



MID-COLUMBIA FARMER'S NEWSLETTER

November 2023

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Grain and Rain

The average price for soft white wheat in Portland for September and October was \$6.85 and \$6.89 per bushel for 10.5% protein. A year ago the price was at \$9.39 and \$9.11 during September and October. So far the price in November has been at \$6.89, a year ago the price was at \$9.03. Barley prices for September and October were \$210 per ton, currently around \$195 per ton in November.

The rainfall this fall was a welcome change after the exceptionally dry and hot fall a year ago. Precipitation at the Sherman Station in Moro for September and October was 1.11 and 0.72 inches at 258% and 68% of average. The start to the crop year is at 123% of average for the Sherman Station. Average precipitation across Sherman County in September was 0.82 inches ranging from 1.25 in Rufus to 0.61 in Grass Valley. Average precipitation in October was 0.95 inches ranging from 1.28 in Rufus to 0.68 in Grass Valley.

Precipitation at The Dalles Airport for September and October was 0.83 and 0.72 inches at 250% and 63% of average. Crop year total there is at 105% of average at 1.55 inches. Average precipitation across Wasco County in September was 0.89 inches ranging from 1.01 in The Dalles to .60 in the Columbia District east of The Dalles. Average precipitation in October was 0.75 inches ranging from 0.99 in Mosier to 0.40 in Dufur.

Climate Outlook

August - October precipitation across most of the Mid Columbia region averaged around 110 to 130% of normal with temperatures 1 to 3°F above normal across the region. So far in November we are at about 150-200% of average precipitation and temperatures have averaged about 3-5°F above normal. The rest of November is likely to be drier than the first half due to the Pacific Jet Stream splitting, resulting in limited on shore flow. In addition, Northwest flow into the Central U.S. will make the drier pattern more persistent. The current El Nino weather pattern is staying strong and it is forecasted to continue for the next several months with a 62% chance of lasting through April—June 2024. The El Nino is expected to peak in the next 60 days. This may favor a snowier and colder December with a milder second half to winter.

In the North Central Region of Oregon (Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, and Umatilla Counties) the next three months are expected to be about 0.6°F below average temperature with precipitation 82% of normal. The forecast for December is for temperatures to be 3.5°F below average with precipitation at 88% of average. January is forecasted to have temperatures 0.5°F above average



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Climate Outlook Continued...

and precipitation at 87% of average. February is forecasted to have temperatures 1.1°F above average and precipitation at 66% of average.

Over the next three months there is a 50-60% chance for above average temperatures and there is an equal chance for either above or below average precipitation. Drought is expected to persist over the next three months for central and northeastern Oregon. The northern tips of both Wasco and Sherman Counties are in D1 Moderate Drought while the rest of the counties are in D2 Severe Drought.

Wheat Market Outlook

Trade has been slow lately and the price of wheat has been staying stagnant at just below \$7.00. Trade has been at the lower end of trade expectations for several weeks. Prices will need an uptick in trade or other weather or political event to create much upward movement. The dollar continues to lower due to lower than expected U.S. inflation and expectations that interest rates may be lowered.

The recent World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report from USDA lowered domestic wheat use and expects higher increased ending stocks due to an unchanged export forecast and increased U.S. wheat supplies, this news is unfortunately not going to help move the price of wheat in an upward direction for now. USDA is keeping U.S. wheat export sales projected at 700 million bushels, which is surprisingly the smallest figure in 52 years and will be interesting if it holds true. The global wheat outlook is the same as in the U.S. with higher increased stocks anticipated. USDA has lowered its estimates of wheat production in several countries that would usually increase the price of wheat, however with an increase in 5 MMT anticipated in Russia has been keeping the price where it is at.

No big news to report out of Russia, though they claim to have planted 49.42 acres of winter crops, which is up 3.7 million acres from last year. Many experts question the increase and believe that this reflects crops planted in Russian occupied areas of Ukraine. Earlier in November there was a report of a vessel being struck by a missile in the Black Sea that caused some very brief excitement in wheat futures. Two years ago such a rumor would have caused a more substantial change in wheat prices, but it is taking larger events in the region to impact prices now.

