

# GEM STATE **Producer**

**Idaho Farm Bureau**

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Farm Bureau Survey Looks  
At Actual Grazing Costs



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## Clearing supply chain hurdles

**W**e live in an instant age here in America. From fast food to same-day delivery, we have gotten used to not waiting long for most things.

But not everything has a quick-fix option, and there's certainly no such thing as instant farming.

When something breaks down on the farm, it takes time to repair. When disaster hits, recovery doesn't come in minutes but months, sometimes years.

As a nation, we're on that long road to

recovery together as supply chain disruptions continue to ripple through our economy.

Yes, America's farmers and ranchers are still farming. No question. But empty shelves and rising food costs have everyone concerned and looking for solutions.

The pressure of rising costs is being felt by farmers and ranchers too. Food cost inflation doesn't make its way back to farmers' pockets in the form of higher payments for their products.

See **DUVALL**, page 6

# The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



## Farm Bureau conference brings producers, lawmakers together

**I**ron sharpened iron during Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's recent Legislative & Commodity Conference.

More than 160 farmers and ranchers from around the state who are Farm Bureau members attended the annual conference in Boise, which was held Feb. 8-9 this year.

About two-thirds of Idaho's 105-member legislature also attended some the event.

One of the main purposes of the event is to provide an opportunity for Farm Bureau members to meet face to face with state lawmakers and discuss ideas, challenges

and hopefully, solutions to the various issues facing agriculture and the state as a whole.

The legislative and commodity conference is one of the events that I and other Farm Bureau members most look forward to attending each year. Lawmakers tell us it is the same for them.

"There are about five top events that legislators look forward to attending each session and this is one of them," Rep. Clark Kauffman, a farmer from Filer and chairman of the House Agricultural Affairs

See **SEARLE**, page 7

# Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



## A worthwhile challenge

**T**he Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's mission statement states:

"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."

When all else fails, a mission statement reminds everyone what an organization stands for and strives to achieve.

The mission of the Farm Bureau is black and white and very easy to understand, and it's also rarely easy. Few things of significance are, which is why achieving

challenging goals is so satisfying.

Water tastes better, food is richer, and the sky is always more beautiful after a challenging task has been successfully completed.

There are also times when the task is challenging and not entirely clear. When hard decisions have to be made, you find out the true mettle of your organization. Only a strong organization can take on hard challenges.

Currently, Farm Bureau is addressing one of those types of challenges. This

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# Idaho Farm Bureau.

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Photos by Sean Ellis

Idaho tied a record last year for total ag export value.

# Idaho tied record last year for ag exports

By Sean Ellis  
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The total value of Idaho farm product exports jumped 9 percent last year and tied an all-time high, according to one of the main sets of data that track Idaho agricultural exports.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data that became available in early February and was crunched by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Idaho businesses exported \$1.02 billion worth of agricultural products to other countries in 2021.

That tied the previous record set in 2014.

That data from the Census Bureau differs from a separate set of data released annually by USDA because although the Census Bureau export data is released quarterly and is more timely, it doesn't capture all of Idaho's farm product exports because it is based on what state a commodity is exported from.

For example, it doesn't capture the wheat from Idaho that is exported out of Portland. But it does show trends and from a percentage standpoint, matches closely with the USDA data, which is released annually in the fall.

The latest USDA data, released in late October, showed Idaho exported a record \$2.32 billion worth of agricultural products in 2020, narrowly eclipsing the previous record of \$2.29 billion set in 2013.

The USDA Idaho ag export data for 2021 won't be released until this fall.

Idaho's growth in agricultural exports was even more impressive considering the relative strength of the U.S. dollar, which strengthened almost 4 percent in 2021 on a trade-weighted basis, said Doug Robison, the Idaho president for Northwest Farm Credit Services.

A stronger dollar generally makes U.S. products less competitive in the global marketplace.

Idaho's higher ag export value also came despite considerable

See **EXPORTS**, page 15

**COVER:** Cattle graze near Bone, Idaho, in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. See page 4 for a story on the results of an IFBF survey that looked at what it actually costs ranchers to graze cattle on state land. (Photo by Joel Benson)



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photo

A recently published study conducted by Idaho Farm Bureau Federation and a Utah State University researcher looked at the actual non-fee costs associated with grazing livestock on state land.

# Farm Bureau survey looks at non-fee grazing costs

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – The Idaho Land Board in October voted not to support a proposal by the Idaho Department of Lands to raise the state grazing fee by 28 percent.

Since that time, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation has released the results of a study that the organization believes supports the land board’s decision not to raise the rate that ranchers pay to graze their cattle on state-owned land.

The IDL in 2021 proposed raising that fee from \$7.07 per animal unit month to \$9.07 per AUM. An AUM

represents the use of public land for one cow and her calf per month.

The IDL’s proposal to raise the rate failed after the five-member land board voted 2-2 on it. Gov. Brad Little recused himself from the vote because he is a rancher.

Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden and State Controller Brandon Woolf supported the proposal, while Secretary of State Lawrence Denney and Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra voted against it.

Some people who support raising the fee point to the average grazing fee rate of \$18.50 per AUM on private ground in Idaho to support their argument.

The IFBF study, which was conducted last year by a Utah State University master’s degree student and Farm Bureau staff, shows that’s not an accurate or fair comparison, said Russ Hendricks, director of IFBF’s governmental affairs division.

“We now have actual, current, hard data that shows the contrary is true,” he said. “While some people have the mistaken idea that ranchers are getting a screaming deal, actually they’re really paying far more than the private lease rate when you consider their non-fee costs.”

During a public hearing on the proposal during the October land board meeting, Hendricks pointed out the

state grazing fee does not take into consideration the significant non-fee costs that ranchers pay to graze their animals on Idaho state land.

He said all the state does is provide the forage for animals but it requires the ranchers to do all the management of the land and livestock, which is far different than what happens on many private leases.

Beef cattle is the state's No. 1 agricultural commodity in terms of farm-gate revenue and Idaho ranchers graze

cattle on 1.7 million acres of state land.

The IFBF survey done in conjunction with Utah State University graduate student Dexton Lake looked at those non-fee costs.

Lake conducted the survey with 87 ranchers who pay to graze their cattle on state land. Each survey was 34 pages long and at least 200 questions were asked, Lake said. He said it took an average of about 1 hour and 15 minutes to conduct each survey.

"It was very detailed," Lake said. "It demonstrated that it is expensive to run cattle on state ground...."

The average grazing lease on private land in Idaho is \$18.50 per AUM, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. But private landowners typically provide a lot more services to lessees than the state does, Hendricks says.

The non-fee costs that ranchers who graze cattle on public land face include providing their own fencing, veterinary and medicine, predator loss, labor, salt, transportation, water, horses, noxious weed control, maintenance, depreciation and other miscellaneous costs.

During the October land board meeting, IDL Director Dustin Miller, responding to a question from the board, said most of the lessees on state land own the infrastructure, such as fencing and water developments, on

the grazing allotments.

Producers who graze cattle on state land pay an average of \$50.40 per AUM in non-fee costs, the Utah State University survey found.

"I can't stress enough that these are real costs and we can't just ignore them," Hendricks said.

Lake's survey has been accepted by the Applied Economics Department at Utah State University and published. It was submitted as a research paper for his master-of-science degree in agribusiness.

These non-fee costs represent the latest actual data and show that any claims livestock producers aren't paying the state enough to graze cattle are incorrect, Hendricks said. He said if the state were to begin providing more services to lessees, like private landowners do, then it might make more sense to take a new look at the grazing fee.

"As Farm Bureau has consistently said over the past six years that IDL and some members of the land board have been attempting to increase state grazing rates, ranchers are already paying more to graze on state leases than they do on private leases when all the non-fee costs are included," Hendricks said. "This study confirms what we have been saying all along."

During the October land board meeting, Wasden said the board had a constitutional duty to ensure the grazing fee achieved the maximum long-term financial return to the state as required by the Idaho Constitution.

The current rate formula, which was set in 1993, is not achieving that mandate, he said.

"Pushing this (rate issue) further down the road simply will maintain a current system that we know doesn't meet our responsibility," Wasden said.

After sending Wasden's office a link to the study results, Scott Graf, the attorney general's director of constituent

affairs, said Wasden "appreciates your organization providing this information to help assist the board in making reasoned and informed decisions consistent with its constitutional responsibilities."

"While there are no grazing rate issues pending before the land board right now, Attorney General Wasden is glad to have the added information for the next time the issue comes back before the board," Graf said.

Joshua Whitworth, chief deputy controller, said the state controller's office has not had enough time to thoroughly read through the study and analyze it enough to comment on the results.

"As always, and what we have said leading up to this study, is that the more data that is relevant and valid to the issue, the better for all stakeholders involved," Whitworth said. "Our actions as a body, stakeholders of the use of the land included, should be to ensure the long-term value of the lands benefit the beneficiaries while providing processes and mechanisms – formulas – that represent the best analysis and market rate for the resource while giving the greatest transparency and foresight of any changes to grazers."

During the October Idaho Land Board meeting, Oscar Evans, president of the Owyhee Cattlemen's Association, said ranchers who manage their grazing allotments are basically providing free labor to the state in doing that.

"You won't find better stewards, more devout stewards, conservationists of the ground, than you will in your ranching community," he said.

Hendricks said ranchers are also providing fire suppression to state lands as their livestock remove fine fuels and protect against wildfire and habitat loss for sage grouse and other sensitive species.

