

GEM STATE **Producer** Idaho Farm Bureau

July 2022 • Volume 26 Issue 5

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On The U.S. Economy**



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## Preparing for a new farm bill

**O**ne piece of legislation has had as profound an impact on America as thousands of other bills combined, yet very few people are familiar with it.

I'm referring to the farm bill, which ensures a safe and abundant food supply, helps feed the hungry, invigorates rural communities and helps farmers take care of the environment.

As I travel the country, it's clear the farm bill has had a broad, visible impact. Family farms able to be passed to the next generation

because of USDA's numerous risk management tools and programs. Families able to put dinner on the table thanks to nutrition assistance programs.

Soil and water improvements because of land enrolled in conservation programs. Rural communities back in the game thanks to broadband grants and new business loans authorized by the farm bill.

Soon it will be time to refresh and renew this nearly 90-year-old law, so let's examine its

See **DUVALL**, page 6

# The President's Desk

By **Bryan Searle**

President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



## Report shows economic impact of food and ag sectors

**A**griculture has a major impact on the nation's economy. No big shocker to a producer there, although many consumers might not realize that.

The food sector has a huge influence on the nation's economy. Again, no huge surprise.

But when you combine the food and agriculture sectors, the numbers are startling, in a good way.

A recent "Feeding the Economy" report found that the two sectors combined were responsible for 29 percent of all jobs in the country in 2021 – that's 43,464,211 total jobs – and directly and indirectly accounted for

\$7.43 trillion in sales.

The results of the report also found that the agriculture and food (restaurants, foodservice, grocery stores, etc.) sectors were responsible for \$2.3 trillion in total wages, \$718 billion in total taxes and \$183 billion in total export value.

Those numbers jump off the page and, in my mind, constitute real "breaking news."

The numbers are so huge it's almost hard to grasp them. Especially the jobs numbers, which show that almost one in every three jobs in the nation is linked to the agriculture

See **SEARLE**, page 7

# Inside Farm Bureau

By **Zak Miller**

CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



## What's your job again?

**T**eams that can work well are almost magical; the opposite is true of failed teams.

There are many reasons teams succeed and fail. A typical team killer, in my experience, is a person who neglects their task because they feel the urge to tell others what they should be doing.

An example of a team killer would be someone with an important job like running a gate when working cattle. An excellent way to kill the day would be to walk away from his job

and tell someone else they are doing their job all wrong.

Often this person knows nothing about the subject they think they are the expert on. Meanwhile, the cows escape through the unwatched gate, completely upending all the work of the entire team and earning that person the least liked status among the crew.

Sometimes the best job a person can do is the one they have.

It could be assumed that this wouldn't be

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Photo courtesy of Idaho Grower Shippers Association

**According to a new report, the cost of packing Idaho's most famous product, potatoes, has risen by more than a third over the past two years.**

# Cost of packing potatoes increases significantly

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The cost of packing Idaho's most famous commodity, potatoes, has risen at least 36 percent over the past two years.

That's according to a new report funded by the Idaho Grower Shippers Association, which represents shippers, growers, marketers and processors of Idaho potatoes.

"That's a pretty big increase," said IGSA President Shawn Boyle. "It's pretty drastic."

This is the first time this type of study has been done on the potato packing side of the industry and he said it's likely that 36 percent increase is greater than the total increase over the previous 20 years combined.

"It's hit us hard and quick," Boyle said about the increased cost of packing spuds over the last two years. "Potato producers are facing abnormal price increases, to fertilizer and fuel and every other input, and packing warehouses are seeing the same thing."

The report, which was conducted by agricultural economist Ben Eborn, owner of North American Potato Market News, looked at what it costs to pack potatoes in Idaho after the spuds are harvested.

To keep it simple, the report looked at just five main cost categories involved with potato packing: the cost of packaging spuds

See **POTATOES**, page 18

**COVER: See page 4 for a story on the large impact the food and agriculture sectors have on the nation's economy.** Photo by Joel Benson



Stock photo

A national report found that the food and ag sectors in 2021 were responsible for 43,464,211 jobs in the United States, \$2.3 trillion in total wages, \$718 billion in total taxes and \$183 billion in total export value.

# Report: ag and food sectors have massive impact on economy

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – A national farm-to-fork report shows that the food and agriculture sectors combined have a massive impact on the nation's economy.

The economic analysis also found that 29 percent of jobs in the United States are linked to the food and agriculture sectors.

Results of the sixth annual Feeding the Economy report can be found at [feed-intotheeconomy.com](http://feed-intotheeconomy.com).

The analysis also breaks out the impact

the agriculture and food sectors combined have on each state's economy.

It shows the sectors in Idaho are responsible for 373,171 jobs, \$19.5 billion in wages, \$71 billion in total sales, \$5.1 billion in taxes and \$942 million in exports.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle said he knew the Idaho numbers would be large but he was still surprised by just how big they are.

"The report shows just how critical the state's agriculture and food sectors are to Idaho's economy," said Searle, a potato farmer from Shelley. "Those numbers

jump off the page and should be shared with as many Idahoans as possible."

The report is sponsored by 30 food and agriculture groups, including American Farm Bureau Federation.

The analysis includes the direct and indirect economy activity surrounding the food and farming industries, capturing both the upstream and downstream activity generated by both sectors.

For example, it would include a new employee hired by a farm equipment retailer because farmers are buying more tractors.

It would also include as an induced



Stock photo

**A national report found that the food and ag sectors combined are responsible for 29 percent of all jobs in the United States.**

economic impact the money spent by a food retail associate when they spend their paycheck.

Together, the report shows, the two sectors have a formidable impact on the nation's overall economy.

It found the two sectors in 2021 were responsible for 43,464,211 jobs in the United States, \$2.3 trillion in total wages, \$718 billion in total taxes and \$183 billion in total export value.

Total sales generated directly and indirectly by the nation's food and farming sectors amounted to \$7.43 trillion.

"American agriculture is really the foundation of our lives and our economy," said American Farm Bureau Federation Chief Economist Roger Cryan. "This study reveals the numbers, and maybe some of the spirit, of this one indispensable sector."

"Food and agriculture play a vital role in not only feeding the country but ensuring a thriving U.S. economy," Brad Doyle, president of the American Soybean Association, said in a Feeding the Economy news release. "The Feeding the Economy study shines a spotlight on little known, yet critical information on our significant contributions to everyday American life and the continued economic success of our nation."

A separate University of Idaho study shows that the economic impact of the state's agriculture sector alone is huge.

That report, "The Economic Contribution of Idaho Agribusiness," showed the state's agriculture industry directly and indirectly was responsible for \$26 billion in sales in 2017, which amounted to 18 percent of Idaho's total economic output that year.

The U of I report also showed agriculture was directly and indirectly responsible for one in every eight jobs in the state and 13 percent of Idaho's total gross state product.

Agriculture is not only a huge economic driver in Idaho but it's growing at a rate much faster than the state's overall economy, said University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor.

An analysis done by Taylor earlier this year showed that from 1997 to 2020, in inflation-adjusted dollars, Idaho's total gross state product grew by more than 100 percent. During the same period, Idaho's farm GSP grew by more than 200 percent.

"Farm GSP is growing faster than the state's economy," Taylor said. "Agriculture is an important industry and we're an engine for growth in the state's economy."

Agriculture alone is the biggest sector of Idaho's economy but when the food industry is added in, the impact is huge, as the national Feeding the Economy report shows, Searle said.

"Wow, those numbers are startling in a good way," he said. "The results of the report should be required reading material for every elected official and decision-maker in Idaho and, really, every Idahoan."

Restaurants and the agricultural community are inextricably linked, Marvin Irby, president and CEO of the National Restaurant Association, said in the Feeding the Economy news release.

"America's farmers and ranchers provide safe and abundant food options to more than one million restaurant locations and we're looking forward to continuing our strong partnership as the restaurant and foodservice industry continues its recovery," he said. ■



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# DUVALL

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*Continued from page 2*

history and relevance today.

Those who helped craft the first farm bill in 1933 laid the groundwork for protecting our nation's food supply for generations to come. For example, they created the Commodity Credit Corporation, a program that's still in use today.

Thanks to that first farm bill, many of America's farmers and ranchers survived the Great Depression and were equipped to feed our country as we entered World War II, giving us the ability to provide food security which is part of our national security.

In 1938, the next farm bill was the beginning of federal crop insurance, which remains a critical lifeline for many farmers and ranchers.

This tool has continued to evolve to help farmers endure the devastating impacts of natural disasters and unpredictable markets.

Congress has increased access and incentives to help farmers—across crops and regions—to protect their businesses. And in recent years, crop insurance has shifted to be more market-based, with the private sector now able to help create new insurance products.

In the 1970s, the farm bill was first combined with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which

provides vital support to those who need help feeding themselves and their families.

Combining farm programs and nutrition programs in one piece of legislation makes sense because ensuring we have an abundant domestic supply of food and that it is accessible creates a more food secure nation, which is critical to national security.

Farmers and ranchers work hard to provide the food America needs, and the nutrition programs help ensure that what we grow gets to those who need it.

Congress cast the net wider that same decade by including a rural development title that has helped expand rural utilities, which has evolved to include broadband internet, and supported rural businesses and housing initiatives.

There are rural communities thriving across the countryside today that were aided or saved by farm bill rural development programs.

Just as agriculture changes and adapts to meet the needs of the time, so does the farm bill.

Every five years or so, Congress passes a new farm bill to meet the challenges of an ever-changing landscape and ensure that critical programs continue to work for farmers and ranchers, families on a budget, and rural communities working to stay competitive.

Hearings on the 2023 farm bill started

in Congress this year. At Farm Bureau, we began our work last year, recognizing how essential it was to be ready to offer ideas.

In August, our farm bill working group started meeting to discuss what's working under the 2018 farm bill, what's not working, and what's missing altogether.

