

STAA

SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION OF ARIZONA



It begins HERE

A small industry in comparison to the crops that grow from it, but a vital one with a global reach

ISOLATION PINNING MAP

Finding a solution in maintaining this resource

PRIORITY SEED

A company spotlight

NAFTA

Billions of dollars at stake

LABOR

Exploring the demands

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The son of a dentist, Tim Butcher found his true calling in the seed business. He adds, "I have learned from a very good group of gentlemen."

That's something he's paying forward as the current president of Seed Trade Association of Arizona. "The membership value is tremendous as a seed person," he said. "We get a lot of information about what's going on in the seed industry. It's all vitally important." That includes meetings, conventions and networking in the state organization as well as the American Seed Trade Association and California Seed Association.

This year's STAA convention will be held May 3-4 at Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale, with the theme: "Before the harvest, it began with a seed." Keynote speakers will be Mark Jessen of the Gowan Company and James Martin of Wilson Produce. Representatives from the Arizona Department of Agriculture, Arizona Farm Bureau and STAA committees will also address the group. "It's a good rundown," Butcher said, "of what is happening in the seed industry and the farming industry in Arizona."

Originally on track to follow his father's footsteps into a medical career, Butcher discovered that he preferred the challenge of making things grow. He gives much of the credit to TT Havins (formerly of the Barkley Co.) who took Butcher under his wing as a boy, Dr. Kurt Nolte who as one of Butcher's science teachers at Arizona Western College influenced his career change,

and to Louis and Mike Didier, who introduced him to the seed business with an internship at Select Seed of Arizona. Butcher also gives a nod to Jose Solorzano "for his friendship and my first introduction to the STAA."

After earning a bachelor's degree in crop production in 2007 from the University of Arizona, Butcher worked his way up at Select Seed from the "entry level kid" to a position as part of the product development team, then salesman. Realizing he would rather be on the production side, he started working for Priority Seed Production in 2015 and learned the business literally from the ground up. Today he is the production manager, overseeing contractors for vegetable seed production for the company in Yuma and Salinas.

While his own family's exposure to agriculture was limited to a garden, his wife, Alyson, is the third generation of a respected Yuma-area farming family that stretches back to her grandfather, Clarence Phillips. Butcher hopes

he's creating his own legacy through his children,

5-year-old twins Brock and Avery. "The kids enjoy getting out on the farm and getting dirty as much as I do," Butcher said.



Our Keynote Speakers



James Martin

Director of Sustainability, Wilson Produce, LLC.
MSt student, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership
Research fellow, Fink Foundation / University of Arizona

A native of southern Arizona, James is part of the 4th generation of family farmers at Wilson Produce, a grower-packer-shipper of fresh fruits and vegetables from Mexico.

After studies at universities in the US, Cuba and Denmark, he received BAs in Philosophy and Latin American Studies from the University of Arizona.

During college, he founded a University contingent of No More Deaths/No Más Muertes during the Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime Campaign.

He later served with the US Peace Corps in the Federated States of Micronesia before partnering with Tucson-based solar company and cofounding its Mexican subsidiary.

With a focus on social, environmental and economic aspects of the fresh produce value chain, he has helped lead Wilson Produce to be recognized as Arizona's Greenest Workplace in 2014 and Mexico's Best Renewable Energy Collaboration in 2015.

James also serves on the Executive Board of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, is currently pursuing a Masters in Sustainability Leadership at the University of Cambridge and is a research fellow with the Fink Foundation and University of Arizona, where he is focused on addressing fresh produce loss at international ports of entry.



Mark Jessen

In his keynote address, Mark Jessen will trace the history of The Gowan Group from its formation in Yuma in 1962 to the international agribusiness powerhouse it is today.

It is a story that Mark knows well – it's the story of his family. The company was founded by his father, Jon, an entomologist who started the business in 1962 by scouting seed and vegetable crops for pests. Over the years, the business, renamed Gowan Company, grew to include developing, processing and marketing crop protection products, fertilizers and seed. Today, the Yuma-based business has multiple entities in countries around the world, a thousand employees and sells wholesale to 70 countries.

But it remains a family-owned business. Today, the senior Jessen serves as chairman of the board while his daughter, Juli, is the CEO. His son, Mark, became Gowan's first Europe-based employee in 1999. Today, Mark is head of the Gowan Group's retail division, overseeing all the products the company sells direct to farmers in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

"I grew up in the business. It's where the road led me," he explained. Mark has a bachelor's degree in plant science from University of California-Davis and an MBA from Purdue University. He and his wife have three young daughters. When not working, he enjoys deep-sea fishing and riding mountain bikes.



