

# Shepherd's Grain flour expansion reaps key benefits

By T.J. BURNHAM

**T**ALKING about making a difference in agricultural markets and doing something about it separates the daydreamers from the movers and shakers.

The appearance of the Stone-Buhr flour brand this year in mainline Pacific Northwest grocery stores is a sign that entrepreneurial prowess is alive and well in PNW agriculture.

Northwest consumers can now buy this first-of-a-kind locally grown all-purpose flour without going to specialty shops.

Stone-Buhr is the first major brand to launch an identity-preserved flour grown exclusively by PNW farmers.

The wheat for the flour is grown by a group of Northwest families, primarily in Washington and Oregon, using environmentally friendly practices that conserve soil and water.

You've probably heard about their Shepherd's Grain; it had been offered in a few bakeries and restaurants. Now, the product is broadly available to retail grocery customers.

The success for Shepherd's Grain producers comes not from wishful thinking, but a hard determination to succeed, and years of incessant work to expand their product into bigger markets, directly selling to ultimate users of their wheat products.

## Change is good

What is most notable in this is the signal that farmers can change old marketing techniques if they set their minds to the task, and are driven by a strong producer base to go out and sell their idea themselves. It sets a standard for what can happen throughout many sectors of the industry to use direct marketing as a tool.

The effort contrasts with the conventional practice of selling Northwest-grown grain abroad for the most part, which stands in the way of consumers buying locally grown flour. That old system has served agriculture well, but not as well as identify-preserved marketing that puts farmers in control of their crop destiny.

The Shepherd's Grain concept is that not only will consumers locally like to purchase sustainably produced flour grown in their region of residence, but also that shifting more market control to the growers will enhance returns.

## Consumers more cautious

"Today people care more and more about where their food comes from and how it was grown; we're thrilled to be able to bring Northwest consumers a top-quality, family-farmed, local and environmentally-friendly flour," says Josh Dorf of Stone-Buhr.

For the farmer, using the Food

## Our Say

T.J. BURNHAM  
Editor  
tburnham@  
farmprogress.com



Alliance-approved no-till production practice "is a change that happens in the heart first," says Shepherd's Grain co-founder Karl Kupers, a Harrington, Wash., producer who has worked hard to advance the local marketing concept.

"We believe it is the right thing to do so that future generations can continue to enjoy the abundance of our fine lands," he says.

Success of Shepherd's Grain, ratcheted up with the Stone-Buhr connection, is perhaps the greatest signal yet that good farming practices and working to change out old marketing scenarios can pay off for producers. Others should take note of the Shepherd's Grain idea and think hard about local marketing of what they grow.

In the words of another dedicated Shepherd's Grain founder, Reardan, Wash., farmer Fred Fleming, "By choosing this flour, consumers will be supporting healthy soil, farmland and local farm families."

The new flour, labeled "Washington White All-Purpose Flour," is also certified by the Portland, Ore.-based Food Alliance, giving it an official stamp of approval as a sustainably farmed product.

## We want to hear from you!

You can "Sound Off" too.

E-mail your letters to  
tburnham@  
farmprogress.com.

Write to:  
Letter to the Editor  
The Western Farmer-Stockman  
12309 NE 21st Street  
Vancouver, WA 98684

All letters must include your name, address and telephone number for verification purposes, and should be 300 words or less.

## Your say

### Thanks for DS coverage

Thank you so much for the great articles in the March *Western Farmer-Stockman*. We have been receiving calls about the carbon program, and they have been because of the information you provided.

Patt Evans, executive director,  
Communications  
Pacific Northwest Direct Seed  
Association  
Moscow, Idaho



## Calendar

### July

**12:** Spillman Agronomy Farm field day, 7:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Pullman, Wash. Contact: John Burns. Phone: 509-335-5831. E-mail: burnsju@wsu.edu.

**22-25:** Howard Wyman Sheep Industry Leadership School, Sioux Falls, S.D. Phone: 503-364-5462. Web site: [www.nfa-sheep.org](http://www.nfa-sheep.org).

### August

**23-25:** Oregon Association of Nurseries Farwest Show, Oregon Convention Center (tours Aug. 21-22), Portland, Ore. Phone: 800-342-6401. Web site: [www.farwestshow.com](http://www.farwestshow.com).

### October

**3-5:** U.S. Pea & Lentil Trade Association annual meeting, Cal Neva Resort, Crystal Bay, Nev. Phone: 208-882-3023. E-mail: [kmonk@pea-lentil.com](mailto:kmonk@pea-lentil.com).

### December

**11-13:** Colorado State University Range Beef Cow Symposium, Larimer County Fairground at the Ranch facility, 25 miles south of Fort Collins, Colo. Contact: Jack Whittier. Phone: 970-491-6233. E-mail: [jack.whittier@colostate.edu](mailto:jack.whittier@colostate.edu).

■ For more calendar items, see [www.westernfarmerstockman.com](http://www.westernfarmerstockman.com).

THEY'RE JUST LIKE SOYBEAN FARMERS IN EVERY WAY. THEY'RE OUR LOCAL LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY PRODUCERS. WE NEED THEM AS MUCH AS THEY NEED US. THEY CONSUME 98 PERCENT OF OUR SOYBEAN MEAL USED AT HOME AND GIVE US SO MUCH MORE IN RETURN. THEY GENERATE OVER \$312 MILLION IN TAX REVENUE THAT FIXES OUR ROADS, PAYS FOR OUR SCHOOLS AND BUILDS OUR LIBRARIES. SUPPORT THEM AS MUCH AS THEY SUPPORT US...AND OUR WAY OF LIFE.



COLORADO NEEDS LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY PRODUCERS

HARD WORK.  
LOW PAY.  
FEEDS THE WORLD.  
SOUND FAMILIAR?

