As many of you know, I am coming to the end of my third year as director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. It has been great to see ODA’s mission of “ensuring healthy natural resources, environment, and economy for Oregonians” come to life through our work with farmers, ranchers, and fishers across the state. Looking back at 2019, I think of all the opportunities, collaboration, and growth that occurred at ODA.

I am proud to say that the state continues to invest in developing markets for our food and agriculture products. This support has created many opportunities. The Legislature invested $15 million in the Farm to School Program, making Oregon the leader in the country. Our Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funded a Women in Agriculture project that is developing a 90-day farm-to-food accelerator program that will provide women specialty crop producers training in product development, food safety, marketing, and business development. And despite federal trade uncertainty, ODA and the state continue to invest in our domestic and international markets. I just returned from South Korea and Japan as part of the Governor’s Trade Mission. This was in addition to ODA trade work done in Vietnam, Canada, and Mexico this year.

In 2020, we are planning for domestic and international trade missions taking Oregon producers to Iowa, Singapore, and Taiwan. Our mission to Iowa will focus on cover crops. The use of cover crops in the Midwest, particularly Iowa, is gaining more traction. I think the time has never been better for Oregon grass seed growers to capitalize on this market opportunity. A mission to Singapore and Taiwan will focus on food ingredients and seafood. Asian countries continue to be top markets for Oregon agricultural products.

There were a number of projects in 2019 that required a high level of collaboration. In partnership with Oregon State University, ODA was focused on educating our producers about the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and the Produce Safety Rule, holding more than 30 grower trainings statewide, reaching more than 700 people, and doing more than 60 On-Farm Readiness Reviews. House Bill 2437, the agricultural channel maintenance bill, authorizes maintenance activities without a removal-fill permit previously issued by the Department of State Lands (DSL). ODA in partnership with DSL, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon Department of Justice is creating a new notice-based process. This work will continue through early 2020.

I could not write about 2019 without including hemp. To say Oregon’s Hemp Program has grown would be a major understatement. When Oregon launched its program in 2015 there were 13 growers and 105 acres registered. In 2019, those registrations grew to 1,960 growers and 63,833 acres. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released federal hemp program regulations in late October. To ensure Oregon’s compliance, there will be a bill in the 2020 Oregon legislative short session to grant ODA additional authority to implement the federal requirements and a budget ask to ensure we have staff to serve the needs of growers. At the same time, we are working on drafting an Oregon state plan, also a federal requirement. We expect to submit a state plan sometime after session with phased-in implementation dates.

I sincerely want to thank all ODA employees and our partners for all their hard work in making the most of 2019’s opportunities, collaboration, and growth. I couldn’t possibly list everything because ODA provides so many services that in one way or another reaches every Oregonian in the state. We look forward to serving Oregonians in 2020.
After nearly 50 years of combined state service, John Byers and Dale Mitchell officially retired December 31, 2019. Byers, the Agricultural Water Quality Program Manager joined ODA 18 years ago when the Water Quality Program was new. He says ODA needed someone to write stories and meet with media to explain the new program and his 17 years of broadcasting experience gave him the advantage.

In addition to managing the Ag Water Quality Program, over the years, Byers also inherited the Smoke Management Program, Soil and Water Conservation District Program, and is involved in the Oyster Plat Leasing Program. This land use program regulates the growing of oysters in Oregon’s waters. John says one of his best memories at ODA was out on the water.

“I recall conducting a joint investigation with the OSP (Oregon State Police),” said Byers. “Following the investigation, the trooper, said, “hey, there’s a small craft advisory at the mouth, want to go?” “As we headed out, the rollers got bigger and bigger. Finally, just before we hit the mouth, and the waves were about to swallow the boat, the trooper hollered “hold on” over the sound of the water, he quickly swung the boat around and we rode a big roller home. Any day you can spend on the water in a boat is a good day at work.”

Pesticide Program Manager, Dale Mitchell joined ODA 29 years ago. Before moving to Oregon, he previously spent nine years in pesticide program management in California. After six months at ODA, Dale was promoted from pesticide field investigator to management. In 1990, his enforcement team had four employees including himself, today it includes case reviewers and investigators based all over the state. When asked about leaving, Dale is optimistic about the program’s future.

“I think it has a good, solid foundation. There are going to be challenges: we hit new challenges every day, every week, every month,” Mitchell said. “We have to be dynamic and able to change. I don’t expect things to always continue the way I’ve done it.”

ODA is thankful for their commitment and dedication and wishes them the very best. Both Byers and Mitchell look forward to traveling and spending more time with friends and loved ones.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture’s (ODA) multi-year effort to eradicate Japanese beetle is moving in the right direction. An infestation of Japanese beetle was detected in the Cedar Mill area near Portland by ODA in summer 2016. ODA began targeted treatments in 2017. In 2017, the agency trapped more than 29,000 beetles, in 2018, ODA trapped more than 17,000 beetles. The overall number of beetles trapped in 2019 was 7,749 a 56-percent reduction from the previous treatment year.

From April to June, ODA applied granular larvicide treatment to approximately 8,500 residences, six schools, eight parks, three shopping centers, Portland International Airport, and a golf course—an area of approximately 3,000 acres. Treatment consisted of a single application of Acelepryn® G (chlorantraniliprole) granular larvicide to lawns and ornamental planting beds where beetles were detected in 2018. Acelepryn® G is a targeted larvicide that kills certain pests in their larval state in the soil. This is a reduced-risk pesticide and is not considered to be a health risk for humans, pets, or wildlife including pollinators, when applied according to label directions.

