In The West

IN IDAHO

Farmers and Idaho State University staff are testing if rapeseed could be an important alternative crop.

Farmers in Idaho, and in Washington too, have grown limited quantities of rapeseed in rotation with wheat for many years. Lower prices for wheat prompted Northwest farmers to expand alternative crops such as rapeseed. Now rapeseed prices have also declined, but interest remains. The expansion of acreage, for example, has prompted the Departments of Agriculture in the two states to designate different production zones—some for rapeseed used to produce lubricants and some for rapeseed used to produce edible oil for cooking.

Current rapeseed acreage in Idaho and Washington is 35 thousand acres—quite small in comparison to the approximate 2.5 million acres of wheat in these two states.

Many factors will eventually determine if rapeseed becomes an important source of income. Facts such as these are known, however. Canada is the largest world exporter of rapeseed. Much of their exports goes to Japan. Canada markets rapeseed oil as "Canola Oil." Proctor and Gamble now imports significant amounts of Canola Oil for use in foods and for cooking such as the preparation of french fries.

Besides being a cash crop, rapeseed significantly reduces soil erosion and it enhances wheat yields. These and many other factors will be evaluated and will eventually influence the place of rapeseed in Idaho and Washington.

Contributed by Tony Prato
University of Idaho

IN OKLAHOMA

The extension service is under attack by Governor Henry Bellmon, a long-time friend of agriculture.

The Governor's Executive Budget submitted in January calls for the transfer of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service to the Oklahoma State Department of Vo-Tech. The proposal would eliminate the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service as it currently functions. The Governor's proposal calls for an increase in the Vo-Tech state appropriations by an amount equal to one half the state now provides to the Cooperative Extension Service. The other half would be allocated to other institutions.

The Department of Vo-Tech oversees a statewide program on some 24 campuses. These programs concentrate on training in areas such as engine repair, computer programming, and drafting and design and electrical repair.

It is not clear what would happen to federal funds now received from Extension Service, USDA. These funds are mandated by federal law to go to the Land Grant University. Traditional agricultural groups have rallied to the defense of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. And their challenges have been sufficiently strong to discourage action in the current session of the legislature.

Contributed by James E. Osborn
Oklahoma State University

IN NEVADA

The State Legislature passed a resolution calling for national legislation requiring USDA and the Department of Interior to take steps—including destruction—to limit wild horse and burro populations if demand for adoption of the animals falls below the number of animals available for adoption.

One of the major impetuses for this resolution was the January 1982 moratorium on destruction of healthy excess animals by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Such destruction had been authorized by the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

The resolution by the Nevada Legislature is just the latest in a series of clashes between cattle ranchers who lease Bureau of Land Management lands and groups dedicated to the protection of wild horses and burros.

In the years subsequent to the 1971 Act, the number of wild horses and burros on federal lands increased from 17,000 horses (plus 8,000 burros) to a peak of 55,000 horses (plus 12,000 burros). Since then there has been a decline to 42,000 horses and 8,000 burros on federal lands primarily as a result of removals. However, 9,000 other animals are in permanent holding facilities at Muleshoe, Texas; Broomfield, Nebraska; and Lovelock, Nevada.

While the number of horses and burros has declined from their peak, there is little doubt that the competition for grazing continues. Cattlemen say the numbers should be decreased to 1971 levels. Horse protectors tend to favor "let nature determine the optimum number or maintain the current number of animals."

The conflict is an example of public goods (wild horses) conflicting with objectives of private groups who "developed" rights for use of the public resource-grazing land.

No one solution appears in sight. Many steps are proposed including: lower adoption fees, use of private sanctuaries, and leaving animals on the range in combination with sterilizing animals on the range.

It's not likely that we've seen the last roundup of this issue.

Contributed by Ronald Shane and
Gordon Meyers
University of Nevada

IN NEW MEXICO

The State Legislature has directed New Mexico State University to conduct specific agricultural research and to develop certain agricultural research programs—without appropriating new money to support the research. To meet these legislative mandates, the University will need to redirect resources presently devoted to other areas of agricultural research. The recent approach reflects the decline in state revenues, as well as a desire of legislators to maintain its influence over research. The Legislature has left the University administrators the prerogative of deciding how to reallocate existing resources.

