



**Idaho Farm Bureau.**

# Quarterly

Summer 2020 • Volume 20 Issue 3

## More farmland converted to development



**USMCA goes  
into effect, 4**

**Potatoes into  
soap, 22**

**Idaho bean  
acres jump, 31**

## Taking on ag's greatest challenges through innovation



From the first day a farmer put a seed in the ground, agriculture has relied on innovation to help us adapt and grow.

There's no such thing as good enough on the farm: we're always looking to do better. U.S. agriculture has led the way in developing new tools and techniques to drive the industry forward, thanks to our nation's great innovators.

Each decade and century of American agriculture is shaped by entrepreneurs, scientists and innovative farmers and ranchers who have found solutions to address agriculture's great-

est challenges.

When John Deere saw the challenge neighboring farmers in Illinois faced in preparing the soil, he came up with a better way and helped turn the American frontier into fertile cropland with his steel plow.

When George Washington Carver looked at the depleted soil of the South, he took on that challenge and introduced new crop uses and rotation methods to restore healthy farmland and benefit farmers and consumers alike.

See **DUVALL**, page 6

## The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

### Americans should celebrate freedom every day



Over the past several months, I can't stop thinking about how blessed I am to live in the greatest country in the world.

I especially was very humbled and grateful to celebrate, as each of you did last month, on Independence Day. As we had family gather for a celebration before the firework show began, we first paused as individuals, family, and friends and started with singing the national anthem.

Then, we were led in the pledge of allegiance by one of our six-year-old grandsons. What a

great blessing and privilege it is to enjoy the freedoms we have.

Though we are living in a very difficult time with a pandemic, riots, and lots of controversy, we still have been blessed to live in the best country in the world. I wish to share with you a few of my thoughts.

Though we had a big celebration on Independence Day, I believe that we as Americans ought to celebrate the freedoms we enjoy every day of the year.

See **SEARLE**, page 7

## Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

### Hoeing weeds and trusting scientists



A deep memory from my youth occurred when I was perhaps 10 years old. A corner of one of our potato fields had become overrun with weeds.

I am not sure why only this area was such a problem. Regardless, there were too many and my sister, brother and I were far too available for my dad to let the weeds go without action.

I am sure it was only a few days of hoeing weeds for a few hours for a few mornings, but at the time it seemed like months in the hot sun.

Because of advancements in technology, it has

been years since I have hoed potato rows and very few people today do such work in potatoes at all. I continue to be so grateful for tools more effective than my hoe, such as herbicides, to control the weeds that invade our crops.

Few people would struggle to understand the function and the effectiveness of a hoe on a weed's roots.

However, they would struggle to understand how an herbicide impacts weeds or a pesticide impacts crop pests, especially when factors

See **MILLER**, page 6

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**ON THE COVER:** A subdivision is being developed near farm ground in Idaho Falls. See page 8 for story on farmland being converted to development. (Photo by Joel Benson)



The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which went into effect July 1, could be a boon to farmers and ranchers in Idaho and throughout the country.

# USMCA could be much-needed boost for U.S. agriculture

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Amid the market challenges farmers and ranchers are facing because of the coronavirus outbreak, the new USMCA trade deal offers the U.S. agricultural industry a ray of optimism.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which went into effect July 1, replaces the 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement between

those nations.

It could be a boon to American farmers and ranchers and includes some big wins for the U.S. agricultural industry, in particular for dairy and wheat, which rank as Idaho's No. 1 and No. 4 farm commodities in terms of farm-gate revenue.

The agreement includes a smaller win for U.S. wine, which should provide a boost to Idaho's fast-growing wine grape industry.

Canada and Mexico are the top export markets for U.S. and Idaho farm products and together account for almost half of Idaho's agricultural exports.

"This important trade agreement will provide additional market access for Idaho dairy, wheat, wine and other commodities to Canada and Mexico, our two largest export markets," Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould said in a statement welcoming the new agreement.

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused some big challenges for the U.S. agricultural community, she said.

“In trying times, farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses look for opportunity and that is exactly what USMCA affords us,” Gould stated. “The agreement will provide a needed measure of stability and economic growth for our producers and trade partners.”

In a statement hailing the new agreement, President Donald Trump called USMCA “a historic breakthrough for American agriculture. Canada will provide greater access for American dairy products, poultry and eggs and finally give fair treatment to American-grown wheat.”