Australia's wheat production is expected to be down due to weather impacts of El Nino. The total Australia 2023 wheat crop is estimated by USDA to be 38% lower than the 2022 harvest. However, they have been receiving more rainfall than expected in the eastern part of the country while the west remains drier. This could lead to a higher crop with more competition for western U.S. soft white wheat.

Wheat Conditions

Seeded winter wheat conditions across the nation are the best they have been since 2019. Winter wheat seeding in early November was 93% finished and just below the five year average. The amount of winter wheat emerged is at 81%, up slightly from the five year average and six points up from the week prior. Wheat is looking healthier here and nationally than last year with 47% reported in the good to excellent category, this is up 14 points from last year. In Oregon the winter wheat crop is rated at 0% very poor, 21% poor, 40% fair, 35% good, and 4% excellent condition. The Washington winter wheat crop is looking better rated at 2% very poor, 8% poor, 38% fair, 45% good, and 7% excellent condition. Idaho is ranked the best with winter wheat rated at 1% very poor, 1% poor, 18% fair, 78% good, and 2% excellent condition.

Even with a promising crop outlook, there are some areas of drought across the U.S., mainly in Kansas and other areas of the High Plains. Even regionally there is some drought development with top soil moisture ranked 55% and 41% very short in Washington and Oregon respectfully.

Fertilizer Trends

Overall fertilizer prices continue to decline and are now at levels half of what they were a year ago and slightly lower than two years ago before fertilizers made the big jump in prices. Some nitrogen fertilizers did increase slightly from a month ago.

Fertilizer Trends Continued...

- Urea was slightly up, but 29% lower than a year ago at \$570/ton or \$0.62/lb. of N.
- Anhydrous is up slightly, but down 41% from a year ago at \$833/ton or \$0.51/lb. of N.
- UAN28 was lower by 6% from a month ago and down 42% from a year ago at \$338/ton or \$0.60/lb of N.
- UAN32 was up slightly from a month ago, but down 41% from a year ago at \$402/ton or \$0.63/lb of N.
- Potash was up from last month, but down 39% from a year ago with an average price of \$512/ton.
- DAP was lower than a month ago and 23% lower than a year ago with an average price of \$713/ton.

A new form of ammonium phosphate fertilizer has been field-tested by University of Illinois researchers. Struvite (5-28-0) is a new fertilizer that recycles nutrients from wastewater streams, reduces the leaching of phosphorus and nitrogen in soils and maintains or improves soybean yields compared to conventional phosphorus fertilizers, according to a University of Illinois news release you can read here:

<https://aces.illinois.edu/news/recycled-phosphorus-fertilizer-reduces-nutrient-leaching-maintains-yield>.

Cattle Markets

Cattle prices had been steadily increasing through the start of fall, but the increase has slowed down recently. Future prices are showing stronger declines than the cash price for now. National live steer prices are at \$180.11/cwt - down \$4.78/cwt from a week ago, but still up \$27.40/cwt from a year ago. Dressed steer prices are at \$286.14/cwt down \$5.78/cwt from a week ago, but still up \$44.70/cwt from a year ago. Choice beef cutout prices are at \$300.15/cwt – down \$4.55/cwt from a week ago, but up by \$36.88/cwt from a year ago. Other news in the cattle markets show that beef exports are decreasing while cattle imports have been increasing in the third quarter of the year.

The retail price for beef reached an all time high of \$7.82/lb in September. Retail all-fresh prices have averaged 6.6 percent higher year over year (4.0 percent higher in real dollars) in the July-September period. Per capita beef consumption in 2022 was 58.9 pounds, equal to 2021. Retail all-fresh prices reached the same level in 2015 but with per capita beef consumption at 54.0 pounds, 8.3 percent less than the 2021-2022 level. Per capita beef consumption is expected to lower as beef supply decreases in 2024, decreasing avail ability and likely increasing prices further.