Their analysis will help members across the country at the county, state and national levels adopt Farm Bureau policy, which serves as a roadmap for us to engage with Congress.

It's critical work as we advocate for a farm bill that helps us combat the challenges we face today and those we will undoubtedly face in the future.

It is our responsibility to engage with members of Congress from urban districts, too, who may not understand how farm bill programs impact all families, from our biggest cities to our smallest townships.

The door to engage these members has been opened even wider by the growing public realization that our food supply must not be taken for granted.

The farm bill is one of the mightiest tools to protect it. I hope you'll engage in discussions about its significance.

You, our grassroots members, are agriculture's most influential advocates.

We will need your help to ensure this powerful legislation continues to stand the test of time. ■

# MILLER

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*Continued from page 2*

a problem in our federal government. After all, according to the Federal Register, there are only 440 federal agencies as of 2016.

Surely with that many government agencies, each agency should be able to focus on their job, which will be enough.

However, government agencies are just like the person so worried about everyone else that they foul up their responsibilities also.

A prime example of someone worrying about the wrong job these days is the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Its mission is to protect investors; maintain fair, orderly, and efficient markets, and facilitate capital formation.

I appreciate the SEC and its mission. A watchdog making sure markets are fair and criminals are not taking advantage of our nation's markets sounds like an important job for our society, just

like making sure a gate stays shut.

However, the SEC recently decided they needed to do another job as well. The SEC now wants to create an additional rule to allow them to require all publicly traded companies to report emissions.

So the SEC intends to step away from its job a bit. Perhaps the cows won't see the gate is open, and maybe they will help someone else do their job better.

Possibly the SEC can pull this off and do it better than the many agencies already tasked with monitoring and regulating all aspects of our environment.

Here is the real kicker though: this rule, if enacted, would also force all suppliers to publicly traded companies to report their emissions.

Please take a moment and re-read that sentence. It's as bad as it sounds.

This rule would allow the SEC, whose job is to facilitate and maintain markets, to require virtually all of agriculture to report their emissions to the SEC.

If a farmer sells wheat that becomes bread on an Albertsons store shelf, that farmer would need to report their emissions to Albertsons because Albertsons is publicly traded.

Same for the rancher whose beef ends up at Walmart, or the

potato farmer whose potatoes end up at Fred Meyer.

Whom a farmer sells their product too may force a farmer to come under the rules meant for publicly traded companies.

The question again repeats itself: why is the SEC trying to find a way to regulate farmers?

And don't they have enough to do with their first job not to need to worry about everyone else? ■

## SEARLE

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*Continued from page 2*

and food sectors.

[See page 4 in this magazine for a story about the report.]

There are too many people who take their food for granted.

Back in May, my wife Mary and I were able to be part of a farm-to-table event that the Kootenai and Shoshone County Farm Bureau hosted over three days.

The event, which we have been a part of for five years now, attracts more than 1,600 fifth-grade school children, teachers, and some parents.

Several ag education stations are set up and the participants spend 20 minutes at each station learning where their food comes from and how it is grown.

It never ceases to amaze us the understanding or lack of understanding that many people have when it comes to where and how food is grown.

We can and must do better at telling our story and I would encourage everyone reading this to share those numbers with as many people as possible. They show just how critical the food and ag sectors are to the nation's overall economy and security.

We find many times that our elected officials may lack some of that same understanding of how their food is grown.

We must prove to elected officials why it's so important to continue to protect and promote these sectors and do all we can as a state and nation to allow them to flourish and innovate.

The following is an example of the type of influence we can have when we share the story of agriculture with elected officials.

While attending the recent Congressional Western Caucus held in Pasco, Wash. – this event brings some members of Congress along with congressional staff from different offices from around the nation – we engaged in many ag topics, focusing heavily on water and power and the need for dams.

While on a boat tour of the Snake River, which included a tour of Ice Harbor Dam, we spent a lot of time speaking with congressional members and their staff about agriculture, dams and other topics important to farmers and ranchers.

These types of conversations answered questions that at times can only be understood by seeing it with your own eyes while getting out of D.C.

As I had a conversation with Rep. Bruce Westerman from Arkansas, his words were, "I called our governor's office just a few minutes ago and told them they need to be reaching out to their state Farm Bureau to get better in touch as to where ag is in the state."

If the U.S. House of Representatives changes after this year's

*'We must prove to elected officials why it's so important to continue to protect and promote these sectors and do all we can as a state and nation to allow them to flourish and innovate.'*

general election to majority Republican, Westerman will likely be the chairman of the natural resources committee.

This is but one example of how taking the time to tell the story of agriculture could pay off in the future.

We must tell our story because what's more important than our food supply? Last I checked, everyone still has to eat.

Americans have for some time enjoyed the most abundant and affordable food supply in the history of the world and I applaud the farmers and members of the vast food industry who have achieved that.

The report also broke down the impact of the food and agriculture sectors by state and as expected, their influence on Idaho's economy is vast.

In Idaho, according to the report, 373,171 jobs were linked to the ag and food sectors in 2021 and the sectors combined paid out \$19.5 billion in wages, \$5.1 billion in taxes, \$71 billion in total sales and \$942 million in exports.

You can see the results and methodologies used in compiling the report for yourself at [feedingtheeconomy.com](http://feedingtheeconomy.com).

American Farm Bureau Federation is one of 30 food and agriculture groups that sponsored the report.

I hope everyone reading this takes a moment to try to grasp the incredible influence the food and ag sectors have on our economy as well as the overall security of the nation.

Here's a quick glimpse of how significant agriculture is in Idaho.

There are almost 25,000 farms in the state and those operations together produce more than \$8 billion worth of agricultural commodities each year.

By the way, 96 percent of those farms are family owned.

Idaho ranks in the top five states in the production of 14 different agricultural commodities, including potatoes, barley, alfalfa hay, peppermint oil, food trout, sugar beets, hops, cheese, dry onions, wheat, lentils, dry edible peas and dry beans.

Many of those commodities are processed right here in Idaho before being shipped to their ultimate destinations around the country and world.

The farming and food processing industries in Idaho have a tremendous impact on the state's overall economy. Add in the food industry, and well, as you can see from the results of the Feeding the Economy report, the impact is shocking, in a good way.

Let's be sure to tell our story and help share the facts of how we work each day to provide safe food and fiber for the world. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

The price that Idaho dairies are receiving for their milk is up substantially but the overall cost of production for those dairies is also way up.

# Farm-level milk prices way up but so are production costs for dairies

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Farm-level milk prices in Idaho are flirting with record territory but so are production costs for the state's dairies.

The average price that Idaho producers receive for their milk hit a sky-high \$26.10 per hundred pounds (cwt) in March, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. That's compared to \$17.60 per cwt in March of 2021.

But Idaho dairy operations' production costs are also sky-high.

That poses some challenges for Idaho's dairy industry, which is the No. 1 sector of the state's agricultural industry in terms of farm-gate revenue.

Idaho dairies brought in more than \$3 billion in farm-gate revenue last year, according to NASS.

When the hay, corn and other crops needed to feed milk 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.

Very recently, the average Idaho dairy needed to receive about \$16 to \$16.50 per cwt for its milk in order to break even. That break-even point is now closing in on \$20 per cwt.

The cost of virtually all dairy inputs is up significantly but much higher feed costs especially are presenting serious challenges to Idaho dairies, said Idaho Dairymen's Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout.

He said increased feed costs alone have pushed up the cost of production for the average Idaho dairy by about \$3 per cwt over the past year.





“We’re seeing record high feed costs,” Naerebout said. “Every indication is that feed will become more and more expensive as we get into new crop feed. We expect to see all-time highs on hay prices and corn silage prices this year in Idaho.”

Feed costs are way up compared with a year ago and regardless of how high they are, “cows have to be fed,” said Twin Falls dairyman Willie Bokma.

The average Idaho milk cow eats about 50 pounds of dry matter feed each day, he said.

“Contracting feed is a nightmare right now,” he said.

Feed costs typically account for about 50 percent of the total cost of production for an Idaho dairy, said Caldwell dairyman Bernie Teunissen.

He said part of the problem is that the cost of every dairy input, including feed, is rising rapidly. He said his operation gets a letter from a vendor nearly every week notifying it of a price increase for an input.

“Our costs have been accelerating so rapidly that we don’t have a strong handle on what our costs are right now,” he said. “It’s been a runup in costs like there has never been in my lifetime.”

He said the overall increase in the cost of production is very concerning but there are multiple hedging tools producers can use to lock in the price of some costs.

“We are certainly going to do some hedging,” Teunissen said.

“If you’re a wise producer, you use those tools,” Bokma said. “God gave us brains. If we use our God-given talents to use the tools available to us – hedging when you can, contracting when you can – we’re probably going to be OK. Everyone in the world

still has to eat.”

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 over \$24 per cwt through October, which is above the cost of production for dairies.

Naerebout said one of the major concerns Idaho dairies have right now is that the farm-level price of milk will drop but the cost of production won’t go down nearly as quick.

“Dairymen are very apprehensive about how long these prices will sustain and being able to cover feed costs,” he said. “That part really has our dairymen nervous.”

University of Minnesota dairy economist Marin Bozic, who has presented to Idaho dairymen in person before, said developments in New Zealand and Europe, two of the United States’ major competitors when it comes to milk production, could present opportunities for U.S. dairy operations.

The dairy herd in New Zealand tripled from the mid-1990s to about 2016 but it has stopped growing the past few years, he said.

“That has presented a tremendous opportunity for other milk producers,” Bozic said.

At the same time, Europe is committed to its version of a New Green Deal, which targets reduced emissions from the agricultural sector. That will mean reduced cow numbers.

