

# Seed supplies will be ample

*Turfgrass seed production is up in 1999, supplies are adequate and prices are stable with only spot shortages forecast.*

By RON HALL/ Managing Editor

**C**ommercial buyers of seed should be smiling this season, particularly those who do a lot of overseeding. Production is up, supply is up and prices are stable for most seed species and varieties—particularly perennial ryegrass. Demand should remain strong too.

Several factors affect demand for seed, including the level of new construction. New commercial properties, new homes, new golf course construction/renovation boost seed usage. Most experts feel that new construction will remain robust, but beware: interest rates started creeping up this summer and this could slow building.

Weather is a determining factor in the seed industry too—for both seed production and demand, as Wayne Horman, of The Scotts Company, Marysville, OH, pointed out.

For instance, a severe summer drought in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic will unquestionably create greater seed demand—particularly in Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania which has suffered one its worst droughts ever. Lawn/landscape pros are going to be busy with renovations on unirrigated residential and commercial properties in these areas this fall.

## **Off to a cool start**

Weather affects production too. Week after week of 50° to 60°F weather this past spring and early summer in the Willamette Valley in Oregon slowed maturity of both tall

*story cont. on page 26  
seed chart begins on page 24*



Above, Dr. Joe Duich (right, center) explains the latest findings at the 1999 Turf-Seed, Inc./Pure Seed Testing, Inc. Field Day. Test plots, like these in Rolesville, NC, allow breeders to compare varieties.

## Burn ban fuels cottage hay industry

Grass seed growers in Oregon's fertile Willamette Valley this year are exporting about \$40 million in straw to Asia for use as roughage in cattle feed. Oregon produces 60% of the U.S. grass seed crop, and 93% of that comes from the Willamette Valley.

It's estimated that almost 100 million tons of straw result each year from the over 400,000 acres planted for turfgrass seed production in the Willamette Valley.

For years, grass seed producers had re-

sisted pressure from groups opposed to field burning—and later government regulators—over field burning, in which acres of the leftover straw would be set afire to sanitize the fields of pests and plant disease. In June of 1991, however, Oregon legislators placed restrictions on field burning. Today, turfgrass seed growers are allowed to burn a maximum of 45,000 acres in the valley, down from about 230,000 acres in 1980.

Because of tax incentives, many farmers have replaced burning with baling as the straw is cut and compressed for shipment to Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

"At one time straw was viewed as a waste product—now it's viewed as a commodity," says Dr. Tom Chastain, a crop physiologist at Oregon State University. This sea-

son the overseas demand rose because of typhoons that damaged rice crops in several Pacific Rim countries.

"This is a great environmental success story," says Chastain. "There were people predicting the end of the (grass seed) industry without field burning, but the opposite has occurred; the markets have skyrocketed and demand has gone up."

Growers didn't make the change overnight, but they did adapt, says Dr. Craig Edminster with International Seeds, Halsey, OR. "Actually, it's a testimony to the resourcefulness of the growers here in the valley," says Edminster. "They had to make a change and they did."

*Jim Guyette*



## Seed industry in transition

AgriBioTech, Inc. (ABT) is closing 33 facilities and eliminating over 300 positions, and expects to achieve profitability in FY 2000, said Richard Budd, chairman of the board and CEO of ABT. He made the announcement on July 1 (the start of the company's fiscal year) after the company's board approved a restructuring plan that should save ABT over \$14 million annually.

ABT had been on a buying spree the past several years, acquiring 34 turf and forage seed companies. Earlier this year, the company revamped its management with a focus on integrating these acquisitions.

"This board action is important for ABT because we can now put the integration behind us," said Budd. "We are excited about the new organization that has emerged from the integration effort."

Also:

► The three seed companies acquired by AgriBioTech, **Fine Lawn Research**, **Burlingham** and **Zajac**, are now under one name: Independent Seeds. Independent Seeds can be contacted at 3420 Cherry Ave. NE, Salem, OR, 97303; 800/221-7333.

► **Seed Research of Oregon**, Corvallis, OR, acquired the North America turfgrass marketing program of **Advanta Seeds Inc.**, both companies announced in June. Both firms will participate in a cooperative research program to develop new and improved turfgrass varieties. SRO will also take over Advanta's turf and forage seed production. "We are pleased to have a research partner with the sales and marketing capabilities of SRO," said Dave Holman, general manager of Advanta Seeds Pacific, Inc. Advanta will continue to market forage grasses in North America.