"They manage the lands for the endowments and also police them against vandalism or other illegal activities," he said. "Ranchers provide a lot of management services that are not factored into the current grazing fee." ■

*"You won't find better stewards, more devout stewards, conservationists of the ground, than you will in your ranching community."*

*- Oscar Evans, President,  
Owyhee Cattlemen's Association*

Continued from page 2

Only about 8 cents of every consumer food dollar goes to the farmer, after marketing costs.

Meanwhile, the cost of farm equipment and other critical tools like fertilizer have increased—if those items can be found at all.

I've painted a bleak, yet realistic, picture here, but my message is that we're determined to overcome the hurdles. We are working with our nation's leaders to address these challenges.

USDA's announcement this week of an innovative solution to get agricultural products moving again through the port in Oakland, Calif., is a great example.

It will take time and investment to continue fine-tuning the supply chain and rebalancing the economy, but it can be done.

As we shift from our highly efficient "just in time" system to build up more "just in case" inventory to stabilize the economy and protect our food supply, we need to develop both immediate and long-term solutions.

Top of mind for farmers across the country is relief from rising farm costs. Fertilizer prices have sky-rocketed – they're up 300% in some areas – and the added impact of these costs on the rest of the food chain will not be far behind.

## MILLER

Continued from page 2

challenge goes so deep to the heart of what Farm Bureau is that it could possibly cause parts of our mission statement to stand in opposition to other parts.

The development of prime farm ground is an action and worry that has dogged mankind since the beginning of civilization. Once a house is planted, the agricultural value of that land is lost virtually forever.

The path of civilization nearly always follows the furrows of the best farm-

## *'Top of mind for farmers across the country is relief from rising farm costs.'*

While there are several factors at play here, there are actions the Biden administration can take to help the situation.

The American Farm Bureau has urged the administration to look for ways to bring fertilizer prices down, which include resolving supply chain issues and removing import duties.

Going forward, we must also focus on trade agreements that break down harmful barriers and restrict access to critical tools for America's farmers and ranchers.

It's time to increase efficiency and reliability across commercial shipping channels, from our roads and rails to our ports and waterways.

The recently passed bipartisan infrastructure package will be critical in making long-term overdue improvements that will keep our food supply moving across the nation.

More can be done by the administration now, however, in bringing industry leaders to the table to find solutions to reduce backlogs and delays, whether that be through increased competition or innovative solutions to improve efficiency.

The labor shortage has also hit the food chain hard, especially when it

comes to finding enough long-haul drivers to transport food products. But as more Americans return to the workforce, we need to increase access to these jobs.

We have called on the Department of Transportation to expand eligibility for commercial truck drivers, extend hours of service and increase shipping weights.

Of course, agriculture is no stranger to worker shortages, and if we're going to ensure the stability of our nation's food supply in the long-term, we must reform our H-2A program in a way that works for all of agriculture.

We must ensure that farms can continue producing food, fiber and fuel sustainably and that those products can make it out the farm gate to processing facilities to stores and to consumers.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this column, the problems facing our supply chain will take time to address fully.

But work is underway, and at Farm Bureau, we'll keep coming to the table with ideas and solutions to clear the hurdles.

Rest assured, every day you are out there still farming, the American Farm Bureau has your back. ■

land.

In Idaho, we are feeling and seeing that happen with such an uncomfortable amount of speed that it could possibly cause some elements of the Farm Bureau mission statement to become at odds with others.

One part of our mission statement is that "Farm Bureau is dedicated to strengthening agriculture," which can be seen as working to keep ag lands in agriculture.

"Protecting the rights" of members is also found in the same mission state-

## *'A significant number of legislators are interested in and excited to follow the work that Farm Bureau is doing on this issue.'*

ment.

Any agricultural organization that does not respect a farmer or rancher's right to do with their own land what they will is not much of an organization to respect.

Therein lies the challenge that Farm Bureau is valiantly trying to address. The members of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation have asked the organization to take on this herculean task of finding a way to both protect ag land and honor property rights.

Never one to cower from a challenge, the state board of directors of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation has created a committee to address this complex challenge of both preserving ag land while at the same time protecting a person's rights to sell it if they choose to.

Fifteen farmers and ranchers from across the state have accepted this challenging assignment and agreed to serve on IFBF's new ag land preservation committee. They met for the first time Feb. 8 and are in the process of exploring the topic.

This task will not be easy or fast.

When the Idaho Legislature's food and timber caucus

heard that Idaho Farm Bureau Federation formed a committee to tackle this issue, its members met with Farm Bureau leaders to find out more about what we are trying to accomplish.

A significant number of legislators are interested in and excited to follow the work that Farm Bureau is doing on this issue.

The collective wisdom of the members of Farm Bureau is excellent and a lot of wise thought went into the charge of this committee.

This committee is charged with "identifying viable solutions to preserve agricultural land throughout the State of Idaho while also protecting individual property rights."

When an individual agrees to a difficult task for the greater good, I am proud. When farmers and ranchers trust the Farm Bureau enough to ask it to take on a difficult task, I am proud to be a part of this great organization. ■

## SEARLE

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*Continued from page 2*

Committee, said during this year's conference.

Kauffman said he enjoys having frank discussions with the farmers and ranchers who attend the event and added, "Sometimes they straighten me out, sometimes I straighten them out."

The House ag chairman in one sentence pretty much summed up the main purpose of the event: for agricultural producers and legislators to share their collective wisdom with each other and work to find answers and solutions.

I believe solutions to some of the challenges facing Idaho and the state's agricultural industry at least in part arise during some of the many one-on-one conversations that take place during this conference.

During the conference, our members also hear, via video call, from the members of our congressional delegation. Those four nationally elected officials from Idaho share updates on some of the biggest issues our nation and state face and answer questions.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's many commodity committees are able meet in person during the two-day event and they invite presenters from other farm and ranch groups that represent their commodity to address their committees.

A few hours are spent at the state Capitol building, where our members can walk the halls and either sit in a committee meeting or listen in on the House or Senate while they are in session.

For me, the highlight of the two-day event is the strolling buffet on the evening of day one, which pairs farmers and ranchers at the same dinner table as their local legislators.

There is no program during the strolling buffet. It is simply an opportunity for Farm Bureau producers to sit down and engage one-on-one with their elected officials.

*'For me, the highlight of the two-day event is the strolling buffet on the evening of day one, which pairs farmers and ranchers at the same dinner table as their local legislators.'*

The conference serves as an opportunity for producers and state lawmakers to learn from each other and both sides have plenty to learn as well as plenty of wisdom to offer.

It also provides an opportunity for Farm Bureau members to create and in many instances strengthen the already strong relationships they have with their senators and representatives.

Keeping in contact via phone or email is wonderful but there is no substitute for speaking with someone face to face while sitting at the same table and breaking bread together.

Legislators who have attended this event over the years have shown they are truly eager and willing to listen to the concerns that farmers and ranchers have.

And those farmers and ranchers have in turn shown they are willing to keep an open mind and entertain possible solutions offered by lawmakers.

So, thank you to the grassroots Farm Bureau members who show up for this annual event and thank you to the legislators who accept our invitation to join us.

If you're not involved with Farm Bureau and have a desire to be, contact your local county Farm Bureau president. Visit [Idahofb.org](http://Idahofb.org) to find out more and locate phone numbers there. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho Gov. Brad Little, center, visits with Idaho FFA members Jan. 24 during the annual Day on the Hill luncheon. The annual event brings Idaho FFA members from across the state to Boise, where they meet with legislators and ag industry leaders and learn about the policy development process.

# Blue jackets descend on Boise for Day on the Hill

**By Sean Ellis**

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BOISE – Idaho legislators mingled with a sea of FFA members wearing their iconic blue jackets Jan. 24 during Idaho FFA's annual Cenarrusa Day on the Hill luncheon.

The luncheon kicks off a two-day event that brings hundreds of FFA members from across the state to Boise to meet with legislators and farm industry leaders.

During their time in Boise, many of the high school students visit the Capitol building, meet with lawmakers and watch the state's policy development process in person.

"We're here to teach students how to be civically engaged, engaged in their communities and engaged in agriculture, through leadership," said Idaho State FFA

Executive Director Clara-Leigh Evans. "We take what we learn in the classroom and through FFA and we

actually put that to use here building relationships that are so important as they advocate for agriculture in their communities here in Idaho."

The event allows FFA members to experience first-hand how Idaho government works, said Kevin Barker, an ag education teacher and FFA advisor from Notus.

"We can talk about it in the classroom all the time but it's just like the ag education model: you have to have that hands-on opportunity," he said.



“When you’re able to go to the Capitol and watch the legislative process, there’s no amount of educational classwork that can take the place of seeing the legislators debate in person.”

The two-day event includes a leadership conference with national FFA officials. About 400 FFA members attended that conference this year.

The Day on the Hill event is named after former Idaho Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa, who died in 2013 and whose 51 years in the legislature and executive branches of Idaho government make him the longest serving public servant in state history.

Cenarrusa started the first ag classes at Cambridge and Carey high schools and was a strong supporter of Idaho agriculture.

“One of the things about this (FFA) program is participation in government and Pete epitomized participation in government,” said Gov. Brad Little, who was a friend of Cenarrusa.

Little read and signed a proclamation declaring Feb. 19-26 as FFA Week in Idaho.

The proclamation noted that the FFA mission “is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.”

It also noted FFA is the nation’s oldest and largest school-based youth leadership organization and that Idaho FFA is in its 92<sup>nd</sup> year, with 5,271 members in 96 chapters throughout the state.