Between the developments in New Zealand and Europe, the market signal is that more milk is needed and the opportunity is opening up for U.S. producers to capture some more overseas market, Bozic said. ■



Photos by Sean Ellis

**Idaho Potato Commission Chairman Brett Jensen takes a picture inside a “grow room” in the University of Idaho’s new Seed Potato Germplasm Laboratory. A groundbreaking ceremony for the \$5.5 million facility was held March 29 and attended by about 200 people.**

# Major upgrade for the place where Idaho potatoes are ‘born’

**By Sean Ellis**

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

MOSCOW – The Idaho potato brand is all about quality and the origins of that quality has a new, state-of-the-art home.

About 200 people attended a groundbreaking ceremony March 29 for University of Idaho’s Seed Potato Germplasm Laboratory.

The new lab, which is the place where most Idaho potatoes are “born,” is a spa-

ciuous, standalone facility on the university’s Moscow campus. The old lab was tiny and located within a few small classrooms inside a large building.

Members of Idaho’s potato industry said the difference between the new, \$5.5 million facility and the old one is stark.

“It is a difference of day and night, truly,” said potato farmer Mary Hasenoehrl, who served on the Idaho Potato Commission when the plan to create the new facility was forged. “You couldn’t even compare

the two.”

The facility maintains the germplasm or startup material that Idaho’s potato industry uses to produce about 90 percent of the potatoes grown in Idaho. About 60 percent of the spuds grown in the United States also originate from the facility.

“Idaho potatoes are synonymous with quality and that quality starts here; it starts in this lab,” said potato farmer and former IPC Commissioner Nick Blanksma.

The laboratory ensures the tissue culture

that is used to grow potatoes is disease-free and high quality.

Michael Parrella, dean of the University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, told participants at the groundbreaking ceremony that "it's within this very lab that the premium quality that Idaho potatoes are known for is established."

The new facility has state-of-the-art clean rooms and includes the latest safety protocols, such as double-door entries, to ensure that tissue culture is not contaminated.

The facility maintains disease-free tissue culture for about 300 different potato varieties, according to Jenny Durrin, the program director for the Seed Potato Germplasm Laboratory.

All potato tissue cultures and mini-tubers that come out of the program are certified disease-free after undergoing a rigorous cleanup process.

There were never any sanitary issues with the previous facility but because the old facility included common-use spaces and a lot of foot traffic, the possibility existed, Durrin said.

"This facility is isolated and away from any of those 'threats,' as I like to call them," she said. "The chances of (potato pathogens) getting into the clean site are very, very low in this facility."

The U of I's potato germplasm program establishes, maintains and distributes disease-free germplasm and mini-tubers to domestic and international seed potato



**Jenny Durrin, program director for the University of Idaho's Seed Potato Germplasm Laboratory, gives members of the Idaho Potato Commission a tour of the new facility March 29. About 200 people attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the \$5.5 million facility that same day.**

growers and researchers.

The new facility, which went functional near the end of 2021, will allow the program to significantly ramp up production if it's required by the potato industry.

"Conservatively, I could triple the amount of plants that I produce here," Durrin said.

The Idaho Legislature approved \$3 million toward the facility, the IPC has provided \$1.25 million, CALS provided \$1 million and the rest of the money came from contributions from industry and

individual growers.

"It took the involvement of a lot of other folks in the state to get this done," Blanksma said.

That included Hasenoehrl and her husband, potato farmer and former IPC commissioner Doug Gross, who both donated money and a lot of time toward the effort.

Gross said ensuring Idaho potatoes get a clean, healthy start is critical to the state's iconic potato industry.

"We need clean seed to get started with," he said. "The Idaho brand isn't worth much without quality."

Gross said it also sends a clear message to customers and potential customers who visit the facility: "It shows them we really mean business."

Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Jamey Higham said the state's potato industry brings in an estimated \$5 billion per year to the state and he said it's critical that the Idaho potato industry continue to find ways to increase quality because that also increases demand.

"The quality of Idaho potatoes begins with its seed supply and that's why we are here today, to officially open this beautiful, state-of-the-art Seed Potato Germplasm Laboratory," he said.

"We are extremely excited about this new investment in the Idaho potato industry." ■



**A groundbreaking ceremony for the University of Idaho's new Seed Potato Germplasm Laboratory facility was held March 29 and attended by about 200 people.**



Photo by Joel Benson

Potatoes are unloaded into a storage facility near Idaho Falls in the fall of 2020.

# Idaho's potato industry applauds potato research endowment

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

MOSCOW – Potato storage is one of the backbones of Idaho's iconic spud industry.

After being harvested, more than 80 percent of the state's potato crop is stored until it's needed by processors and other customers.

A lot can go wrong during storage and having a good understanding of what goes on during that process is critically important to Idaho's potato farmers, who collec-

tively produce about 13 billion pounds of spuds each year, which is one-third of the nation's total potato supply.

Efforts by University of Idaho researchers to improve potato storage technology got a boost recently thanks to a \$1 million investment to create an endowed research professorship.

Wayne and Peggy Thiessen donated \$500,000 to create the endowment and the Idaho Potato Commission matched that donation.

The Wayne Thiessen Potato Research

Professorship honors Thiessen's career in the potato industry and he and Peggy's long-time support of their alma mater.

The endowment creates a new position for a faculty member in U of I's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences that will focus on the physiology of potato storage, helping support Idaho potato growers, processors and shippers.

The endowment will support research needs and provide funding for graduate students.

University of Idaho scientists already do

*“The potato industry has been good to us and since potato storage is so critical to our processing potatoes, (the endowment) was a way we could give back to the industry.”*

*- Wayne Thiessen*

a lot of research on potatoes and spud storage but this endowment will help improve those efforts, potato industry leaders said March 29 while attending the grand opening of U of I’s new Seed Potato Germplasm Laboratory.

Hammett potato farmer Nick Blanksma, who was chairman of the IPC when the endowment was created, said the endowed research position will help Idaho’s potato industry continue to meet its crucial goal of supplying consumers with a steady year-round supply of the highest quality potatoes.

“Storage is huge for our industry,” he said. “We harvest for about three months of the year so the other nine months out of the year we have to pull out of storage in order to have a year-round supply of potatoes (for) our customers and consumers throughout the world. Anything we can do to enhance the quality of the product, that’s what we’re after with that research position.”

Wilder potato farmer Doug Gross said about 80 percent of the spuds his operation produces are stored, for up to eight months.

“Storage physiology is a really important part of our industry,” said Gross, who formerly served on the Idaho Potato Commission.

His wife, potato farmer Mary Hasenoehrl, who also served on the IPC, said having that research professorship “is crucial, so when we have issues with potato storage, we can go to that researcher and that researcher is going to know the answer to our problems or they will help us find answers.”

Wayne Thiessen grew up on a wheat farm in north Idaho and earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in soil science while studying agriculture at the University of

Idaho.

He met Peggy, his wife of 57 years, at U of I while she was studying family and consumer sciences and the two have been long-time supporters of the university.

Wayne Thiessen worked for University of Idaho Extension for several years and then joined Ore-Idaho Foods and retired 22 years later as general manager of procurement.

“The potato industry has been good to us and since potato storage is so critical

to our processing potatoes, (the endowment) was a way we could give back to the industry,” he said. “There are a number of ways you can experience storage loss and we felt like the research storage potato professor could make a contribution to aid the industry ... by defining better storage practices and having those implemented by potato growers and processors.”

The endowed potato storage research position, which is located at U of I’s Kimberly Research and Extension Center, is held by Gustavo Teixeira, who began in April.

“The generous support by the Thiessens and the Idaho Potato Commission shows the importance of the U of I potato research program to Idaho’s agricultural industry,” CALS Dean Michael Parrella said in a news release. “We greatly appreciate the investment in our program, which will impact the potato industry for generations.” ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Wayne and Peggy Thiessen, shown here March 29 in Moscow, Idaho, donated \$500,000 toward a \$1 million endowment that creates a new position for a faculty member in University of Idaho’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences that will focus on the physiology of potato storage, helping support Idaho potato growers, processors and shippers.**

# ‘PIONEER HERD OF THE WEST’: Idaho ranchers boast oldest continuous Registered Angus herd west of Rockies

By John O’Connell

*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

BLISS — Many of the cattle roaming the pastures at Spring Cove Ranch can be traced back to the first Registered Angus cows born on the property in 1920.

Art and Stacy Butler run a cattle operation steeped in history, with a reputation for quality earned over more than a century in the business.

They operate the oldest Registered Angus herd continuously kept by the same family west of the Rocky Mountains, now in its 103rd year.

“My father-in-law deemed it the pioneer herd of the West,” Stacy said.

Art’s grandparents homesteaded the property. His Grandma Effie named it Spring Cove for the natural spring that flows in the cove above the farmstead.

Pioneers traveling the Oregon Trail’s Kelton Branch kept a tin cup in the sage brush near the spring, where they’d stop for a water break, Stacy explained.

Wagon ruts left by those pioneers are still visible there.

Effie and her husband, Arthur H. Butler, purchased their first Registered Percheron Horses at the ranch in 1916, and they bought 13 registered Angus cows and a bull from a neighbor three years later.

They would travel the country selling the Angus cattle and Percheron draft horses they raised.

Arthur H. Butler was the original ditch rider on the Northside Canal’s west end, helping to build the canal, which still supplies water to the ranch.

Stacy explained the location of the homestead now helps the family minimize



*Arthur Harrison Butler with "Whitey" Blackbird Bell of Whiteway*

*Registration # 1301847 Calved: July 4, 1950*

*Pictured here at Spring Cove Ranch, Bliss, Idaho where he was herd sire in the 1950's.*

Submitted photo

its irrigation power costs. The water supply flows downhill, and the fall provides pressure to their pivots, reducing demand for electricity to pump the water.

Art’s father, Doran, was the oldest of four siblings. Doran had seven children, including two sons — Art is the youngest of the group, all of whom went to college.

Today, Art and Stacy run the cattle herd with their son, Josh Mavencamp, their daughter, Sarah Helmick, and their nephew, Dale Butler.

