



Idaho Farm Bureau.

Quarterly

Winter 2022 • Volume 22 Issue 1

Where Does Your Food Dollar Go?

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Farmers making their voices heard on WOTUS



Water is critical to our families and our farms. It breathes life into our crops and produces forage for animals on our rangelands.

It is a priority for farmers and ranchers to ensure the water we rely on is clean because safe, clean water is critical to all life.

Farmers and ranchers are stepping up to partner with their communities to protect our water. Farmers have increased the use of buffer strips to prevent excess fertilizer from reaching waterways.

They're using new technologies to filter water as it drains beneath our fields and continually work to beef up other clean water protections.

Last year, officials at the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced they would rewrite the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule, continuing a nearly decade-long back and forth that has left farmers and small business owners scratching their heads.

In 2015, the WOTUS rule was rewritten and federal courts blocked its implementation in
See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle
President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Farmers hit with rising input costs



Rising inflation has impacted every consumer and every sector of the economy in America and farming is no exception.

Many farmers in Idaho say their cost of production has risen about 20 percent compared to a year ago.

Crop prices are volatile and there is no guarantee that what farmers and ranchers will receive for their commodity this year will be enough to cover the increased production costs.

Fertilizer prices in particular have gone ballistic, with price increases as high as 300 percent

in some areas of the country. Farmers can get by without some things, but they can't get by without fertilizer.

Not only has the price of fertilizer increased, but a lack of supply has been a major concern. There was more fertilizer applied this past fall than any other year I've farmed and it was due to the concern about a lack of supply and how much more the price might increase.

The rising price of fertilizer alone will increase the average farm production cost

See **SEARLE**, page 7

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller
CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

I just might need shades



In 1986, a rock group called Timbuk 3 released a song titled, "The Future's so Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades."

When you see that song title, you are either a cynic who doubts that claim, or you're an optimist who believes the future is indeed bright.

If you would like to move from the cynic camp to the optimist side of the tracks, may I suggest simply looking at our youth.

Specifically, our young farmers and ranchers in this great state of Idaho.

At the American Farm Bureau Federation convention in Atlanta in January, Idaho was honored to be represented by some of the best and brightest young producers around.

Farm Bureau offers three specific competitions that all members of the organization's Young Farmers and Ranchers program, which is for ages 18-35, can participate in.

The Idaho winners of those three contests, which are highlighted below, joined us in Atlanta for AFBF's annual conference.

See **MILLER**, page 6

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**COVER: This is the produce section of the Fred Meyer
 store in Pocatello. For a story on how food gets from
 the farm to the store, see page 12.**

(Photo by Michaela Andrus)



Photo by Paul Boehlke

University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor speaks to Idaho lawmakers Jan. 6 about how the state's farming and ranching industry fared in 2021.

Idaho ag sets record, but net farm income down

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Despite a severe drought and early season heat wave that depressed production, Idaho set a record for total farm cash receipts in 2021.

But farm and ranch expenses in Idaho also reached a record level in 2021 and total net farm income in the state declined by 8 percent last year compared with 2020.

That's according to University of Idaho's, "The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2021" report, which was released to state lawmakers Jan. 6.

The annual report by UI agricultural economists is the first estimate of how Idaho farmers and ranchers fared during the previous year.

USDA state-level estimates of farm cash receipts and net farm income are released in late August.

Farm cash receipts is the revenue farm-

ers and ranchers receive directly for their commodity and net farm income – total farm revenue minus costs – is the producer's bottom line, or paycheck.

According to the Financial Condition report, Idaho farmers and ranchers brought in \$8.88 billion in farm cash receipts during 2021, which was 9 percent higher than the 2020 total and above the previous record of \$8.79 billion set in 2014.

Despite severe drought and heat that

When expenses are subtracted from total farm and ranch revenue, which includes things like government payments, machine hire and custom work, total net farm income in Idaho in 2021 is estimated at \$2.39 billion, which is 8 percent below the record level of \$2.6 billion set in 2020 and also below the 2019 total of \$2.53 billion.

significantly reduced most crop yields in Idaho, “We broke an all-time record high in cash receipts in 2021,” UI Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor told legislators Jan. 6.

That’s because prices for most of the state’s main agricultural commodities were up significantly last year compared with 2020, said Taylor, one of the report’s co-authors.

But enthusiasm surrounding the record is tempered by significantly increased farm input costs, Taylor added.

“The expenses for 2021 are eating us up,” he said.

According to the report, total farm and ranch expenses in Idaho totaled a record \$7.84 billion in 2021, which was an 8 percent increase over 2020.

When expenses are subtracted from total farm and ranch revenue, which includes things like government payments, machine hire and custom work, total net farm income in Idaho in 2021 is estimated at \$2.39 billion, which is 8 percent below the record level of \$2.6 billion set in 2020 and also below the 2019 total of \$2.53 billion.

UI ag economists attributed the higher expenses to 12 percent increases in farm origin (feed, seed and replacement livestock purchases) and manufactured (fertilizer, chemicals and fuels) inputs.

All other inputs, including labor, property taxes and fees, and payments to stakeholders, increased by percentages

ranging from 3-7 percent compared with 2020.

According to the Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report for 2021, total cash receipts for Idaho’s top seven agricultural commodities increased in 2021 compared with 2020.

Cash receipts for Idaho’s dairy industry totaled an estimated \$3.1 billion in 2021, which was a 3 percent increase over 2020, and cash receipts for the state’s cattle and calves industry increased by 13 percent, to \$1.8 billion.

Idaho’s top crop, potatoes, brought in a record \$1 billion in cash receipts during 2020, according to the report. That was an 8 percent increase over 2020.

Cash receipts for Idaho’s wheat industry totaled \$560 million in 2021, a 3 percent increase, and cash receipts for the state’s hay farmers totaled \$554 million, a 21 percent increase compared with 2020.

Idaho sugar beet farmers brought in \$396 million during 2021, 19 percent more than during 2020, and Idaho barley growers brought in \$246 million in cash receipts last year, a 3 percent increase.

In almost every case, the higher cash receipts were due to higher prices and

not production, which was reduced due to last year’s drought conditions and extreme heat.

For example, total Idaho wheat production declined 32 percent last year but that crop brought in 3 percent more in cash receipts.

Barley production in Idaho declined by 21 percent last year but cash receipts for that crop also increased by 3 percent.

Idaho potato production was down 2 percent last year despite the fact that farmers planted 15,000 more acres in 2021. However, cash receipts for Idaho spuds increased by 8 percent last year.

Taylor said growth in total gross domestic product from Idaho’s agricultural industry has outpaced growth in total Idaho GDP over the past few decades.

Most of that growth in farm GDP in the state has been driven by production agriculture and not food processing, he added.

From 1997 to 2020, total Idaho farm GDP grew by 200 percent, while total Idaho GDP grew by 90 percent, Taylor said.

Total GDP from Idaho’s food processing industry grew by 60 percent during that time, he added.

Agriculture “is a growth industry for the state of Idaho,” Taylor said. “And it’s grandma and grandpa on a tractor that is driving that growth.” ■



Photo by Paul Boehlke

DUVALL

Continued from page 2

more than half of the states because it was a clear overreach by the federal government.

In 2020, the rule became the Navigable Waters Protection Rule, which provided clearer rules while ensuring clean water.

If you've ever had to deal with red tape from our federal government, you know that working through the stack of paperwork and fees that come with applying for federal permits often requires lawyers and consultants.

The 2015 rule would have prevented farmers from moving forward on climate smart farming practices and other advancements that ensure farms remain viable and vibrant.

Unfortunately, warning lights point to the Biden Administration heading down a similar path as the 2015 WOTUS rule.

While EPA Administrator Regan committed to a robust dialogue about the potential effects of the new rule, the agency seems to be moving forward even as they ask stakeholders to set up regional meetings.

The EPA claims the new rule will have

no impact on any of America's small businesses. That simply isn't true.

The proposal the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers have presented would significantly expand the land mass regulated by the federal government and lead to a costly labyrinth of permitting requirements that small businesses aren't equipped to navigate.

Although EPA has left me wondering about their sincerity in working with farmers, I'm grateful that the Small Business Administration seems to be genuinely listening.