Little, a rancher, said that Cenarrusa, who was a close friend, was very innovative in the range sheep business and a lot of things done in that business today can be traced to him.

He encouraged FFA members to also be innovators and to work hard.

“I have been blessed to have known quite a few Idaho pioneers in my long lifetime,” the governor said. “The common denominator in all of them was hard work and innovation.”

The event is an opportunity for FFA members to establish a relationship with their local legislators.

It’s also an opportunity for legislators to learn about the FFA program.

“Since I’ve been in the legislature, it’s one of my favorite things,” said Sen. Jim Guthrie, R-McCammon, who has served in the Idaho Legislature since 2010. “Seeing all the blue jackets, the enthusiasm of the youth and just the professionalism they have at such a young age.”

He said interacting with FFA members has inspired him to be more diligent when making decisions about education “that are going to impact those young kids, so when they take over, they have a good foundation from which to work.”

Last year’s event was canceled due to restrictions related to COVID-19 and it was good for FFA members to again engage with legislators and industry leaders face to face, Evans



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said.

Despite the COVID disruptions, the FFA program has continued rolling and local advisors have done a great job keeping students engaged, she said.

“It’s all about local program success when it comes to FFA and agriculture education and our teachers have done a stellar job of that,” Evans said.

Honorary FFA degrees for their long-time support of Idaho FFA and agricultural education were presented to Sen. Jim Rice, R-Caldwell, former chairman of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee, and Rep. Clark Kauffman, R-Filer, chairman of the House Agricultural Affairs Committee.

The Northwest Agricultural Cooperative Council, which sponsors the Day on the Hill, each year during the event presents friends of the cooperative industry awards to people who “have demonstrated a dedication and passion toward Idaho agriculture, the people and the industry.”

These awards were presented this year to Sen. Van Burtenshaw, R-Terretton, chairman of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee, and Rep. Laurie Lickley, R-Jerome.

Lickley, a rancher, has served Idaho’s beef industry at both the local and national level.

Burtenshaw is a farmer, rancher and livestock dealer. ■



Photos by Paul Boehlke

Rep. Russ Fulcher, R-Idaho, speaks with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members by video conference Feb. 8 during IFBF's Legislative & Commodity Conference.

# Two-thirds of legislature attends Farm Bureau event

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BOISE – About two-thirds of the Idaho Legislature attended Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Legislative & Commodity Conference Feb. 8-9.

The annual event brings farmers and ranchers from across the state who are Farm Bureau members to Boise for a two-day event where they have the opportunity to engage with legislators face to face.

About 160 IFBF members and more than 70 of the state's 105 legislators attended this year's event.

"There are about five top events that legislators look forward to attending each

session and this is one of them," said Rep. Clark Kauffman, a farmer from Filer and chairman of the House Agricultural Affairs Committee.

He said he enjoys having open and frank discussions with Farm Bureau members, hearing their concerns and learning more about IFBF policy.

"It's always good to have those conversations," Kauffman said. "Sometimes they straighten me out, sometimes I straighten them out."

One of the highlights of the conference is the strolling buffet, where legislators sit down with Farm Bureau members during dinner and discuss the various issues facing agriculture and the state.

There is no program for the strolling buffet; it's just lawmakers and farmers and ranchers having face-to-face discussions.

"This is a valuable opportunity for us to meet face to face with our legislators, tell them thanks for what they do and also talk to them about the issues that are going on," said IFBF President and Shelley farmer Bryan Searle.

IFBF CEO Zak Miller said the conference is one of his favorite events of the year.

"We feel we have a great relationship with legislators but it's always good to be able to talk to them face to face," he said. "There's nothing better than when a farmer or rancher can sit down and talk to a legislator."

"Legislators showing up for the event

shows the value they place in Farm Bureau and the conference is a good way for us to show the value that Farm Bureau places in them,” Miller said.

Payette County Farm Bureau President Mike Shoemaker, who farms in New Plymouth, said the conference is a great opportunity for producers “to become more familiar with the issues the state legislature is looking at that Farm Bureau has a vested interest in.”

Last year’s event was canceled due to COVID-related restrictions and Shoemaker said it was good to return to having one-on-one meetings with lawmakers.

“It’s always good to see them and strengthen that personal relationship even more,” he said.

Before the strolling buffet, members of IFBF’s governmental affairs team encouraged Farm Bureau members to speak their mind to legislators and assured them lawmakers are eager to hear from them.

“They want to hear from you as their constituents,” said Russ Hendricks, director of IFBF’s governmental affairs division. “They really, really want to hear from you and they want to know what’s happening on your operations and how different issues affect you.”

“We can’t over-emphasize (how much) they want to hear from you guys,” said Chyla Wilson, an IFBF governmental affairs representative. “It’s important to have this open line of communication between you and your senators and representatives.”

The two-day conference also brings



**Sen. Mark Harris, a Republican rancher from Soda Springs, left, speaks with Idaho Falls farmer Stephanie Mickelsen and Georgetown farmer Albert Johnson Feb. 8 during Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Legislative & Commodity Conference.**

together members of IFBF’s commodity committees to discuss the latest issues affecting the various agricultural commodities produced in Idaho.

Members of IFBF’s beef, water, wheat and feed grain, hay and forage, dairy, potato, forestry, and federal and state lands committees met during the event.

Members of the newly formed ag land preservation committee also met for the first time.

That committee has been tasked with find-

ing a way to help preserve farmland in Idaho. Lynn Steadman, the committee chairman and a former IFBF vice president, said the group will try to find a solution “while also protecting individual property rights.”

Members of Idaho’s congressional delegation also addressed Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members by video conference from Washington, D.C., during the event. A major topic of discussion from the delegation was finding a way to fix the agriculture labor issue.

“The ag labor issue is probably the biggest issue facing agriculture across the country,” said Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho. “We’re working on it and we will continue to work on it.”

Hendricks thanked Farm Bureau members for attending the event and reminded them that they as grassroots members are the backbone of the organization.

“Each of you as members of Farm Bureau, this is where our strength comes from, so thank you for participating in this conference,” he said. “Our strength comes from us all supporting each other and working together.” ■

**Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members from across the state meet in front of the Capitol building Feb. 9 during IFBF’s Legislative & Commodity Conference.**



# Idaho Farm Bureau's Promotion and Education Committee is here for you

By Paige Nelson

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

FORT HALL – Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Promotion and Education Committee is an opportunity to get together and promote and educate people about agriculture, according to Alan Clark, the committee's state chair.

The P&E program also helps farmers and ranchers become better agriculture advocates and encourages more influential interactions with consumers, adds Clark, a farmer and rancher from Jefferson County.

Overall, P&E's mission is help agriculture have a better perception among consumers.

Clark and other members of the state P&E committee presented P&E tips during IFBF's annual convention, which was held Nov. 30 – Dec. 2 in Fort Hall.

## MAC Trailer

Britany and Curt Stegelmeier, who represent District 2 on the committee, offered tips for using IFBF's Moving Agriculture to the Classroom trailer.

"The thing I love about the MAC trailer is there's so many hands-on visual items that anyone can use it. Kids love it. Adults love it. It's very interactive," Britany said.

New this year to the MAC trailer is the Big Book of Beef. This brand-new module joins an existing library of giant-sized books housed in the trailer.

The exquisite size of the books generates both amazement and interest from elementary-age children; even adults love the huge graphics presented in the Big Book of Dairy, Big Book of Wheat and Big Book of Water modules.

The books are made to be easily used by anyone, explained Britany Stegelmeier, citing a recent experience in which she called upon her local high school's FFA chapter to help her out at an ag day.

First, she set up the ag day with an elementary school, then she contacted the FFA advisor. She asked for two FFA students per module. She had previously



Photo by Paige Nelson

**Stacy Burmester, a member of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Promotion and Education Committee, offers tips on how to promote and educate people about agriculture Nov. 30 during IFBF's annual convention.**

chosen to present on the three modules she thought best represented the agriculture commodities within her county.

A week before the ag day, Britany made copies of each module's lesson plan (found at Idaho Farm Bureau Federation website under Moving Agriculture to the Classroom) and gave them to the high school students to study.

"The FFA kids came prepared. They knew what they were doing because they'd already seen it," she said.

Britany encouraged her audience to not hesitate to host ag days in schools. Whether you have access to the MAC trailer or not, all of these modules and their corresponding lesson plans are on the IFBF website, she said.

To schedule the MAC trailer, contact your district's regional manager.

## Commodity case

Linda Rider, representing District 5, presented tips for rounding out an educational presentation. Through years

of experience talking to people about agriculture, Rider came up with the idea to create her very own "commodity case" — a suitcase filled with items representing a certain commodity module. For her part, Rider displayed her "wheat-case."

In her travel case she keeps several varieties of wheat, wheat straw, wheat products, a miniature wheat combine and some printed material.

"It's always put together. I just bring my suitcase, and when I get there, I am ready to set up," said Rider.

Britany explained one of the committee's ideas for these commodity cases is to keep them in each county's closet. Give everyone access to them so they can be used more frequently. Additionally, said Britany, make them specific to the commodities raised in your area.

"Every county can do this," she said.

## Library books

Stacy Burmester, representing District 1, spoke about her county's efforts to sup-

# “The biggest thing we want to promote is accurate ag.”

-Stacy Burmester, District 1 Representative  
IFBF Promotion and Education Committee

ply local school libraries with ag books. Not just books about agriculture topics, but books that inform their readers with accurate agriculture facts and information, she said.

The American Farm Bureau Foundation is a great source for picture books for younger children. The foundation publishes a new book on an agriculture topic each year and makes them available beginning at American Farm Bureau Federation’s annual convention.

