Delta Farm Forum to consider barley prospects

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Fairbanks, Alaska—The annual Delta Farm Forum on Feb. 25 will include an update on the barley biofuel project the Army is considering at Fort Greely.

Phil Kaspari, agriculture agent for the UAF Cooperative Extension Service in Delta, said the Army is studying the feasibility of using barley-fired boilers. The project is of great interest to growers as a potential new market, he said. The project, if successful, could quadruple barley production in the Delta area.

“We can grow more barley but we don’t have a market,” he said.

Currently, Delta producers cultivate 5,000 acres of barley, which is used primarily as livestock feed, but a small portion is used in grain-burning stoves or ground as flour. Bryce Wrigley, a Delta barley producer who operates a grain mill, will talk about the project.

Charlie Knight, a former northern region manager for the Division of Agriculture, will welcome forum participants at 9 a.m. and presentations of interest to area farmers will continue until 4 p.m. in the Delta High School small gymnasium. A panel will discuss food regulations and creating a commercial kitchen in Delta that is certified by the Department of Environmental Conservation. Other topics will include potato late blight and agricultural agency updates. Brandy McLean of Triple McLean Farms in Delta will talk about “heritage hogs” and Carolyn Chapin of Polar Peonies, LLC will address the marketing of peonies.

The day will end with a Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District presentation and award ceremony. Extension and the conservation district are co-sponsoring the 35th annual forum. For more information, see a flyer linked at www.uaf.edu/ces or call Extension’s Delta office at 895-4215 or the conservation district at 895-6279.

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