Beef production has decreased by 46.3 million lbs from a year ago and beef demand is staying strong. U.S. Cattle slaughter was at 618,000 for the middle week of November, down 53,000 or 92% from a year ago. Cattle weights are 7 lbs lower at 1,379 lbs. Heifer slaughter rates are at an all-time record with rates indicating that cattle producers are not yet retaining enough females to start rebuilding the national cattle herd yet. The current pace of beef cow slaughter suggests a 2023 herd culling rate of 12 percent, above the long-term average rate of about 10 percent and indicates additional herd liquidation. The expectation is that things will start stabilizing in 2024 with current herd liquidation rates slowing. Rebuilding cattle numbers will likely not start until 2025. The January 1, 2024 beef cow inventory is likely to be down at least 2.5 percent from 2023

Hay and Pasture Outlook

Pasture and range condition in Oregon as of November 19th was in decent shape ranked as 24% very poor, 18% poor, 36% fair, 21% good, and 1% excellent condition. Washington and Idaho are ranked similarly, though Idaho has 37% ranked as good to excellent. Nationally conditions are ranked better than the last several years, but not as good as conditions in fall 2019.

Hay prices continue to decrease from record highs reached over the last few years. The charts below help but prices in perspective. Pricing off the Oregon Direct Hay report (accessed here: <https://beav.es/iTs>) for the central Oregon region (Crook/Deschutes/Jefferson/Wasco Counties) showed the following trends:

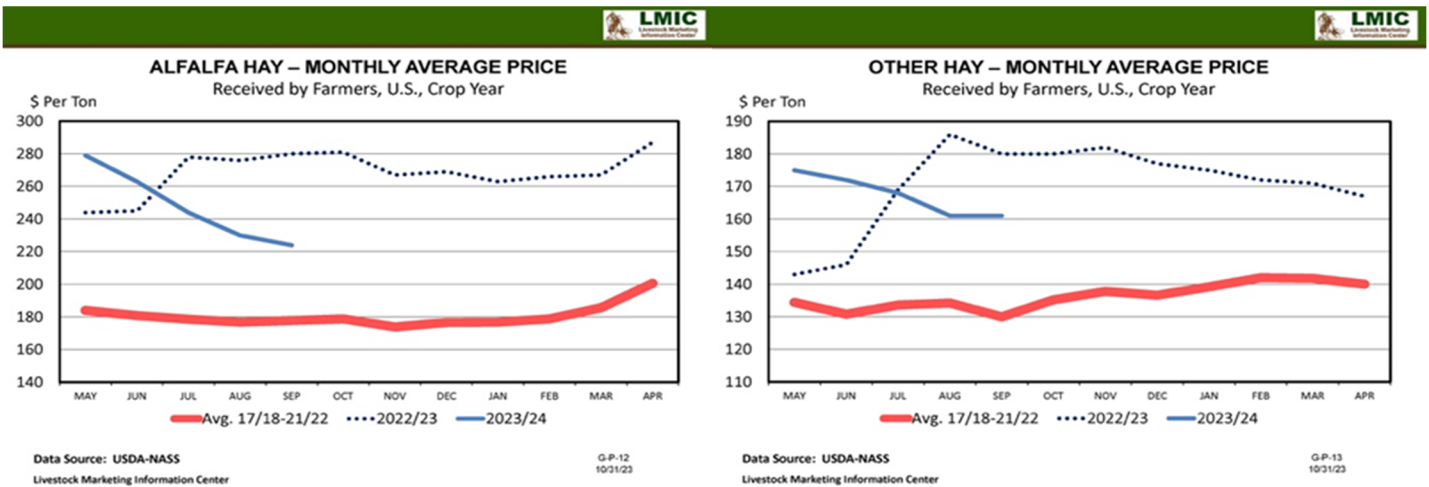
For September good quality alfalfa was selling for \$250/ton, while premium was selling at \$375/ton. Alfalfa with grass mix was selling for \$350/ton. In October prices for alfalfa were averaging around \$245/ton for good quality, \$372/ton for premium. So far in November alfalfa with premium quality is around \$375/ton, while good quality is around \$190/ton.

Hay and Pasture Outlook Continued...

Mixed grass hay with premium quality was selling for around \$423/ton during September. In October prices were around \$398/ton for premium quality. November prices seem to be holding in the \$430 range for premium quality.

Orchard grass bales were selling for around \$361/ton in September, while in October prices were \$250/ton for good quality and \$366 for premium. So far this month prices are around \$356/ton for premium quality.

Triticale premium hay was selling for around \$225/ton in September and \$220/ton in October for good quality. So far in November the price has been at \$220/ton for good quality.