Art’s brother Daniel runs the farm,

traditionally raising grain, hay and corn. He also leases about 500 acres per year for potato and sugar beet production.

In 2019, the ranch received some notable recognition. The National Angus Association honored Spring Cove with the Centennial Herd Award, the Seedstock Producer of the year Award and the Certified Angus Beef Commitment to Excellence Award.

“That’s kind of the pinnacle for us, being recognized for what you’re producing,” Stacy said.

They threw a big shindig with live music and a memorable dinner to celebrate. The event also included an educational presentation on Certified Angus beef.

The ranch is now in the throes of preparing for its major event — its annual bull sale, scheduled for March 14. On a single day, they sell about 170 bulls and 75 heifers.

Stacy is working on a catalog to mail to prospective buyers. Her son Josh is in charge of preparing all of the animals for the sale.

Some of the top bulls are purchased by internationally renowned genetics programs to become studs for artificial insemination.

“This is the payday that funds the ranch for another year,” Stacy said.

At last year’s sale, they sold their highest grossing bull ever, named Spring Cove Crossfire. Three breeders — Sitz Angus in Montana, TD Angus in Nebraska and Triple L Angus in Twin Falls — purchased the bull together for \$120,000.

Spring Cove also sells bull semen, keeping a semen interest in every bull sold. They maintain videos of bulls from past sales on their website, [springcoveranch.com](http://springcoveranch.com), along with performance data, for the benefit of customers interested in procuring semen from top AI studs.

The ranch started its bull sale in 1992. Back then, they hauled their animals to the Producers Livestock Marketing Association in Jerome to be auctioned, along with animals from other breeders.

To avoid the biosecurity threat of having their animals in contact with other livestock, as well as the cost of transportation, they built their own sale barn in 1998.

Their annual sale draws about 450 people. For the first two decades, Stacy prepared home-cooked meals for all of her guests. Nowadays, they hire Stampede Burger, of Gooding, to cater a flank steak dinner.

They start feeding people at 11:30 a.m. and the sale starts at 1 p.m.

In addition to buyers, lots of friends from town and neighbors stop by the sale barn for a good meal and the entertainment of watching an auction.

“We wanted to get people out to the ranch. This is a beautiful



Submitted photo

**Spring Cove Ranch in Bliss started its bull sale in 1992. The annual sale draws about 450 people.**

location,” Stacy said. “We wanted people to see how our cattle are raised and how our bulls are on range.”

They also broadcast the sale on live auction sites to allow buyers to participate remotely. The family uses software to post the price of every animal sold to inform online bidding.

They host additional meals for customers the night before the sale and following the sale. About once every five years they put on a larger post-sale party with live music for those who wish to “stick around and just celebrate the joy of being a rancher.”

Both Stacy and Art come from historic agricultural families. They met at the University of Idaho, where she studied plant sciences and he was an animal science major.

“We have a deep commitment to agriculture and the family farming way of life,” Stacy said. “We never thought twice about wanting to raise our children and grandchildren anywhere else than on a ranch or a farm.”

Stacy said she’s fascinated by genetics, and she and her husband appreciate the scientific approach to breeding.

“Because of the longevity of the herd we’ve been able to see the results of those breeding decisions,” Stacy said.

Nowadays, advanced scientific techniques help the family produce animals with better marbling, birthweight, tenderness, weight gain and other desirable traits.

For the past seven years, they’ve been taking a tissue sample from every newborn calf and have DNA testing done to verify parentage and provide genomic trait data, which helps them to more rapidly improve their herd genetics.

“It’s given us another tool,” she said. ■

**Spring Cove Ranch in Bliss hosts its bull sale in 2019, during the operation’s centennial year.** Submitted photo





Photo by Sean Ellis

A potato field near Parma is irrigated last year. The value of Idaho's agricultural exports totaled \$258 million during the first quarter of the year, down less than one percent compared with the same period in 2021.

# Idaho ag export value dips slightly in first quarter

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – The total value of Idaho's agricultural exports dipped slightly during the first quarter of the year compared with the same period in 2021.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data that became available in early May and was crunched by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Idaho exported \$258 million worth of agricultural products to other countries during the January to March time-

frame.

That is 0.8 percent less than the \$260 million total registered during the first quarter of 2021.

Considering Idaho set a record for total ag export value last year, the state's ag exports are still strong.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau data, Idaho set a record for total agricultural export value in 2021 with \$1.02 billion.

A stronger U.S. dollar and continuing supply chain disruptions were some of the major factors affecting Idaho farm product exports during the first quarter, according to industry experts.



Container issues at West Coast ports have had a negative affect on Idaho ag exports, said Laura Johnson, who manages the ISDA's market development division.

"Not being able to get containers in a timely manner and then delivered to customers in a timely way is having an impact on exports," she said.

Higher commodity prices supported the overall value of Idaho's ag exports during the first quarter of 2022 but the strong U.S. dollar was a significant headwind for Idaho agricultural exports, 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.

"On average, the U.S. dollar increased during the first quarter of 2022 by 4.8 percent over the first quarter of 2021," Robison said.

The severe drought conditions in Idaho last year have also impacted Idaho ag exports, Robison said. Yields and total production for most of the state's major crops was down significantly in 2021 due to the drought conditions.

For example, total Idaho wheat and barley production were down 32 percent and 21 percent, respectively, last year. That meant less crop to export for a state that typically ranks No. 1 in the nation in barley production and fifth or sixth in wheat production.

"Grain exports decreased as a result of drought and reduced yields in non-irrigated crop areas during 2021, including the key

export area of North Idaho," Robison said. "This resulted in less grain available for export during the quarter."

Dairy was Idaho's top ag export category during the first quarter and the state exported \$56 million worth of products included under the "dairy" category during the first three months of 2022, according to the Census Bureau data. That was an increase of 24 percent compared with the first quarter of 2021.

The dairy export category was supported by strong production and higher prices on a year-over-year basis, Robison said.

"Gains in dairy exports were offset by decreases in small grains," he said.

Canada remained the top destination for Idaho ag exports and Idaho businesses sold \$92 million worth of ag products to that nation during the first quarter of 2022, up 15 percent compared with the first quarter of 2021.

Mexico ranked as the No. 2 destination for Idaho ag exports with \$35 million during the first quarter, a decline of 35 percent compared with the same period last year. A decrease in the total value of small grains from Idaho was a major factor in that decline.

China was No. 3 at \$21 million, an increase of 31 percent compared with last year, and the Netherlands was No. 4 with \$13.9 million, a half-a-percent decrease from last year.

Idaho ag export value to Japan (\$13 million) and South Korea (\$10.6 million) was down 9 percent and 23 percent, respectively. ■



# POTATOES

*Continued from page 3*

increased 47 percent over the last two years, the cost of labor went up 28 percent, the cost of repairs rose 17 percent, the cost of chemicals increased 48 percent and the cost of scooping and hauling potatoes from storage rose 31 percent.

It's not just the cost of packing potatoes that has risen, but the cost to grow and harvest Idaho spuds has also risen dramatically, according to industry representatives.

"The cost of growing potatoes is up substantially," said Travis Blacker, industry relations director for the Idaho Potato Commission.

He said the cost to grow potatoes in Idaho this year will be the highest ever.

In an annual study funded by the Idaho Potato Commission, Eborn also calculates the cost of growing Idaho potatoes each year.

That report hasn't been finished for 2022 yet but Eborn said it appears the cost of growing spuds in Idaho will increase by another 15-20 percent this year, at least.

It's hard to know just how high the increase will be, he said, because the cost of major inputs such as fertilizer, chemicals and fuel are not nailed down and changing fast.

The price that farmers are receiving for their potatoes has risen significantly over the past year but costs have risen at least as much, he said.

"Growers and packers have to get a high price just to break even," Eborn said.

Data for the report was collected from input suppliers, machinery and equipment dealers and potato shippers.

The IGSA plans to continue the report on an annual basis and track potato packing costs over time.

One of the missions of the IGSA is to educate and advocate for the potato industry, said chairman Klade Williams, who is involved on the growing and packing side of the potato industry.

The board decided to fund the report to educate stakeholders in the industry about the steep cost increases faced by the potato packing industry, he said.



Photo by Sean Ellis

**A report funded by Idaho Grower Shippers Association found the cost of packing potatoes has risen 36 percent over the past two years.**

"The packing sheds can no longer keep pushing these increased costs down to their growers and the growers can no longer shoulder the burden of increased costs," said Williams, chief financial officer for Arrowhead Potato Co. out of Rupert.

The farming side of the equation has been hit with even greater percentage increases, he said.

"At our current levels, it's difficult to be sustainable when we're faced with these types of cost increases," Williams said.

Boyle believes most people, from consumers to major buyers, will understand that "what our industry is dealing with in cost increases is just like what everybody else is dealing with. If they want to stay in business and remain relevant, they have to pass that cost on."

He said the report is a direct, easy way for people to understand the magnitude of the cost increases the industry is dealing with.

"When your costs go up like that, it's hard to keep operating like you have been," Boyle said.

Blacker said the increased cost of growing and packaging potatoes is indicative of what is happening across farm country.

"It's definitely not just potatoes; it's everything," he said.

Boyle agrees.

"These types of increases are probably a good indication of what the whole potato industry in the U.S. is dealing with and, really, what all of agriculture is dealing with," he said. ■

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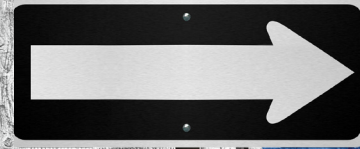


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# To cut or not to cut: working with logging contractors

By Audra Cochran  
University of Idaho

The barrage of weather we have witnessed in the past year has led to various concerns for our family forests.

Stressors such as extreme drought, strong winds, fires, and now flooding, leave our forests vulnerable for insect and disease outbreaks and wildfire risks.