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26th Annual Convention

Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch | Scottsdale, Arizona

Thursday, May 3

11:00 am Registration Opens

1:00 pm Opening General Session

President's Remarks

Arizona Department of Agriculture Current Affairs

G. John Caravetta, *Associate Director*
Arizona Dept. of Agriculture, Phoenix, AZ

Update on Current Legislative Issues Affecting AZ Agriculture

Chelsea McGuire, *Director of Government Relations*
Arizona Farm Bureau, Higley, AZ

University of Arizona-Yuma Update on Current Academic Programs

Tanya Hodges, *Regional Academic Program Coordinator*
Yuma/La Paz/Imperial

Beleshka Brenes Mayorga, *Director of Agriculture Programs*
Yuma, AZ

"Seeing Differently" – Responding to Pressing Environmental, Social Issues as an Arizona Produce Business

James Martin, *Director of Sustainability*
Wilson Produce, LLC Nogales, AZ

Committee Meetings Board of Directors Meeting - Officer Elections

6:00 pm Hosted Cocktail Reception

7:00 pm Dinner
Following dinner - Dancing to "Downtime" band

Friday, May 4

7:00 am Breakfast Buffet

8:00 am Keynote Speaker
Mark Jessen
Gowan Seed Company Yuma, AZ

STAA Business Meeting

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Southern Seed Association Report and Plaque Presentations
Tom Bodderij

University of Arizona CALS Students - Recipients of SSA & ASTA Scholarships

Outgoing President's Remarks / Incoming President's Remarks

Convention Adjourns

12:30 PM Shot Gun Start - Al Simons' 7th Annual Scramble Golf Tournament
at Starfire Golf Club transportation provided

Following golf (5:30-6:30 pm) – Hosted Bar/ Munchies & Golf Awards at Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch - for golfers and guests

1:00 PM Paint Party, Fun & creative paint class at the resort
Papago I room



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It Begins Here

BY JOYCE LOBECK

The theme for this year's Seed Trade Association of Arizona's convention is "Before the harvest, it began with a seed." How fitting. Producing that tiny seed is an art, one that requires know-how and the right growing conditions. And no one does it better than growers in the desert Southwest, especially when it comes to seed for vegetable crops as well as such field crops as wheat, cotton and grasses. Seed production is a relatively small industry in comparison to the crops that grow from that seed, but a vital one with a global reach. A walk through the warehouse of Condor Seed Production bore testament. Pallets of seed were identified as destined for far-flung markets: onion seed to Vietnam, okra seed for the Netherlands, swiss chard to Australia.





DONATED PHOTO BY PRIORITY SEED



Okra? "This is a big area for okra seed," explained Tom Tolman, recently retired president of Condor Seed Production, a wholesale seed distributor. "We sell a lot of it to the southern U.S., Europe and Africa, although all we sell to Europe likely ends up going to Africa."

industry. He came to Arizona in 1970 as a salesman for Ferry-Morse, a seed company begun in 1856 in Detroit that became one of the largest seed distribution companies in the world. A major breakthrough in the seed industry – and in agriculture – was the development of hybrid seed production in the mid-1900s. With hybridization, pollen

resisted the price for awhile but when they figured out how to plant seed just where they wanted it so they needed less and saw their increased yields (in 1972 they were getting 350 cartons of head lettuce to an acre; now they get over 1,000 cartons), they were more than willing to pay the higher price."

"...in 1972 they were getting 350 cartons of head lettuce to an acre; now they get over 1,000 cartons..."

Not all the seed the company handles is grown in the desert Southwest, but the vast majority is, an estimated 2,000 acres contracted by growers. Small amounts of seed also are produced in Northern California and the Northwest, some even in other countries. "But we do everything we can here," he said. Once harvested, the seed is brought to the company's plant for cleaning and distribution.

Kelly Keithly, president and chief executive officer of Keithly-Williams Seeds, related some of the early history of the seed

from the male plant of one species is used to pollinate the female flower of a parallel plant, resulting in a better product with higher yields, more uniformity and higher quality for the consumer.

Such hybridization revolutionized broccoli consumption in the United States, Keithly said, adding that the cost of broccoli seed went from \$6 a pound to \$50. "People don't understand the cost of research and development for new varieties. It's millions of dollars and years of work. The growers

Other research and development has brought new varieties of seed to extend the winter vegetable growing season here, higher yields, more diversity of crops and better products. The end result: "Consumers have higher quality food to feed their families," Keithly said.

Tolman explained seed production 101. There's wet seed that grows inside fruit, such as tomatoes and melons, that can be grown about anywhere, although maybe not economically. Dry seed, produced

Tolman estimates that all the seed produced in the Yuma area by various companies has a wholesale value approaching \$30 million



DONATED PHOTO KEITHLY-WILLIAMS

externally, such as onions and broccoli, “is a whole different ballgame. It cannot be produced everywhere you can grow onions and broccoli. They require certain climate conditions and other factors.”