Nutrition Requirements of the Cowherd

This article is adapted from Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist. Grazing and feed expenses account for about 42% – 52% of the input cost of a cow-calf operation. Knowing the nutritional needs of our cows helps us cost effectively meet their needs. Over feeding or underfeeding both rob the profit potential from cow-calf operations. During the normal production cycle cows should gain some weight/body condition during the dry stages and lose some weight/body condition while nursing a calf. With that in mind, having cows at a BCS 5 – 6 going into calving season is optimum. This means that cows are in good shape and have ample energy reserves to draw upon when the “spike” in Crude Protein (CP) and energy (TDN) requirements occur post-calving as the cow begins lactation. Cows need to be in good shape at the beginning of calving season to reduce the rebreeding interval and stay on schedule to breed, calve and raise a calf to weaning each 12 months.

Assuming we have an ample supply of good quality water and an adequate vitamin/mineral supplementation program, the two primary nutritional requirements of cows are CP and TDN. In normal weather, there are three primary influences on the daily requirements of both:

- 1 – Mature Weight
- 2 – Level of Milk Production
- 3 – Stage of Production

Where cows are now in the production cycle and when they will start calving should be considered when making management decisions regarding feeding. The example below follows a 1,300 pound cow through a normal production cycle during the middle trimester of pregnancy, the final trimester of pregnancy, and the first 90 days post-calving based on her level of milk production.

During the middle third of pregnancy, the 1,300 pound mature cow needs:

- CP = 1.64 pounds per day

Nutrition Requirements of the Cowherd Continued...

- TDN = 11 pounds per day

The same 1,300 pound cow in the final third of pregnancy needs:

- CP = 1.84 pounds per day
- TDN = 13.3 pounds per day

The increased nutritional needs reflect not only the cow's maintenance requirements but also the increased growth and development of the fetus as calving draws near.

After calving, during the first 90 days of lactation, the same 1,300 pound cow will have increased nutritional requirements based on how much milk she is producing:

If giving 25 pounds of milk per day at peak lactation, she will need:

- CP = 3.4 pounds per day
- TDN = 19.3 pounds per day

If giving 35 pounds of milk per day, she will need:

- CP = 4.2 pounds per day
- TDN = 22.2 pounds per day

Knowing these requirements is essential to cost effective feeding of the cow herd. Managing our nutritional program correctly plays a huge role in reproductive performance. More details about nutritional requirements of beef cows can be found in this fact sheet: <https://beav.es/qAL>

Beef Quality Assurance Training in The Dalles for Cow Calf Producers, January 23rd 10 am to 3:30 pm

What is Beef Quality Assurance or BQA? BQA is all about increasing consumer confidence through proper management techniques and a commitment to quality within every segment of the industry. This training is a voluntary educational training program that is valid for three years. The training focuses producer attention on daily production practices and increases product safety & quality. Separate BQA trainings are available for cattle transporters, feedlots, and cow calf producers, which this training will focus on.

The mission of BQA is to maximize consumer confidence and acceptance of beef by focusing the producers' attention to daily production practices that influences the safety, wholesomeness, and quality of beef and beef products. Being BQA certified can improve sale value of marketed beef cattle with both direct sales and sales to feeders. Some cattle feeders and feedlots are beginning to ask for producers BQA numbers and may lead to a premium on sales. The beef industry is moving towards making this a possible requirement in the future.

This training is **free** and will be held on January 23rd starting at 10 am in Building 2, 3rd floor lecture hall, Columbia Gorge Community College, in The Dalles (400 E Scenic Drive). **Lunch will be included with the training. Please register here** <https://beav.es/5YS> or call 541-298-3581. The BQA cow calf training covers nine modules: nutrition, cattle behavior and handling, biosecurity, herd health, transportation, record keeping, environmental considerations, worker safety, and emergency planning.

Last Chance Pesticide Recertification Virtual Class, December 8

In-person sessions will take place only in Walla Walla, Pendleton, Clarkston, and Colfax. **Online sessions will be offered via Zoom. Pre-registration is required here:** <https://beav.es/qMv>. Classes are FREE. Instructors are local and regional experts. 5 WSDA and 5 ODA credits are available.