As we see these events occur, it often encourages forest landowners to think about the overall health of their forests.

This often includes revisiting their forest management plans and reevaluating priorities.

Subsequently, this can mean forest owners taking a more active approach to reduce the risks and creating a harvesting plan for their forests.

However, the thought of creating a harvesting plan and following through with the harvest can be overwhelming for many landowners.

There are several things that can help you as you prepare to harvest timber on your property.

## Work with a Consulting Forester

If you are uncertain where to start when it comes to planning a timber harvest, a consulting forester can be a wise investment.

Consulting foresters are professional foresters who are available for hire by private forest owners. They are typically graduates from an accredited institution and have experience working within the forestry industry.

They can help with a wide variety of services including writing forest plans, timber cruising and conducting forest inventory, forest health evaluations, setting up and managing timber sales, helping landowners contact and work with logging contractors, and many after-harvest activities such as slash management, replanting, and



Photos by Audra Cochran

**The thought of creating a harvesting plan and following through with the harvest can be overwhelming for many landowners. There are several things that can help you as you prepare to harvest timber on your property.**

more.

Consulting foresters can serve as a good guide for what to expect from start to finish when conducting a timber harvest.

The University of Idaho Extension has several great resources to help you in finding a consulting forester to work with.

Our publication, “Idaho Natural Resource Consultant Directory” and CIS 1226: Working with a Professional Forester, are available for download on our website.

In addition, U of I Extension, Idaho Department of Lands, and Natural Resources Conservation Service offer educational resources to help with planning.

## Hiring a Logging Contractor

Likely the most important decision you

can make when selecting a logging contractor is making sure your goals align.

Your forest is both a source of enjoyment and revenue for your family. You want to make sure that the logging company that harvests your timber will do so with your considerations and best interests in mind.

Likewise, the logging contractor has a right to know your full expectations ahead of time when deciding on whether to bid your job.

This is where a few vetting steps can save you time in the long run.

*Get referrals:* Lean on your consulting forester, friends or neighbors who have logged their properties to give you recommendations of logging contractors who might best align with your plans.



The Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho also owns and operates the Idaho Pro-Logger program.

This is a voluntary logger training program designed to help loggers learn more about environmental and logging best management practices, as well as meet the requirements of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

The ALC maintains a list of Idaho Pro-Loggers that is accessible to the public, allowing you to see a contractor's qualifications and certifications.

*Meet with multiple contractors:* Logging contractors are another good source of information and often enjoy the opportunity to meet with landowners to see the property firsthand before bidding it.

This is a great time to discuss your forestry objectives with the different contractors and see if their harvest plan aligns with yours. If you worked on a harvest plan with a consulting forester, bring them into the conversation as well.

This way you can learn what different services each contractor provides. Are you just interested in a commercial harvest, or are you wanting thinning, replanting, and slash management provided as well?

These meetings are a good time to address whether the contractors under consideration can meet all your management goals.

The contractors will also know quickly whether it is a job that their company can complete on your timeline.

Keep in mind, with increased interest in timber harvesting, many contractors are already booked in advance. It is important to discuss timelines, so you



## Idaho's Private Forest



**If you are uncertain where to start when it comes to planning a timber harvest, a consulting forester can be a wise investment.**

both know what is realistic.

*Insurance coverage:* It is also important to address in your contractor meetings what insurance coverage each contractor carries. This will ensure that appropriate liabilities are in place, in case property damage occurs.

*Negotiate pricing:* Each contractor prices jobs a little differently. Some opt to charge a percentage, while others charge by the unit basis. It is important that you understand this difference and agree on terms.

*Sign a contract:* Once you go through all the discussions and have your questions answered, develop and sign a contract that spells out what both you and the contractor are responsible for, and what you both

will be paid.

Finding a reputable logging contractor takes time, but it is not a process you want to rush.

There is a lot at stake when it comes to logging your property, and mistakes can be long lasting and sometimes irreversible.

Having a good consulting forester and logging contractor on your team can help give you the peace of mind knowing that your forest is healthy and well cared for.

We never know what mother nature might come up with next!

*Audra Cochran is a University of Idaho Extension educator in Lewis County. She can be reached at [audrac@uidaho.edu](mailto:audrac@uidaho.edu). ■*



Photos by Alesha Bailey

Rock runs down a calf so Belle can rope it.



After intense competition, Rock is calm at the horse trailer.

# An equine Cinderella story, high-energy ‘Rock’ is renowned on the rodeo circuit

By Dianna Troyer  
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

For nearly 20 years, a diminutive gelding named Rock has been a household name on the eastern Idaho high school rodeo circuit. An award-winning equine celebrity, he is renowned for his speed and competing successfully in five events.

Many fans are unaware of his backstory.

“People look at him and assume he’s a Quarter Horse,” said his owner, Calvin Beard of Moore. “But he’s an Appaloosa cross.”

Rock, 20, has won District 1 Horse of the Year several times.

“I’ve lost track – he’s been Horse of the Year five or six times,” Beard said. “He still does it all and loves whatever event he’s in -- steer wrestling, team roping, calf roping, barrels and poles. He’s not big, about 14-2 hands, but he’s got such a big heart and gives his all every time.”

Age has not diminished Rock’s performance.

“He looks and acts like he’s about 6 -- not 20,” Beard said. “He’s aged well and still has good muscle tone. He hasn’t slowed down either. He’s such a powerhouse and extremely fast.”

Beard said Rock has changed teens' lives, bolstering their self-confidence.

"I've seen it time and again," he said. "The kids who ride him trust him because they know he'll take care of them and is experienced in whatever event they do."

Rock's speed and rock solid expertise has helped his riders win countless buckles and trophies.

"He's a Cinderella story," said Tyler Wanstrom, a senior at Butte County High School who competed with Rock in steer wrestling the past two years. "Some people think you can only succeed if you have a registered Quarter Horse with fancy breeding, but that's not the case. Here's Rock, a grade horse with no papers, and he made it to nationals."

Last summer, Rock and his rider, Ethan Smith, competed in steer wrestling at the National High School Finals Rodeo in Nebraska. Smith, a member of the Butte County High School rodeo team, hopes they qualify again this summer.

Wanstrom said Rock is both "a safe kids' horse and an insane speed demon, especially in calf roping and steer wrestling. In the box, he gets in this mode and just stares, waiting for his cue to go, and he's off. He gets you in the perfect spot. It's thrilling to ride him."

Although Beard was asked to submit Rock's name for statewide Horse of the Year, he could not because Rock is not registered.

"He's half Quarter Horse and half Appaloosa, so he can't be in either registry," Beard said.

Rock's dam was an Appaloosa named Dee.

"She was my birthday present when I was 9," Beard said. "She was a yearling bought from Dee Maynard for \$150 and became my rodeo horse. I could do anything on her."

When Beard competed in roping with Dee in Arco, he was teased about riding an Appy instead of a Quarter Horse.

"Then they saw she was a heck of a horse," he said. "A friend there had a breed fee for a AAA race horse in Blackfoot. He couldn't use it, so I bought it and bred Dee. I wanted a little more speed and got it in spades."



Tyler Wanstrom said Rock puts him in a perfect position for steer wrestling.



Rock slides to a stop as Belle Beard leaps off during goat tying. A versatile horse, Rock competes successfully in several rodeo events.

Rock was born in 2002 and named for his Quarter Horse sire, BCR Azure Rocket. Rock became a 4-H and rodeo horse for Beard's son, Dylan, and daughters Belle and Lily.

"Rock was easy to train in all events," Beard said. "For steer wrestling, I rode him twice beside a steer, then jumped the steer on the third time. That's all it took."

When Beard teaches teens to wrestle steers, he has them practice on a slower horse at first.

"Rock blows by a steer so fast, some kids don't even realize he passed it," he said.

Beard let a few other Butte County High School rodeo team members ride Rock, too. In high school, Brett Waymire, 22, remembers an unforgettable steer-wrestling run.

"At districts in Salmon, Rock got sideways in the box for some reason," Waymire said. "The steer was halfway down the arena by the time he got turned around. He still caught him. He had killer speed. He's the best all-around horse I've ever ridden. They don't come better than Rock."

Beard's daughter, Belle, 19, relied on him for every event she entered – barrels, poles, breakaway roping, goat tying, and team roping.

"It was easy to teach him the poles and barrel patterns," Belle said. "He's level-headed and is used to crowds, so he never gets antsy or nervous. After he's done, he calms right down and just stands at the trailer ready to go home."

Her sister, Lily, will compete in barrels with Rock when she starts high school next year.

When he's not competing, Rock is mellow.

"He dials it down to whatever level his rider is at," Beard said. "I can put kids on him, and he walks around. He's not just a rodeo horse, either. He's moved cows and packed out elk. In the arena, he becomes a different horse, though – focused and fast."

Beard said people have wanted to buy Rock.

"He's one-of-a-kind and will never be for sale," Beard said. "It would take four or five horses to replace him. He'll always stay in our family and have whatever job he wants." ■



Photo by John O'Connell

**Rich Novy, the USDA Agricultural Research Service potato breeder in Aberdeen, Idaho, holds Becca Rose tubers. Becca Rose, which is named after Novy's two daughters, should be officially released as a variety later this summer.**

# New Tri-State spud variety honors potato breeder's daughters

**By John O'Connell**  
*University of Idaho*

ABERDEEN — A cooperative potato breeding program that includes the University of Idaho is poised to release a red-skinned variety with white flesh, notable for its consistently round tuber shape and its desirable size profile.

The new Northwest (Tri-State) Potato Variety Development Program variety will be named Becca Rose, in honor of USDA Agricultural Research Service research geneticist and potato

breeder Rich Novy's two daughters, Rebecca (Becca) and Jenna Rose.

The program, started in 1985, is a research collaboration involving U of I, Washington State University, Oregon State University and USDA-ARS scientists in Aberdeen and Prosser, Wash.