► **Barenbrug North America**, Tangent, OR, has acquired two seed companies: **Pro Seed Turf Supply Inc.**, Chantilly, VA and **Lloyd Seekamp Seed Company**, Gilcrest, CO. Pro Seed will continue to operate as Pro Seed and bring new products to the MDVA market. Special custom mixes will be the speciality of Barenbrug/Pro Seed. The Lloyd Seekamp Seed Company name will eventually be changed to Barenbrug-Colorado.

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
<b>KEY (AVAILABILITY):</b>			
A=expected surplus; B=adequate supply; C=limited supply.			
<b>KEY (PRICE):</b>			
H= higher price than last season; S= stable, equal to last season;			
L= lower prices than last season; NR = no response			
<i>Kentucky Bluegrass</i>			
1757	ABT/Lofts	B	S
ABBey	Scotts	B	S
Adelphi	Advanta	B	S
Alpine	Pickseed West	C	S
Apollo	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Ascot	Scotts	B	S
Award	Jacklin	B	H
Banff	Pickseed West	C	S
Blacksburg	Turf-Seed	B	H
Blue Jay	ABT/Olsen Fennell	C	S
Caliber	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Cannon	Advanta	A	L
Champagne	Lebanon	C	S
Chateau	ABT/Fine Lawn	B	S
Cocktail	Advanta	C	S
Cobalt	Turf Merchants	B	S
Coventry	Scotts	B	S
Cynthia	Advanta	B	L
Dawn	Lesco	C	S
Dellwood	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Dragon	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Eagleton	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Explorer	Pickseed West	C	S
Fairfax	Advanta	B	S
Fortuna	International Seeds	B	L
Gnome	Turf Merchants	B	S
Geronimo	Advanta	B	L
Haga	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
Liberator	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Midnight	Turf-Seed	B	L
Misty	Pennington	B	S
Nassau	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Nottingham	ABT/Willamette	B	S
Nuglade	Jacklin	C	H
Opal	ABT/Burlingham	C	S
Parade	Advanta	C	S
Preakness	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Princeton 105	ABT/Lofts	C	S
Ram I	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Rambo	Jacklin	C	H
Rugby	Medalist	B	S
Seabring	ABT/Olsen Fennell	C	S
Shamrock	Lesco	B	H
Sodnet	Turf Merchants	B	S
SR 2000	Seed Research	C	S
SR 2100	Seed Research	B	S
SR 2109	Seed Research	C	S
Unique	Turf-Seed	B	S
Viva	Advanta/Turf Merchants	B	S

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
Washington	Burlingham	B	S
Wildwood	Lesco	B	H
<i>Perennial Ryegrass</i>			
Accent	Medalist	B	S
Advent	Jacklin	B	L
Affinity	Turf Merchants	A	L
Ascend	Scotts	B	S
ASP 400	Advanta	B	S
ASP 410	Advanta	B	New
Blackhawk	Turf Merchants	A	L
Boardwalk	ABT/Olsen Fennell	B	S
Brightstar II	Turf-Seed	B	S
Caddie Shack	Medalist	B	S
Catalina	Turf-Seed	B	S
Charger II	Turf-Seed	B	S
Cutter	Pickseed West	B	S
Derby Supreme	International Seed	B	L
Dimension	Advanta	C	S
Divine	Scotts	B	L
Elegance	ABT/Olsen Fennell	B	S
Essence	International Seed	C	New
Evening Shade	Turf Merchants	B	S
Excel	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
Express	Pickseed West	B	NR
Fiesta II	Pickseed West	B	NR
Gator II	International Seed	C	New
Imagine	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Legacy II	Lesco	B	S
Line Drive	Lesco	B	S
Laredo	Turf Merchants	B	L
Majesty	Scotts	B	S
Manhattan 3	Turf Merchants	B	S
Mardi Gras	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Monterey	Jacklin	L	S
Morning Star	Pennington	B	S
Palmer III	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Panther	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Paragon	Turf Merchants	C	S
Pennant II	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
PhD	International Seed	B	L
Precision	Advanta	C	S
Prelude III	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Prizm	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Radiant	ABT/Burlingham	C	S
Rodeo II	Turf Merchants	A	L
R2	International Seed	B	L
Seville	ABT/Willamette	B	S
Seville II	ABT/Willamette	C	S
Sonata	Pennington	B	S
Shining Star	Pennington	B	S
SR 4200	Seed Research	B	S
SR 4330	Seed Research	B	S
SR 4400	Seed Research	B	S
Premier II	Barenbrug USA	C	S
Stallion Supreme	ABT/Lofts	B	L

cont. from page 22

fescues and, particularly, perennial ryegrass. Farms in and around the fertile Willamette, which supply much of the nation's seed, didn't begin cutting perennial ryegrass in most areas until about the third week of July. This is 10 days to two weeks later than they've cut the past decade.

