

**JENNIFER SIMON, executive director, Klamath County Farm Service Agency**

## **Director: Farm Bill doesn't fit Basin agriculture needs**

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H&N's Staff Writer  
May 23, 2010



It's frustrating to Klamath County Farm Service Agency Executive Director Jennifer Simon that national programs, like those created through the 2008 Farm Bill, don't fit the unique character of agribusiness in Klamath County.

"Our programs are created on a national level, and they're blanket programs to serve agriculture on a national level," she says. "I think that agencies like the Farm Service Agency, whose role is to provide that safety net to producers, are doing everything within their legislative authority. Our programs are created by Congress."

Simon says money to support land idling and well-pumping programs is proof that Oregon's elected officials are paying attention to the strife that a drought could bring to the region.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski showed his support, Simon says, through a swift drought declaration and requests for declarations from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

Simon believes Klamath Basin farmers learned in 2001 the importance of relationships with Washington leaders.

"That long-standing relationship is a key to the relationship we have with the producers and the elected officials as well," she says.

Questions continue to arise with regards to eligibility for FSA disaster programs, and each producer's situation brings new ones, Simon says. She says one common inquiry is how participation in the land idling program might affect a producer's ability to receive disaster relief.

"The land idling program, for instance, is funneled through the Department of Interior, so when situations come up, we have to ask a question and then there's another

question we haven't thought of," she says. "As we hear questions, we're always sending them up to Washington, D.C. They're not black and white answers."

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