The 2022 Book of the Year and the 15<sup>th</sup> book published by the Foundation is *How to Grow a Monster*, written by Kiki Thorpe. The fully-illustrated, page-turner explores gardening and can be purchased on Amazon in both library binding and paperback.

Burmester said an even cheaper way of getting several books is to ask those attending the AFBF convention to pick up a few books during their stay and bring them home in their suitcases.

A great option for older kids, said Burmester, is *Farm Bureau’s Ag Mag*. It explores more in-depth agriculture topics and offers lesson plans for teachers, as well as captivating articles and photos. *Ag Mags* can be purchased on the AFBF website.

In conclusion, Burmester said, “The biggest thing we want to promote is accurate ag.”

## Social media

Amy Mitchell, District 3, encouraged her audience to get connected with P&E on social media. The P&E committee maintains both a Facebook and Instagram page. Search “Idaho Farm Bureau Promotion and Education” to follow either or both accounts.

According to Mitchell, the committee will be focusing on six topics throughout 2022. Additionally, they will be highlighting national food days such as national hamburger day, national pizza day and days like taco Tuesday.

Mitchell ended her segment by imploring those supportive of agriculture to



Submitted photo

A library of giant-sized books is part of the MAC trailer's interactive classroom.

get active on social media.

“The more that we like, share and comment (on posts) the more it gets out to everyone else to help others gain a little knowledge,” she said.

## Speech contest

Rider wrapped up the committee’s presentation speaking about the

P&E-sponsored speech contest for high school students. To participate, students pick any subject that is agricultural in nature and prepare a 6-8-minute speech to be delivered in front of judges.

The committee has intentionally timed their district and state speech contests to happen before the FFA speech contests, so

students can use the Farm Bureau contest in preparation.

Contest rules, judging and scoring information for those interested can be found on the IFBF website under Promotion & Education Projects.

**Here for you**

Above all else, committee members emphasized their commitment to Idaho Farm Bureau members.

“Our committee is really a resource to you,” said Rider.

Burmester added, “If you guys need help to get things going; if you need help getting a county P&E going; if you need help to get into your schools or need to know how to talk to legislators, reach out to us.”

The newest members of the Idaho P&E committee are Bryce and Karly Durrant, representing District 4. Staff support is provided by Justin Patten.

Clark encourages those interested in Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s P&E program to check out the resources his

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committee has compiled online. Start with a visit to the IFBF website: [www.idahofb.org](http://www.idahofb.org).

In the top right you’ll find the P&E tab. After clicking the P&E tab, scroll down to find the Resources section. This is a handy place to find information about the MAC Trailer, Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom, American Farm Bureau P&E resources, as well as resources from Michigan Farm Bureau P&E, the oldest P&E program in Farm Bureau.

“Michigan has a lot of step-by-step

activities you can do,” Clark said. “You can put in your budget and how much time you want to spend, and it will spit out activities. It’s a pretty neat resource from them.”

Back on the Idaho P&E page in the Projects section, you can find past Idaho county Farm Bureau projects, and step-by-step activities, all compiled and standardized by the committee.

From the website, visitors can also connect to the P&E’s Facebook and Instagram accounts. ■

## Country Chuckles

By Johnny Hawkins



Bantam of the Opera

# EXPORTS

Continued from page 3

supply chain issues, said Laura Johnson, who manages the ISDA's market development division.

"It's great that we hit a record for ag exports last year but it could have been so much more if we didn't have the supply chain issues," she said.

Higher commodity prices contributed to the increase in the overall value of ag exports, Robison added.

Idaho's ag export growth last year was led by Canada, the top destination by far for Idaho farm product exports.

According to the Census Bureau data, Idaho exported \$322 million worth of farm products to Canada in 2021, which was an increase of 24 percent compared with 2020.

"The demand from Canada was in part due to drought conditions within the country and reduced production across a variety of crops," Robison said.

He said the combined factors of drought and supply chain problems are causing Canada to source more supplies from the U.S. that are closer in proximity.

Idaho farm product exports to Mexico in 2021 increased 3 percent, to \$209 million, and Idaho ag exports to China totaled \$77 million, a 5 percent increase over 2020.

Idaho farm product exports to Netherlands jumped 60 percent, to \$56 million.

Idaho ag export value to Japan in 2021 decreased 22 percent, to \$49 million, and it also decreased 24 percent, to \$45 million, to South Korea.

Dairy was the state's top ag product export in 2021, according to the Census Bureau data, which showed Idaho businesses exported a total of \$194 million worth of dairy products last year, a 9 percent increase over 2020.

Live animal exports from Idaho – cows – continued to increase rapidly last year. According to the Census Bureau data, Idaho exported \$78 million worth of live animals in 2021, which was a 35 percent increase over 2020.

Idaho live animal exports also increased 20 percent from 2019 to 2020.

Most of Idaho's live animal exports in 2021 – \$65 million worth – went to Canada. ■



Idaho tied a record last year for total ag export value.

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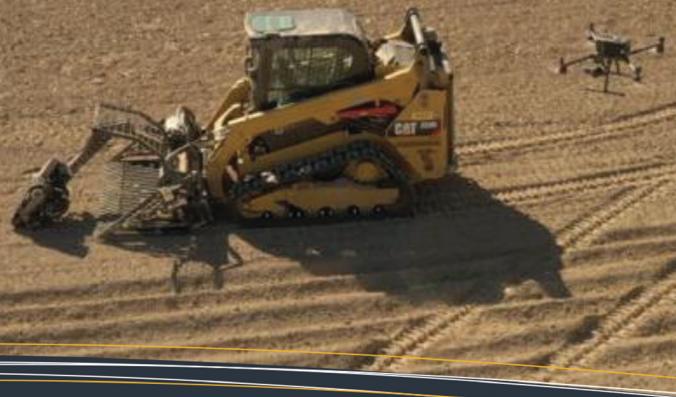
- Final Product and the Consumer | May 11 & 12 | Moscow
- HR Management and Leadership | July 12 & 13 | Online
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# Essence of Idaho potatoes a fragrance hit

By John O'Connell

*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

The hot potato in the fragrance world wasn't made by Chanel, Chloe or Guerlain, but it is French — sort of.

Frites by Idaho packs the odor of a fresh order of french fries made, of course, from Idaho potatoes.

The name "Frites" is the French word for fries.

The sizzling scent was never intended to be a money maker. Travis Blacker, the Idaho Potato Commission's industry relations director, said his organization priced it at \$1.89 per 1.7-ounce bottle to sell for the rough equivalent of an order of fries.

The IPC produced a limited quantity of Frites by Idaho, making it as in demand as the last fry in the bottom of a bag. According to the IPC, it sold out before they had a chance to officially launch their promotion.

The IPC boasts that its scent was "formulated from essential oils and distilled Idaho potatoes to embody the irresistible essence of potatoes from Idaho."

The fine print on the IPC's website warns shipments may be delayed by four to six weeks due to high demand.

That's no surprise to the IPC's leaders, who are tasked with promoting the Idaho potato brand. In their market research, they found 90 percent of Americans surveyed are crazy about the smell of hot french fries.

"It keeps the Idaho potato on the mind of the consumer," Blacker said. "Our job is to make sure when people think of potatoes, they automatically think of Idaho potatoes. I think this just helps with that."

Blacker said Frites by Idaho was released before Valentine's Day, and within the state's spud industry, February doubles as Potato Lovers Month.

"It's been funny to see how this



**Frites by Idaho packs the odor of a fresh order of french fries made, of course, from Idaho potatoes.**

(fragrance) has just taken off," Blacker said.

IPC staff and officials with their advertising agencies came up with the idea during a brainstorming session last April. Staff members formulated several recipes, choosing three finalists, and the top one was selected.

All of the product development, production and bottling was done in-house.

"It was like, 'OK, this is hilarious. Why not do this during Idaho Potato Lovers Month.' That's when we want to stimulate demand, but also there's Valentine's Day," said Jeweldean Hull,

the IPC's administrative and social media director. "Timing is everything. Who would have thought? We're not perfume makers."

Hull said the group initially tested recipes with cooking oil to lend their product authenticity, but they soon determined greasy fries wouldn't go over.

Hull said their end result is slightly sweet but also distinctly potato — Idaho russet to be specific.

"I feel like it was the best we could do in the inspiration of french fries," Hull said. "When you're driving in that drive-thru, you bet the minute you get that bag of fries and you have a burger

or whatever, you're going to grab a french fry."

After giving several bottles away, the IPC listed 60 bottles for sale on their website. An additional batch of the product also sold out immediately.

Hull said there's been no determination about whether or not to ramp up production to try to meet the exceptional demand, but she noted National French Fry Day is July 13.

"Literally, it's like family members helping us to put this together," Hull said. "This isn't like we called Chanel to help us."

Despite the limited inventory, Frites by Idaho has made an international splash.

One caller from Switzerland assured the IPC that the essence of Idaho potatoes could hold the key to world peace, Hull said.

"We're getting calls constantly from people looking for this perfume," Hull said.

Sen. Julie VanOrden, R-Pingree, who also serves on the Idaho Potato Commission, said the idea of making a potato fragrance came up several times during discussions throughout the past half year.

"I'm like, 'You've got to be kidding me!'" VanOrden said.

VanOrden credits the IPC staff with devising great ideas and promotions amid the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the fragrance, and with effectively getting Idaho potatoes featured on social media and recipe sites.