"But, it turned hot pretty suddenly and, although we're late, I think we're going to have a good harvest with good supplies and quality," said Dave Nelson of the Oregon Fine Fescue Commission, Salem, OR.

"For us, we do 50% of our business in the four months starting in July," said Steve Tubbs, Turf Merchants Inc., Tangent, OR. "Now we're basically compressing everything into three months, meaning we have to clean seed faster, test it faster and ship it faster. The crop being late is really throwing

a monkey wrench into logistics."

While this puts pressure on the seed processors, it probably won't be felt by landscapers and other quantity seed buyers.

"We're going to push it again this year," said Brad Dozler, vice president of sales International Seeds, Halsey, OR. "But, the consumer still wants his seed at a certain date, and we have to meet that."

Tom Stanley, marketing director for Turf-Seed Inc., added: "Some varieties will be tight but, on the whole, the Oregon crop will be ample for fall 1999 and spring 2000 needs."

Also, there was carryover from the 1998 harvest, said Horman from Scotts, particularly with perennial ryegrass, meaning seed will remain in the pipeline until the 1999 seed is shipped. How much? Some marketers said a lot; others said "enough."

Steve Tubbs in July said, "We figured we might be able to count 20 million lbs. of carryover on a 200 million lb. crop, but our crop is late this year and I'm practically out of perennial because of the carryover I've already shipped."

As sunny as this year's harvest appears, there are some clouds.

"The traditional northern turfgrass varieties of (Kentucky) bluegrass and fine fescues will be in tight supply this year," said Mike Baker, senior vice president for Pennington's Oregon division.

"The market has responded accordingly to small harvests across the seed industry of Kentucky bluegrass and creeping red fescue with significant price increases in these varieties."

Ronnie Stapp, executive vice president of Pennington's seed division, blamed hot,

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
Sunshine	Pickseed West	B	NR
Top Hat	International Seed	B	L
Wilmington	Lesco	B	S
Wind Dance	Pennington	C	S
Wind Star	Pennington	B	S
Wizard	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
<i>Turf-Type Tall Fescue</i>			
Adobe	Scotts	B	S
Adventure II	Turf Merchants	B	S
Amigo	Medalist	B	S
Anthem II	Turf Merchants	B	S
Apache II	Turf-Seed	B	S
Arabia	Jacklin	B	S
Arid 3	Jacklin	B	S
Avalon	ABT/Olsen Fennell	B	S
Avanti	Turf Merchants	A	L
Aztec	Scotts	B	S
Bonsai 2000	Turf Merchants	B	S
Bravo	Lesco	B	S
Coronado	Turf-Seed	B	S
Crossfire II	Pickseed West	C	S
Dixie Green	International Seed	B	L
Duster	Pennington	B	S
Empress	ABT/Lofts	B	L
Falcon II	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
Finelawn Petite	ABT/Lofts/Finelawn	B	L
Finelawn 5GL	Fine Lawn	B	L
Finelawn 88	ABT/Lofts	B	L
Gazelle	ABT/Lofts/Zajac	B	L
Hounddog	International Seed	B	L
Hounddog 5	International Seed	B	L

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
Jaguar 3	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Laramie	Lesco	C	S
Marksman	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
Micro	Turf Merchants	A	L
Millennium	Turf Merchants	C	S
Mustang II	Pickseed West	B	S
Nashville	Advanta	C	NR
Palisades	ABT/Olsen Fennell	B	S
Pride	International Seed	B	L
Rebel Jr.	ABT/Lofts	B	L
Rebel Sentry.	ABT/Lofts	C	S
Rebel III	ABT/Lofts	B	L
Regiment	Advanta	B	L
Renegade	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
Scorpion	ABT/Zajac	C	S
Shenandoah	ABT/Willamette	B	S
Shenandoah II	ABT/Willamette	C	S
Stetson	Lesco	B	S
Southern Choice	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
SR 8200	Seed Research	B	S
SR 8210	Seed Research	B	S
SR 8500	Seed Research	B	S
Sunpro	Pickseed West	B	S
TarHeel	Turf-Seed	C	H
Tulsa	Advanta	B	L
Virtue	Pennington	B	S
Wildfire	Advanta	B	New
Wyatt	Scotts	B	S
<i>Fine Fescues</i>			
Anvil	International Seed	B	New
Aruba creeping red	Medalist	B	New

dry weather in eastern Washington, and reduced yields due to the burning ban for the less-than-stellar bluegrass crops.

