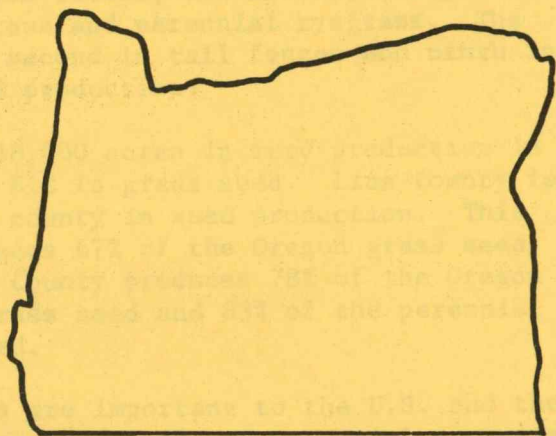


The  
Oregon Seed  
Industry



Background Information

THE OREGON GRASS AND LEGUME SEED INDUSTRY  
Background Information 1/

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 while the legume seed is grown in Malheur and Umatilla counties in Eastern Oregon.

In 1979, Oregon ranked first among all states in seed production of orchardgrass, all Kentucky bluegrasses, Chewings fescue, red fescue, bentgrass, crimson clover, red clover, hairy vetch, annual ryegrass and perennial ryegrass. The state ranks second in tall fescue and ninth in alfalfa seed production.

There are 338,000 acres in seed production in Oregon with 81% in grass seed. Linn County is the leading county in seed production. This county produces 67% of the Oregon grass seed crop. Linn County produces 78% of the Oregon annual ryegrass seed and 63% of the perennial ryegrass seed.

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

Acreage and Value of Oregon Seed Crops <sup>2/</sup>  
1979

<u>Seed</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Production</u> <u>(000 pounds)</u>	<u>Value of</u> <u>Production</u>
Annual ryegrass	127,000	196,850	\$19,291,000
Perennial ryegrass	60,000	49,550	21,602,000
Bentgrass	18,000	4,500	8,550,000
Kentucky bluegrass	22,000	12,238	10,214,000
Tall fescue	10,000	7,200	1,872,000
Red fescue	10,000	5,200	3,848,000
Chewings fescue	12,000	7,200	5,184,000
Orchardgrass	16,000	13,600	6,120,000
Red clover	29,000	6,380	4,147,000
Alfalfa	14,000	4,200	5,166,000
Crimson clover	10,000	4,600	2,300,000
Hairy vetch	10,000	5,000	1,900,000

<sup>2/</sup> Source: OSU Extension Service in cooperation with  
 Statistical Reporting Service, USDA

VALUE OF THE OREGON SEED CROP <sup>3/</sup>

The importance of seed production to Oregon's economy is indicated by the fact that the grass and legume seed crop value exceeded \$70 million in recent years as shown in Table 2. More than \$5.6 million value was added by processing and handling. Blending and retail packaging of seeds is an important enterprise.

Table 2

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Cash Receipts from Oregon Farm Marketings of Grass and Legume Seeds and Value Added by Processing Ave. 75, 76, 77	
Amount Paid to Growers (all seeds)	\$64,500,000
Value Added by cleaning, sacking, handling	<u>5,650,000</u>
Payroll	\$2,400,000
Packaging Materials	700,000
Other	2,550,000
Value of clean, sacked seed	<u><u>\$70,150,000</u></u>

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<sup>3/</sup> From 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 north eastern 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 300 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 227 varieties of 14 grass and legume crops were grown under the certification program in 1979.

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 1978-79 the U.S. production of certified seed under this program was 21.5 million pounds, the largest quantity of forage seed produced under the OECD scheme in the U.S. in one year.

Table 3

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Certified Grass Seed

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

Forage Grasses

82% tall fescue  
99% orchardgrass  
98% ryegrass

Turf Grasses

97% bentgrass  
87% Kentucky bluegrass  
99.9% fine fescues

\*1979 AOSCA REPORT

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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.



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