We worked with SBA to set up meetings where federal officials heard directly from property owners about potential impacts of a new rule.

In early January, the agency heard from farmers and small businesses involved in agriculture. James Henderson, Colorado Farm Bureau vice president, joined the video call from a field he farms.

He was standing in a grass waterway. James said he hadn't seen water flowing through it in years. But, under the proposed rule, EPA could classify it as

a regulated ephemeral stream, which means it has flowing water only during and after it rains.

The example James shared was powerful. That's how we'll make an impact as the Administration works to rewrite the WOTUS rule.

We must help policymakers and the public understand the impact of irresponsible regulation, tying the hands of the very people stocking our pantries. And we must remain persistent in our effort to make sure regulations that keep our water clean also respect farmers, ranchers, and small business owners.

You can make your voice heard today by visiting fb.org/wotus.

When I called on farmers and ranchers to respond to this action alert during our AFBF convention, over 1,800 farmers and ranchers answered the call in less than 36 hours.

I hope you'll answer the call, too, and tell the EPA why we need clear rules for clean water. We stand ready to engage in an honest and meaningful dialogue with policymakers and all stakeholders.

That's the Farm Bureau way. ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

Achiever Award: This award is for farmers and ranchers who make their living on the farm or ranch.

Terry and Ashlee Walton from Emmett, the winners of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 2021 Achiever Award, have accomplished amazing things, although they are so humble you would never know that had they not entered this year's contest.

What the Waltons have accomplished is building a farm while achieving financial and production goals, and raising a family.

A family working together on the farm, they are living, through their hard work, what so many only dare to dream of doing.

Excellence Award: This award is for farmers and ranchers who have an off-the-farm job as well as their duties on the farm.

Matt and Jessica Henderson, who won IFBF's 2021 Excellence Award, have such a remarkable story. They are chasing a dream and seeing it continue to grow and evolve through their vision.

The Hendersons produce pork, but that's not all. They also butcher, package, smoke, and ship pork in little Swan Lake.

As if that wasn't enough, they also volunteer for the fire department and a myriad of other community activities.

Like the Waltons, it is easy not to know their story and how they have overcome some extraordinary challenges because they are so humble.

But it is hard to hide drive like that.

Discussion Meet: All politicians should compete in this event, which features four to five contestants discussing a topic where the goal is not to beat their opponent but to find a solution to the problem!

It is quite a concept to have a competi-

tion where a competitor can lose points for not getting along with their competitors.

Andrew Mickelsen from Roberts was the winner of IFBF's 2021 Discussion Meet

If people were to watch Andrew participate in a Discussion Meet, I doubt many would know he is a full-time potato farmer. It would seem more logical to ask what law school he attended.

Andrew, who competed in multiple Discussion Meets before winning the 2021 event, was so much fun to watch last year and to see his skill and charisma grow over the past years as he has participated in the event is a testament that hard things make great people.

Farm Bureau exists to represent the voice of Idaho agriculture. It is awesome for Farm Bureau when people like the Mickelsens, Waltons and Hendersons are willing to offer their voices and share

MILLER

their experiences with the organization and other producers.

If these three excellent examples are not enough to convince someone that the state's future is bright, consider all

the other 25,000 farmers and ranchers in our state working just like them to do more and be more.

From 4-H to FFA to the Young Farmers and Ranchers program, Farm Bureau

proudly supports and invests in our youth to help them achieve great things, and for that reason, sometimes, when I consider the future, I must reach for shades. ■

SEARLE

Continued from page 2
significantly during the 2022 growing season.

And that will be on top of last year's increase in farm production expenses.

According to estimates by University of Idaho agricultural economists contained in the U of I's annual "Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture" report, total farm expenses in Idaho reached a record level of \$7.84 billion in calendar year 2021, which represented an 8 percent increase over the 2020 total of \$7.2 billion.

The report attributed last year's overall increase in farm expenses in the state to 12 percent increases in farm origin (feed, seed and replacement livestock purchases) and manufactured (fertilizer, chemicals and fuel) inputs.

All other farm and ranch inputs, including labor, property taxes and fees, capital consumption and payments to stakeholders, increased from 3-7 percent compared with 2020.

[See page 8 for a story on the increase in farm input costs.]

Compounding the challenge of price increases is the lack of an adequate supply of parts, equipment, labor, fertilizer, chemicals, and the list goes on.

I explain this increased cost and lack of supplies for farm production not to whine on behalf of agricultural producers, but to point out what is happening at the farm level to help explain why food prices have risen, in some cases substantially, over the past year.

Rising inflation, which is at the highest level in four decades, has increased the cost of virtually everything, including the cost of producing food.

I would in no way try to downplay the impact that rising food costs are having on Americans, but it might help to explain why this is happening and the role that farmers and ranchers play in that equation.

When you buy a food item at the grocery store or restaurant, out of every dollar you spend, the farmer or rancher on average gets about 7.6 cents of that dollar, according to estimates by American Farm Bureau Federation.

The rest of your food dollar goes to pay for a myriad of other costs, including those related to transportation, processing, packaging and advertising.

Using potatoes, here is an example of how much money a farmer might get for French fries you buy at a fast-food restaurant. Say you pay \$1 for 8 ounces of fries.

That equals out to \$200 for 100 pounds of spuds. At current farm-level prices, the farmer will get about \$8 of that.

Keep in mind that farmers are price takers and not price makers. That means they can't pass their increased costs on to the consumer like other parts of the supply chain can. Like the saying goes, "Farmers are the real gamblers due to the risk they take."

With the cost of almost everything increasing, there is great risk right now on the farm and ranch heading into the 2022 growing season because there is no guarantee that production costs won't continue to rise significantly during the rest of this year.

In addition to the rising produc-

tion costs, there is also uncertainty about whether certain fertilizers and chemicals will even be available this coming growing season. It appears likely there will be shortages of some agricultural chemicals and fertilizer in 2022.

While knowing all this won't lower the cost you are paying for food, I hope it will help you better understand the challenges farmers currently face with rising prices and the role they play in the food supply chain.

But do know this: Farmers and ranchers are very resilient and will work hard each day to continue to provide a supply of safe food and fiber. ■

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\$ 50 - \$ 999	Rate	.100	.200	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	
	Yield	.100	.200	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	
\$ 1,000 - \$ 2,499	Rate	.150	.250	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	
	Yield	.150	.250	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	
\$ 2,500 - \$ 4,999	Rate	.200	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	
	Yield	.200	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	
\$ 5,000 - \$ 9,999	Rate	.250	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	
	Yield	.250	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	
\$ 10,000 - \$ 24,999	Rate	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	
	Yield	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	
\$ 25,000 - \$ 49,999	Rate	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	.950	
	Yield	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	.950	
\$ 50,000 - \$ 99,999	Rate	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	1.00	
	Yield	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	1.00	
\$ 100,000 +	Rate	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	.950	1.05	
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Photos by Sean Ellis

Farm production costs have risen significantly, in some cases dramatically, over the past year.

Rising input costs hitting farmers hard

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Farm production costs rose substantially in 2021, in some cases dramatically, and those input cost increases are continuing into 2022.

Rockland farmer Cory Kress farmed says the current spike in farm input costs is unlike any other he has experienced.

“It’s unreal. These price increases are pretty unprecedented,” he says. “It is going to be an interesting year to see how this all shakes out.”

“Our costs of production have really escalated,” says Teton farmer Dwight Little. “It was a huge jump in what we had to pay this year for inputs.”

Caldwell farmer Sid Freeman asked for and got a 20 percent increase in the contract price for the dry beans he plans to grow in 2022. He has asked for a similar price increase for his onions.

But he says his rise in input costs will easily eat those crop price increases up.

“It’s bad,” Freeman says of the recent increase in farm production costs. “It’s a major concern.”

Rising production costs have reached a level where they may impact Idaho potato growers’ planting decisions for 2022, Ben Eborn, owner of North American Potato Market News, said Dec. 16 during a University of Idaho Ag Outlook Seminar presentation.

He said 2021 operating costs for most potato growers in Idaho jumped by 20 percent, minimum, and as much as 30 percent.

