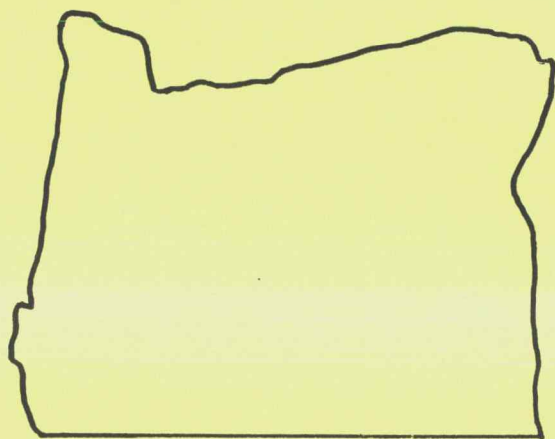


The Oregon Seed Industry



Background Information

THE OREGON GRASS AND LEGUME SEED INDUSTRY Background Information¹

Oregon is a leading producer of grass and legume seeds vital to forage production for livestock and grasses especially adapted to turf uses. Seed is grown in six regions of the state. Most of the grass seed is grown in the Willamette Valley and Union County while the legume seed is grown in Malheur and Umatilla counties in Eastern Oregon.

Oregon ranks first among all states in seed production of orchardgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, Chewings fescue, red fescue, bentgrass, crimson clover, red clover, hairy vetch, annual ryegrass and perennial ryegrass.

In 1983, there were 351,400 acres in grass or legume seed production in Oregon. Linn County is the leading county in seed production. This county usually produces 70% of the Oregon grass seed crop.

Seed exports are important to the U.S. and the Oregon economy. Annual and perennial ryegrasses from Oregon account for a large percentage of U.S. forage seed exports. The European Community, Japan, and Mexico are large importers.

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Table 1

Seed	Acreage and Value of Oregon Seed Crops ²		
	1983 Acres	Production (000 pounds)	Value Production
Annual ryegrass	102,800	145,050	\$23,162,000
Perennial ryegrass	77,860	61,956	19,545,000
Bentgrass	17,700	6,578	3,434,000
Kentucky bluegrass	18,650	11,093	5,557,000
Tall fescue	19,020	16,341	6,876,000
Chewings fescue	16,370	7,441	3,184,000
Red fescue	9,730	4,154	1,705,000
Orchardgrass	21,250	18,355	8,653,000
Red clover	22,550	8,084	6,682,000
Alfalfa	8,740	3,306	3,545,000
Other seeds	36,730	18,710	6,873,000
Total	351,400	301,068	\$89,216,000

² Source: Oregon County and State Agricultural Estimates. OSU Extension Special Report 676. S. D. Miles. 1984.

VALUE OF THE OREGON SEED CROP³

The importance of seed production to Oregon's economy is indicated by the fact that the grass and legume seed crop value exceeded \$97 million in recent years, as shown in Table 2. More than \$7.8 million value was added by processing and handling. Blending and retail packaging of seeds is an important enterprise.

Table 2

Cash Receipts from Oregon Farm Marketings of Grass and Legume Seeds and Value Added by Processing <u>1983</u>	
Value of production (all seeds)	\$89,216,000
Value Added by cleaning, sacking, handling	<u>7,815,000</u>
Value of clean, sacked seed	<u>\$97,031,000</u>

³ After: Miles, Stanley and Roland Groder,
"Agriculture: Its Importance to Oregon's Economy,
Special Report 553, Agric. Experiment Station and
Extension Service, Oregon State University, Aug. 1979."

OREGON GROWERS EMPHASIZE QUALITY SEED

Specialized seed growers produce most of Oregon's seed. The combination of a desirable climate, experienced growers and excellent processing facilities makes it possible for Oregon to supply seed of the highest quality.

Climate: The mild, wet winter season in Western Oregon allows most species and cultivars of temperate grasses to be grown and consistently produce a seed crop of a quantity and quality seldom equaled anywhere in the world. The dry summer allows field drying of the seed before threshing without risk of rain damage. The low summer humidity reduces the seed moisture to a level ideal for maximum seed longevity and viability.

Several areas in the other parts of the state are also adapted to seed production. In areas near La Grande, Ontario, Madras, and Medford, annual rainfall is lower and grass seed is grown under irrigation. Oregon's alfalfa seed is grown near Ontario and Milton-Freewater in the eastern and northeastern part of the state.

Skilled Growers: Oregon producers use the latest equipment especially adapted to small seeds because seed production is their major enterprise. The proper timing of cultural operations assures maximum yields. Years of experience in seed production enable growers to deliver a dependable supply of quality seed year after year.

Processing Facilities: Over 350 processing plants are available to quickly condition the seed for market once the harvest operation is complete. Growers recognize that seed quality begins in the

field. They use a combination of weed control in the field, careful harvesting and processing; growers can meet any quality standards.

Research: The seed industry is backed by an extensive research program in production practices, pest control, seed physiology and processing. The Extension Service carries this information to growers through its numerous programs.

SEED CERTIFICATION

Seed certification provides a service to the public through maintenance and increase of seed in such a manner as to insure varietal purity. In addition, specified minimum mechanical standards are established. The combination of varietal purity and high mechanical purity assures the purchaser of certified seed that has been grown under conditions to protect the desirable characteristic of the variety name.

Oregon seed growers recognize the importance of maintaining genetic identity and purity. Most Oregon seed is grown under the certification program and receives the blue label when it meets all requirements. More than 350 varieties of 20 grass and legume crops were grown under the certification program in 1983.

According to Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies, more than half of the U.S. certified grass seed comes from Oregon. Oregon produces from 40% to 100% of most of the major forage and turfgrasses in the United States.

Oregon also grows certified seed under the international certification program known as the OECD certification scheme (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). This program

establishes internationally recognized standards and labels for certified seed production. During 1982, the Oregon production of certified seed under this program was 24.8 million pounds, the largest quantity of forage seed produced under the OECD scheme in the U.S. in one year.

Table 3

Certified Grass Seed

Oregon Production as a Per Cent of U.S. Total*

88% tall fescue	98% bentgrass
98% orchard	26% Kentucky bluegrass
99% ryegrass	99% fine fescues

*1983 AOSCA REPORT

SEED TESTING LABORATORIES

Seed testing is conducted by one official seed testing laboratory and eight commercial laboratories which are all operated by registered seed technologists. Complete series of tests are available from among these facilities including a wide variety of special tests. Oregon Seed Analysts meet monthly to coordinate activities and share information.

SEED INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS

There are a number of organizations that serve to further the interests of the Oregon Seed industry. The Oregon Seed Growers League is a seed producer group that serves through education and service. The Oregon Seed Trade Association and Oregon Feed, Seed and Supplies Association represents the state seed handlers who market the multi-million dollar seed crop. The Oregon Seed Council is an association of representatives from all groups within the seed industry: grower, trade, Oregon State Department of Agriculture, and Oregon State University. The Council serves to coordinate a comprehensive effort in research and public relations relating to seed production.

Oregon law permits agricultural commodity groups to unit and levy assessments against agricultural production to further that commodity through research and promotion. Producers of forage and turf grasses have united to form the following groups: The Oregon Ryegrass Growers Seed Commission, Oregon Chewings Fescue and Creeping Red Fescue Commission, Highland Bentgrass Commission, and the Oregon Tall Fescue Commission. These commissions also support the activities of the Oregon Seed Council.

NOTES