

## **Wade Bingaman: Stewardship Through the Generations**

Bingaman Farms, located near Imbler, Oregon, started out as a 160 acre farm, homesteaded by the Bingaman family in 1860. Seven generations have farmed parts of what is now a 2,500-acre farm operated by Wade Bingaman. With time the farm has grown in size, equipment has modernized, and crops have changed, but the goal has remained the same.

“At the end of the day, whether my kids come back and farm or we have another generation that wants to come back and farm, I want to make sure that this land is better than it was when I received it,” says Wade.

At Bingaman Farms, a lot has changed in the last 20 years, since Wade began working the land. With new smart technology comes the ability to farm better, and more efficiently use the resources available. Equipment size, speed, and technology like GPS have allowed Wade to overcome issues with a small labor pool.

“Advancements in our farming have been tremendous...what we were doing 20 years ago took more people than it does now. We used to do 10 acres an hour, and now we can do 20 to 30 acres an hour in tillage and planting.”

Yield monitoring systems on combines gives Wade accurate data on which parts of the farm are producing the highest yields, which are less productive, and what kind of work is needed to enhance productivity. Crop rotation and modern tillage practices allow Wade to operate sustainably while keeping his focus on the long-term health of the business and the land.

Today, the farm produces grass seed, wheat, barley, oats, hay and recently, soybeans. Fitting new crops into the rotation to improve soil health is part of the long-term view Wade takes to his operations.

Like all farmers, Wade has real concerns about inflation and high operational costs. While commodity prices were good in 2022, he knows they won't stay that way for long. Input costs continue to climb and high interest rates make it harder to invest in equipment and make improvements to the overall operations of the farm.

When asked about his outlook on the next harvest, Wade highlighted the impact of variability in precipitation. Long, dry stretches can create the perfect condition for another problem to sprout when precipitation does arrive: weeds. Wade is prepared, though. In talking to farmers from other parts of the state, Wade decided to try a new product for dealing with grassy weeds.

“These conditions do create an overgrowth of weeds, but I sprayed some chemicals that will suppress weeds that will come later – I’ve had pretty good luck with doing this in the fall before.”

Through all the hard work, advancements in technology, and changes to the farm, Wade keeps in mind what really matters:

“To me, stewardship means producing the best crop that I can year after year, and taking care of what takes care of us. I wouldn't do anything that would be detrimental to the land that we farm.”

Despite the challenges, he believes it is important for consumers to know, and care about where their food comes from.

“It is important for consumers to know that we are doing everything we can to grow a sustainable crop...telling people where it comes from and how it grows matters. If we don’t do it ourselves, our story will be told by somebody else.”

*Wade Bingaman is the 2023 Vice President of Oregon Wheat Growers League and serves as the Baker/Union County President.*