As for the creeping red fescues, Stapp said that farmers over-produced these varieties several years ago, driving down the price. Many of the farmers diverted their fields to other crops as a result, but last season there was "huge usage" of creeping reds, therefore the shortages.

Similar market forces—but on a much larger scale—played into this year's mostly favorable seed harvest.

More farmers in the Willamette Valley grew grass seed this season because of depressed prices in commodities like corn and wheat and, surprisingly, some of the unique specialty crops like hops and mints.

"Agriculture is generally in the tank," said International Seeds' Dozler. "Conse-



Field burning, restricted in recent years, can affect seed yields in the Pacific Northwest.

quently, a number of farmers jumped into grass seed production." Dozler sees a buyer's market, particularly for varieties used in overseeding.

"From the species standpoint, the total seed supply should be okay. But, what is more important to buyers is the avail-

ability of certain varieties," added John Zajac, of AgriBioTech/Zajac Seeds. "In general, I think we're looking at a reasonably good supply of perennial ryegrass and tall fescue. Customers will have seeds to meet their needs, and I don't foresee any shortages," he added. **LM**

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
Attila hard	Turf Merchants	B	L
Azure	ABT/Lofts	C	S
Badger creeping	Scotts	C	New
Banner III chewings	Scotts	B	S
Brigade hard	Scotts	B	S
Brittany	Lesco	B	S
Cindy red	International Seed	B	S
Dawson	Advanta	B	L
Defiant	Lesco	B	S
Discovery hard	Turf-Seed	B	H
Eco chewings	ABT/Burlingham	C	S
Eureka hard	Fine Lawn/Int'l Seed	C	S
Flyer creeping	Fine Lawn Research	B	S
Hector	Advanta	C	L
Intrigue chewings	Turf Merchants	C	S
Jamestown II	ABT/Lofts	B	S
Jasper creeping	Pickseed West	C	S
K-2 chewings	ABT/Burlingham	B	S
Longfellow chew'g	International Seed	B	S
Marker	International Seed	B	S
Minotaur hard	Turf Merchants	C	H
Moxie creeping red	ABT/Olsen Fennell	B	S
MX-86AE sheep	Jacklin/Medalist	B	S
Nordic hard	ABT/Zajac	B	L
Quatro sheep	International Seed	B	L
Raymond	Advanta	B	S
Reliant II	ABT/Lofts	C	S
Rescue 911 hard	Medalist	B	S
Scaldis	Advanta	B	L
Shademark	Lesco	B	S
Shademaster II	Turf-Seed	B	H

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
SR 3100 hard	Seed Research	B	S
SR 3200 blue	Seed Research	B	S
SR 5100 chewings	Seed Research	B	S
Tiffany chewings	Turf-Seed	B	S
Trapeze chewings	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Vista red	ABT/Zajac	B	S
Vernon hard	ABT/Burlingham	B	L
Victory II chewings	Pickseed West	B	S
Warwick hard	Turf Merchants	B	S
<i>Other Seeded Cultivars</i>			
Cathy Brand zoysia	Jacklin	B	S
Del Sol bermuda	Turf Merchants	B	H
Jackpot	Jacklin	B	L
Midway inter rye	Lesco	B	S
Mirage bermuda	International Seed	B	L
Primo bermuda	Seed Research	B	S
Pyramid bermuda	International Seed	B	L
OKS 91-11 bermuda	Seed Research	C	New
Sahara	Pennington	B	S
Salty alkaligrass	ABT/Lofts	C	S
Savannah bermuda	Turf-Seed	B	S
Shangri La bermuda	ABT/Olsen Fennell	B	S
Sundevil II	Medalist	C	S
Sunstar bermuda	Lesco	B	S
Supranova supina	ABT/Olsen Fennell	B	S
Supina bluegrass	ABT	B	S
Sydney bermuda	Pennington	B	S
Yuma	Pennington	C	S
Zen zoysia	Turf Merchants	A	L