


*Inside this issue:*

*Production Report* 2

*New Crops* 2

*Marketing Report* 3

*G3 Introductions* 3



**CONSERVATION SHOWCASE**

**Willamette Valley hazelnut growers use cover crops to combat soil erosion**

*Ioka Farms takes proactive approach to reduce soil loss despite record rainfall*

**Producer Profile:**  
Ioka Farms  
Pictured: (left to right) Trevor Duerst, Doug Duerst, and Alex Duerst  
Location: Silverton, Oregon

The rainy season in Oregon's Willamette Valley is no stranger to farmers. Yet the winter of 2017 brought record rainfall to the valley, along with severe winter snow and ice storms, resulting in significant soil erosion.

Fortunately, the farmers over at Ioka Farms were well-prepared to withstand the rainfall on their 120-acre hazelnut orchards. That's because they protected the soil with a cover crop in between the hazelnut rows.

"We have fairly shallow and rocky soil here in this part of the valley, so it's critical for us to keep the soil intact as much as we can and to prevent erosion," said Doug Duerst, vice president of field crop production at Ioka Farms. "We started planting creeping red fescue and timothy as a cover crop on our hazelnut orchards in 2012. It made sense for us, because fescue is our main cash crop."

Ioka Farms is a fifth generation farm in Silverton, Oregon, that farms 5,000 acres of primarily grass seed, but also Christmas trees and hazelnuts. The farm has been in the family since 1877 and has a rich family heritage in the community.

www.or.nrcs.usda.gov

The exceptionally high rainfall amounts through the fall and winter of last year brought to light many issues surrounding erosion on hazelnut acreage in the Willamette Valley. Traditional practices in hazelnut orchards is to have a bare floor for optimal harvesting. This practice, however, can leave growers on highly erodible ground with the potential for severe erosion problems. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) officials have taken note that Ioka Farms' hazelnut orchards have experienced nearly no erosion over the 6 years that our trees have been in the ground along with our Creeping Red Fescue companion crop. Ioka partnered with NRCS to host a workshop last June for hazelnut growers to discuss cover cropping benefits and challenges. Management practices were discussed along with tips for establishment and potential for growers to generate income from companion crops while hazelnut trees are young. Our fescue crops on our first orchards were planted shortly after the trees were put in the ground. We treated the fescue crop the same way we would on a full field scale for three years. At year 4

we stopped harvesting the fescue and started mowing to prepare for harvesting the hazelnuts. One disadvantage is the need to mow the grass approximately 8 times through the spring and summer. We feel the added cost of mowing is well worth it and is partially offset from income generated by the seed crop in previous years. Harvesting has not been a problem on the grass sod and actually enables us to get out to harvest in wetter conditions than if we had a bare floor. If you have hazelnuts and think you may benefit from a cover crop, give us a call to discuss the benefits. To read the entire NRCS article Google search "Oregon Conservation Showcase".



Looking for past issues of the Ioka newsletter? Visit [www.iokafarms.com/annual-newsletter](http://www.iokafarms.com/annual-newsletter) online. Call 873-4464 or email [Alex@iokafarms.com](mailto:Alex@iokafarms.com) to request a paper copy (Limited supply on hand).



Doug Duerst received the Oregon Seed Councils 2016 Seedsman of the Year award last December at the Oregon Seed League annual meeting. The award is presented annually to a member of the Oregon grass seed industry who has shown exemplary dedication to the industry. Among his multiple commitments to the Seed Council over the years, Doug has also served as Seed Council President and as the Council's Legislative Committee Chair, has been a

member of the Seed Services Advisory Committee, and he currently serves on the Council's Research Committee. Doug also has served multiple terms on the Oregon Ryegrass Growers Seed Commission, including as the Seed Council Director, and he currently serves on the Oregon Tall Fescue Commission as the Seed Council Director. Doug is a past board member and chair of the Oregon Seed Growers League, has served on the Oregon State University Grass and Legume Advisory Committee, was an advisory committee member for Chemeketa Community College's Agricultural Program, and has served as a board member of the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District. Doug is the third person from Ioka Farms to be named Seedsman of the year. Dave Doerfler won the award in 1996 and Doug's father John won the award in 2004.