A drive around Yuma this time of year, one can see fields of broccoli going to seed. “The Yuma area is ideal for broccoli seed as well as short-day onion seed production,” Tolman said, with its dry climate and 100 percent dependency on irrigation that provides total control of water applied to the crop and results in a quality crop. As a result, companies from all over the world have companies in the Yuma area grow seed for them.

There’s one factor that can’t be controlled, though. That’s Mother Nature. “One year we may have 50 percent of our targeted yield and the next year almost 200 percent just because of Mother Nature,” Tolman said. “She” may bring a winter cold front one year, an extra warm spring the next, a rainstorm at planting time, a pest outbreak or a new disease.

“That keeps things interesting,” Tolman said.

At last count, Tolman said, Condor exports seed to some 70 countries. The company directly exports 60 to 65 percent of the seed it sells; if you factor in its sales to other companies that sell outside the United States, that figure is closer to 80 percent. The remainder is used domestically. He estimates that all the seed produced in the Yuma area by various companies has a wholesale value approaching \$30 million. In comparison, agriculture in Yuma County, of which vegetable production is a major part, is valued at more than \$2 billion, he noted.



“But you have to look past the dollars,” he said. “It all starts with seed. If you don’t have good seed, the cost is irrelevant. It goes back to why this area is so important for seed production. The value is more important than the dollar because of what it means to growers.”

Keithly agreed. “It’s a small industry but what it does is huge. It’s helping feed the world.” ■



PHOTO BY JOYCE LOBECK

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Left: Pak Choi, an asian green
Right: Modes of overseas shipping

THIS PAGE:
Top: Kelly Keithly, President CEO
Keithly-Williams Seed
Below: Tom Tolman, President Condor Seed
Productions (retired)
Right: Onion seed

“It’s a small industry but what it does is huge. It’s helping feed the world.”



DONATED PHOTO BY PRIORITY SEED

Priority Seed

BY JOYCE LOBECK

Some 35 years ago Priority Seed Co. had its beginning with a friendship between a local seed man and a part-time farmer.

Today, while maintaining its roots in the soil of the Yuma area, the company has become a major player in the wholesale production of vegetable seed, both organic and conventional, in Yuma County and Salinas.

Administrator Tony Tew recalled how it all came about. Fresh out of high school, he took a job with Northrup King while taking some classes at Arizona Western College. During that time, he became friends with Dennis Monypeny, who was growing some seed crops for the company on land he had purchased in Yuma Valley.

In 1983, Tew and Monypeny formed a partnership to produce vegetable seed, Tew said, explaining that came about with the help and encouragement of longtime growers Les Kammann and Milton Johnson.

Through the contacts Tew had formed in the industry he was able to obtain several seed contracts. Monypeny helped in the fields, applying his grower's experience to the business. "He was one of those guys who was always there to help. He was known for his solutions to problems," Tew said of his partner.



About the label: Priority Seed. "We were sitting around and saying we needed a brand name," Tew reminisced. "I noticed a letter on my desk that said priority mail. It fit."

The rest was history. Yuma is a good area to grow seed with the availability of land, water and labor here as well as the dry desert climate. The company grew and thrived to the point it needed more financing. So in 2002, the company formed a new partnership, Priority Seed Production LLC, sold shares and took in several growers as partners. "That allowed us to grow with the capital infusion we needed," Tew said. Those partners include Tew; Steve, Craig and Tony Alameda, who farm in the Bard area; SMT Farms in the Gila Valley; Robert

Nickerson Farms in the Dome Valley; and Casey & Sons Custom Harvesters, who not only provide harvesting but also grow in the Imperial Valley. Monypeny later moved out of the Yuma area and wanted to withdraw from the operation as he would have little input being so far away. Thus the remaining ownership purchased his shares of the company.

size and complexity of production. From small cage increase to 100-acre large-scale production.”

Tew went on to take a position as area manager for Foothill Packing, a labor contractor business, while continuing for a time as the field representative for Priority Seed. “But we were getting so big we needed more hands-on attention,” he said.

needs to meet the needs of its customers, but with the high price of vegetable seed it’s critical to manage inventory of your products. Therefore, the pressure is on seed producers to be consistent with yields as well as quality. Furthermore, prior to a new variety of any vegetable crop, research is done on seed production to ensure that the product can be delivered with quality and consistency. This chal-

“Yuma has some of the most technical, aggressive farmers in the country, with a solid group of younger kids coming into the profession. That translates into positive outputs in the seed production business.”

“The growers became part of the ownership,” Tew explained. “Our philosophy has always been to partner with the growers in growing seed. Because of that ownership, we have land around the county so we’re able to provide what customers need. It gives us micro management, crop diversity and isolation . . . we’re able to move around as we need to.”

