not be able to match it.

Randy Fortenbery, a WSU ag economist, has forecast a drop for this year in farm revenue.

In a time when

higher exports than expected led to wheat prices breaking the \$7 mark for the first time since 2013-2014, futures markets tell of flat prices to come.

Specifically, futures prices for spring wheat 2022 are above or equal with delivery prices now.

Fortenbery also noted that regular government payments from farm programs will be lower as the wheat price stays higher.

Futures markets,



RANDY FORTENBERY

in general, represent buying and selling on contracts for later dates – pricing for a much later delivery.

“If you’re going to buy a new truck on special order, you go to your Ford or Chevy dealer and they say we’ll give it to you in six months for this price,” said Fortenbery. “The price of steel may go up in that time, etcetera, but today that’s a fair price

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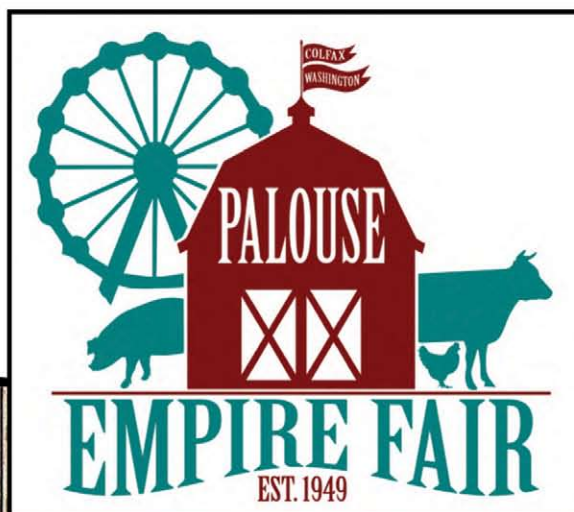
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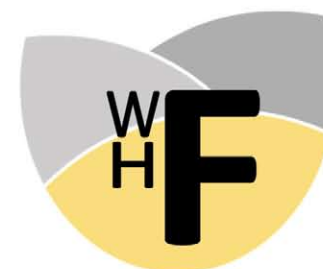
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WSU economist *cont.*

for later.”

Bad Corn

As corn had a bad crop in 2020, prices increased – for soybeans as well. Both were due to inconsistent rains and warmer than usual temperatures, followed last August by a record-setting, crop-damaging wind storm across the Corn Belt.

In turn, wheat prices went up as importers considered it an alternative to corn for cattle feed.

The increased soybean prices affected wheat prices too, indirectly, because corn and soybeans compete for land.

While wheatgrowers benefited from this, however, world wheat harvests are forecast to increase, which would pull prices back down.

Totals/China

All told, U.S. farmers brought in an estimated net income of \$140 billion in 2020,

“The price of steel may go up in that time, etcetera, but today that’s a fair price for later ...”

— Randy Fortenbery,
WSU Ag Economist

much of it coming from federal virus relief programs and payments made to farmers by the Trump administration after trade disruptions.

The USDA has predicted 2021 net farm income will come in at \$128 billion. This is calculated by receipts for livestock and crops, subtracting cost of production.

Fortenbery said the \$12 billion difference between 2020 and 2021 will be due to less government payments, as opposed to price drops.

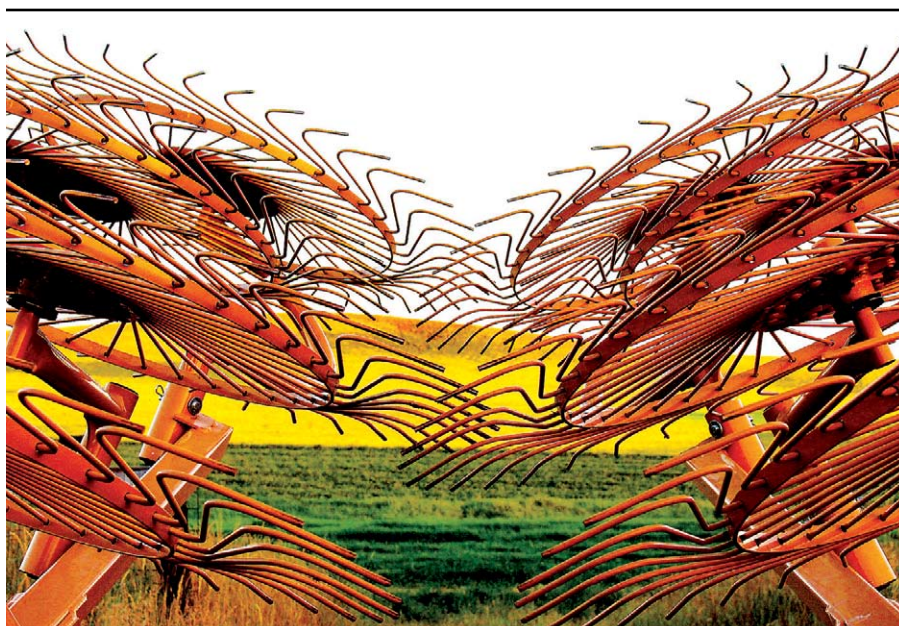
The USDA has also predicted China may represent as high as 25 percent of total U.S. ag exports for fiscal year 2021.

Fortenbery noted that wheat will be part of the boost going to China.

This is because of trade agreements from the Trump administration, and that the Chinese lost an estimated half of their hog inventory in 2018-19, due to African swine flu.

They liquidated half of those millions of hogs and began to rebuild the count, buying more wheat for feed, instead of corn this year.

Fortenbery noted that the next important news to come in forecasting will be a May 31 report from USDA on how many spring wheat acres were planted.



ROGER HARNACK | THE GAZETTE

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