“Costs of production have skyrocketed,” he said. “How do you plan when those prices jump like that in a year? Po-

tato contract prices are up significantly but so are input costs ... and those input costs add a tremendous amount of risk and make decision making very difficult for the coming year.”

Fertilizer prices in particular have gone through the roof. According to American Farm Bureau economists, fertilizer prices have risen as much as 300 percent compared with a year ago.

If one word could be used to describe the current fertilizer market, it would be crazy or wild, University of Idaho Extension Educator Xiaoli Etienne said Dec. 14 during a U of I Ag Outlook Seminar presentation.

“Fertilizer prices have been on a crazy, wild ride,” she said.

“Rising fertilizer prices are a great concern for farmers across the country,” says AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “The rising cost of supplies is slowing down the momentum America’s farmers were starting to build through higher commodity prices and increased demand for their products.”

Wilder farmer Doug Gross, who grows potatoes for the processing market, says he has seen about a 20 percent increase in the price he gets for his spuds but production costs have gone up more than that.

“Our prices are not escalating near as fast as our costs are,” he says. “We’re getting hit everywhere: fertilizer, fuel, labor, equipment.”

Last year’s production cost increases are one thing but farmers and ranchers are bracing for similar increases in 2022.

Meridian farmer Neil Durrant fears farm input cost increases in 2022 will be huge also.

“You already know everything is going to be up (in 2022),” he says. “You just hope commodity prices stay at a level that can cover those costs. They are going to have to.”

Rising production costs are also having a major impact on the livestock industry and one of the biggest factors is the increasing cost of feed for animals.

“The elephant in the room is inflation and it is a bit of a struggle for (cattle producers),” Joel Packham, a University of

Idaho Extension educator, said Dec. 15 during an Ag Outlook Seminar presen-



Farm input costs soared in 2021 and those increases are continuing into 2022.

tation.

Before the recent increase in production costs, the average Idaho dairy needed to make about \$16.50 for every hundred pounds of milk it produced to break even. Now, that break-even point is closer to \$19 per hundred pounds, says Idaho Dairymen’s Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout.

“The cost of milk production is rising and will likely rise again next year,” Dustin Winston, a commodity finance analyst for EDGE-X Group, said Dec. 16 during a U of I Ag Outlook Seminar presentation. “A large factor of that is feed and we know feed costs have been extremely high.”

Inflation has also significantly pushed up the cost of farm equipment to the point where the used equipment market is hot right now, says Oakley potato farmer Randy Hardy.

“If you have to have a new piece of equipment, it’s crazy,” he says. “Used equipment right now is hotter than a firecracker.”

The rising cost of production aside, there is major concern about even having an adequate supply of fertilizer and other chemicals in 2022 due to supply chain disruptions.

“We can go without some things; we can’t go without fertilizer,” Brett Stuart, president of Global AgriTrends, said

Dec. 13 during a University of Idaho Ag Outlook Seminar presentation.

“There is uncertainty as to whether some fertilizer and chemicals will even be available this year,” says Idaho Farm Bureau federation President Bryan Searle.

Freeman says that uncertainty is a major concern heading into the 2022 growing season because every chemical a farmer applies is applied for an important, specific reason. If one of them isn’t available, it could jeopardize the entire crop.

“We can’t guarantee we’re going to have all the supplies we’re going to need,” he says. “Fungicides, insecticides, herbicides. It all has to be applied in a timely manner.”

The good news, Searle says, is that farmers and ranchers are plowing ahead with their normal food production plans, despite the great uncertainty they face right now.

“American farmers and ranchers are definitely resilient and I have faith they will find a way to overcome this challenge, just like they have every other challenge that has been thrown their way over the decades,” he says. ■



Photos by Brad Griff

Sugar beets are harvested in a southern Idaho field. The Idaho Sugarbeet Growers Association has changed its name to Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association.

Idaho sugar beet group expands membership and changes name

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The Idaho Sugarbeet Growers Association has expanded its membership and reach and as a result, has changed its name to Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association.

The name change took effect Jan. 1 and reflects the fact the group now also represents members of the former Nyssa-Nampa Sugarbeet Growers Association, which represented about

160 farmers in southwestern Idaho and eastern Oregon, as well as a handful in Washington.

The ISGA represented about 540 Idaho growers, so the newly named SRSGA now represents 700 sugar beet farmers in Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Those farmers grow a combined 180,000 acres of sugar beets, with about 166,000 of those acres in Idaho.

Combining the membership of the two organizations will allow the Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association to

be more efficient and effective when representing sugar beet growers at the state and national level, said SRSGA President Randy Grant.

“The membership expansion will allow us to represent our sugar beet growers at the state and national levels more effectively,” he said in a news release. “We plan to broaden our advocacy and education efforts, and the board is excited for the future of our association.”

Sugar beets rank No. 6 among Idaho’s agricultural commodities when it comes



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to total farm revenue and Gem State farmers brought in an estimated \$396 million in farm-gate receipts in 2021, according to University of Idaho’s “Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2021” report.

Sugar beets are also one of the state’s most stable crops because all sugar beet acres in Idaho and Oregon are grown under irrigation.

Joining the ISGA under one umbrella organization gives members of the Nyssa-Nampa Sugarbeet Growers Association an amplified voice at the Idaho statehouse and will increase their relationship with legislators, said Galen Lee, president of the former NNSGA.

“Nearly 40 percent of Idaho’s legislative districts are in western Idaho and we can now speak with one voice from our region through the Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association,” he said. “It’s going to be a good move.”

The mission of the Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association is to advocate for sugar beet growers and educate the public about the agriculture industry. The group’s advocacy efforts include

partnering with the American Sugarbeet Growers Association to educate congressional leaders about the importance of U.S. sugar policy.

One of the biggest benefits of the merger is that the entire sugar beet industry in the Pacific Northwest can speak with a unified voice on a state and national level, said Brad Griff, executive director of the Snake River Sugarbeet

Growers Association.

“All sides are better off if we can speak with one voice as an industry and we are unified and pulling in the same direction,” he said. “This will allow us to coordinate our advocacy and education efforts so much better.” ■



Sugar beets are harvested in a southern Idaho field. The Idaho Sugarbeet Growers Association has changed its name to Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association.



Photo by Michaela Andrus

This is the produce section at the Pocatello Fred Meyer store. A food item's journey from the farm to the store is more complicated than many people probably realize. In the end, a farmer or rancher gets, on average, 7.6 cents of every dollar consumers spend on food in the United States.

How does food get from farm to the store?

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The food you buy from the store or restaurant doesn't get there by itself. Obviously.

Everyone should know that.

But a food item's journey from farm or ranch to the store is a lot more complicated than most people probably realize.

"I don't think most people even care about that process, unless the shelves are empty; then they start thinking about it," says Doug Gross, a Wilder farmer who

grows potatoes for the processing industry. "It's not nearly as simple as people might think."