Today, the company has over 20,000 acres of prime seed-producing ranches and multiple growers, the website states. “From organic to conventional and hybrid to open pollinated, our team can handle any

In 2015, Tim Butcher was brought onboard and today is the production manager, overseeing contracts for vegetable seed production for the company in Yuma and Salinas. “Tim has made us stronger,” Tew said. “We just continue to grow. The vegetable seed industry keeps growing and diversifying into more crops. Seed production is always learning ways to make a better crop.”

It’s a challenge with changing weather and changing crops as well as such issues as bolt resistance for onions or tighter heads on broccoli, Tew said. He also likens it to putting together a puzzle. The company

lunge of creating different methods and planting dates for producing these crops comes with the knowledge you obtain while literally living day-to-day with these crops. And keeping endless notes to track the crop’s progress to ensure the production techniques that were successful can be used on future crops.

Tew concluded: “Yuma has some of the most technical, aggressive farmers in the country, with a solid group of younger kids coming into the profession. That translates into positive outputs in the seed production business.” ■

“We were sitting around and saying we needed a brand name,” Tew reminisced. “I noticed a letter on my desk that said priority mail. It fit.”

Isolation Pinning Map



BY JOYCE LOBECK

Producing pure and vigorous seed requires more than farming know-how and good growing conditions. A key to the production is the prevention of cross-pollination. The most effective way to do that is through isolation of the crop from other similar crops, whether fields that also are growing seed or a commercial crop.

For many years, a tool for the seed-growing industry in the Yuma area has been the seed isolation pinning map where growers and seed companies participating in the program locate their fields on the map and mark them with colored pins coded for each crop and each participant. For most seed crops, a distance of 2 miles is desired between similar fields as a buffer.

Over the years, the map has been maintained by the University of Arizona Yuma County Cooperative Extension. But with the departure by Dr. Kurt Nolte, longtime Extension agent, that has raised the question of who would carry on the responsibility for the map. "When he left, it turned into being a gentlemen's agreement," said Denny McKay, senior field agronomist for Sakata Seed America in

Yuma. "Communication and cooperation are key." It's similar to the early days, he said, "when people made sure they stayed out of each other's way." But today there are many more seed producers and far more varieties. "There's just a lot of stuff," McKay said. And there's a lot at stake. When a renegade plant shows up, the entire crop can be lost. "We need isolation to maintain the integrity of the hybrid."

"We need isolation to maintain the integrity of the hybrid."

For the most part, McKay believes the gentlemen's agreement approach to the map is working. Seed producer Steve Alameda agreed, saying that each producer tends to have his own fields. "Everyone tries to go back to the same spot and maintain it. If there's a discrepancy, the two parties talk it over."

Tim Butcher, president of the Seed Trade Association of Arizona, however, believes "the gentlemen's agreement is getting abused" with the lack of leadership and it's time to

come up with a more structured solution. Added Jose Solorzano, research station manager in Yuma for American Takii, "definitely there's a need for some kind of referee."

The two are proposing starting that conversation during the upcoming STAA convention and hopefully come to some solution before the start of the new season in the fall. They think it may be time the

STAA itself took on the responsibility for the map on behalf of its members. Butcher suggested that a three-member board be selected out of Yuma to oversee the map, with administrative duties to be provided by the staff of the Arizona Crop Improvement Association. The system could be funded through a small assessment fee for each pin.

"I think it's the right fit for the Seed Trade Association to take over the pinning map," concluded Solorzano. ■



NAFTA

Since NAFTA was implemented, U.S. agricultural exports have increased by 265 percent to Canada and 298 percent to Mexico for a total of \$43 billion, up from \$8.9 billion before NAFTA was implemented.

BY JOYCE LOBECK

As President Trump talks tough about trade imbalances and threatens tariffs, those in the agriculture industry are keeping a close eye on the issue.

Especially troubling for the industry was the president's vow during his 2016 campaign to pull the United States out of the North American Free Trade Agreement adopted in 1994 to establish smoother, tariff-free trade among the U.S., Canada and Mexico, an agreement Trump describes as "a bad deal" for the U.S.

Sabrina Hallman, president and CEO of Sierra Seed Co. in Nogales, disagrees. "We think (NAFTA) has been good for the economy. It would be devastating for agriculture to get rid of it." That includes the state's seed industry.

Mexico is Arizona's No. 1 trading partner, said John Caravetta, associate director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture for the Plant Services Division. "And vegetable seed products are a big part of that ... a lot of it goes there. Mexico is one of our biggest customers."

Canada is the No. 2 trading partner for the state's agriculture products, said Mark Killian, director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture, although it's less clear how big a part seed plays. But it is significant, he said.

