

Dutch bank expands its presence in U.S.

By WILLIE VOGT

AGRICULTURAL banking is a key segment for major financial players in the market, and there's a fresh face entering the United States. Rabobank, the Dutch financial-services firm, has been building a presence for the past few years. Rabobank was founded by Dutch farmers in the 1890s who sought a source of reliable and fair credit for their rural communities.

The latest move is the purchase of the Central Coast Bancorp, a holding company for Community Bank of Central California. The 14-branch organization will become part of the Rabobank Group when the deal closes in the first quarter of 2006; all of those original branches will remain open. Rabobank already had a presence in California after purchasing Valley Independent Bank in 2002. The Central Coast branches will become part of that operation, now called Rabobank N.A.

Cor Broekhuysen, regional head of Rabobank International in the Americas, talked with Farm Progress Cos. recently about the acquisition and the firm's approach to the Midwest market for the future. Broekhuysen (pronounced Brookhouse) talks of the value of the U.S. market and what Rabobank offers when it makes a community-bank purchase.

"When we bought Valley Independent Bank, it had loan assets of about \$1.3 billion to \$1.4 billion," he recalls. "Today, that operation has nearly \$3 billion in loan assets. We nearly doubled the business in two years."

The Central Coast purchase further strengthens Rabobank's solid foundation in what is called California's "salad bowl," which encompasses Monterey and Salinas around the San Francisco basin. The Community Bank of Central California is a century-old cooperative bank, and Broekhuysen likes that approach.

Building a new market

Broekhuysen is no stranger to building positions in new markets; he took on the challenge of creating a vibrant organization in Australia during the 1990s when Rabobank purchased the Bank of the West, which had been owned by the government of West Australia.

"When we purchased that operation, they left it to us to grow the business," he recalls. So he packed his bags and left his native Netherlands for Australia, where Rabobank now holds a lead position as an ag lender.

As Broekhuysen works to integrate the Central Coast operations into the Rabobank business in California, he's also keeping an eye out for community-bank properties that might come on the market in the Midwest.

The focus is on larger, business farmers, and Broekhuysen has a reason: "In the end, the top layer will always survive. We want to serve that market."

■ To learn more about Rabobank, visit www.rabobankamerica.com.



BROEKHUYSEN

Western Close-up

Outstanding 4-H'ers selected

Lon and Stacey Waid, Havre, Mont., are the state's Outstanding 4-H Alumni for 2005. Involved in 4-H programs since their youth, the parents of five are involved in the Hill County 4-H as a beef leader (Lon) and horse-project leader (Stacey). "Lon and Stacey lead by their enthusiasm, and we are grateful for all they do for the 4-H," says Jim Gleason, Montana 4-H executive vice president.

Appel wins 12th bureau term

Washington Farm Bureau President Steve Appel was elected to a 12th one-year term during the WFB annual meeting. The Whitman County producer is also vice president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Boggess named associate dean

Bill Boggess has been selected as Oregon State University's new associate dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences. He is an economist specializing in interactions between agriculture and the environment. "Bill brings new energy and ideas to the College of Agricultural Sciences," says Thayne Duston, college dean.

Montana Bureau leaders picked

Lewistown rancher Dave McClure will be president of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation, delegates decided at their annual convention. White Sulphur Springs rancher Bob Hanson was named vice president.

Agriculturist of the Year named

Rick Jacobson was named Agriculturist of the Year by the Agri-Business Council of Oregon during their annual Denim & Diamonds Dinner Gala and Auction. A President's Award was

given to USI Northwest, which Council President Dick Severson says has shown a commitment to providing resources to the ABCO, helping members save insurance expenses during 2005.



New Stockgrowers chief

The Montana Stockgrowers Association announces that Steven West (left)

has become their new executive vice president. He succeeds Steve Plicher, who retired.

Another Livingston leads

Sharon Livingston of Grant County, Ore., is the new Oregon Cattlemen's Association president. She enjoys a lifetime of ranching involvement.

OSU rangeland student awarded

Kevin France, an Oregon State University graduate student from Vernonia, British Columbia, Canada, received the 2005 Savery Outstanding Master's Student Award from the OSU Department of Rangeland Ecology and Management. The award recognizes a student whose research benefits the state's natural resources and agriculture. He received an \$800 prize.