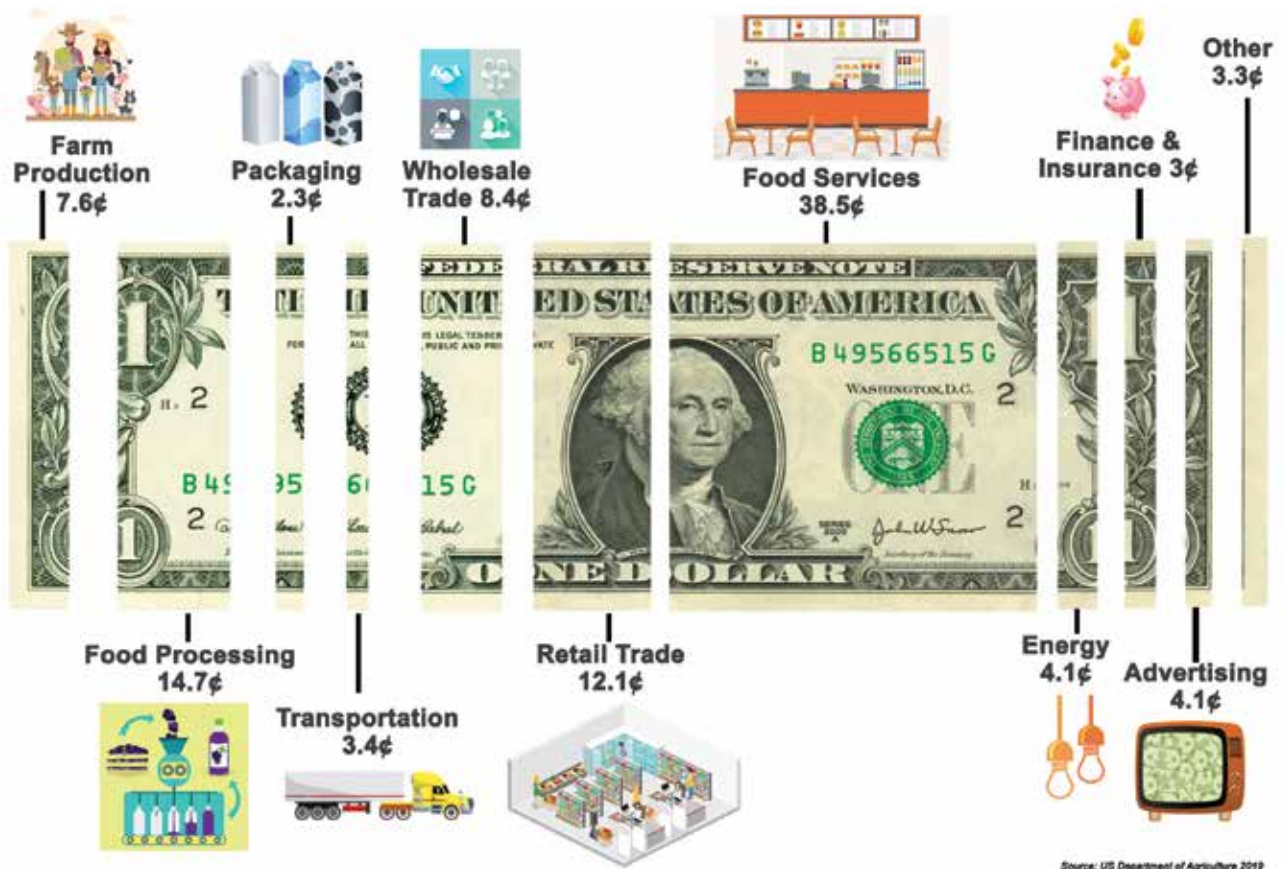
There are several steps involved in the food supply chain, which is a food item's journey from farm to store. All of these steps are necessary but by the time food is sold to a consumer at the grocery store or other eatery, the farmer's share of the retail food dollar is pretty small.

According to estimates by USDA's Economic Research Service, a farmer gets, on average, 7.6 cents of every dollar spent on food in the United States.

The rest is divided up between the different parts of the food supply chain: transportation, processing, packaging, advertising, agribusiness, wholesale trade, retail trade, food service and legal and accounting.

"There are a lot of hands in the (food dollar) pot before food gets to the grocery store," says Rockland wheat farmer Cory Kress. "It doesn't matter what the commodity price is, a farmer's share of the food dollar pie doesn't change that much."

The vast majority of what Americans



Source: US Department of Agriculture 2019
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation graphic

This graphic shows how much of the average dollar spent on food in the United States each part of the food supply chain gets. Notice that farmers and ranchers only get 7.6 cents of the average food dollar.

pay for food “is certainly not going in the farmer’s pocket, that’s for sure,” says Oakley potato farmer Randy Hardy.

He provided an example of what a farmer might get for his commodity.

Say you pay \$1 at a fast-food establishment for 8 ounces of French fries. That equals out to \$200 for 100 pounds of spuds. The grower will get about \$8 of that. That’s actually only 4 percent of what that 100 pounds of potatoes ultimately sold for.

Kress says it’s important to know that farmers are price takers and not price makers.

“Farmers are the only ones in the entire supply chain that don’t set their prices,” he says.

When it comes to divvying up the average food dollar, agricultural producers are at the back of the line, says JC Management Co. President Clark Johnston, who contracts with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation to help farmers and ranchers

develop individual marketing plans.

“The guy at the bottom of the totem pole is the producer,” he says. “If I’m down here at the flour mill or the feed mill and my costs go up, I just pass that on. But if I’m the producer and my costs go up, I don’t get to pass that on. I’m still at the mercy of the market.”

The first step of the food supply chain is, of course, the farm or ranch. That’s also the most important step and one where technology plays a major role.

“I don’t think most people realize how sophisticated food production is these days,” says Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Casey Chumrau. “Farmers and ranchers today rely heavily on science and technology to produce the healthiest food in the most efficient and sustainable manner.”

Total food production in the U.S. continues to increase despite decreasing acres dedicated to agriculture, she adds. “At the same time, growers have

been able to reduce the use of pesticides, water, and tillage thanks to the advancements in technology.”

After harvest, food has to be transported, packaged, washed, processed, and then transported again. That transportation process involves a lot of trucks but also boats, trains and sometimes airplanes.

That whole process, which involves storage for some commodities, such as potatoes and onions, involves lots of manpower.

“There are a lot of hoops the farmer has to go through to grow the type of quality food that American customers have become accustomed to and get it to the store,” Gross says.

“We are very fortunate in this country to find so much variety at the grocery store and rarely question the quality or freshness of our food,” Chumrau says. ■

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In addition, **86%** of U.S. ag products sold are produced on family farms or ranches. Non-family corporations or other entities account for only **14%** of U.S. ag product sales.





Photo by Sean Ellis

The global milk supply is tight and farm-level milk prices are up, but so are production costs for Idaho dairy operators.

Milk supply tight and farm-level prices up, along with costs

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The global milk supply is contracting and, from a price perspective, that bodes well for Idaho’s dairy industry, which has a large impact on the state’s overall economy.

“Global supply is contracting. Just about everywhere, we’re seeing milk supply contracting,” Dustin Winston, a dairy financial analyst based in Idaho, said Dec. 16 during a University of Idaho Ag Outlook Seminar presentation.

“Demand is in fact pretty strong. As supply becomes limited, there (is) a bidding war for ... that supply that is out there,” he said.

Winston said milk prices paid to dairy operators will likely continue to be strong through at least June.

But while a tight milk supply means higher farm-level milk prices for Idaho dairies, the cost of production for those operations has also risen substantially over the past year.

That makes it tough for dairies to eke out a profit even with higher milk prices.

Idaho ranks No. 3 in the nation in total milk production and most of Idaho’s milk is used to produce cheese. That milk is known

as Class III milk.

Class III milk futures are currently in the \$19-20 per hundredweight (cwt) range for all of 2022.

The break-even price for most of Idaho’s dairy operations has been about \$16 to \$16.50 per cwt for the past several years.

But higher production costs have pushed that break-even level into the \$18.50-\$19 per cwt range, said Idaho Dairymen’s Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout.

He said the higher cost of feed has been the main factor behind higher production costs for dairy operations, and higher labor costs haven’t helped.

Despite the higher production costs, most Idaho dairies did make a profit during 2021, Naerebout said.

“Prices were above break-even for Idaho dairy operations in 2021 and they are making some money,” he said. “I expect the average Idaho dairy operation will have had a decent year in 2021.”

But, he added, the uncertainty surrounding production costs, the COVID situation, labor availability and other factors have added a tremendous amount of risk to the business and that has resulted in a number of smaller dairies being purchased by larger operations.

“The amount of risk in the business any more makes it tough for those smaller operations to stick around for another year,” Naerebout said.

Dairy is Idaho’s No. 1 agricultural commodity when it comes to total farm cash receipts, which is what the farmer gets directly for their commodity. Idaho dairies bring in about \$3 billion per year in farm cash receipts.

When the hay, corn and other crops needed to feed cows is factored in, the dairy industry’s total economic impact on the state is considerable.

According to the U.S. Dairy Export Council, Idaho’s dairy industry has a \$9.1 billion economic impact on the state, contributes 5.7 percent to Idaho’s total gross domestic product, and supports more than \$400 million in wages.

While global milk supply is expected to continue to contract, production costs are expected to continue to rise.

“The cost of milk production is rising and will likely rise again (in 2022),” Winston said. ■

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Photos by Sean Ellis

Potatoes are planted in a Bingham County field in spring 2021. Farm-level potato prices are up but the cost of production for farmers is also up, significantly.