Hallman noted that her seed distribution company, which has operations on both sides of the border, has benefited greatly from NAFTA, as has the entire community. "Our business has grown substantially ... probably 10-fold." In addition, she said, "all those seeds we

export to Mexico come back across the border as fresh produce. And that produce that comes into Arizona goes to Boston, New York City, Los Angeles ... it covers the United States."

At one time the tariff for Mexican goods was 20 percent, Hallman said. If that tariff is imposed again, the price of goods to consumers would increase as well – that's true for such products as avocados and tomatoes that come through the Nogales port and the leafy greens that come through the San Luis port in Yuma County. "If we lose NAFTA, the price of produce will increase and the availability will decrease," she warned.

The concerns surrounding NAFTA emerged from a perceived loss of jobs in the U.S., in particular the Rust Belt.

However, instead of the jobs Trump says would come back to the U.S., Hallman believes those jobs won't return and loss of the trade deal will actually have a negative impact on American jobs. "If I lose business, I need to lose people. The same will be true of agriculture across the nation, she

“Let’s look at what’s broken and fix it. But let’s not close off the agreement...”

said, pointing to the devastating losses Midwest corn farmers will suffer if Mexico looks elsewhere to buy the huge amount of corn it now imports from the U.S.

On another front, pulling out of NAFTA likely would have a major impact on seed breeding, noted Jose Solorzano, research station manager in Yuma for American Taki Inc. The company does a lot of its seed research and development in Mexico and also has sales of seed in both countries “so seed goes both ways” across the border,” he said. Because of NAFTA, that movement has been easier with the easing of phytosanitary certification regulations and efforts by inspectors on both sides of the border to work together.

“We have a good working relationship,” said Solorzano. “If we pull out of NAFTA, that would shut doors. We need to continue NAFTA ... we need to continue those bridges to move seed from both countries easier.”

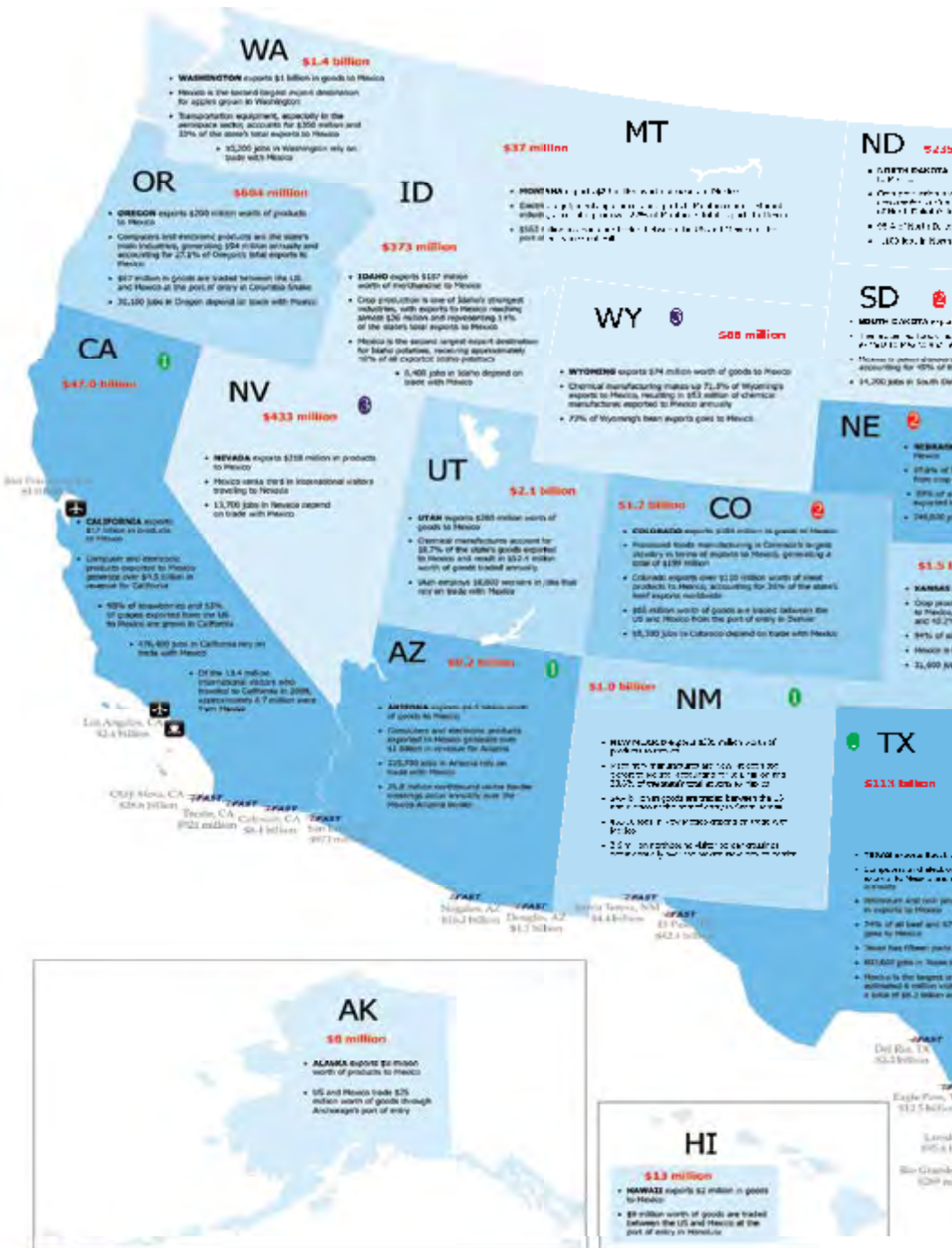
Solorzano is a member of a working group established by the American Seed Trade Association that is collaborating with public and private organizations on both sides of the border to further smooth the import-export process of agricultural products and solidify trade relations between Mexico and the U.S.

