

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Ag Tour lets Valley farmers experience SW Oregon ag**

Willamette Valley farmers and ranchers got to experience the lives and livelihood of their southwest Oregon counterparts during the OFB Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Ag Industry Tour, Sept. 23-25.

Organized by Kathy Hadley of the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) YF&R Committee, the tour was a three-day roadtrip for 17 intrepid Farm Bureau members. Oregon boasts more than 250 types of agriculture products, so it's common for a grass seed grower from Benton County to not know much about raising cranberries in Coos County.

"The goal was for attendees to learn about agriculture outside of their own Willamette Valley farm or ranch," said Hadley. "But as ag producers, we share a lot of the same issues, goals, and challenges."

It was an action-packed schedule from the start. Following is the YF&R Ag Industry Tour itinerary.

### **Tour Itinerary**

#### Friday, Sept. 23

The Farm Bureau group started its journey at the Paradise Creek Ranch in Elkton for an overview of timber production and stream enhancement work.

The next stop was Clausen Oysters in North Bend for a visit to a uniquely coastal facility. "We learned how oysters are raised, harvested, packaged, and marketed," said Hadley. The group got to sample some of the coast's finest oysters fresh from the bay.

Stop three was Hallmark Fisheries in Charleston. Hosts gave an overview of the Oregon coast fishery industry, including the catching, processing, and shipping of different types of fish, shrimp, and crab.

The group next met OFB Board member Sharon Waterman and husband Charlie on the ranch's Coquille River bottom property. The Watermans explained the workings of their family's cattle and sheep operation. Only a few times a year do Farm Bureau members get to meet and mingle with their counterparts from other parts of the state, so opportunities like these were a highlight.

A trek to southern Oregon couldn't skip cranberries, so the next location was the cranberry farm of Charlie Ruddell in Bandon. "The farm is getting ready for harvest and we were able to see almost-ripe berries on the vines," said Hadley. Attendees got a rare view of cranberry harvesting equipment outside of the bog.

Keeping with the southern Oregon cranberry theme, the group headed to the Ocean Spray Receiving Station in Bandon. Tour attendees learned what happens to berries after they leave the bog and enter the processing cycle.

The busy day ended with a BBQ dinner at the Bandon property of Waterman Ranch with members of Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau. A representative of Sea Mist Wines offered tastings of the best cranberry vintages.

#### Saturday, Sept. 24

On Saturday, the group started the day with a visit to Valley Flora in Langlois. Valley Flora raises an impressive variety of fruits, vegetables, and greens on 10 acres. Crops are sold through its farm stand, restaurant contracts, and a Community Supported Agriculture program that includes 106 families.

Next up was a tour of Wahl Ranches in Port Orford, a large sheep operation. Wahl's also operates Lakeside Ranch Supply, which keeps local ranchers stocked with the tools they need to run a successful livestock operation.

The third stop was the Easter Lily Research Foundation in Brookings. The site grows lilies for research purposes with a goal of identifying and eradicating diseases or pests for this labor-intensive, expensive-to-raise flower variety. The tour also visited Oregon Hydrangea in Brookings for an overview of the farm's operations and marketing of cuttings and fresh flowers.

In Medford, Farm Bureau members took a tour of one of Bear Creek's orchards and the Harry & David Packing Facility, where they learned about the current pear harvest.

Dinner that evening was shared with members of Jackson County Farm Bureau.

#### Sunday, Sept. 25

The day began with a visit to Del Rio Vineyard & Winery in Rogue River, where tour attendees explored the vineyard and learned about the production of great southern Oregon wine.

Lunch was shared with members of Douglas County Farm Bureau at the K-Bar Ranch in Myrtle Creek. Afterward, the farmers toured the hay, cattle, and grain operation.

The three-day tour ended with a stop at Kruse Farms in Roseburg, grower of a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and produce. Participants met the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generations of this family farm, toured the property, and learned how the family raises and markets its extensive variety of crops.

After three days of tours, demonstrations, and tastings, the 17 Willamette Valley farmers on the YF&R Ag Tour left with a much richer understanding of southwestern Oregon agriculture — and the awareness that while the location, size, or commodity may differ, all family farmers and ranchers share the core values of love for the land, unwavering commitment to quality, and immense pride in their work.

#### PHOTO CAPTIONS:

AG TOUR 1: At Clausen Oysters in North Bend, Farm Bureau members Mike Kutsch (left) of Benton County and Mark Vanasche (right) of Washington County see oysters freshly harvested from the bay.

AG TOUR 3: Lee Riddle (left) of the Easter Lily Research Foundation in Brookings explains to YF&R Ag Tour attendees how the foundation works to combat diseases that threaten lily species.

Photo credit: Oregon Farm Bureau

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\* Note to Editors: "Farm Bureau" is a registered trademark; please capitalize in all cases.

The state's largest general farm organization, Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is a voluntary, grassroots, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing the interests of the state's farmers and ranchers in the public and policymaking arenas.

First established in Oregon in 1919, Farm Bureau is organized in all 36 counties and has more than 8,000 member families that are professionally engaged in agriculture. Barry Bushue, an east Multnomah County berry and nursery stock producer, is OFB's 15th President.

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