For the first time in 2019, the granular treatment (Acelepryn G®) was supplemented with a foliar spray, in areas with higher Japanese beetle populations. The foliar application has the same active ingredient (chlorantraniliprole) as the granular treatment, and therefore the same minimal risks. This application was both free and voluntary to the residents. Properties within 200 meters of a trap that collected 75+ beetles in 2018 were within the higher density treatment area. The scheduled treatment occurred between June 25- July 1, 2019.

An economic analysis by ODA found that farmers could spend an estimated $43 million annually to combat Japanese beetle if established. Japanese beetle is a threat to agricultural crops, gardens, public parks, and urban forests that are essential to Oregon’s character, economy, landscape, and way of life. ODA will continue the Japanese eradication project in the spring of 2020.

For more information about ODA’s Japanese beetle eradication project, visit japanebeetlepdx.info or call 1-800-525-0137 or email Japanesebeetle@oda.state.or.us.
PRODUCE SAFETY PROGRAM OUTREACH
by SUSANNA PEARLSTEIN

The Oregon Department of Agriculture’s (ODA) Produce Safety Program has taken on a life of its own! We work with farms covered by the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule. Covered farms are those that meet certain income requirements and grow, harvest, handle or pack produce that is typically consumed raw. Many Oregon farms with more than $500,000 in produce sales had their first inspections in 2019. These inspections are conducted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in some cases with ODA staff observing.

The focus of the Produce Safety Program is outreach, education, and technical assistance to help farms meet the requirements of the rule. The Produce Safety Program has four staff members and partners with five Oregon State University (OSU) faculty. The Produce Safety team has conducted 25 grower training classes, reaching over 700 people. In 2019, we provided over 60 technical assistance visits or On-Farm Readiness Reviews (OFRR) to farms in Oregon. Produce Safety Program Manager, Susanna Pearlstein said it was really important to have staff represented at the fair this year and she plans on participating next year with a more interactive display. “The Market Access team has been talking about a hands-on activity that would illustrate the work ODA does...something memorable and fun.”

Organizers of the Oregon State Fair are eager to work with the department on an increased presence at the fair. Please remember to look for ODA next year at the fair with more of the best the department has to offer.

Despite outreach efforts, some farms still don’t know their coverage status or the requirements for compliance. To meet this need, the Produce Safety Program is developing new tools and collaborations. In November, we partnered with OSU and East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (EMSWCD) to put on a demonstration OFRR at EMSWCD’s Headwaters Farm. This was a unique educational opportunity. Most of our work is confidential, so an operation may not understand what an OFRR entails until it is happening on their farm. For this project, we designed training videos so operators can see these activities in action. We brought in the Revolution Design Group to film the event and are creating short videos on different sections of the Produce Safety Rule. When completed, these videos will be another tool to further spread the word about the Produce Safety Rule.

UPDATE ON THE USDA INTERIM HEMP RULES

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) has read through the interim hemp rules and connected with our federal partners. Here is what we know:

1. States can continue to operate under the 2014 Farm Bill for a year after the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released interim rules. The USDA released the rules October 31, 2019.

2. The Oregon Hemp Program already meets many of the USDA requirements.

ODA is looking to submit a state plan for review by the USDA for the domestic production of hemp as the 2018 Farm Bill requires. The plan will have future implementation dates. For example, getting the plan approved with background checks starting in the 2021 calendar year.

There is some action in the USDA rules that ODA lacks legislative authority to carry out. The upcoming 2020 legislative short session may be able to provide those authorities.

With this in mind, ODA has started providing applications for the 2020 calendar year. The application does not include background checks. Applications are on ODA’s hemp webpage: https://oda.direct/hemp. ODA anticipates Oregon hemp growers being fully compliant under the USDA requirements starting 2021.

2020 PRE-HARVEST TESTING REQUIREMENTS:

• Pre-harvest testing requirements for 2020 will be for total THC. ODA made this change back in May 2019. These rules now are in line with federal requirements.

• ORELAP-accredited and OLCC-licensed labs can continue to do pre-harvest sampling and testing (no change from 2019). A list of approved labs is on the ODA hemp webpage.

• Labs must collect samples no more than 28 days before harvest (no change from 2019).

As ODA receives more information, we will continue to provide updates. To receive updates via email, sign up at https://oda.direct/subscribe.
OUTREACH to the SPECIALTY CROP INDUSTRY

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is accepting proposals for project ideas as part of US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) for 2020. Approximately $1.5 million is expected to be available. To help get the word out and reach specialty crop producers, ODA launched an SCBGP tour that included statewide workshops, online webinars, and targeted emails.

The SCBGP coordinator traveled to nearly 20 locations across the state to host workshops about the program, with more than 150 people in attendance. Workshops were held in Astoria, Bandon, Bend, Brookings, Burns, Corvallis, Eugene, Grants Pass, Hermiston, Hood River, John Day, Medford, North Powder, Ontario, Portland, Salem, and Roseburg.

During the meetings, groups reviewed how the program is funded through the Farm Bill and managed by the USDA, Oregon program specifics, the timeline of the grant, and what a proposal should look like.

There were two goals for the workshop tour—the first was to have at least one person attend every workshop. With the exception of canceling Klamath Falls due to inclement weather, this goal was met. The second goal was to get at least one new application from each travel week. Success will be determined once the request for proposal period closes.

If you or someone you know is interested, proposals should be submitted online by Tuesday, January 31, 2020 at 12:00 pm (noon) Pacific Standard Time. ODA has information available online at https://oda.direct/SCBGP and staff is also available to provide applicants directions on submitting grant proposal applications by calling 503-986-6473.