Hallman, too, has been involved in talks as a board member of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas in

pleading the case to protect agricultural trade. “Agricultural trade was not at the forefront of thinking when the original call to dismantle NAFTA was made,” she said. However, the industry has benefited greatly from the agreement and would be hurt badly if it is scrapped. Since NAFTA was implemented, U.S. agricultural exports have increased by 265 percent to Canada and 298 percent to Mexico for a total of \$43 billion, up from \$8.9 billion before NAFTA was implemented. If the U.S. withdraws from NAFTA, Canada and

Mexico will look to other countries for sources of the agricultural products they need, Hallman warned.

There is no doubt the 24-year-old agreement needs to be revisited and revised, she said. “Let’s look at what’s broken and fix it. But let’s not close off the agreement. America will suffer, consumers will suffer, while the rest of the world will continue to work together. Losing NAFTA would impact us in ways we can’t even visualize now.” ■



“We think (NAFTA) has been good for the economy. It would be devastating for agriculture to get rid of it.”

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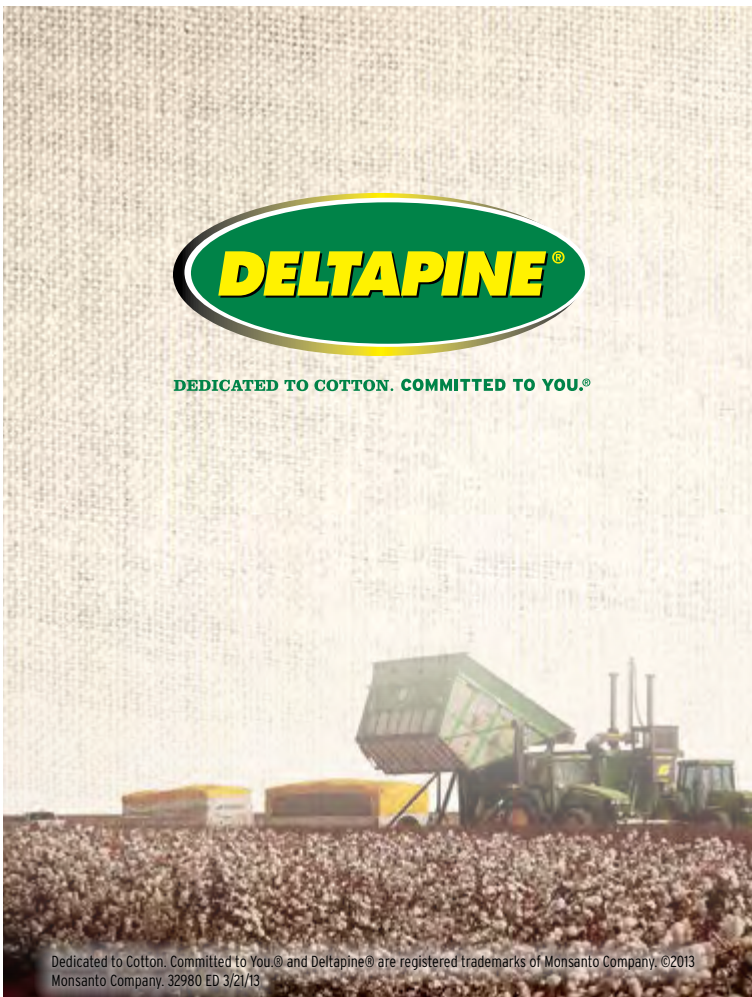
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Labor

BY JOYCE LOBECK

The seed industry in the Desert Southwest isn't immune to the labor shortages that are challenging production agriculture across the nation.