Potato prices up for farmers but so are input costs

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The global potato market is tight on supply and farm-level spud prices for Idaho farmers are up substantially.

But so are farm input costs and, with prices for other Idaho crops also up significantly, many Idaho potato farmers may be faced with some tough planting decisions in 2022.

Russet potato prices for Idaho farmers typically drop significantly from August to October but that didn't happen this year, Ben Eborn, president of North American Potato Market News, said during a University of Idaho Ag Outlook Seminar presentation Dec. 16.

Idaho Russet prices dropped \$8 per hundredweight from August to October in 2019, \$12 per cwt during that period in 2020, but only \$3 per cwt during that same

time in 2021.

“That’s the lowest drop in decades,” Eborn said. “Prices are extremely strong and not behaving like they normally have in the past.”

Idaho is the nation’s top potato-producing state and Gem State farmers produce about a third of the nation’s total spud supply.

The price increase is partly due to Idaho producing a smaller spud crop in 2021 compared with 2020. Idaho farmers planted 315,000 acres of potatoes in 2021, compared with 300,000 in 2020, but total statewide production decreased 2 percent in 2021 to 132 million hundredweight.

That drop in Idaho potato production was due largely to the drought conditions and unusually high summer temperatures in 2021, which sharply reduced average yields.

Total U.S. potato production also

dropped, from 420 million cwt in 2020 to 413 million cwt in 2021.

Total 2021 potato production in Canada is forecast to be 535 million cwt, up from 524 million cwt in 2020.

But certain factors, including a potato quarantine in the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island, has somewhat restricted the flow of Canadian potatoes to processors in the United States.

Total potato production in the European Union fell 7 percent, from 863 million cwt in 2020 to 803 million cwt in 2021.

“Globally, there is a (potato) supply situation that is rather tight,” Eborn said.

That has driven farm-level potato prices up. But cost of production for spud farmers is also soaring.

“Operating costs for most growers are probably up 20 percent, minimum, and maybe as much as 30 percent,” Eborn said.

Continued on page 18



Potatoes are harvested in a Bingham County field in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. Farm-level potato prices are up but the cost of production for farmers is also up, significantly.

Continued from page 17

Rising costs add tremendous risk to farmers, he said. “How do you plan when those prices jump like that in a year?”

That could present Idaho potato farmers with some tough choices when it comes to deciding what to plant in 2022, Eborn said.

Yes, potato prices are extremely strong compared to where they were a year ago and that could encourage potato growers to plant more spuds, he said.

But potatoes cost a lot to grow compared with many other crops grown on a large scale in Idaho and the price for some of those crops is way up. For example, wheat prices are up 61 percent compared to a year ago.

Prices for barley, hay and corn are also up.

“There is still a lot of uncertainty in the potato market, and other ag markets as well,” Eborn said. “It makes decision making difficult for the coming year.”

“The question on everybody’s mind right now is how many potatoes are we going to plant in Idaho in the coming year?” he said. “How much are we going to increase when the cost of production has skyrocketed like this?”

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, a potato farmer from Shelley, said planning next year’s crop on higher input costs is difficult and some potato growers may have a tough time deciding

what to plant in 2022.

But he doesn’t think there will be a major change in Idaho potato acres, either up or down.

“There will be some thinking like that going on but I don’t think acres will change much,” he said. “I don’t see a big swing in acres either way.”

Randy Hardy, an Oakley farmer who grows potatoes for the fresh market, agrees with that assessment.

He pointed out that Idaho potato acres have stayed pretty constant over the past decade – in the 300,000 to 320,000 range.

There is a lot of competition price-wise from other crops right now and soaring input costs will make decision-making difficult for the 2022 growing season, he said.

But, he added, “I don’t see a big increase

in (potato) acres and I don’t see a big decrease.” ■

“The question on everybody’s mind right now is how many potatoes are we going to plant in Idaho in the coming year? How much are we going to increase when the cost of production has skyrocketed like this?”

– Ben Eborn, North American Potato Market News



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Photos by Chris Schnepf

Precommercial thinning is a golden opportunity to set a young forest on the course you desire.

Thinning small trees

By Chris Schnepf
University of Idaho

Of all the different treatments that can be made to meet forest owner objectives, thinning is one of the most powerful.

Part of thinning's utility comes from reducing stand density, which lowers tree moisture stress, making trees more resilient in the face of drought, forest insects, and fire.

But one of the most valuable dimensions of thinning in Idaho is the opportunity to adjust species composition, setting the stand's future trajectory for the next 40 years or more.

Thinning is also a way to improve forest genetics (if you will be relying on those trees eventually to seed in new trees).

There are two broad types of thinning – precommercial thinning and commercial thinning. Commercial thinning removes trees large enough to be taken

to a mill.

Precommercial thinning (sometimes referred to as “PCT”) focuses on smaller trees. Precommercial thinnings are made early in the life of a stand, between 10 and 20 years old, depending on the initial density of the trees and how rapidly they are growing.

The term “precommercial” thinning does not necessarily mean the primary objective is managing for ultimate commercial harvest. You may be managing primarily for other objectives, including wildlife, aesthetics, grazing, or other values and still do some precommercial thinning.

The term simply refers to the size of trees being cut (small).

Precommercial thinning is a fairly approachable practice for many family forest owners because it does not involve setting up a timber sale and the smaller sapling trees are easier for a novice to cut down, though there are still safety considerations.

It is also a task that a landowner can do a little bit at a time.

Species selection is one of the most important dimensions of precommercial thinning. Natural regeneration of tree seedlings often happens in Idaho, but not always the way we want.

Even if you plant the ideal species for a site, you may get additional trees seeded in from nearby trees (sometimes referred to as “ingrowth”) that change your species composition.

Ingrown species may not be a problem if they are desired for the site; who wouldn't like to have a little more western redcedar in their forest?

But naturally seeded trees can be problematic if they are not suited to the site over the long term, or if they suppress the most desired species for the site.

For example, sites that have been harvested and re-planted due to root disease issues often have lots of Douglas-fir and grand fir in the surrounding

forest that seed into a plantation.

Such Douglas-fir and grand fir will likely be killed by root diseases, but not before suppressing species which are ultimately more resilient to root diseases. Precommercial thinning is an excellent opportunity for early course correction.

The first step to any thinning effort is to assess stand density.

For tree planting and precommercial thinning, we usually estimate stand density by counting trees in sample plots. Plots can be many different sizes, but in extension programs on PCT, we commonly use 1/100th acre circular plots, which makes the math very easy. You simply count the trees in the plot and multiply by 100.

You can purchase a variety of tapes to measure out plots, but if you are just doing plots for precommercial thinning, cut a rope to 11'10" – a circle made using that rope as a radius would be a 100th acre plot.

Some foresters use 250th acre plots and cut a wooden stick 7'5" to measure plot radii (in this case, the number of trees counted would be multiplied by 250). Smaller plots like this are easier for one person to measure.

Generally, measure at least one plot for every 10 acres or at least three plots through the whole site if you have less than 10 acres. If you have a stand that is very mixed in terms of species and density, more plots are probably a good idea.

Ultimately, the more plots you measure, the more accurate your stand estimate will be. Setting the plots up on a regularly spaced grid system will help you map out where the density is highest and lowest.

For more information, see "Basic Forest Inventory Techniques for Family Forest Owners" (PNW 630) available at (<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/basic-forest-inventory-techniques-for-family-forest-owners>).

Don't just count trees. When counting trees, record their species, to give you a fuller picture of what you have to work with. Plots may reveal that you had more of some species than you imagined.

Reducing stand density is an important part of all thinning. It is not uncommon on sites with lodgepole pine seed sources to have 3,000 or more saplings per acre.

For perspective, we typically plant no more than 400 trees per acre. If such "doghair" thickets are left untreated, their growth often stagnates, and they are degraded by bark beetles or fire.

Lodgepole pine can be one of our better growing tree species if density is managed.

Timing of precommercial thinning varies by the species and the initial stand density. There is some value in letting trees compete for a while to identify which trees are exhibiting the best growth potential.

But a good rule of thumb is to thin before the average crown ratios get below 40%. The crown ratio is the portion of a tree's height that has green branches coming from it.