Topics include:

- Harvest Weed Seed Control for PNW Wheat Production Systems
- Label changes for threatened and endangered species
- Russian Thistle Biology & Control
- Invasive Weed Control using Targeted Grazing
- Residual Herbicide Issues in Rotation Crops

Register here: <https://beav.es/qMv>

In Person Mid Columbia Winter Pesticide Trainings – December 13th and 14th

Upcoming **free** pesticide continuing education classes in The Dalles and Moro:

- **Wednesday, December 13th, 1 pm to 5 pm, Building 2, 3rd floor lecture hall, Columbia Gorge Community College, 400 East Scenic Drive, The Dalles**
- **Thursday, December 14th, 1 pm to 5 pm, Sherman County Extension Office, 66365 Lonerock Rd Moro**

Each class will have four pesticide credits available. **Registration is encouraged, but not required at this link: <https://beav.es/TH8>**

Agenda for December 13th:

- 1 pm: Weed Management in Hay and Pasture - Kendal Johnson
- 2 pm: Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program and Water Quality - David Gruen
- 3 pm: Best management practices to minimize spray drift - Jacob Powell
- 4 pm: Pesticide toxicity and proper PPE use - Jacob Powell

Agenda for December 14th:

- 1 pm: Weed Management in Hay and Pasture - Kendal Johnson
- 2 pm: Weed Control Options in Low Rainfall (Fallow-Based Systems) - Larry Lutcher
- 3 pm: IPM for Annual Grasses in Crops and Rangelands - Jacob Powell
- 4 pm: Impacts of Biologicals on Crop Competitiveness and Weed Control in Wheat - Jacob Powell

Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association (PNDSA) Cropping Systems Conference, January 9-10th

The PNDSA conference will again be in Kennewick, WA on January 9-10th with an **Advanced Soil Health Training on January 8th**. PNDSA is a non-profit that provides information exchange and advocacy on conservation policy issues, research coordination, and access to value-added benefits that support the adoption of environmentally sustainable and economically viable direct seed cropping systems. Every year they have their Cropping Systems Conference where experts and farmers come and speak on the newest and greatest research and farming practices in no-till farming and soil health in the Pacific Northwest. The Advanced Soil Health Training takes place the day before the conference (January 8th) and features a full day of experts and farmers speaking on soil health practices. Educational breakouts include:

- Companion Cropping of Canola and Peas - Don Wysocki
- Drones for Weed Control - Aaron Avilla
- Soilborne Wheat Mosaic - Christina Hagerty
- Impact of Biofertilizers on Wheat Yield and Grain Quality under Variable Fertilizer Rates - Jacob Powell
- Challenges of Crop Insurance When Incorporating Cover Crops, Ben Theil, NRCS Representative
- Climate Smart Economic Solutions - Bob Inglis, RepublicEN Org.

Mid Columbia Soil Health and Soil pH Workshop in The Dalles, January 25th, 12:30 pm to 5 pm

Want to learn more about managing soil acidification and improving your farming practices to lessen the impacts of increasing soil acidity on dryland wheat production in your fields? If your soil pH is getting below 5.5 you should consider coming to this **free** workshop in The Dalles in Building 2, 3rd floor lecture hall, Columbia Gorge Community College, 400 East Scenic Drive. **Please RSVP here: <https://beav.es/qPS> or call 541-298-3581.** This workshop will focus on:

- Research findings from lime rate trials in Moro and eastern Washington
- Soil sampling and testing
- Provide producers with economic and science based data to decide if and how they should consider raising soil pH levels in their fields.
- Nutrient management for dryland wheat production
- Fertilizers and management practices to minimize impacts to soil pH such as variable rate, use of biofertilizers, and starter fertilizer considerations

Featuring:

- OSU Cereal Pathologist Christina Hagerty
- WSU Professor Emeritus Paul Carter
- OSU Extension Agricultural Extension Agent Jacob Powell
- Brian Griffith with Fresh Tracks Ag

Soil Acidification Workshop Series

WSU and UI is holding a virtual and in person soil acidification workshop series for dryland wheat producers. Registration is now open and the first virtual class happened at the end of November. The virtual sessions are free. Save the dates and register here: <https://beav.es/qA7> My hope is to also cover these topics during my training in The Dalles on January 25th described in more detail on the previous page of this newsletter.