Meadows given service award

Bill Meadows was the recipient of the 2005 Montana Farm Bureau Federation Distinguished Service Award. The retiring MFBF board member produces cattle and hay and has been instrumental as a bureau leader on many fronts.

Thundering Hooves ranch honored

Farming and the Environment has

announced that Thundering Hooves ranch of Walla Walla has been selected as this year's winner of the annual Vim Wright Stewardship Award. The fourth-generation family farm owned and operated by the Huesby family was chosen for their outstanding stewardship of the land, air and water, as well as their tireless leadership in educating the public about why those practices are important.

Sakata Farms honored

Bob and Joanna Sakata of Sakata Farms in Brighton, Colo., have been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for their dedication to Colorado Proud and Colorado agriculture. "For 60 years, their commitment to strengthening the state's agriculture industry has been unwavering," says Don Ament, Colorado Department of Agriculture commissioner.



Livingston heads Wyo. Bureau

Perry Livingston of Sundance, Wyo., is the new president of the Wyoming Farm Bureau

Federation. He farms with his wife, Clara, in Crook and Weston counties.

MSU chooses Outstanding Agricultural Leaders for 2005

Five Montanans have been named Outstanding Agricultural Leaders by the College of Agriculture at Montana State University. The agricultural leaders for 2005 are Carol and Tom Peterson of Wilsall, Jon and Sharla Tester of Big Sandy, and Jake Cummins of Bozeman. MSU gives these awards annually to people who have provided outstanding leadership in production agriculture and public service, and who advocate for the industry or agricultural business.

Calendar

JANUARY:

5-6: Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference, Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. Phone: (509) 783-4676.

17-19: Spokane Ag Expo, Ag Trade Center, Spokane, Wash. Contact: Myrna O'Leary. Phone: (509) 459-4114. E-mail: moleary@chamber.spokane.net.

18-19: Washington State Hay Growers Association Annual Conference and Trade Show, Toyota Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. Contact: Sheri Nolan. Phone: (509) 585-5460.

19: AgrAbility Workshop, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Trinidad State Junior College, 600 Prospect St., Trinidad, Colo. Contact: Bob Fetsch. Phone: (970) 491-5648. E-mail: fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu.

24: AgrAbility Workshop, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., San Luis Valley Information Center, 947 First St., Monte Vista, Colo. Contact: Bob Fetsch. Phone: (970) 491-5648. E-mail: fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu.

30-Feb. 1: Oregon Horticultural Society annual meeting, Red Lion Motor Inn, Salem, Ore. E-mail: info@oregonhorticulturalsociety.org.

31-Feb. 2: Northwest Agricultural Show, Portland Expo Center, Portland, Ore. Phone: (503) 736-5200.

31-Feb. 3: Colorado State University Extension Grower Conference and

Trade Show, Ski Hi Park, Monte Vista, Colo. Contact: Merlin Dillon. Phone: (719) 754-3494, ext. 12. Trade Fair Contact: Debbie Bressman. Phone: (719) 852-2731.

FEBRUARY:

1-2: Montana Soil and Water Conservation Society "Amber Waves of Change" technical workshop, Sheraton Hotel, Billings, Mont. Contact: Ann Fischer. Phone: (406) 778-2238, ext. 109. Web site: www.mtswcs.org.

7-9: 2006 Washington State Potato Conference & Trade Show, Big Bend Community College & Grant County Fair Ground. Phone: (509) 766-7123. E-mail: info@potatoconference.com.

7: AgrAbility Workshop, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Colorado Welcome Center, 3745 E. Prospect Rd., Ft. Collins, Colo. Contact: Bob Fetsch. Phone: (970) 491-5648. E-mail: fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu.

8: AgrAbility Workshop, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Adams County Community Bldg., 2550 Strasburg Mile Rd., Strasburg, Colo. Contact: Bob Fetsch. Phone: (970) 491-5648. E-mail: fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu.

21: AgrAbility Workshop, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Moffat County Extension, 539 Barclay St., Craig, Colo. Contact: Bob Fetsch. Phone: (970) 491-5648. E-mail: fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu.

Vol. 129 No. 1

Fast find:

■ NewsWatch	1
■ Letters/Opinions	9
■ Crop Management	12
■ National Beef Producer	BP1
■ Marketplace/Classified	M1
■ Livestock	17
■ Property Management	25
■ Western Lifestyles	28
■ Marketing	30

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