If you have a 10-foot-tall tree and the top 7 feet has green branches, that tree would have a 70% crown ratio. Some would focus on 30% crown ratios, and that is not wrong, but if you wait till then, you do not have as many years to complete the treatment.

Crown ratio estimates should be made on the inside of the stand and not with trees next to a road or meadow – those trees will have larger crown ratios than the interior stand trees due to the light they get from those openings.

Stands with small or poorly developed crowns and long, slender stems from waiting too long to thin are prone to windthrow or breakage from heavy wind or snowstorms, so it is important to get the thinning done before they reach this state.

If a stand already has very small crown ratios, you may be able to do light thinnings in stages, to build larger crowns and root systems and develop more stem taper so trees can withstand



Lodgepole pine can be a great species if stand density is managed.

greater exposure to weather hazards.

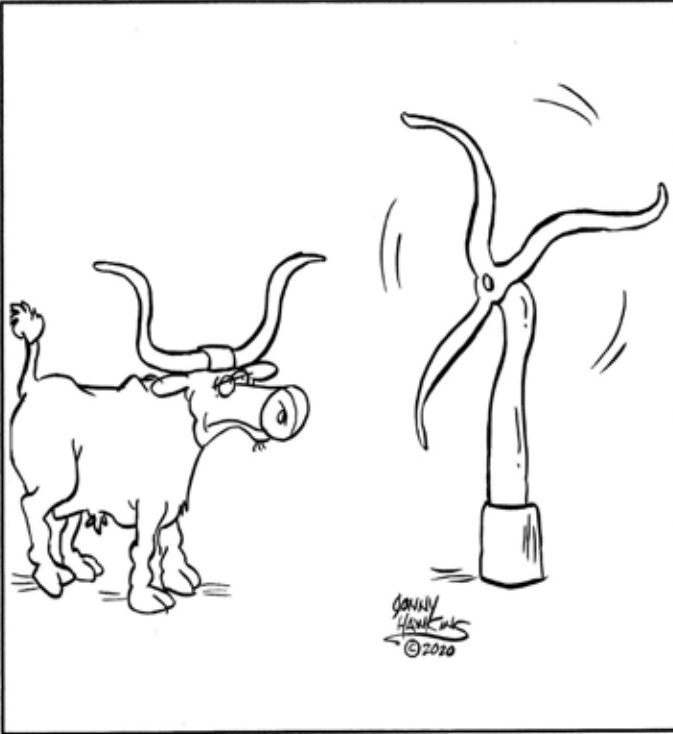
University of Idaho Extension offers field days every summer on thinning and pruning where you can learn more about the science, techniques, and tools for thinning. Check UI Extension Forestry calendar (www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry/programs) and click on "Strengthening Forest Stewardship Skills" for dates and locations.

Precommercial thinning is an essential silvicultural tool. By asserting some management early in the life of a stand or regeneration patches, landowners can save themselves a lot of headaches later in the life of the forest.

In my next column, we will discuss practical tools and techniques for getting precommercial thinning done. ■

Chris Schnepf is an area extension educator in forestry for the University of Idaho in Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and Benewah counties. He can be reached at cschnepf@uidaho.edu.

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Fort Hall, Idaho
December 2021

Mission Statement

The Idaho Farm Bureau is a voluntary grassroots organization dedicated to strengthening agriculture and protecting the rights, values, and property of our member families and neighbors.

IFBF Policy

Policy statements were developed over the past 82 years by Idaho Farm Bureau volunteer members. The policy development process takes place at the county, district and state levels throughout the year. The policy comes from our grassroots members and is then used to guide the Idaho Farm Bureau's lobbying, public relations and educational efforts each year.

You can find our 2022 policy statements at

idahofb.org/policy-books



Photos by Bill Schaefer

Mike Sterling, owner of Parma Post & Pole, stands next to treated hop poles in the lumber yard.

Rapid hop growth fuels pole business

By Bill Schaefer

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Free advice from a friend in 2010 proved to be invaluable advice in the following decade for Mike Sterling, owner of Parma Post & Pole.

Greg Obendorf of Obendorf Farms, which grows hops in southwestern Idaho, showed up one day and gave Sterling a heads-up that hop production in the state was about to take off and he needed to get prepared to produce hop poles.

“Greg’s known me my whole life and I know his boys really well and he was kind of the one who came in and said, ‘You need

to be prepared,’” Sterling said. “And it’s just been non-stop since 2012.”

Hop production has really taken off in Idaho and Parma Post & Pole has become the main provider for hop poles in the state.

Over the past eight years, total hop acres harvested in Idaho jumped 260 percent, from 3,743 acres in 2014 to 9,700 acres in 2021.

Idaho surpassed Oregon in 2017 to take over second place in the nation for harvested hop acres.

The center of hop production for Idaho is in the southwest corner of the state. The communities of Wilder, Homedale, Notus

and Parma comprise the hub of hop growers in the area.

The hop plant is a climbing vine that produces flowers or seed cones that are then harvested for use in the production of beer. Cultivation of the plant requires poles to support the horizontal cables that support the vertical lines the plants climb.

Parma Post and Pole has been one of the major beneficiaries from the explosive growth in hop acres in Idaho, as well as across the country, according to Sterling.

Sterling’s father, Walt, started the business in 1982 when he bought a fence post peeler and a couple other pieces of equipment at an auction in Marsing.



Hop acres have taken off in Idaho since 2014 and so has business at Parma Post & Pole, which makes hop poles for local growers.

Sterling bought PPP from his father in 1998.

According to Sterling, his father had never sold a hop pole when he owned the business.

Sterling said that the hop poles are a niche industry and he takes a lot of pride meeting the hop pole needs of local hop growers.

His primary business is focused on fence posts and rails. He estimated that hop pole production is between 15 to 20 percent of his business.

“I think in the last 10, 12 years we’ve done just under a half-million poles,” Sterling said.

“With the hop poles, our main focus is catering to the local growers,” he said. “All these guys are guys we know. They’re guys that I grew up with, so we take a lot of pride in making sure that we’re covering the local hop growers, but we’ve (also) shipped hop poles to ... Colorado, to Oregon, to Reno, to Maine; I mean, we’ve sold hop poles all over the country.”

According to Sterling, the beauty of hop poles is that if the orders for hop poles fail to materialize, the poles are easily converted into fence posts.

“We’ve already got them pre-cut at 22 foot or 24 foot, but if the hop pole orders don’t come in, we can chop those into three sevens or two sevens and an eight because we produce like 300 different items,” he said. “Once the wood’s physically on the property, we have so many opportunities to re-manufacture it.”

Sterling said that in Parma he has about 30 employees running four peelers. Over in Seneca, Ore., he has a partnership with Iron Triangle Logging, where they run three more peelers and employ another 20 people.

According to the National Beer Wholesalers Association, the U.S. beer industry sold almost 205 million barrels of beer in 2020. Put another way, average annual consumption of beer in the U.S. is 28 gallons for every person over the age of 21 in the U.S.

That’s a lot of beer. And to make all that beer requires a lot of hops.

The hop plant is an important flavoring ingredient in the production of beer. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, Idaho, Oregon and Washington grew an estimated 90 percent of hops in the United States in 2021.

Washington state ranked number one in U.S. hop production with 43,783 acres harvested in 2021, Idaho was number two with 9,694 acres harvested and Oregon was number three with 7,395 acres harvested.

Brock Obendorf, the current owner of Obendorf Farms and chairman of the Idaho Hop Growers Commission, attributed some of the hop acreage growth to development of the micro-brew and beer market, specifically India Pale Ale.

Obendorf said that he currently plants about 3,900 acres in hops, an increase of 2,700 acres from 2008, he doesn’t see the expansion of production continuing.

“It’s plateaued,” he said of the demand for hops. “Growing costs have really gone up. We’re kind of going into a really interesting market, where labor has gone out of sight, growing costs have gone out of sight ... so our margins aren’t there anymore. So, things are going to get real tight (and) you’re going to see a big pull-back on expansion.”

A recent newcomer to the field of hop production is Central Cove Hop in Parma, a subsidiary of the JC Watson Packing Co. based in Parma. JC Watson Co. specializes in producing, packing and marketing Spanish sweet onions.