VanOrden hasn't managed to score a bottle of Frites by Idaho for herself yet, and she said she's reserving judgment on the french fry fragrance until she smells it.

Then again, she acknowledges the fragrance has certainly made Idaho potatoes a hot topic lately, which is the point of the promotion, after all.

"That's the whole thing, and then (people) go, 'Wow, the potato industry is great, so I'm going to support them,'" VanOrden said. ■



## Country Chuckles by Jonny Hawkins



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# Basics of weed control on forest land

By Randy Brooks  
University of Idaho

With spring just around the corner, our minds should start wandering to ... weed control!

University of Idaho Extension has written several articles for this column on weed control over the years, but weeds are such a constant threat that it's good to see "refresher" material on the subject.

Weed control is managed somewhat differently on forested land than agriculture lands and the herbicides used can vary.

Weeds are quick to sprout any time the soil is disturbed or an opening is made in the forest. Most forest weeds do not lend themselves to non-chemical control as well as they do to herbicides.

Herbicides have several advantages over other weed-control methods (mechanical, grazing, etc.) due to their selective and rapid control and minimal soil disturbance. They are very effective on tough perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs such as oceanspray,



ninebark, and snowberry.

The selection of an herbicide varies with species and growth of both the weed and tree. Problem weeds are best controlled during site preparation, as they can be more difficult to control once trees are planted.

The main goal of weed control on forested land is to give desired tree seedlings a head start over their competition. Once trees are 15-20 feet tall, additional control is almost never needed.

Most weed and brush control in forested areas of the inland Northwest is with hexazinone, glyphosate, metsulfuron, sulfometuron, 2,4-D ester, imazapyr, picloram, triclopyr, clopyralid, atrazine and a few others.

See a more complete list from the PNW Weed control handbook at <https://pnwhandbooks.org/sites/pnwhandbooks/files/weed/chapter-pdf/forestry-hybrid-cottonwoods.pdf>

These products give broad-spectrum activity on forest species. Hexazinone (Velpar) has wide application for

controlling grasses, forbs, and small shrubs. It is appropriate for site preparation or release.

Glyphosate (Accord) is effective on annual and perennial grasses, forbs, and many shrubs. In the fall it will selectively remove brush and herbs from conifers, but in mid-summer, glyphosate can severely injure conifers.

Clopyralid (Transline and others) has good control over weeds such as knapweed and yellow starthistle but does not injure trees.

Sulfometuron (Oust XP and others) can be used for site preparation or release for most tree species. Adding 2,4-D to Oust will help control thistles, which Oust does not control.

2,4-D works well on broadleaf weeds and is relatively non-injurious to Douglas-fir seedlings during the dormant season, but will injure ponderosa pine.

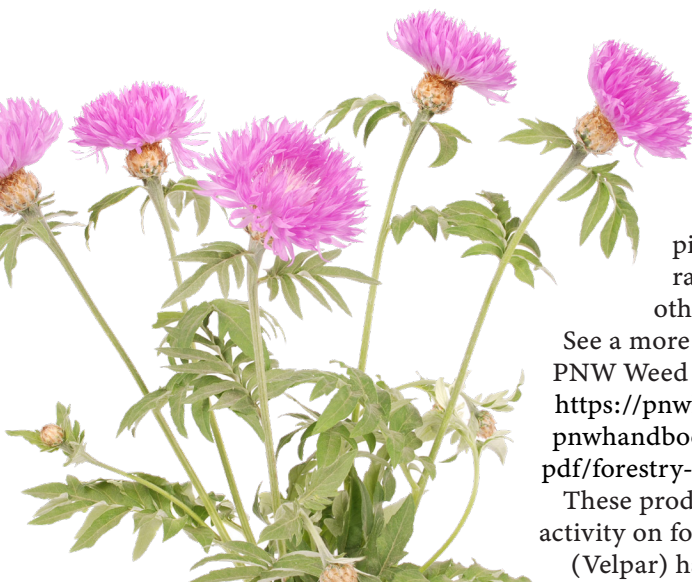
Picloram nearly always harms conifers when direct application is made and should be limited to site preparation or spot applications. Do not use a surfactant for a release spray.

Most forested areas in Idaho are difficult to access, making hand-held or backpack sprayers the logical choice. Hand-held sprayers are often used for spot treating patches of weeds or for treating small areas or tree plantings.

Spray coverage should be uniform and thorough. Spray the target plants to the point of being wet, but not to the point of runoff.

Calibrating a hand-held or backpack sprayer can be difficult because of the size and dimension of the area to be sprayed and difficulty in applying uniform spray coverage with a single nozzle.

The following calibration information may be useful in determining the proper amount of spray volume to mix for the area of a known dimension.



Calibrate handheld sprayers by 1) spraying a known area using water; 2) measuring the amount of water applied, and 3) calculating the number of gallons applied per acre (gpa).

For example, 1.5 gallons on 1,000 square feet is the same as 65 gallons per acre:

$$43,560 \text{ sq. ft. per acre} / 1000 \text{ sq. ft.} \times 1.5 \text{ gallons} = 65 \text{ gpa.}$$

The desired rate in lb/ac or pint/ac can be used to calculate the amount of herbicide to add to the spray solution.

If 3 pt/ac is desired:

$$3 \text{ pt/ac} / 65 \text{ gpa} = 0.046 \text{ pt. or } 0.73 \text{ fl oz}$$

or 1.5 tablespoons per gallon of spray solution.  
(16 fl oz = 1 pt; 2 tablespoons = 1 fl oz).

When calibration of a hand-held sprayer is not possible and the herbicide used is safe to the environment and non-target plants, a volume of 50 to 70 gpa can be assumed.

However, the actual volume applied can vary considerably with the type of sprayer, spray pressure, and technique of the applicator, so calibration is strongly encouraged.

Some herbicide labels specify a percent solution for use in hand-held sprayers. The following table provides mixing instructions to obtain solutions of varying percent concentrations.

Calibration Table				
Desired Solution Concentration	Concentration of Herbicide %			
	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0
(gal)	amount of herbicide to add, in fluid oz.			
1	0.6	1.3	1.9	2.6
6.4				
2	1.3	2.6	3.8	5.1
12.8				
5	3.2	6.4	9.6	12.8
32				
10	6.4	12.8	19.2	25.6
64				
100	64	128	192	256
640				
<i>2 tablespoons = 1 fluid ounce</i>				

In Idaho forests, the soil can get pretty dry by the time fall rolls around. Chemical control works best when the soil is moist and the plants are actively growing.

For herbicides to be effective, the chemical needs to translocate down into the root system. Cooler temperatures are a signal to perennials to send most of the food produced by photosynthesis down into the root system, meaning fall is a good time to control perennials.

Creeping roots or rhizomes found on many perennial weeds serve as food storage organs. It is the food storage of

these weeds that we need to kill.

It is easy to kill above-ground portions of weeds, but the difference between success and failure in perennial weed control is killing the underground parts.

Water-stressed plants take up less chemical, which means less chemical is translocated down into the root system. Poor weed control will become obvious next spring or summer.

The herbicide used must fit the situation for the trees that might be planted next year. Herbicides are not the only option in a weed-management plan. They can be used in combination with scalping, burning, hand pulling, etc.

Usually, a combination of practices works best, depending on terrain. Lastly, always read and follow all label directions when using any herbicide or pesticide – the label is the law!

For more information on calibrating backpack sprayers, request publication number PNW 320, *Calibrating and Using Backpack Sprayers*, from your local Extension office or download it here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/269615040/pnw320>

*(Randy Brooks is a University of Idaho Extension forestry specialist. He can be reached at [rbrooks@uidaho.edu](mailto:rbrooks@uidaho.edu))* ■



# Upper Valley recharge site among projects chosen for \$195 million in ARPA funds

By John O'Connell

*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

The Idaho Water Resource Board has elected to use \$195 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding to build three water infrastructure projects, including a proposed new Upper Snake River Valley aquifer recharge site.

The board voted to use ARPA funds for the projects, which were all recommended in Gov. Brad Little's proposed budget, during a Jan. 17 meeting. A board spokesman noted the funds must still be included in the state legislature's final budget.

The board awarded \$75 million of the funding to build an Upper Snake River Valley recharge site, \$90 million to enlarge Anderson Ranch reservoir and \$30 million to build a water treatment plant serving Mountain Home Air Force Base, using a J.R. Simplot Co. Snake River water right.

Wes Hipke, water project section supervisor for the Idaho Department of Water Resources, said the projects all meet draft guidelines for ARPA funding eligibility.

Hipke explained ARPA has prioritized water supply projects, including managed aquifer recharge, which entails intentionally allowing surface water to seep through unlined canals, spill basins and other infrastructure in strategic locations to reverse declining groundwater levels.

"With all of this money — with the ARPA money, with the (federal) infrastructure money that's out there and the state surplus — there's this opportunity in the water world at least of doing some projects and really making differences for decades to come,"

Hipke said.

Funding previously allocated by the state for the projects will now be freed for other uses. For example, the state is partially funding the Anderson Ranch expansion project with federal Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act dollars, which require a state match.

The state had planned on issuing bonds for its match and repaying them with water rental funds created by the additional reservoir storage. The ARPA funds would be used as the state's match instead.

With so much work to be done on long-term projects that promise to make a difference in the state for decades to come, Hipke explained IDWR is seeking to add about 15 full-time employees. He said the department never returned to full strength following personnel cuts made in 2008.

On Feb. 11, the board's Aquifer Stabilization Committee will hear a consultant's presentation regarding a study of three possible options for an Upper Valley recharge site.

