

Subject: Oregon Dept. of Agriculture's "Story of the Week."

Oregon leads the nation in the production of several agricultural commodities - Oregon ranks high in national agriculture scene

November 26, 2008... Oregon agriculture boasts more than 225 different commodities, making it one of the most agriculturally diverse states in the U.S. While its total value of production may not rank as high as the mega-agriculture states of California, Texas, and Iowa, Oregon is known as a top producer of several commodities that contribute to the nation's impressive agricultural output.

"There are some things our farmers grow better than anyone else in the world," says Katy Coba, director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. "A big part of it is our unique climate and soils. But our producers have developed expertise and know-how over a long period of time. If not for Oregon, some of these commodities just wouldn't be available to the American or international consumer."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) recently released a report on Oregon production of various commodities and where they rank among all states. Oregon is identified as number one in the production of 12 commodities— most of them fall in the categories of grass seed and caneberries. For many more commodities, Oregon is in the top ten of all states— another reminder of the state's agricultural diversity.

According to NASS, Oregon leads the nation in production of the following:

- Hazelnuts 37,000 tons
- Christmas trees 7.05 million trees
- Ryegrass seed 478 million pounds
- Fescue seed 264 million pounds
- Bentgrass seed 4.8 million pounds
- Orchardgrass seed 11.8 million pounds
- Blackberries 58.9 million pounds

- Black raspberries 3.6 million pounds
- Boysenberries 3.9 million pounds
- Loganberries 90 thousand pounds
- Potted florist azaleas \$12.3 million
- Storage onions 1.48 billion pounds

The 2007 final statistics also show that Oregon produces all of the nation's hazelnuts, blackberries, black raspberries, and Loganberries. There are also some commodities not tracked by the recent NASS report that list Oregon as the nation's top producer. Those include sugarbeets for seed, crimson clover, red clover seed, dried herbs, and Dungeness crab.

"These are very specialized crops," says Brent Searle, ODA analyst, who echoes that comments of Director Coba. "It's not just the climate and soils that allows production of these commodities, it's the knowledge base of our growers, the technology they employ, and the managerial ability they display in today's global economic climate. That speaks a lot to the quality of producers we have in Oregon."

Oregon is ranked second of all states in the production of the following:

- Peppermint 1.9 million pounds
- Spearmint 284,000 pounds
- Hops 9.5 million pounds
- Prunes and plums 3,000 tons
- Snap beans for processing 115,000 tons

The list of commodities in which Oregon is ranked third in the nation includes some of the state's larger commodities in terms of production value:

- Pears 206,000 tons
- Sweet cherries 34,000 tons
- Blueberries 45 million pounds

- Strawberries 24.7 million pounds
- Green peas for processing 41,000 tons
- Kentucky bluegrass seed 24 million pounds
- Mink pelts 278,000 pelts

Other Oregon commodities are in the top five nationally in terms of production, including potatoes, cranberries, sweet corn for processing, cut flowers, and alfalfa seed.

In total, Oregon agriculture has a production value approaching \$5 billion—its highest mark ever. Led by the nursery industry's \$988 million value of production in 2007, there are eight commodities with values exceeding \$100 million this past year. Fifteen commodities have production values of more than \$50 million. It is clear that even a state like Oregon, where no single agricultural commodity dominates, there is an impressive contribution to the overall U.S. farm economy.

"Oregon ranks 26th of all states in terms of value of production, but if we were to rank the states on diversity of production, Oregon would be in the top three or four," says Searle. "The types of commodities we produce are ones that consumers want, and place Oregon as an important player in the national market."

Oregon agriculture's reputation for high quality has also gained notice in the marketplace. Combining quality with quantity gives Oregon credibility on the national and international stage. That's something that won't be changing as the industry heads into 2009.

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