"There's a huge labor demand for seed crops," said Tony Tew, area manager of Foothill Packing in Yuma who was one of three panelists to share their experiences with farmworker shortages during the recent Southwest Agriculture Summit. They also described their experiences in recruiting foreign workers to fill their crews through the H-2A guestworker program.





THIS PAGE
LEFT: Worker harvesting Kale
RIGHT: Pak Choi harvested from field

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Workers harvesting Kale



ALL AGRICULTURE PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRETT FRAME

Tew said that of the estimated 18,000 to 20,000 farmworkers who work in the lettuce and fresh vegetable fields here during the height of the winter growing season, some 6,000 are brought in temporarily from Mexico through the H-2A program. He's now seeing labor shortages extending to citrus and into the summer months with melon production.

protect the seed's integrity. Plus, he added, "with mechanization there's a downgrade in quality. Until there's no labor source, I don't think it will happen."

However, hand labor costs "aren't cheap," Tew said. "They can be \$1,200 to \$1,500 an acre or more." That's a cost that will go up as California and Arizona raise their

hybrid carrot seed production is coming into the area and "we're even looking at watermelon."

Tew believes that Yuma will become even more attractive to the seed industry as the minimum wage in California increases to \$15 an hour in four years. "I think we'll see more people interested in moving their

"There's a huge labor demand for seed crops"

So far, he said, the seed industry isn't using the H-2A program. But he figures it's only a matter of time. He described seed crops as very labor intensive. "Most functions in the seed industry are done by hand ... planting, weeding, thinning, manipulation of the plant, harvesting by hand."

He doesn't see mechanization replacing that hand labor anytime soon. It's not feasible, at least for now, because seed plots are smaller and they're isolated to

minimum wage rates and competition for labor increases with few young people joining the ranks to replace the aging agriculture workforce.

Because of its warm, dry winters and reliance on irrigation, the Yuma area is a significant producer of seed crops, especially for cauliflower, broccoli, mustard and onions. For example, Tew estimates that Yuma growers produce 75 percent of the world's supply of broccoli seed. Also,

production to Yuma. That just puts more pressure on labor in Yuma. In Yuma, we still have some sources of labor across the border. In Salinas, they don't have a border with that source of labor."

He continued: "The shortages never end. There just aren't enough workers. Imagine if some of us weren't using H-2A and we were all going to the border to pick up 6,000 more people. No one wins. We're all just trying to get people on the buses."

“Most functions in the seed industry are done by hand ... planting, weeding, thinning, manipulation of the plant, harvesting by hand.”

This country now imports half of its fresh fruit and one-fourth of its fresh vegetables. Not only are imports of the food on the rise, this country also is losing out on export opportunities, Craig Regelbrugge, national co-chairman of the Ag Coalition for Immigration Reform, said during his keynote speech at the Southwest Ag Summit. It's mostly because U.S. farmers are struggling to find enough workers to tend their labor-intensive crops.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. agriculture industry has between 2 million and 2.6 million “unique” hires, some 75 percent of them foreign born – mostly from Mexico – and half to 70 percent of them are “document challenged.” Many

farmworkers are aging out – the average age is 40 and 14 percent are 65 or older. Their children are going to college and pursuing careers rather than joining their parents in the fields.



Farmers increasingly are turning to foreign labor to fill their crews through the H-A program – 75,000 were certified for fiscal year 2007, a number that has surged to 200,049 this fiscal year. Five states, Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, California and Washington, account for 51 percent of

those jobs. The H-2A program, however, involves a cumbersome and expensive recruitment process and stringent requirements for wages, housing and transportation.

Meanwhile, any effort in Congress to reform immigration and guest labor for years not only has been futile but “the kiss of death” to supporters, observed panelist Chalmers Carr III, president and CE of South-Carolina-based Titan Farms who has been trying for 20 years to get immigration reform. For now, he observed, the conversation has been focused on finding a fix to DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). But that, too, has failed to go anywhere in Congress or the White House. ■



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- Arizona residency and graduate of an Arizona high school
- Upper division student status - junior or senior
- Majoring in plant sciences, crop production or ag-tech management

Here are three students who have benefited from the STAA scholarship program.



DONATED PHOTO

Morgan Taylor

Morgan Taylor, one of three scholarship recipients for this school year from the Seed Trade Association of Arizona, has deep roots in Yuma's agriculture community.

That goes back several generations on both sides of his family. His father's grandfather and father, Charlie and Larry Taylor, respectively, had Taylor Seed for several years before selling the business. They also became known for their barbecue expertise, catering many an agriculture-related event over the years. And Charlie resided for many years on the Yuma County Fairgrounds. On his mother's side of the family, Taylor's great-grandfather Robert Hefner homesteaded in the Yuma area and he and his son, Jerry, operated Citrus Care for a number of years. Taylor's uncle, Chad Hefner, continues in the agriculture business as a sales man with Santa Maria Seeds.