Colbie Libsack, crop manager for JC Watson, said the company decided to start growing hops in 2016 to diversify their row crop operation.

“It definitely boomed the last five years,” Libsack said of hop production in southwest Idaho. “But it’s starting to ... stabilize. We’re seeing more of a change in varieties than we are a growth in acres.”

Whether the demand for hop poles increases or decreases, Sterling and Parma Post & Pole will continue providing poles on demand.

“I’ve always joked that these guys treat me like Domino’s Pizza. They want them just in time,” he said with a laugh. “I’m predicting it could go down but last year I was thinking we would hardly do poles but in a three-week period we took orders for 30,000.” ■



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Southeast Idaho auctioneers are a family of fast-talkers

Kade Rogge finds his award-winning voice at auctions and rodeos

Photo courtesy of Livestock Marketing Association
Kade competes at a contest to qualify for the Livestock Marketing Association's World Livestock Auctioneer Championship.

By Dianna Troyer
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

A professional rodeo announcer and award-winning auctioneer, Kade Rogge makes his vocal vocations seem as natural as breathing. He shifts effortlessly from normal conversation to his fluid, rhythmic auctioneer's chant of 200 to 400 words per minute.

So do his auctioneer role models – his father, Ron Rogge, who specializes in farm sales, and stepfather, Merv May, who sells livestock at the Burley Livestock Auction.

Based in southeastern Idaho, the three agree their goal is to get their audience to have as much fun as they are having. They share a few trade secrets of what they do to make their jobs look easy and entertaining.

Behind minutes at the mic are hours of daily voice practice and research.

"Most people have no idea what it takes to be ready," said Kade, 32, who lives in Rupert and works at events throughout the West.

To prep for weekly auctions in Bur-

ley and Blackfoot, Kade practices his chant twice a day, about 10 minutes at a time.

"I do it around the house or while I'm driving," he said. "You have to keep up with livestock prices, too, so you can get a fair price for sellers and buyers."

To be ready for rodeos, he researches for hours, learning about competitors' accomplishments and personalities. He jots down notes on a program.

"No one would know what my scribbles mean – like the letters NC mean national champion," he said. "For national competitors, it's easier to find information. For the smaller rodeos, it's more challenging."

His summer rodeo season gets into full swing in June every year.

"I'm usually booked every weekend in southern Idaho, Utah and Wyoming," he said.

Kade said being flexible and willing to travel has helped him succeed in his careers.

"Rodeo is a small world, and production companies know who to call if someone has to cancel," Kade said. "Nationwide, there are only about 100 of us with announcer credentials from the Professional Rodeo Cowboys

Association."

Kade grew up competing in team roping, calf roping, and steer wrestling, earning him a slot on the College of Southern Idaho's rodeo team.

At a clinic, his coach asked for a volunteer announcer, leading Kade to his careers

"He asked me if a mic made me nervous," Kade said. "I told him no, so he said, 'Good, you're our announcer.'"

Realizing he was comfortable with public speaking, Kade decided to also become an auctioneer and enrolled at the Western College of Auctioneering in Billings, Mont., in 2011.

For Kade, being around a mic seemed natural, having tagged along with Ron and Merv during childhood.

"Having seen and heard them work with an audience most of my life put me at ease," he said. "We still work together, and they'll sub for me if I have to be out of town, or if they need help, I'm there for them."

Fast-talking fathers

As for farm sales, Kade said there's no one better than Ron, who also works at banquets for nonprofits.

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 29

“Rodeo is a small world, and production companies know who to call if someone has to cancel. Nationwide, there are only about 100 of us with announcer credentials from the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.”

– Kade Rogge

Whatever auction he does, Ron said he strives “to loosen up people so they have a good time and want to stay. I really like feeling the energy of interacting with a crowd.”

Ron, 57, said he has loved auctions since he was a young and went to sales with his dad and granddad.

“Auctioneering gets in your blood,” Ron said. “I knew that would be my career.”

He enrolled in a two-week auction school and recalls several lessons.

“Focus more on the numbers in a bid instead of using so many filler words,” said Ron, who won a state auctioneer title in 2005. “Control your breathing, too, so you don’t sound like you’re gasping for air. It takes a lot of practice.”

He practices daily.

“Sometimes I’ll do it when I’m driving,” he said. “But I have to put it on cruise control. Some days, the faster I talk, the faster I drive because I get so energized.”

Like Ron, Merv, 62, knew as a child he would become an auctioneer. When he was 5, his parents bought the sale yard in Rupert.

“That’s when I decided to be an auctioneer,” he said. “I’d practice in a tape recorder, then erase it so my mom wouldn’t hear me. One night, I fell asleep and she found it and played it for my stepdad. He let me start selling when I was 14.”

He said he keeps his voice in shape by practicing regularly.

“I’m still having fun and not ready to



Photo courtesy of Kade Rogge

Kade announces a rodeo while riding Zorro, a former bucking horse.

quit.”

Competitive nature

With his self-described “competitive personality,” Kade said he enters contests to improve.

He was encouraged when the Washington Auctioneers Association named him the 2017 Northwest Champion Auctioneer.

He hopes to eventually qualify for the prestigious World Livestock Auctioneer Championship hosted in conjunction with the Livestock Marketing Association’s yearly convention.

Kade has competed at two World Livestock Auctioneer Championship

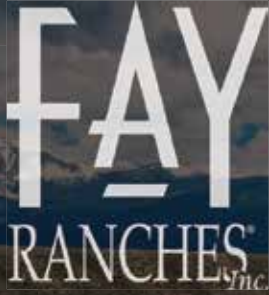
Qualifying Events – one in Lewiston, Idaho, in 2017 and two years later in Holdenville, Oklahoma.

He has taken advice from judges.

“They said I pointed too much, which makes people feel uncomfortable,” Kade said. “Instead, I lift up my left hand, palm up, to show who’s winning a bid.”

Kade said he was grateful rodeos and auctioneering contests resumed this past summer with COVID restrictions lifted for public gatherings.

“I’m grateful to make a living doing what I love,” Kade said. ■



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Agricultural Profile

Fremont County



Photos by Straton Crapo

Barley is harvested in a Fremont County field last year. Teaching kids about agriculture is one of the main focuses of the Fremont County Farm Bureau organization.

Fremont County Farm Bureau focuses on educating kids about ag

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Considering that most of Fremont County consists of federal or state land, it's no small feat that the county ranks as high as it does in Idaho when it comes to total farm revenue.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Fremont County farmers and

ranchers brought in \$138 million in farm-cash receipts during the 2017 census year.

The census data shows that 16 of Idaho's 44 counties ranked ahead of Fremont in that category, while 27 ranked below the county.

"We're not a huge ag county but we're not small either," says St. Anthony farmer Val Hammond, who is also president of Fremont County Farm Bureau.

Fremont County's main crops are barley, wheat, hay and potatoes and the county also has a sizable beef cattle industry.

According to the 2017 census of ag, farmers in the county grew 58,565 acres of barley during the census year, 38,399 acres of wheat, 22,221 acres of hay and 21,397 acres of potatoes.

The county is a major seed potato producing area and grows a lot of commercial



Barley is harvested in a Fremont County field last year. Teaching kids about agriculture is one of the main focuses of the Fremont County Farm Bureau organization.

spuds as well.

“The Ashton area is considered to be one of the largest seed potato producing areas ... in the nation,” says Alan Baum, who grows wheat, barley and alfalfa and rents out potato ground in the Ashton area.

There were 13,879 cattle and calves in the county in 2017.

Like many other parts of Idaho, the county is experiencing growth but it’s mainly in the north part of the county in an area with a lot of pastureland and marginal farm ground, Hammond says.

“We’re not losing good farmland. We haven’t reached that point and I hope we never do,” he says.

One of the main focuses of the Fremont County Farm Bureau organization is teaching kids about agriculture and FCFB members spend a lot of time and resources doing that, Hammond says.

“We’re very much involved with the schools and promoting agriculture,” he

says. “These youth are our future leaders. Being in a rural county like ours, you would think the youth know a lot about agriculture but that’s not the case. We have a lot of ag education to do.”

As part of the local Farm Bureau group’s ag literacy program, FCFB purchased bookcases for each elementary school library in Fremont County and is filling them with books about different agricultural commodities.