Two of the proposals would entail building pipelines and pumping water to a spill basin, adding power bills to the cost of recharging water.

One pipeline would pass beneath Interstate 15 and transport water to a spill basin within the lava flows of Hell's Half Acre, located between Blackfoot and Idaho Falls.

The second pipeline would pump water from the Roberts area to a spill basin near Mud Lake.

The third project would avoid the need for pumping. Water would be gravity fed west of the state's current Egin Bench recharge site into a spill basin within lava fields.

State officials say the Egin Bench site, which would add between 150 cubic feet per second (cfs) and 350 cfs of Upper Valley recharge capacity, remains a viable option.

The cost of materials to build a pipeline has risen dramatically in recent months, however. Estimates for the Mud Lake project, for example, have skyrocketed from about \$70 million in November to more than \$300 million currently, Hipke said.

Hipke said the state hopes to add up to 500 cfs of additional Upper Valley recharge capacity with the \$75 million in ARPA funding allocated for the purpose. He said the state is also in the midst of internally evaluating several small projects that would add up to 50 cfs of recharge capacity each.

He'll personally present the top 10 to 15 of those smaller projects to the board, and he anticipates about five of them will ultimately be built.

The next step in the process will be to meet with canal company officials to determine who would be willing to allow use of their infrastructure for additional recharge in exchange for payments, called wheeling fees. Hipke said certain upgrades to canal systems would also be necessary.

The state's recharge program has set a goal of averaging 250,000 acre-feet of annual recharge, seeking to reverse decades of declining groundwater levels.

The Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer has declined by an estimated 13 million acre-feet since the early 1950s due to the combination of drought, new wells and conversions to efficient sprinkler irrigation systems, which leave little excess volume to filter into the groundwater. ■





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Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photos

A new University of Idaho study shows Idaho's agriculture industry directly and indirectly contributed \$29.3 billion in sales to the state's economy in 2019, which represented 17 percent of Idaho's total economic output.

# Study: Ag has major impact on Idaho economy

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – A new University of Idaho study shows that agriculture's contribution to Idaho's economy is huge, and growing.

The report, "Economic Contribution of Idaho Agribusiness," will be released first to lawmakers when the Idaho Legislature convenes in January.

It will show that in 2019, Idaho's agriculture industry directly and indirectly contributed \$29.3 billion

in sales to the state's economy, which represented 17 percent of Idaho's total economic output.

The data from the report will also show that agriculture was responsible for 129,500 jobs, which amounted to 1 in every 8 jobs in the state.

Agriculture was responsible for \$10.5 billion in value added in 2019, which was 12.5 percent of Idaho's total gross state product that year.

The report is based on several sources, including data from USDA and the U.S. Bureau of Economy Analysis.

A separate report has found that Idaho ranks fifth in the nation when it comes to gross state product from agriculture as a percentage of a state's total GSP.

"This means that there are few places in the country where agriculture plays a more central role in driving the state's economy than in Idaho," said the report's author, Philip Watson, an associate professor in University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

In the report, agriculture's total im-

impact on the state's economy includes its impacts on other sectors. For example, it includes the sale of a tire tractor, fertilizer or other farm-related service to a farmer or rancher.

The report is based on 2019 data and updates a previous report by Watson based on 2017 data.

Idaho agriculture's total contributions to the state's economy grew from 2017 to 2019.

The report based on 2017 data showed Idaho's agriculture industry contributed \$26.4 billion in sales, which was 18 percent of Idaho's total economic output in 2017, and \$9.6 billion in value added, which was 13 percent of total Idaho GSP.

While those totals in the recent report were higher, their percentage of Idaho's overall economy actually declined slightly, to 17 percent and 12.5 percent.

The value of agriculture in Idaho is greater than it has ever been, even as the overall economy in Idaho grows at one of the fastest paces in the nation, Watson said.

So, while agriculture in Idaho grows, it is a bit smaller as a proportion of the overall state economy.

"This is not a bad thing, it just says that the overall Idaho economy has been strong, which is good for agriculture and for the state as a whole," Watson said. "It's not that Idaho ag doesn't have strong growth, it's just that the



According to a new University of Idaho study, agriculture was responsible for 129,500 jobs in the state in 2019, which amounted to 1 in every 8 jobs in Idaho.

overall growth of the Idaho economy has been exceptional."

The report found that Idaho's agriculture industry was responsible for \$4.6 billion in wages in 2019, which was \$1 of every \$10 of wages paid in the state that year.

It also compared how big a share of the state's overall economy agribusiness in Idaho accounted for compared with neighboring states and the U.S. as a whole. Agribusiness includes all crop

farming and livestock production, as well as the processing of agricultural products.

The report shows that agribusiness in Idaho contributes 4.5 times more to the state's total GSP than it does in Utah, 4.3 times more than in Washington, 4 times more than in Wyoming, 2.8 times more than in Oregon, 2 times more than in Montana, 12 times more than in Nevada and 3.7 times more than in the United States as a whole.

The Economic Contribution of Idaho Agribusiness study shows Idaho in 2019 ranked among the top nine states in production of 28 agricultural commodities.

The study also shows Idaho's top 10 counties in terms of total farm cash receipts from crop and livestock production in 2019 were: Cassia (\$1.06 billion), Gooding (\$922 million), Twin Falls (\$749 million), Jerome (\$733 million), Canyon (\$644 million), Bingham (\$496 million), Elmore (\$487 million), Minidoka (\$388 million), Jefferson (\$328 million) and Owyhee (\$311 million).

When it came to farm cash receipts from livestock production, Gooding was the top county in the state with \$851 million, while Bingham County was the top county for cash receipts from crop production, with \$382 million. ■



A new University of Idaho study shows agriculture accounts for a large part of the state's overall economy.



Photos courtesy of Autumn Baker

Royal White sheep have hair instead of wool and can be bred year-round to produce lean, mild-flavored meat.

# Royal White and Babydoll Southdown sheep fill a niche in eastern Idaho

**By Dianna Troyer**

*For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

Like her Australian forefathers who raised sheep, Autumn Baker decided to follow in their footsteps but with a modern twist.

“I wanted to honor my heritage and bring registered and commercial sheep back into the family business,” she said. “I did a lot of research to pick breeds that would thrive here and fill a niche market.”

Five years ago, she established a flock of two breeds – the Royal White, known for having a tender lean mild-flavored meat, and Babydoll Southdown, renowned among spinners for producing soft and lofty wool.

Baker said she wanted to raise sheep on the family ranch near Lava Hot Springs in southeastern Idaho to complement her parents’ other agribusinesses: custom fencing, raising raspberries and offering wagon rides.

“When they retire and I step up to

run the ranch, I want to be diversified,” said Baker, 40, executive assistant to the Pocatello Fire Department chief.

She chose Royal White sheep for several reasons.

Developed in Texas, the breed is low maintenance, parasite resistant, naturally polled, and produces meat with a mild taste. As a result of having hair instead of wool, they also lack lanolin, which can flavor the meat strongly.

“In fall, their hair grows longer,” Baker said. “Then they shed it off nat-



**Autumn Baker raises unusual breeds of Royal White and Babydoll Southdown sheep near Lava Hot Springs in eastern Idaho.**

**LEFT: Babydoll Southdown Sheep originated in southern England several centuries ago. Farmers with small acreage needed a diminutive easygoing sheep that would produce quality meat as well as wool.**

usually in the spring, so they don't need to be sheared."

They can be bred year-round.

"It allows for lamb production to meet specific markets depending on demand," she said. "The moms are great, too. Lamb survival is excellent, and we often have twins, triplets and even quadruplets."

Lambs have a high meat distribution of about 54 percent.

Baker said southeastern Idaho consumers want locally raised meat. She has seen an increase in demand, buoyed by the pasture-to-plate movement.

"People tell me they like the Royal White meat because it doesn't have a greasy texture or aftertaste," she said.

She sells the meat through her website – [www.bakerranchlava.com](http://www.bakerranchlava.com) – and the Portneuf Valley Farmer's Market in Pocatello.

She works with a USDA certified butcher and sells a whole lamb or commercial cuts.

"Butcher shops from Pocatello to Sugar City are already booked nearly a year out for processing because of the increased demand," she said.

The demand for locally raised meat was fueled during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. Baker and her partner, Brandon Finck of Blackfoot, also raise a few cattle and hogs to sell directly to the consumer.

"When meat packing plants were shutting down, the demand for pork was high here in southeast Idaho," she said. "Brandon and Debra Hill from Ririe coordinated with local butcher shops to secure processing and transportation for just over 700 hogs that were unable to go to market for a farmer in South Dakota."

To let people know meat would be available, she posted the information on the Baker Ranch Facebook page.

"The response was overwhelming," she said. "Every one of them sold, and we had a waiting list."

Unlike the Royal White, her Babydoll Southdown sheep are more popular for pets, therapy, and fiber rather than for meat.

"I've never tried their meat," Baker said. "To me, they're too cute to eat. They're small, docile and easy to take care of."

Known as the "smiling sheep," they

look like a plush stuffed animal with short legs.

"They're bought for pets, to graze on weeds, or for therapy animals," she said. "People take them to long-term care centers to interact with residents because they're friendly and easy to transport."

Originating in southern England several centuries ago, they were bred for farmers with small acreage who needed a diminutive dual-purpose sheep that would produce quality meat as well as wool.

Standing 18 to 24 inches tall at the shoulder, they withstand the cold well and are not susceptible to hoof disease. They are popular in orchards for keeping grass and weeds grazed down without harming the bark of the trees.