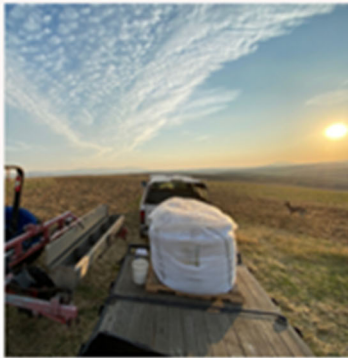
Acidic Soils Solutions

A PNW SOIL ACIDITY MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP SERIES

AN EVENT HOSTED BY WSU AND UI EXTENSION
AND THE PNW FARMERS' NETWORK

November 30th
9:30-11:30am
Online

- *An introduction and update on regional soil acidity*
- *First steps to developing an acidity management program*



December 19th
9:30-11:30am
Online

- *Remote soil pH mapping for detecting in-field variability*
- *Ameliorating acidity and nutrient optimization*



January 18th
9:00 - 3:00
Asotin County
Firehouse
Clarkston, WA

- *Dig in to the latest research outcomes for the region and management strategies (bring your soil cores!)*



Registration for the series is \$30 to get access to live and recorded online sessions and the full day face to face event

Registration and more info:

<https://www.pnwfarmersnetwork.org/workshops/>



With Questions or Comments Please Contact:
Carol McFarland- carol.mcfarland@wsu.edu 509-335-4852
Rachel Wieme - rachel.wieme@wsu.edu
Doug Finkelberg - dougf@uidaho.edu

Up to 10 CCA credits pending for entire series



Register
Here!

Harvesting Insights with Data-Driven On-Farm Precision Experimentation (OFPE) Free Virtual Workshop on February 13th and 20th, 10 am to 11:30 am.

This free training is hosted by The University of Connecticut and the PNW Farmers' Network. This training is focused on helping producers better utilize yield maps and other data sources to make more informed decisions on their operation in regards to variable rates and farming practices.

Participants will be able to:

- learn about OFPE methods
- brainstorm obstacles and solutions for developing adoptable variable rate recommendations
- evaluate the trial design and reporting software for developing your own experiments
- connect with collaborators

Symposium includes:

- access to OFPE video tutorial materials
- design and reporting software
- participation in a two-part online series: February 13 and February 20

More information and registration can be found at: pnwfarmersnetwork.org/workshops

PNW Canola Association Workshop in Moscow, ID January 25th, 2024

Join the PNW Canola Association for a full day of learning and networking about a wide range of canola production topics. General and breakout sessions will allow plenty of time for questions and discussion regardless of your canola knowledge level. The workshop will be held at the University Inn in Moscow, ID, more details can be found on their website: <https://pnwcanola.org/>

SAIF Agricultural Safety Seminars 2023 -2024

SAIF is once again offering free in person trainings for Oregon's agricultural industry. There will be classes in both English and Spanish in both Hood River (February 13th in English and February 14th in Spanish) and The Dalles (January 24th in English and January 25th in Spanish). Register at <http://saif.com/agseminars> or call 800-285-8525. Topics cover farm injuries, consultation, freeway safety, and welding safety.

PNW Cover Crops is online:

Are you interested in continuing the conversation around soil health in an online forum? Are you interested in cover crops? Maybe you want to try them but you have a question about seeding a multi-species mix... Maybe you've tried cover crops and want to share some of your experience here in the iPNW, because it is different than cover cropping many other places- Join the PNW Cover Crops project now. Please visit the website: <https://pnwcovercrops.org> and take a look at the information that is being provided there so far, including a description of the new WSARE project on cover cropping for the PNW. If you register, you will be able to see more information, right now especially there are discussion threads on aspects of cover cropping. The goal is to provide a forum for producers and others to discuss issues related to cover cropping in our region. To join just go to the site and click on the "Register" button on the top toolbar, then follow instructions. That includes a keyword field where you can enter PaNDAS2023.

Want to learn more about soil acidification in dryland wheat?

Check out this blog from WSU:

What's weighing down your soil? Soil Acidity and Aluminum Toxicity in the iPNW on the WA Soil Health Initiative Blog - <https://beav.es/qPc>

The PNW Farmers Network <https://www.pnwfarmersnetwork.org> also has great resources to check out and also a YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@pnwfarmersnetwork> This group can be more Washington focused, but many of their soil health resources also apply to north central Oregon. I think we might be able to learn a thing or two from how dryland producers in Washington are dealing with soil acidification that is beginning to affect many of their fields sooner than here in Oregon.

Happy Holidays!