



► AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

Agriculture in the West contends with a host of complex issues. Similar to other sectors of the U.S. economy, aging infrastructure has become a key challenge making it difficult to get products to market. Just this month, the wheat harvest has become stalled on the Columbia River unable to navigate through the Bonneville lock due to damages requiring repair. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working to scope the damage and make repairs, however barges loaded with wheat cannot pass to west coast ports where container ships await, and empty barges cannot proceed eastward to load up grain waiting in silos. If the lock remains closed, alternative modes of transport will be required and may impact consumer prices.

Likewise, international trade policy and relations have had a big impact on farmers and agriculture this year. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) trade treaty has not yet been ratified by the United States or Canada. With Congress back in session after the summer recess, action on the USMCA will be closely watched. Escalating tariffs between the United States and other countries – particularly China for the western states – is also impacting the costs of consumer goods and agricultural markets. Farmers have received federal support to offset these impacts, but concerns remain regarding the impact of high tariffs on U.S. agricultural products.

Allowed under the 2018 Farm Bill, agricultural hemp has become a popular crop in the West. Grown for fiber, seed, and flora for cannabidiol (CBD) extraction, the hemp industry is experiencing growing pains, as well as profits. Bad genetics have created poorly performing crops that grow too “hot” (exceeds the 0.3% dry weight tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) limit) and must be destroyed, and the lack of in state processors along with quality certified seed stock have limited the return on investment for some growers. On the positive side, the regenerative benefits of hemp on soil are promising, as is the growing number of experienced growers and hemp research.



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Agriculture in the west has never been a stranger to adversity and challenges but has proven to be a resilient and innovative economic driver for states. The CSG West Agriculture Committee will continue to review issues confronting agriculture throughout the region, with plans for a robust discussion between committee members and resource experts during the next meeting in Jackson, Wyoming.

Stay tuned...for an introduction the [CSG West Education Committee](#).