“Once a breeding clone is named and released as a variety, then the ownership of that variety is shared within the Tri-State program, currently with a new agreement between the Idaho, Washington and Oregon potato commissions, the USDA-ARS

and the three universities,” Novy said, adding that royalties from the Tri-State varieties are invested back into the Tri-State research programs.

Rhett Spear, a U of I potato variety development specialist, added, “It’s a great collaboration between ARS and the universities. They don’t have the personnel to do all the field testing and we don’t have the personnel to do all the crosses and early generation field evaluations.”

Becca Rose should be officially released by late summer 2022 and previously had been known by its breeding clone designation: NDA050237B-1R.

In 2005, North Dakota State University potato breeder Susie Thompson made the cross for Becca Rose between a pair of unnamed breeding clones and sent an unselected tuber that grew beneath that initial germinated seedling to Novy at Aberdeen.

Novy planted the seedling tuber in his 2007 single-hill field evaluations, which include more than 100,000 seeding tubers resulting from hybridizations conducted at Aberdeen and another 10,000 to 15,000 seedling tubers planted from other U.S. breeding programs each season.

The breeding clone was selected in the field

at Aberdeen in 2007 and subsequently retained through many years of field trials across different growing environments. Becca Rose is unique in also having a Chilean variety as a grandparent in its ancestry.

“The key here is reciprocity. Susie has a variety she will release this year that came from Aberdeen hybridizations that she selected in North Dakota,” Novy said.

This reciprocal exchange of germplasm among U.S. potato breeding programs has occurred for decades and maximizes the potential for a release of a new variety for the U.S. industry.

Researchers from U of I, USDA-ARS and others involved in the program evaluate the tubers grown in the single-hill evaluations and retain only the top 1% to 3% to plant the next year in the 12-hill trial.

With each subsequent field generation, more breeding clones are eliminated, and larger plots of each breeding clone are planted to allow for broader evaluations across multiple sites to assess performance under different growing environments.

Breeding clone seed is expanded at U of I’s Tetonia Research and Extension Center through a collaborative effort between Tetonia staff and ARS.

Aberdeen breeding clones are then shared with the other Tri-State collaborators for evaluations under their conditions after six or seven years in the program.

That’s also about the timeframe in which Spear begins management evaluations.

They provide guidance on fertilizer requirements, how each breeding clone grows, row spacing,

herbicide sensitivity and other key factors.

“We try to get a good idea of management practices for different varieties so if they are released we can communicate good information to the industry,” Spear said, adding that yield evaluations begin with the 12-hill trials and con-

tinue through the Tri-State and Western Regional trials.

It takes between nine and 12 years for a variety to be released. The program typically releases a variety or two each year, and the Tri-State partners are all involved in the decision.

“The main driver of if a variety gets released is if there is a champion for it,” Spear said. “In this case growers in the Midwest are interested in the yield, color and size profile.”

In collaboration with Michigan State University, Becca Rose has been thoroughly tested in Michigan, where common scab pressure can be high, and appears to have good resistance to the bacterial disease.

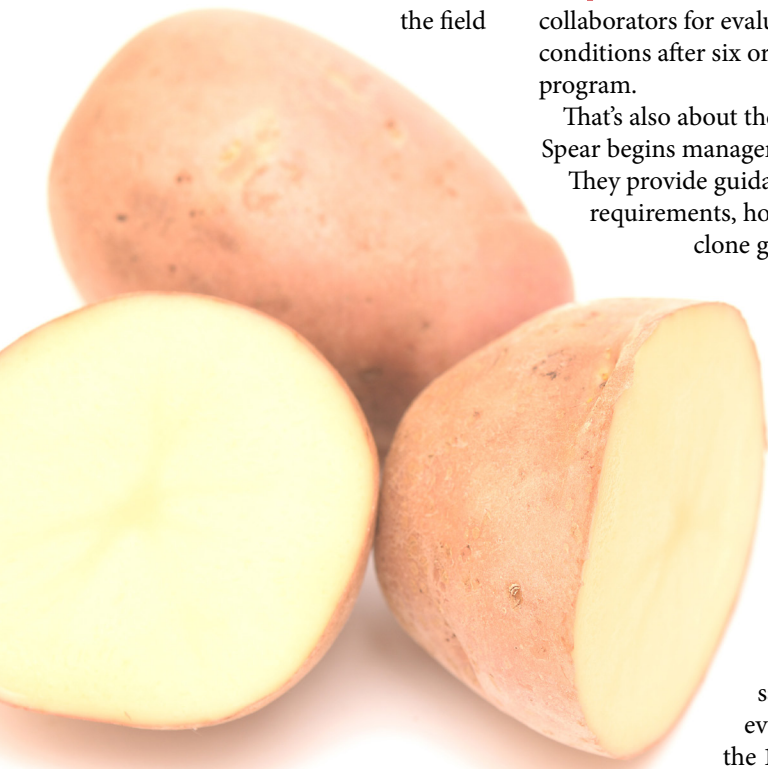
It also has been noted as high yielding with excellent skin color and tuber uniformity and a low incidence of internal defects in Michigan. In addition to the strong industry interest in Michigan, Brian Charlton, of Oregon State University, has recognized its potential for western growers based on his evaluations in Klamath Falls, Ore.

Becca Rose produces average yields, but a high percentage of tubers are less than 6 ounces in western environments, which is a size profile that can be sold at a premium.

In fields in Michigan, however, tuber size is larger, with a higher percentage of A-sized tubers, which the Michigan industry likes. Becca Rose has proven to retain its shape after baking and boiling. The spud’s brilliant color also doesn’t fade as much as other red-skinned varieties in storage.

The Aberdeen breeding program mostly specializes in developing Russet potatoes, and Novy has been eagerly awaiting the release of a red variety from his program to recognize his daughters. Rose, his youngest daughter’s middle name, is commonly used in naming red-skinned varieties.

“They’ve been excited about it,” said Novy, who has brought countless advanced potato breeding clones home to his family over the years to sample at dinner. “For them to have a potato variety named after them after many meals with breeding clones over the year, I know they’ve really appreciated that.” ■





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## This past month has been volatile to say the least

Chicago December wheat has traded \$1.18 per bushel lower since my last column. Hard red winter wheat is down \$1.40 and dark northern spring wheat is down 99 cents, both in the December contract.

The October feeder cattle market traded a little over \$9 higher and then retraced \$4 per hundredweight (cwt). So as you can see, the futures markets have been all over the board.

Last month we talked about the need to study the markets as well as the different ways that you can protect yourself against an adverse price movement in the market.

I am not going to be a second-guesser; however, I am going to say that with what has transpired, we can see the need to at least understand how the different price protection strategies can work for you.

For example, let's take one of the simplest strategies, buying a put option. A put option will protect you in the event the market trends lower while at the same time letting you participate and contract your commodity at the higher price should the market trend higher.

This sounds really good and it is; however, it's not free. There is a premium that you will pay upfront for this strategy.

Now let's not rule it out just because there is a premium because put options do work very well for those that have risk of the market trending lower.

On the other side, we have call options that work if you are at risk of the market trending higher. Call options work very

well for feeders such as dairies or feed lots.

The time to contract will protect you from a higher trending market while letting you buy your feed at a lower price if the market moves in that direction.

And as with the put options, there is a premium involved that needs to be paid up front.

These are both very good methods of managing your price risk in the market but before you just jump in you need to study just how they work specifically.

What may work for one producer may not be all that enticing to another. This is why you will need to study and take the time necessary to decide just how this may work for you in your operation.

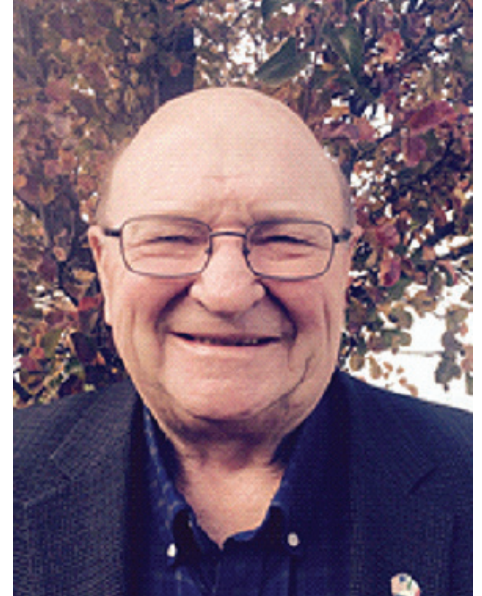
Take good notes in your journal. Write down things like where is the market currently trading and are we in a higher or lower trending market or sideways?

What is the current news and then finally, why did I enter into this hedging position?

Keeping a journal just for marketing will pay you big dividends down the road. It will be good to read just what was going on in the futures as well as the local market and what helped you to decide it was a good timeframe to contract some of your commodities.

It doesn't matter whether you are selling grain, oilseeds, hay or calves. The more information you can keep to assist you in the future, the better.

At this time it looks as though we will have very good production in the grain



crops this year. The northern part of the state has a very good looking wheat crop.

Some of the other crops are not so good at this time due to all the rain they have received. The southeast and western part of the state is also looking very good.

The demand should be about normal, setting up a scenario for the basis to be a little weaker than normal.

In the southern region of the state we do see at times when producers need to sell into a timeframe rather than just a price.

This could be the case this year if you usually contract for delivery into a flour mill.

We could also see very good markets for wheat into the feed lots this year and there again you may need to sell into a delivery time rather than just a price.

However you market this year it will still be important to weigh all your options and then do whatever feels right to you.

Yes, you study it out with your mind and then sell with whatever feels right. ■

*'It doesn't matter whether you are selling grain, oilseeds, hay or calves. The more information you can keep to assist you in the future, the better.'*

# Agricultural Profile

## Bear Lake County



Photos by Jim Parker

Farmers and ranchers in the county brought in \$37 million in farm-gate revenue in 2017 and most of that – \$14 million – was from cattle and calves.