Ioka Farms was honored to receive the Raymond "Red" Boedigheimer award this past September for contributions of time and services to the Sublimity Harvest Festival and Tractor Pull. We provide the use of a water truck for track maintenance and always bring several farm tractors to the pull.



Check out our new harvest video, filmed and edited in 2016 by summer employee Kyle Reiser. Online at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), search "Ioka Farms".





## New Crops

We are always searching for ways to diversify and vertically integrate our business. In many cases new crops being brought into our rotation are ones which we are able to market to the end user. Factors that come into play while assessing which new crops we will try are: 1) Is it a crop that we can use our existing equipment on? 2) Does it fit into a field rotation where there will be no chemical carryover from a previous crop that may impede growth of a new planting? 3) Does the yield potential and projected pricing expect it to be profitable?

One of the most important benefits of raising rotation crops is to clean up fields with recurring weed problems that have become resistant to, or tolerant of herbicides used in grass seed production. For example, several chemicals are available to use on clovers that have good efficacy on many resistant weeds. Crop rotations also help improve soil health naturally.

### Crimson Clover

One of the most widely grown annual forage crops in the U.S., Crimson Clover has been a staple crop in the Willamette Valley for many years. Crimson is a nitrogen fixing legume, establishes quickly, and once it gets going is a very hearty plant. When flowering, Crimson has a distinct ruby red elongated blossom. Honey bees are brought in during flowering to pollinate the plant. Harvest of Crimson is generally late June or early July. Last year was our first for this crop and we planted another 40 acres this fall on the McElhaney Farm.



### Red Clover

Red clover is a perennial plant with a pink bloom. Management of Red and Crimson Clover are quite different. Red is commonly planted in the spring, but can also be fall planted with irrigation if not much rainfall is expected. As the plant begins to bloom in May, the crop is either clipped or cut for green chop to promote even maturation. Red also needs pollination by bees and bumble bees are the preferred pollinator. Red clover flowers are long and physically, the bumble bee is better at reaching the nectar compared to honey bees. Red Clover harvest occurs in late August or early September. Being a perennial, it is possible to take a second crop, but disease may be an issue for taking a third. This fall we planted over 100 acres of Red Clover at the Moen Farm on Drift Creek Rd, with the goal of cleaning up a field with herbicide resistant annual ryegrass.



### Choice Chicory

Our partnership with PGG Seeds has given us the opportunity to expand our portfolio of seed crop rotations. Our first seed crop of Choice Chicory was harvested last year and we have 16 acres in production this year. Chicory is a perennial herb with high forage quality and excellent warm season pasture growth. Chicory grown for seed gets very tall and when in bloom has a light blue flower. Each flower only blooms for one day, so timing of pollination by honey bees is critical for seed germination. With the crop being extremely tall, we had to swath the field twice to get all the material in the windrow. The first cut was high, with the following cut running in the opposite direction, cutting the material down tight to the ground. Chicory is harvested in late August or early September. You can watch this year's crop of chicory grow on the Warren King Farm between Riches and Doerfler Rd.



## Production Report

The start of 2017 will be remembered as one of the wettest on record. From January thru April we received well over 30 inches of rain, with 14 inches of that in the month of February alone! We found wet spots in fields we never knew existed. The wet weather presented many challenges for spring work, but we took advantage of opportunities when we could. As May rolled around it was like someone had flipped a switch, with rainfall below normal and some spikes in temperatures. The latter part of June we experienced a couple of 100 degree days that affected the grass crop pollination. Overall harvest went smooth, with below average yields and higher than expected cleanouts.

Hazelnuts were harvested again this fall with the expected yield down, likely due to the extreme wet period during pollination in February. We are planting another 25 acres of hazelnuts this year, as we continue the growth plan we have set in place. This year will be one of our last Christmas tree harvests, as we will only have one small field left. The end of the year will be filled with meetings, winter maintenance, budget preparation, and most importantly, family time for all to enjoy.

-Don Doerfler



Harvesting Creeping Red Fescue between Hazelnut rows.