Baker cautions they are such easy keepers, "you have to watch their weight."

Their short legs required her to build steps for them, "so they can reach their heated trough in winter."

As demand grows, Baker will expand the flock.

"They've filled a niche in the area and have been well received," she said. ■

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- ▲ Check system alignment
- ▲ Flush the system



## Studying the market is vital for decision-making

Depending on your own personal definition, it does feel a little like spring is in the air. Farmers get just a little excited about spring work, especially the planting part.

After all, what we really enjoy doing is producing.

You have had a number of opportunities over the past few months to take a serious look at contracting your commodities.

There was a fair amount of malt barley acreage contracted, but the malt companies were still looking for more as we moved into the end of February.

They will probably be able to contract additional acreage with the water and fertilizer issues in some of the areas in the southern and eastern part of the state. We are also hearing that producers in the northern part of the state are looking at planting pulses.

At this time, it looks as though the demand for hay will remain good, especially for first-crop hay, depending on the weather conditions during that time frame.

The cattle market looks strong into the summer for feeder cattle. USDA is anticipating the number of cattle on feed to increase the first half of the year due to increased placements into the feed yards.

The feeder cattle futures are at such levels that producers should take a



serious look at hedging their calf crop.

If you currently feel that the feeder cattle futures still have some upside potential, you could put an order in to trail the market up, which would allow you to participate in a higher market while protecting you from an unknown move to the downside in

the market.

You could use these trailing sell stop orders in any commodity that trades on the board.

It doesn't matter the commodity you produce, whether it is small grains, hay, cattle or milk, you are all adjusting and tweaking your production methods in an effort to increase yields or quality of your commodity.

I have also visited with a number of producers that are also tweaking their marketing plans. Not only from year to year but as we move from winter to spring and throughout the year.

It is important that as the news changes we remain flexible enough to adjust our marketing as well. I have attended some producer meetings these past few weeks and have heard a fair amount of talk from presenters on knowing your cost of production.

I don't disagree with this at all and it is good to know the level of your break-even point. However, it is good

to remember that the market we sell into really doesn't care about our cost of production.

There are too many factors that contribute to the price you will receive that in reality don't apply to your input costs. We can only do what the market is going to let us do in any given year.

This makes it very difficult to not get all tied up in the emotion that is in the market.

Yes, I do understand that you need to be looking at the cash bids but it is important to remain focused on the task at hand. That being the basis; is it strong or weak? Is it following the seasonal trends? Is it flat or has it strengthened rapidly?

What is in the news that is moving the futures market higher or lower? And let's not forget to throw in one or two technical indicators.

When you remain disciplined in analyzing the market and the basis, you will be able to make an educated decision on marketing.

I understand that you have a hundred different things going on every day but studying the market and talking to people in the industry is vital to helping you make your decisions.

It doesn't require a lot of your time but it does require a small amount of time consistently.

We historically see the futures strengthen as we move into the spring. This strength doesn't last long as it is usually weather related.

If you still have some grain that you would like to contract you could see that opportunity in late spring or early summer.

As you analyze the market, it will be important for you to remember this: the worst thing that can happen is for you to think you are right and the market is wrong. ■

*'It doesn't require a lot of your time but it does require a small amount of time consistently.'*



Photos by Cindy Kinder

High school students learn about cattle during a Magic Valley Classic Beef Show, which is sponsored by Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau. The GLCFB spends a lot of time and resources sponsoring and hosting events aimed at teaching youth about the realities of agricultural production.

# Gooding-Lincoln Farm Bureau puts major focus on youth

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

The Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau organization focuses a lot of its energy and resources on educating youth about the realities of agricultural production.

“We feel it’s important to advocate for agriculture and what better way to do that than by educating our youth about farming and ranching?” says Cindy Kinder, a member of the Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau board of directors.

“We think it’s important for our youth to understand some of the hardships and joys we have raising food,” adds Kinder, who works for University

of Idaho Extension and also farms and raises cows in Hagerman.

The GLCFB organization hosts or sponsors a lot of different programs aimed at educating kids about the state’s important agriculture industry.

That includes providing scholarships for students in both counties, hosting livestock shows and using Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s Moving Agriculture to the Classroom Trailer to teach kids about farming and ranching.

“We have used the MAC Trailer considerably in the two-county area,” says Darren Taber, who owns a dairy and feedlot and grows hay and corn near Shoshone in Lincoln County.

Taber, who serves on the IFBF board of directors, said a significant portion

of the GLCFB budget is used to provide scholarships to children of Farm Bureau members.

The county Farm Bureau organization also sponsors UI Extension’s annual “Know Your Government Conference,” which brings eighth and ninth graders to the state Capitol building to watch the legislative process in person.

The county Farm Bureau’s scholarship program involves applicants giving oral presentations to sharpen their public speaking skills.

“We want our kids to be speakers and know how to conduct a meeting,” Kinder says. “We also want them to understand the government process.”

Educating local elected officials is also a major focus of the GLCFB



organization and that is accomplished in part through a farm and ranch tour held during election years. All of the two counties' elected officials, from state legislators to sheriffs, are invited to join the bus tour.

"Anybody who is running for office can get on the bus," Taber says. "It has been our opportunity to educate them about agriculture. We want them to know that this is what's going on in your district; this is the agriculture that you're representing."

When it comes to Gooding and Lincoln counties, milk is by far the top agricultural commodity.

Gooding County ranks second in the state in total milk production and \$130 million of Lincoln County's total \$203 million in farm-gate revenue in 2017 came from milk production, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

"Milk is by far the biggest agricultural commodity in Gooding County," says Phil Gossi, president of Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau.

The dairy industry has also been a blessing for the county's farmers because a lot of them produce the feed crops needed to support the dairy industry, as well as the sizeable beef cattle industry in the two counties.

"Dairies have helped the farmers in this area be profitable," Gossi says.

The state's aquaculture industry is also centered in Gooding County. About 70 percent of the nation's food trout are produced in Idaho and most of that production occurs in Gooding County.

"The trout business suffered because of the COVID-related lockdowns but the market is bouncing back," Gossi says.

Gooding County ranks No. 2 among Idaho's 44 counties when it comes to total farm-gate revenue.

According to the 2017 ag census, the county's 538 farmers brought in \$783 million in farm-gate revenue during the 2017 census year, placing Gooding County behind only Cassia County (\$927 million) in that category.

Of Gooding County's total farm revenue of \$783 million in 2017, \$620 million of that came from milk production.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 276 farms in Lincoln County in 2017 and 134,911 total land in farms, including pasture-land. ■



Interview judging is conducted during the Hagerman Science Fair, which is sponsored by the Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau. This event provides an opportunity for students to research a topic and then explain their research methods and findings.



Students learn about the nutrient needs of breeding and market goats during the Magic Valley Classic Goat Show, which is sponsored by Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau. The GLCFB spends a lot of time and resources sponsoring and hosting events aimed at teaching youth about the realities of agricultural production.

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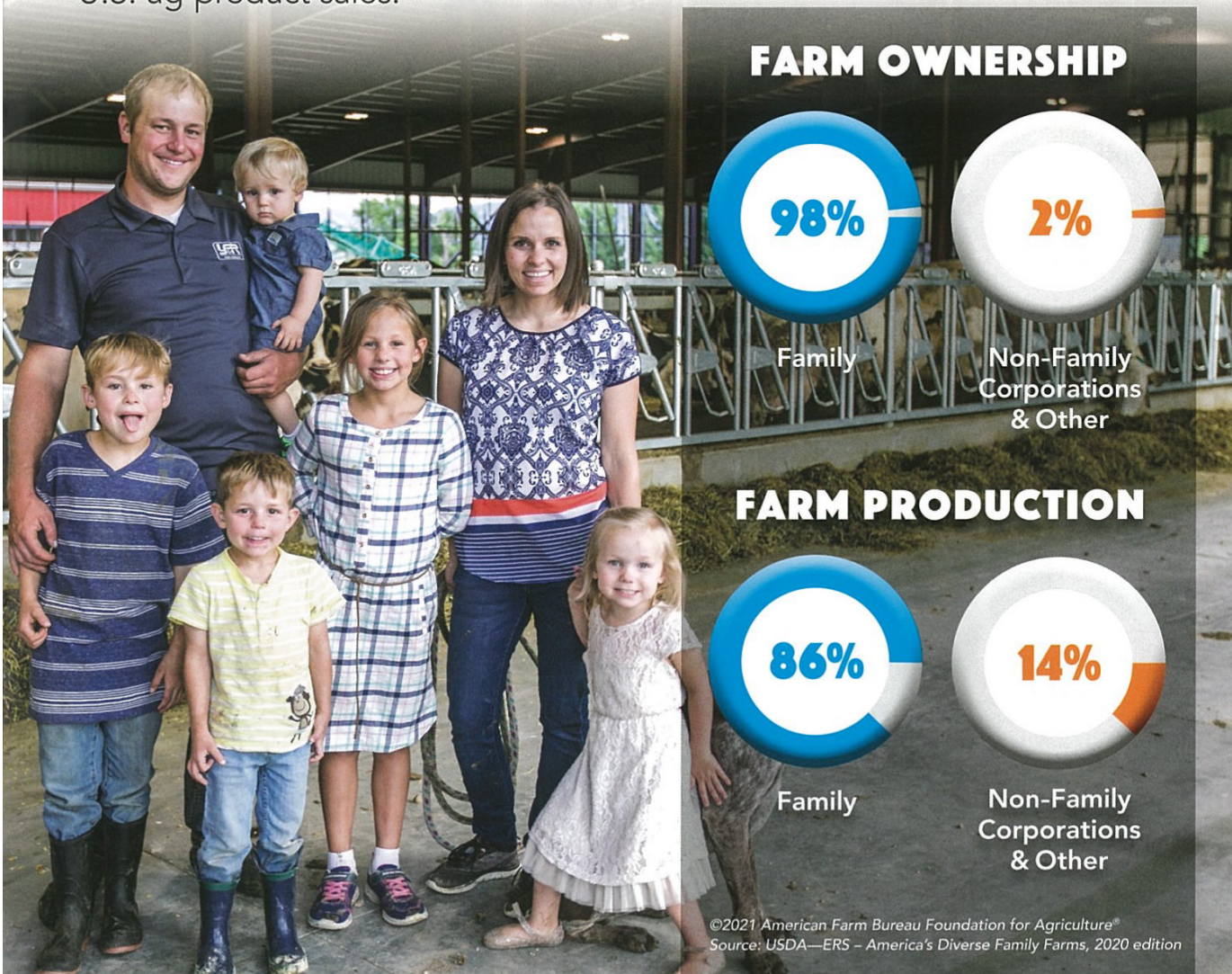
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Submitted photo

Idaho Falls farmer Matt Gellings has been appointed to serve as the new state executive director for the USDA Farm Service Agency.