# Cattle and calves the big ag commodity in Bear Lake County

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

MONTPELIER – Bear Lake is sparse on people but big on cows.

“The mother cows outnumber the full-time residents here three to one,” says Georgetown hay farmer Albert Johnson, president of Bear Lake County Farm Bureau.

Cattle and calves, in fact, is the main agricultural commodity in the county in

terms of farm-gate revenue. Hay comes in second.

“Cattle and hay, in that order, are the big things here, and we grow a lot of wheat and barley here as well,” says Bear Lake County farmer and Bear Lake County Farm Bureau Vice President Jim Parker. “We don’t have many other crops.”

The reason a small variety of crops are grown in this area is because of the county’s short growing season and the always present threat of frost damage.

“We’re too high of elevation and too short of growing season for any kind of row crops,” Johnson says.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 28,175 cattle and calves in Bear Lake County during the 2017 census year.

There were 62,726 acres of hay grown in the county during the 2017 census year, 10,864 acres of wheat and 8,369 acres of barley.

Farmers and ranchers in the county





**Bear Lake County is sparse on people, but big on cattle.**

brought in \$37 million in farm-gate revenue in 2017 and most of that – \$14 million – was from cattle and calves.

“There’s a lot of cattle in the county,” says rancher Mark Harris, a Republican state senator from Soda Springs who does most of his ranching in Bear Lake County.

Because of the short growing season, Harris says, “Farmers here get two hay crops on average. Every once in a while, somebody might get a third hay crop but it’s not very common.”

While the population of Bear Lake County is small – 6,545 as of the latest U.S. Census – the county is experiencing some rapid population growth and the development that comes with it.

That means less farm ground and more people who might not necessarily have an understanding or appreciation of agriculture, Harris says. That means it will be up to farmers and ranchers to help educate the newcomers about the important role agriculture still plays in the local and state economy, he adds.

“It’s going to have to happen,” Harris says about efforts to educate newcomers about agriculture. “People still bale hay at night when the dew is just right and there’s a lot of stuff that goes on at odd hours because it’s agriculture and that’s the way it has to be done. We’re looking at increased conflicts between newcomers and ag.”

One of the looming issues facing ranchers and farmers in the county is the upcoming Bear River Basin water adjudication process. A water adjudication is an administrative and legal process where a

court determines, or decrees, water rights.

The adjudication process would catalog and confirm water rights in the Bear River Basin. The Bear River runs through part of Wyoming, Idaho and Utah.

Harris says that while there are some farmers who are concerned about the upcoming adjudication and what it will mean for their water rights, the ultimate goal is to ensure people have secure water rights that can’t be challenged after the process issues final water rights.

With the massive growth occurring in northern Utah, a lot of people and groups there are poking around and have their eyes on water from the Bear River and

Bear Lake, he says.

“That’s part of the reason I feel adjudication is so important,” Harris says. “In Idaho, we need to know what water rights we have because if we don’t, Utah’s going to want it all.”

Johnson says the county Farm Bureau organization spends a lot of its resources and focus on helping youth. That includes a large scholarship program for local high school students and supporting FFA and 4-H programs.

A lot of youth end up leaving the county for career opportunities elsewhere and Farm Bureau members want to encourage them to stay involved in the local agriculture industry, Johnson says.

Of the total 662 ag producers in the county in 2017, only 65 were under the age of 35, according to the 2017 ag census.

“The youth are the future of our industry,” Johnson says. “Probably the most valuable crop that we raise in Bear Lake County is kids. The challenge is that we are exporting a lot of them. So many youth leave our valley for opportunities elsewhere and we are just trying to encourage as much of the new generation to get involved with agriculture as possible.”

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 395 farms in Bear Lake County during the 2017 census year and 296,959 total acres of land in farms. ■



**According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 28,175 cattle and calves in Bear Lake County during the 2017 census year.**

# Classifieds

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For Sale: AKC registered Anatolian Shepherd Livestock guardian dogs. [www.elkhornasd.com](http://www.elkhornasd.com) [www.elkhornbnb.com](http://www.elkhornbnb.com) Mesa, ID 208-741-2071

## FARMING/EQUIPMENT

\* Case 511-B, 1960 case. Needs a little work to get running. New rear tires. Aberdeen, ID 208-339-0274, 208-240-8079

NH 2008 1475 Hydro-swing Swather 14Ft. great shape, well maintained, 2214 Header. \$17,500.00. Also a 2006 NH 570 Hayliner small baler, lined chute, Moisture monitor, excellent shape, well maintained \$19,500.00. Call 208-253-4346 Council, Id.

New Holland 1032 Stackliner Balewagon. Good condition, good tires,

good working order. No longer needed. Asking \$5,800. 208-365-0281, Emmett, ID.

Stanley Chipper for sale. Only used two times. \$100. Murtaugh 208-731-7040.

Fordson Major Diesel, 42 Hp. 6 speed Trans. 3 pt. Hitch, Very good tires, Fluid and wheel weights on rear. Included: Shop Manual, drawbar, top link and chains for rear. Engine overhaul – 2020. Price \$5950.00. Call or text 208-892-1887

Balewagons: New Holland self-propelled or pull-type models, parts, tires, manuals. Also interested in buying balewagons. Will consider any model. Call Jim Wilhite at 208-880-2889 anytime.

1973 Veermer Trencher Gas M450 blade and back-hoe with 12" bucket, Ford 4 speed engine. Firm \$4,250. Boise 208-757-3943.

ALFALFA SEED \$2.80/LB. Alfalfa seed, \$2.80/lb., Dormancy 4. Tests well with great persistence and winter hardiness. Inoculated in 50lb. bags. Kuna, ID. Contact Dave 208-890-1066 or Jessica 208-761-2720 or email [seed@davereynoldsfarms.com](mailto:seed@davereynoldsfarms.com)

I am 10 years old and raising chickens. Eggs for sale. \$2.00 dozen or \$3.00 for 18 count. 208-420-7916 text or call Lars. Can deliver to Twin Falls/Kimberly area.

## AUTO

1994 F250 Pickup Heavy Duty. 97,000 miles, bad head gaskets, tore down needs put back together. Gas 460, 411 gears. Aberdeen, ID 208-339-0274, 208-240-8079

## FOR SALE

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Paying cash for old cork top embossed bottles and some telephone insulators as well as other vintage and antique items. Call Randy. Payette, ID. 208-740-0178.

Paying cash for German &

Japanese war relics/souvenirs! Pistols, rifles, swords, daggers, flags, scopes, optical equipment, uniforms, helmets, machine guns (ATF rules apply) medals, flags, etc. 208-405-9338.

Pre-1970 Idaho License Plates Wanted: Also Revere Ware and Solar-Sturges Permanent cookware, and old signs. Will pay cash. Please email, text, call, or write. Gary Peterson, 115 E D St, Moscow, ID 83843. [gearlep@gmail.com](mailto:gearlep@gmail.com). 208-285-1258

Old Idaho related patches and Farm Bureau patches. Top dollar! Text or email a picture to 208-870-3217 [idahotrappguy@hotmail.com](mailto:idahotrappguy@hotmail.com)

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Place - Valley-Wide Cooler with BBQ essentials - Matt Ineck, Nampa, ID**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Place - \$250 D & B Supply Gift Card - Steven White, Caldwell, ID**



Photo by Stephanie Hodge

This is Parma Ridge Winery, located in the Sunny Slope area near Caldwell in southwestern Idaho. The state's wine industry is celebrating the 15th anniversary of Idaho's first American Viticultural Area designation, which is credited as the main catalyst for the rapid growth that has occurred in the state's wine industry in recent years.

# Idaho wine celebrating 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of first AVA

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

CALDWELL – In 2002, there were 11 wineries in Idaho. Today, there are more than 70.

Idaho's viticulture industry is celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the federal wine designation that is credited as the main catalyst for the rapid growth that has occurred in the state's wine industry in recent years.

Idaho received its first American Viticultural Area designation in April 2007 with the creation of the Snake River Valley AVA.

An AVA is a specific wine grape growing region that is federally designated because

it has certain growing conditions, boundaries and history.

"An AVA puts you on the map," says Caldwell winemaker and vineyard owner Mike Williamson. "When your state has an AVA, that's kind of an arrival point. It means something."

Idaho's first AVA designation "put us on the map and gave us this recognition and validation that we didn't have before," says Idaho Wine Commission Executive director Moya Shatz-Dolsby.

An AVA designation lets wine connoisseurs know that the wine produced in a specific region has certain distinct characteristics, says Caldwell winemaker Martin Fujishin.

When the Snake River Valley received its AVA designation, that opened doors to more restaurants and other retail outlets, he says.

"When you have a bottle of wine that says Idaho on it, that only gets you so far," Fujishin says. "But when you can say, 'This bottle is Snake River Valley,' suddenly the wine shops start to take notice. An AVA says, 'This is a recognized wine area. These guys are the real deal.' And that really changed everything for us."

AVAs are designated by the federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. According to the ATTTB website, "These designations allow vintners and consumers to attribute a given quality, reputation or



Photo by Mark Pasculli

**This is Rolling Hills Vineyard in the Eagle Foothills American Viticultural Area, which is a sub-AVA of the Snake River Valley AVA. Idaho's wine industry is celebrating the 15th anniversary of the state's first AVA designation, which is credited as the main catalyst for the rapid growth that has occurred in the state's wine industry in recent years.**

other characteristic of a wine made from grapes grown in an area to its geographic origin.”

The Snake River Valley AVA designation was the main catalyst behind the rapid growth that occurred in the state's wine industry since 2007, Shatz-Dolsby says.

“An AVA designation proves you're different than anywhere else in the county,” she says. “It gave us validation.”