## Marketing Report

Our marketing team recently returned from the annual trip to Kansas City, Missouri where we met with customers from around the globe and learned about current market trends. Availability of certain products is currently limited. Since it takes a year or more from planting to harvest, supply and demand of seed can change from original projections. Think about Economics 101, when supply is short it can create short-term price spikes. In contrast, when usage is less, prices are held down. Annual Ryegrass, Tall Fescue, and Orchard Grass are currently in short supply, whereas Perennial Ryegrass inventories are in excess. Many seed companies will be using Perennial Ryegrass in blends where they would have preferred to use Tall Fescue. Our domestic markets have seen an increase in demand for turf products and we expect this to continue as the 2017 crop yields were below average. Even though some prices are strengthening, we can never make up the difference due to a low yield. Export demand has been strong for us again this year, as we had inventory of products that people needed. Our meetings in Kansas City may present opportunities for new business in countries like South Africa, China, and the Middle East. Export sales provide marketing diversification to our business.

We were happy to host tour groups from Uruguay and Canada on our farm again this year to share ideas. Lindsay continues to expand our customer base for the PGG Seeds Forage Seed line in Eastern Oregon, Idaho and the Mid-West. She has also been involved with local pasture groups and a class to gain knowledge to better help others. In October we welcomed Liz Schaecher back to our team, part time, to help with PGG Seeds marketing and special projects. Liz had previously worked in Sales and Marketing from 2002-2010, so we value her knowledge of our business and support of the Agribusiness community. We are looking forward to another positive year!

-Rob Duerst



Pictured above: Uruguayan farmers touring Ioka.

Pictured right:

The Doerfler and Duerst group at the 2017 Family Unity event at Top Golf in Hillsboro. Each year we get together for a fun activity and to discuss what has been going on at Ioka.



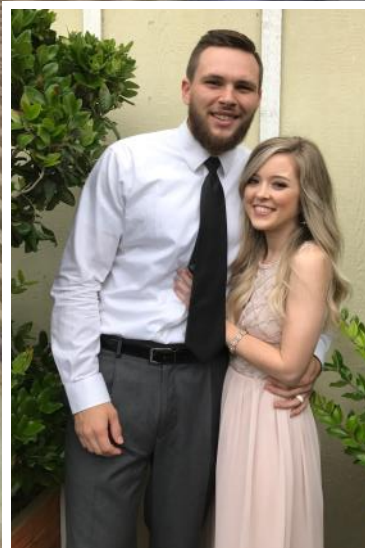
## G3 Introductions

Part of the intention of this annual newsletter is to help you get to know the Ioka family better. This segment will feature two members of generation three each year.



Brittany Bersin is the daughter of Dick and Michele Fennimore. Growing up, Brittany spent her summers on the farm driving combine and assisting in the office. Brittany graduated from Silverton High School in 2009 and went on to attend the University of Oregon, graduating in 2013 with a Bachelor's of Art in Advertising. After college, Brittany continued to pursue her passion of graphic design, working for Davis Elen Advertising in Portland. Wanting to return to the agricultural community, Brittany pursued a position with Wilco's Marketing Department. Brittany is currently the Online Catalog Specialist at Wilco, and manages the

content of farmstore.com. Brittany continues to do contract graphic design work, crafting the Summer Sale Catalog for Schreiner's Iris Garden. On weekends, Brittany can be found taking photos, sipping coffee, and adventuring with her 200 lb. English Mastiff, Aslan.



Miranda is the oldest daughter of Rob and Mindy Duerst. She spent her summers throughout high school working on the farm driving combine. She attended Tangled Ends Hair Academy after graduating from Silverton High School in 2010. Her passion is working in the beauty industry as a Hair Stylist and Esthetician at Visions Salon in Silverton. She married her high school sweetheart Hank Ulven in 2012. He works at Silverton High School as a special education teacher and coaches

the girls Freshman basketball team. Miranda has been a leader in Silver Falls Young Life for 7 years, helping high school girls grow in their relationship with Jesus. She enjoys attending Oregon Ducks Football games with Hank, coffee dates with friends and has two dogs she loves to spoil.



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