# Idaho Falls farmer to head state Farm Service Agency office

By John O'Connell  
*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

IDAHO FALLS — Matt Gellings broke both of his legs and couldn't walk for six months after he crashed his snowmobile into a snow-covered stump in January of 2016.

Six years later, the fourth-generation Idaho Falls farmer can look back on his debilitating accident as an experience that closed one door — ending his long career as a food producer — but helped to open another opportunity.

On Jan. 21, Gellings, 64, and his wife, Kathy, made the move from Eastern Idaho to Boise, where the Biden administration has appointed him to serve as the new state executive director for the USDA Farm Service Agency.

Ever since the accident, Gellings has rented his Idaho Falls farmland to a neighbor, Derek Reed. He's now free to put his experience to work and contribute to Idaho agriculture from an office setting.

Gellings never lost his affinity for farming. By the fall of 2017, he met a personal goal of helping Reed with potato and grain harvest, regaining strength in his legs through a unique physical therapy regimen — reps of climbing up and down the ladder of his tractor.

However, Gellings was glad to leave behind the stress of living with constant risk and having to eke out a profit margin in the face of rising input costs and stagnant commodity prices.

He admits he could have jumped back into crop production after just a year's hiatus, but he ultimately decided walking away was a safe bet.

"It was so nice not to owe the bank any money," Gellings said. "We were getting some good cash rent and there was no risk. I'd never had that before."

Gellings knows through first-hand experience about the importance of the security afforded to food producers through FSA programs. In 2021 alone,

FSA loaned \$800 million to Idaho farmers and ranchers.

"The government payments definitely helped a lot of people continue their farming and ranching," Gellings said.

Gellings has a long history of involvement in agricultural leadership, both at the state and national levels.

"If we don't tell our story, somebody is going to tell it for us," Gellings said. "Rather than sit and gripe about something in the coffee shop, why don't you get involved and see if you can make a difference?"

The Idaho Wheat Commission sponsored Gellings to participate in Leadership Idaho Agriculture in 2000 and he explained "from that point doors started opening."

Gellings, who had a small cattle herd for 26 years, took his first industry leadership position with the Bonneville County Cattle Association, where he served as president in 2001.

He later joined the executive board

of the Idaho Grain Producers Association, where he served as president.

He still serves on the Idaho Ag in the Classroom board of directors.

In 2008, Gellings was appointed to the FSA State Committee, where he served for 12 years. That experience was critical in helping Gellings earn the state executive director's job.

Gellings started the process of applying to head the state FSA office in November 2020.

"I got pushed by our state organizations to throw my name in," Gellings said.

A top priority for Gellings moving ahead will be to reestablish the defunct State FSA Committee. Prior to Gellings taking the job, the acting FSA director, Charles Newhouse, had been single-handedly filling the committee's duties.

Gellings plans to name five farmers, ranchers and dairymen from throughout the state to the committee, which provides grassroots-level participation in decisions on disaster assistance, hiring and outreach, in addition to handling appeals.

During his initial 100 days in office, Gellings will also aim to restore full staffing to the FSA state service center and to the 29 local service centers, which serve 44 counties.

He also plans to personally visit every local service center.

Juliet Marshall, University of Idaho's department head over plant sciences, appreciates that Gellings is conscientious about weighing the pros and cons before making decisions.

"Having known Matt for so many years, he is such a fair and balanced person when it comes to dealing with issues," Marshall said. "I think there's probably no one better qualified due to his long-term experience in FSA, as well as his long-term knowledge of farming in Idaho."

Living in Boise will allow Gellings to be near his son Jonathan and three grandchildren. He also has a daughter, Jasmin, who lives in Idaho Falls, and Kathy's son, Blaine, also lives in Idaho Falls.

They plan to keep their farm house in Idaho Falls and to travel often back to East Idaho. ■

*"I think there's probably no one better qualified due to his long-term experience in FSA, as well as his long-term knowledge of farming in Idaho."*

*- Juliet Marshall, University of Idaho*



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University of Idaho photos

University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences faculty work in the native landscapes research plots at the college's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center. CALS lost 16 percent of its faculty and staff last year and CALS leaders say the high turnover rate is a major challenge that needs to be addressed.

## High turnover rate challenges college of agriculture

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences is doing great work when it comes to research that benefits the state's extensive farm and ranch industry.

But CALS faces a major challenge when it comes to retaining faculty and

staff.

That's the basic message CALS dean Michael Parrella recently relayed to state lawmakers and member of Idaho's agricultural industry.

CALS, which oversees the nine agricultural research stations located throughout the state, has lost 22 faculty and 53 staff positions over the past 12 months, Parrella told member of the Idaho Legislature's Joint Finance-App-

ropriations Committee Jan. 25.

That's an overall turnover rate of 16 percent.

Parrella told Food Producers of Idaho members the same thing the week he spoke to JFAC members.

CALS researchers received \$36 million in grant funding last fiscal year and are on pace to exceed \$40 million in grant funding this year, Parrella said.

“Our researchers are doing incredible research and setting the world on fire,” he told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. “I feel like the college is firing on all cylinders.”

But, he added, there is no avoiding the fact that the loss of so many faculty and staff is having a major impact on the college at the same time.

“It’s a big issue and we are focused on it, but it’s obviously a huge challenge,” Parrella said.

The high turnover rate is due in large part to faculty and staff accepting higher-paying positions at other universities or in the private sector, he said. That has always been an issue at CALS and the U of I as a whole, he added, but it has become a major problem lately.

The governor’s proposed budget recommends a 5 percent increase for employee compensation and that helps but because of soaring inflation, “We’re basically treading water,” Parrella said.

Parrella said the main solution to lowering the turnover rate is increasing employee pay and CALS has three main options for doing that.

One is to receive more money from the state for employee compensation and another is to free up more money internally from programs that are not absolutely essential and re-direct it toward salaries.

A third option, albeit a non-preferred one, Parrella said, is to not fill some positions when people retire and

redistribute that money to remaining positions.

He said losing faculty and staff is not an issue unique to CALS but it is magnified due to the important role that agriculture plays in Idaho’s overall economy and in turn, the role the college’s research stations fulfill in conducting research aimed at providing meaningful solutions to the various complex issues that Idaho farmers and ranchers face.

“It’s a nation-wide problem but it’s magnified here because of the impact that agriculture has on rural areas and the state’s economy,” Parrella said.

CALS’ loss of researchers and staff has not gone unnoticed by Idaho’s agricultural industry.

Since 1982, the Idaho Wheat Commission has invested more than \$15 million in research and education at the University of Idaho, according to IWC Executive Director Casey Chumrau.

“CALS is an important partner of the Idaho Wheat Commission and conducts vital research on behalf of Idaho wheat growers each year,” she said. “Wheat growers understand that Idaho agriculture benefits from a strong land-grant university.”

Challenges to attracting and maintaining quality staff are felt by the university’s partners, such as farm commodity commissions that in some cases fund multi-year research projects, Chumrau said.

“Many of the researchers are ex-

tremely specialized; therefore, losing one puts ongoing projects at risk of going unfinished and losing the previous investments,” she said. “Most issues faced by farmers take years or decades of study. Advancements are slowed significantly by turnover in the research positions.”

Idaho has unique and diverse land and agronomic characteristics that require critical research be done here, under those conditions, to provide farmers with the best science and best management practices to be successful, said Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director Laura Wilder.

As the state’s land-grant institution, the University of Idaho has the crucial role of educating the next generation of farmers, ranchers and citizens through teaching, research and agricultural extension programs, she said.

“It’s crucial that the University of Idaho and other Idaho institutions have the financial resources needed to retain and attract the best scientists and professors to do the important work needed to support all Idaho industry and especially the agriculture industry,” Wilder said.

“It is not acceptable that we can’t keep or recruit talented university staff due to grossly low compensation as compared to other institutions and private industry,” she said. “We have already lost too much with the depth of knowledge and skill of those that have already left. It’s time to adequately support universities in their vital role

as centers for education, understanding, skills and experience and what that contributes to society in general, and to the state of Idaho.” ■



Michael Parrella, dean of the University of Idaho’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, shown here, is concerned about the high turnover rate in faculty and staff CALS is currently facing.

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