Idaho's rapid population growth over the past decade has also helped.

Idaho has been one of the fastest growing states in the nation from a percentage standpoint over the past 10 years and most of those newcomers have located in Idaho's Treasure Valley, which is where the vast majority of Idaho wineries are located.

That has given those wineries a growing customer base.

“If we didn't have that population growth the last 10-15 years, Idaho's wine industry would not have been able to grow like we have,” says Williamson.

But that rapidly growing population has also resulted in the loss of a lot of farmland in southwestern Idaho and stressed the agricultural industry there.

The growth is a double-edged sword, Fujishin says: “The more people that are here (as potential customers), that's awesome. But the flip side to that is that it puts more pressure on our primary farm ground that we have out here in the area. We're seeing increased pressure on the prime vineyard spots. Everybody says, What's the best place to grow grapes? It's a south-facing slope over a river. Well, where does everybody want to live? They all want to live on a south-facing slope over the river.”

The process of receiving an AVA designation is not an easy one and applicants have to prove their region is indeed unique from other wine grape growing regions.

In the case of the Snake River Valley AVA, Idaho's wine industry showed the region had a defined set of soils and a unique climate.

When a region does receive an official AVA designation, Fujishin says, it's a signal to consumers that, “Hey, these wineries really do know what they are doing here and have been willing to go through the time and effort to show and do the research on what makes their area different.”

The Snake River Valley AVA, at 8,000

square miles, is one of the nation's largest and encompasses 12 counties in southwestern Idaho and part of the eastern Oregon counties of Malheur and Baker.

Since The Snake River Valley AVA was designated in 2007, Idaho has added two more AVAs.

The Eagle Hills AVA, which is located in the foothills of Eagle, and is a sub-AVA of the Snake River Valley AVA, was designated in 2015.

The Lewis-Clark Valley AVA, which includes a 40-mile long strip of canyons within the cities of Lewiston and Clarkston in the middle, and parts of Asotin, Garfield and Whitman counties in Washington, was designated in 2016.

On average, Idaho's wineries harvest more than 2,000 tons of grapes each year off of 1,300 vineyard acres and produce 131,250 12-bottle cases of wine.

According to an economic impact study funded by the Idaho Wine Commission, the state's wine industry impacts the state's economy to the tune of \$210 million each year. ■



Photo by Grant Loomis

University of Idaho employees learn how to play Pest Friends in Moscow in early April, led by U of I Minidoka County Extension educator Jason Thomas, seated at the table.

# U of I Extension Pest Friends board game making a buzz

By **John O'Connell**  
*University of Idaho*

MOSCOW — Actual farmers don't plant lunar wheat, and they'll never encounter fan bugs or bog beetles when they scout their fields.

Despite the fictitious details, anyone who plays the new agricultural-themed board game Pest Friends can count on learning real lessons in integrated pest management.

The educational strategy game, which challenges two or more players to grow a profitable crop in the face of pressures from insects, was created by University of Idaho Extension educators Jason Thomas and Grant Loomis.

Thomas, an entomologist based in Minidoka County, and Loomis, a soil health specialist based in Blaine County, went to great lengths to make Pest Friends as true to life as possible.

They did such a good job that Pest Friends has already been incorporated into agricultural curriculum at the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls and Texas A&M University in College

Station, Texas.

Furthermore, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture awarded two pesticide applicators' credits to each professional who played the game during last winter's Idaho Potato Conference in Pocatello.

"The fun of the game is letting people experience consequences. Then we can dive deep into what they did wrong and what they can do better," Thomas said.

They started working on Pest Friends in the spring of 2020 amid COVID-19 shutdowns, reasoning it was the right time to unveil a farm simulation board game as a teaching tool.

They received a \$400 mini grant through Idaho Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) toward prototype development. Impressed by the results, Western SARE gave them another grant a few months ago for \$100,000 to continue refining their product and to make 600 more sets of the game with updated artwork.

"I hope teachers across the U.S. and other places will get copies of this game and will be using it to teach youth and adults how to

do pest management,” Thomas said. “I’m making something exciting and new and I’ve enjoyed breaking the mold and doing something different.”

A designated moderator starts the game by setting a scenario: For example, three species of insects – beneficial, neutral and harmful – move into a stand of lunar wheat.

Thomas and Loomis chose fictitious names to avoid expert players’ preconceived notions about actual crops and pests. Pesticides available in the game, such as Buzzkill and Xtermin8, are also pretend but are loosely based on actual chemicals.

Participants play action cards during each round to engage in farm activities that affect crop health and the reproduction of pest populations, such as irrigation and pesticide application. They may play an extra action card if they’re willing to pay to hire extra labor.

Choices may have unintended consequences. Using a certain insecticide may also kill beneficial insects, leading populations of bad bugs to flare up, and regulators punish farmers who don’t adhere to pesticide labels.

Players can earn extra money by custom farming for another producer, but they also risk introducing new pests into their own fields via contaminated equipment.

Players may scout their fields by drawing tiles with information on their crop from a bag. In the worst fields, a player’s best choice may simply be to cut losses and allow cattle to graze their wheat.

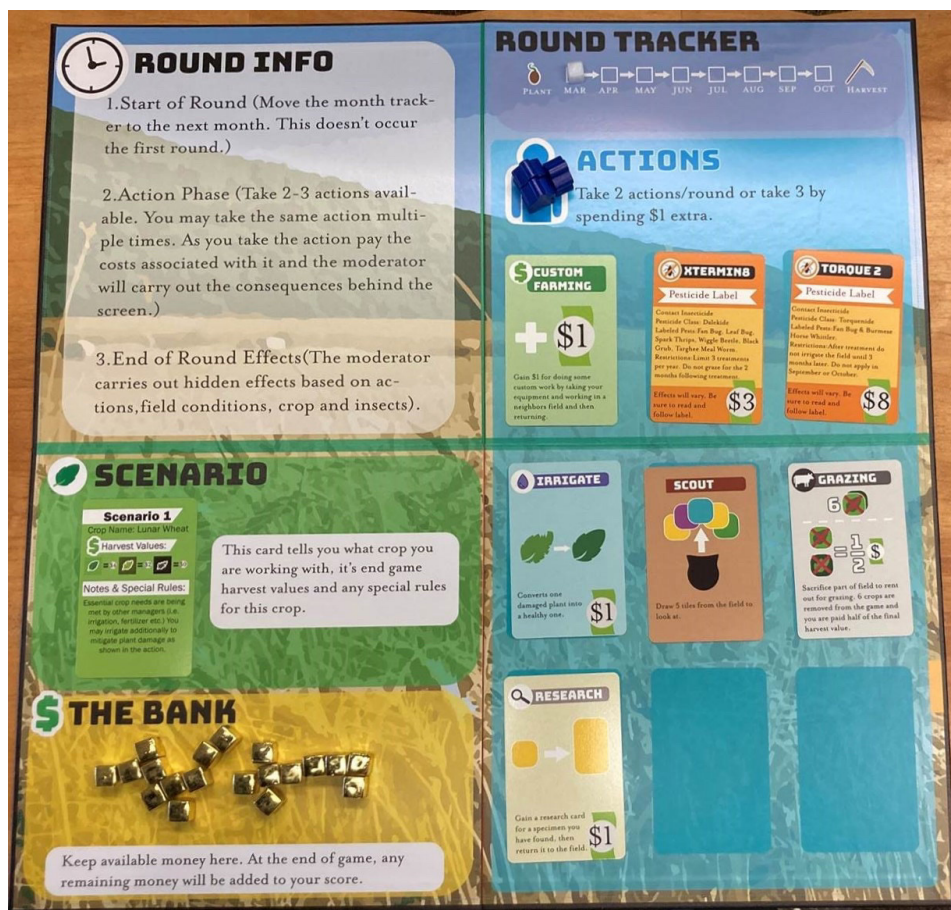
The aim is to end the game with as close to \$99 as possible.

“There are a lot of negative connotations about pesticides now, and understanding pesticides, that’s a big part of it,” Loomis said.

Thomas and Loomis have had a few hundred players already test their game, tweaking the rules as needed based on any stumbling blocks they observe.

Loomis has taken Pest Friends into Blaine County schools as part of that vetting process, working with the general student body rather than students in agricultural programs.

The experience has opened the door to conversations with students about where food comes from in general, as well as why



Submitted photo

The Pest Friends board game teaches players concepts in integrated pest management.

they should care about agriculture.

Thomas is a board game enthusiast who incorporated concepts of Dungeons and Dragons and his favorite deck-building games into the rules of Pest Friends, which is more complicated than the average board game but has still received rave reviews.

Most farmers and pesticide applicators who have played Pest Friends were initially skeptical but were quickly won over.

To lend authenticity to the various consequences of actions taken in the game, Thomas ran more than 60 simulations using spreadsheets, factoring in pest reproduction rates and how they’re affected by several variables.

Jeff Miller, who conducts farm chemical trials with Rupert-based Miller Research, admits he could have performed better when he tried the game and sees potential for it to benefit people of all backgrounds.

“One of the great things it did is that

when you make a decision to use a pesticide, what are the potential unintended consequences of using that pesticide?” Miller said. “The other thing brought out in that game was how can you use research and scientific knowledge to improve your practices in what you’re doing?”

Perhaps a greater endorsement for the game, however, came from Miller’s 12-year-old son, who said he’d play Pest Friends again.

Thomas and Loomis plan to update the game with scenarios for fruit and livestock production. Within a year they hope to have a Pest Friends version available on a mobile app.

Anyone interested in purchasing Pest Friends or in offering feedback may email Thomas at [jason@uidaho.edu](mailto:jason@uidaho.edu) or Loomis at [gloomis@uidaho.edu](mailto:gloomis@uidaho.edu). Proceeds will be used to further expand and develop Pest Friends, in addition to creating future agricultural games. ■

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