"I've been around agriculture my whole life," Taylor said, starting with helping in the family's seed business, then going to work summers for Harrison Farms. Growing up, he was active in 4-H, showing livestock and serving as a 4-H Ambassador for two years. While attending Gila Ridge High School, he was active in FFA as well.

Now a student at the University of Arizona, he is majoring in agricultural technology management. The STAA scholarship "helps a lot in pursuing an education," he said, adding that as a scholarship recipient he tries to represent the organization well by being a good student. "I like to show them that the scholarship really helps me and other kids go to school."

While becoming a farm owner would be "awesome," he said his goal is to become a farm manager.



Logan Osborn

Seed Trade Association of Arizona scholarship recipient Logan Osborn is pursuing a career in agriculture because, he says: "A lot of exciting things are happening." And, he added, "I enjoy the people in it."

A Yuma native, he came by his interest in agriculture honestly. His father is a PCA (pest control advisor) with Dune Company who raises cotton on the side. His mother comes from a well-known farming family - her father was Terry Easterday. "I was raised in agriculture and I really enjoy it," said the young Osborn, who is slated to graduate in December from the University of Arizona with a major in agricultural technology management.

The scholarship he received "helps tremendously," he said. "Everything helps. I've learned so much in school. Having the opportunity because of people helping me ... I'm super grateful."

Home schooled until he entered high school, Osborn was active on the swim team at Gila Ridge High School, where he also participated in FFA. In addition, he was active in 4-H, showing livestock and served for two years as a 4-H Ambassador.

Growing up, he helped his father raise cotton. He also worked for Mellon Farms for awhile. When he was a college freshman, he served an internship with Stotz Equipment in the John Deere dealership's Buckeye office. Last year he had an internship with Fertizona Chemical out of Buckeye. "The nice thing about the internships, I've had different experiences," he said.

Leopoldo Ruiz

Leopoldo Ruiz wanted to go to college because he "wanted a better life. I didn't want to be stuck in a minimum wage job."

He's the only one in his family to go to college. And the scholarship he received from the Seed Trade Association of Arizona "has helped a lot." Ruiz graduates in May from the University of Arizona with a bachelor's degree in agricultural management technology, having enjoyed his classes in such subjects as soils, biology and crop production.

He expects to go to work for NatureSweet Tomatoes Farms, one of the leading producers and marketers of greenhouse tomatoes in the United States. The company has more than 265 acres of glass greenhouses in Willcox, where Ruiz started working last year as an intern.

Born in Los Angeles, Ruiz moved with his family when he was 1 year old to Mexico, where his grandparents had a farm. His mother worked in the family farm business while his father helped his father on his cattle ranch. The family moved to Tucson when Ruiz was 4. His high school didn't offer FFA and he hadn't heard about 4-H until he was in college. Still, he knew he wanted to pursue a career in agriculture, remembering his experience as a small child watching his grandfather working his farm.

"When we were little, our mom would have us sell stuff from the farm ... green chiles, spinach, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots," he said. "I like to see the crops grow from planting the seed to selling the produce." ■



Tom Tolman

2018 Seed Trade Association of Arizona Honorary Member

As long-time seedsman Tom Tolman eases toward retirement, the Seed Trade Association of Arizona is honoring the founding member and strong supporter of the organization.

Tolman, until recently head of Condor Seed Production Inc., has hung up that title and is now under a one-year contract as a consultant to the company. But he remains committed to STAA, which he helped found 26 years ago. He recalled the circumstances: In the early 1990s, the Legislature was proposing a tax on the sale of commercial seed. The industry mobilized and was able to kill the legislation.

"Our company wasn't directly impacted," Tolman said, "but the dealers were our customers. It wasn't a hard decision to get involved." That involvement included two three-year terms on the board of directors. Tolman says the STAA serves two vital functions: education about issues, concerns and trends facing the seed industry and the social support it provides its members.

Tolman grew up in a small farming community in southeastern Idaho. He earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy and

horticulture from Brigham Young University in 1974. That same year, he began his career in the seed business as a vine seed production specialist with Northrup King in Yuba City, Calif. In 1976, the company transferred him to Yuma, where he continued work in vegetable seed production and quality control. From 1982 to 1985, he was employed by K-F Seeds in Brawley, Calif., as a vegetable seed specialist. He then teamed up with Doua Dorsina to begin Condor Seed Production headquartered in Yuma. When the company was sold to Suba Seeds out of Italy in 2013, Tolman was appointed the president and CEO, a position he held until December 2017, when he semi-retired.

He and his wife, Shellie, have four children – one son now works for the company – and 10 grandchildren with another one due in June.



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