The current approach by the legislature deviates from the autonomy University administrators usually have had to direct research and decide on priorities. Typically, new initiatives directed by the Legislature have been accompanied with funding.

Legislative mandates to pursue new avenues of agricultural research without provision of funding have occurred before. But, these situations in the past have usually happened with increases in general research appropriations and funding of new initiatives in other areas. This time without additional general research funds the reallocation process will be much more difficult.

Contributed by Tom Clevenger
New Mexico State University

IN WASHINGTON STATE

Spurred on by the Staggers Rail Act of 1980, a massive restructuring of the grain elevator industry is occurring as it is nationally. Already, 88 percent of Pacific Northwest grain moves on multiple car rates which were not available before Staggers.

And in the State of Washington, about 40 percent of the rail line in the grain-producing area has been abandoned since 1980 (facilitated by Staggers).

The implementation of these changes is evident. The railroads are using multiple car movements to lower their costs and to lower rates for shippers; both the carrier and the shipper gain from this new technology. Further, the railroad's rate differential between single origin and multiple origin shipments is greater than the differences in their costs. These conditions encourage investment in, and development of, multiple car loading facilities. The result is a significant increase in such facilities.

In Washington, the number of facilities increased steadily from 1982, reaching 41 in 1986. One result has been a decrease in barge movements from over half to less than a third of all shipments.

Rail line abandonment may now be passe; selling lines to regional or short line railroads is the recent means of rationalizing trackage. Nationally, about 130 short line railroads have been formed, mostly since 1984. In 1986, Burlington Northern turned over 810 miles of track to four regional railroads; in 1987, they may sell over 1,000 miles to five regional railroads.

The Union Pacific has identified four "geographical groupings" of lines available for sale to regional railroads. The significant labor cost reductions when lines are sold and potential for public equity participation has made selling trackage an attractive alternative to abandonment. Further, the arrangement has allowed Class I railroads to maintain control of traffic of the local carriers to whom they sell the trackage.

These changes in the shipping and transportation system is creating a mix of tensions that reflect higher profits for the railroad industry, lower shipping costs, and multiple-car loading facilities dependency of regional lines on Class I carriers.

Contributed by Kenneth Casavant
Washington State University

IN CALIFORNIA

Governor George Deukmejian has announced an official list of 26 chemicals known to be human carcinogens as his initial implementation action of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking and Toxic Enforcement act. This Proposition was overwhelmingly approved last November by California voters.

The Governor's action is being challenged by groups which pushed for the passage of Proposition 65. They claim that the Governor should have included animal carcinogens as well. If this were done the list could total over 200.

Instead the Governor has asked a 12-member scientific panel to review research on the animal carcinogens.

Proposition 65—the first of its kind in any state—bars the release or discharge of cancer-causing or reproduction-impairing chemicals in ways or places that will bring them into contact with drinking water supplies. The Governor is charged with identifying the chemicals subject to the law. He may modify the list periodically.

The Act vests all liability with defendants, who, if charged, will be required to demonstrate that their actions are lawful. In addition, the law contains a so-called "bounty hunter" provision. It permits citizens to bring legal action against alleged dischargers if the State has not acted within a specified period of time. Government agencies and municipalities are specifically exempted from the provisions of the law.

Proposition 65 was vigorously opposed by both industry and agriculture. Industry leaders expressed fears about the impact of the law on California's economic activity. The concerns of the agricultural sector focused on the fact that irrigation return flows, which may wind up in drinking water supplies, often contain residuals from pesticidies, herbicides, and other routinely used agricultural chemicals.

Depending upon which chemicals are ultimately defined as cancer causing, the law could force a drastic reduction in irrigation return flows. This, in turn, could make irrigation substantially more expensive and, in places where salinity is a problem, force land out of production.

The Governor's initial implementation action postpones for the time being the dire consequences predicted by industrial and agricultural opponents of the Proposition.

Contributed by H. J. Vaux, Jr., Professor of Resource Economics, University of California, Riverside C