“We want to eventually fill up those bookcases with ag books,” Hammond says. “We’re educating the kids about a different ag commodity every year. That’s been a very successful program.”

That library program “has been really quite successful in stirring interest in agriculture,” says Baum, who is a member of the Fremont County Farm Bureau board of directors.

FCFB also hosts a career event for high school students.

That event, which consists of a panel of

five people from different parts of the agricultural industry, is designed to expose high school students to the many different opportunities available to them in the agricultural world, Baum says.

Providing scholarships and supporting FFA programs are among some of the other ways FCFB supports youth in the area.

“Educating youth about agriculture is one thing we excel at in the county,” Baum says.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 513 farms and ranches in Fremont County during the 2017 census year and the average-sized farm was 545 acres.

There are a lot of small farms in the county – 192 of them were less than 49 acres in size in 2017 – but there were plenty of bigger farms also – 101 were larger than 500 acres and 92 were from 180-499 acres in size. ■

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FROM BLUE JACKET TO WHITE COAT

Kristin first zipped up her blue jacket back in 2012 and had a memorable four years in the Meridian FFA Chapter. She was heavily involved in several Career/Leadership Development Events and even received gold in four different events at the national level. One of those being the Veterinary Science CDE where she received 2nd place overall individual in the nation. Kristin not only took advantage of the knowledge gained in the CDE/LDE but took on leadership positions both on the chapter and district level.



"My time in FFA helped me learn how to be a better team leader, fine tune my public speaking skills, and communicate my strengths in interviews. I was lucky to have so many mentors and role models in the program that pushed me to go out of my comfort zone to meet new people and compete in different competitions. I also received over 30 merit based scholarships partially because of the connections, experiences, leadership, and service that I participated in through being heavily active in my FFA chapter. One of these scholarships was from the Idaho Farm Bureau! Idaho FFA is changing the lives of students so they can be the next generation of leaders to change the world." Kristin Nesbitt Meridian FFA Alumna

Since her graduation from the University of Idaho back in 2020, Kristin is currently pursuing her Doctor of Medicine as a 2nd year medical student at the University of Utah School of Medicine in Salt Lake City, Utah. While she isn't directly going into the agricultural industry, she is excited to continue to share her love for the industry and be an advocate for agriculture and the FFA.





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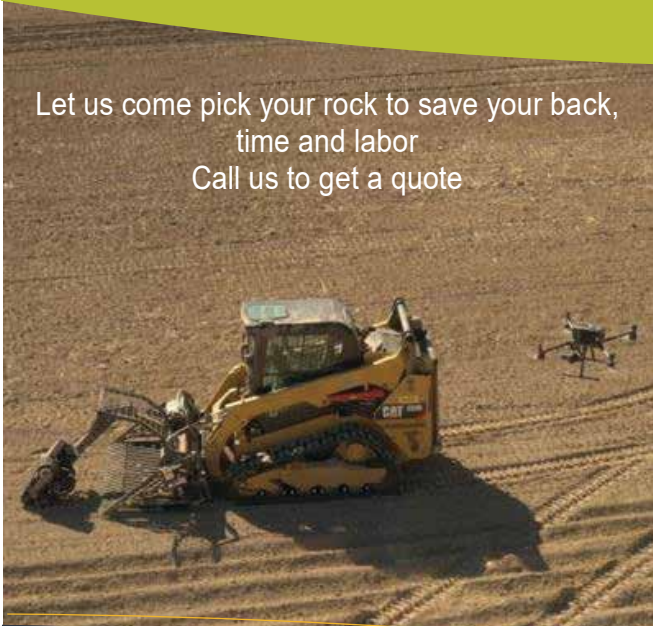
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Photos by Jill Weadick

A set of granaries sit on a hillside near Lava Hot Springs. The Kay Wixom family will rent them out once the interior is completed later this spring.

Repurposing granaries into livable spaces

By Kathy Corgatelli Neville
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BLACKFOOT – Lately, repurposing granaries into a home has been a trend nationwide. But for one East Idaho native, it just made sense, and for another, it's a new business.

About three months ago, Pat Hughes and some relatives put their heads together and came up with a plan to turn two unused granaries north of Blackfoot into a comfortable living area.

They connected the round steel struc-

tures with a square, wooden building made from reclaimed barn wood taken from the same property, using a cardboard model they assembled as their guide.

It looked easy enough, but at times it seemed as easy as putting a round peg into a square hole.

"It's taken quite a bit of head-scratching," Hughes said. "But we all got together and figured it out."

Hughes' niece, Jill Weadick, an interior designer from Idaho Falls, helped with the design details.

"This project is bending my design thinking off the leading edge and into circles," she said. "To make an agriculture receptacle into a comfortable home is an exciting challenge, one I'm up for. It's been so much fun to help with design details. Because of a COVID-19 death in the family, this project came alive, wasn't planned, and finances were tight, so we've been repurposing. I've found sales for my clients that have made financing this project easier and less stressful."

Two entrances welcome visitors into a warm, wood structure. Just inside the

back door, a wood burning stove invites visitors to hurry in to take the chill off, while a more formal invitation is offered at the main entrance in the front.

A laundry room and a comfortable-sized bathroom fit in between these spaces and through a door to one granary is a spacious living area. The other granary is divided into two bedrooms with a loft above for a future bedroom.

Each granary is roomy, measuring 21 feet in diameter with 14-foot-high walls, crowned by the circular steel ceiling that stretches another 20 feet at its peak.

Hughes cut huge openings for windows into the steel and his brother, Ron Hughes, a classic auto craftsman by trade, cut the iron that frames the windows and welded and finished them with resilient auto body paint.

The windows have been placed with the scenery as the priority.

“The metal seal makes them practically bullet proof and they’re designed to fit in the curve of the granary so it all works,” Hughes said.

Some of the steel walls will be lined with strips of corrugated metal and others warmed with cedar wood into an inviting space.

Other walls will be lined with sheetrock. Fitting sheetrock to a curved wall has been a challenge, too. The family learned that sheetrock can be lightly sprayed with water and gently bent to fit the distinctive curve of a granary wall.

‘A fun backyard project’

On a hill just outside Lava Hot Springs, a Blackfoot family is repurposing three granaries into an Airbnb. The project came with a bonus – like with the Hughes family, the Wixom family project drew an already close-knit family even closer.

It all started when Kay Wixom decided a repurposed granary would be a fun backyard project. The family located a granary, purchased it, dismantled it and reassembled it in Wixom’s backyard.

“I didn’t have a granary here at my home in Blackfoot but I’d seen it done before on Pinterest,” he said.

But his backyard project moved to the back burner when a new idea came about. The new project evolved into a



The Kay Wixom family Airbnb granary in Lava Hot Springs.

business, in another town, and included three granaries and two of Wixom’s sons and their wives.

“I talked to my son, Wes, and asked him if he wanted to build an Airbnb so when I retire, I could take care of it,” Wixom said. “The more I talked to Wes, my other son, Adam, got involved and we all decided to go for it. At first, my wife thought we were all crazy.”

The complex includes two honeymoon suites and a larger area with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen and living room area.

A major challenge was hiring contractors to work on the project while the family tended to their full-time jobs. Wixom is a barber and hairdresser in Blackfoot and all have extensive building experience.

“We had several contractors who wouldn’t even call us back, but finally we hired a framer from Pocatello whose wife thought it would be fun and talked him into it even though he had no idea how to do it.” Wixom said. “He agreed to do the first one and work by the hour, and if that worked out okay, he’d do the

other two.”

The Wixom family also had trouble finding a plumber who would tackle the project.

“We looked all over the place and eventually we found one and each contractor wanted to be part of it,” he said. “We had really good, fun times with these people and it’s been a fun thing to do.”

The project has been a head-turner in the small town of Lava Hot Springs.

“Our electrician said he’s surprised there are not car wrecks as people drive by and suddenly stop to take pictures,” Wixom said.

While the project is taking longer than the initial Christmas season target, the family is pleased with the progress, challenges and all.

“Finishing a round building is a real challenge in our minds,” Wixom said. “It takes a lot of thinking out-of-the-box. There were times we sat around the kitchen table and asked ourselves, how we can make this work?” ■

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