Trump’s press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, said in a statement that because of USMCA, “American farmers will have access to fairer markets in Canada and Mexico, opening up more opportunities to export their goods.”

Gould said the new agreement is expected to create \$450 million worth of new export market opportunities for U.S. agriculture.

After NAFTA went into effect, Idaho’s agricultural exports to Canada grew almost 290 percent and they grew nearly 1,000 percent to Mexico, Gould said.

Idaho’s top ag exports to Canada include live cattle, dry beans, fresh potatoes, frozen French fries, butter, canola seed and baked goods.

Idaho’s top ag exports to Mexico include malt, seed, dairy products (mostly cheese), wheat and fresh vegetables.

According to the International Trade Commission, USMCA will result in 176,000 to 589,000 additional jobs in the U.S.

The U.S. dairy industry was one of the biggest winners under the new agreement. That’s good news for Idaho’s overall agricultural sector because dairy is Idaho’s top farm commodity when it

comes to total revenue.

Idaho dairy operations brought in about \$2.8 billion in total farm-gate receipts in 2019, according to estimates by University of Idaho agricultural economists.

When crops that are used to feed dairy cattle, such as hay and corn silage, are considered, the dairy industry is a huge part of the state’s overall farming economy.

Under the new agreement, Canada will provide new access for U.S. dairy products, including for fluid milk, cheese, cream, butter, skim milk and powder.

Canada’s increase of quotas on U.S.

*“This important trade agreement will provide additional market access for Idaho dairy, wheat, wine and other commodities to Canada and Mexico, our two largest export markets.”*

— Celia Gould, Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director

dairy products will benefit American dairy farmers to the tune of \$242 million, according to American Farm Bureau Federation.

Canada has also agreed to eliminate its Class 7 milk pricing system, which the U.S. dairy industry has charged allows that nation to undercut U.S. sales of certain milk products in Canada and dump surplus concentrated milk proteins onto global markets in direct competition with U.S. exports.

Leaders of Idaho’s dairy industry have said addressing Canada’s Class 7 milk pricing system was the top goal of the U.S. dairy industry during the NAFTA renegotiation discussions.

Idaho’s important wheat industry should also benefit from USMCA. Wheat is also one of the backbones of Idaho agriculture and is grown in 42 of

the state’s 44 counties.

Idaho wheat farmers brought in about \$516 million in total farm-gate receipts last year, according to U of I estimates.

Under USMCA, Canada has agreed to grade U.S. wheat imports in the same manner it grades Canadian wheat, which was one of the main goals of the U.S. wheat industry during the NAFTA renegotiations. Now, U.S. wheat shipped to Canada will not be automatically downgraded to feed wheat, which is the lowest classification and brings the lowest price.

The wine industry also scored a small win under the new agreement.

Under the terms of the USMCA, British Columbia agreed to end its practice of not allowing imported wines to be stocked on grocery shelves in the Canadian province, which has a population of close to five million people.

That change will mostly benefit California wineries but it would indirectly benefit Idaho’s burgeoning wine industry because increased domestic wine exports benefit the entire U.S. wine industry.

According to a study sponsored by the Idaho Wine Commission, Idaho’s grape growing and wine making industry had a \$210 million economic impact on the state in 2017.

Leaders of the U.S. beef cattle and potato industries, which rank as Idaho’s No. 2 and No. 3 farm commodities, said their industries didn’t necessarily score any major wins under USMCA. But they added that NAFTA has been good to their industries and the new agreement preserves the favorable trade terms they enjoyed under NAFTA.

“The launch of the USMCA brings optimism to the country’s farmers and ranchers at a time they need it the most,” American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said in a statement. “We’re grateful for the opportunity to build on the success of the North American Free Trade Agreement and we’re eager to see the results on America’s farms.” ■

*Continued from page 2*

These examples are just a peek at the long history of American agricultural innovation, and today that tradition continues as cutting-edge technology takes us into the next age of agriculture with everything from robotic harvesters and driverless tractors to disease-resistant crops.

Innovations like these allow us to farm more efficiently and sustainably than ever. From precision ag tools and smartphones to soil health practices and biotechnology, we are saving time and resources, reducing carbon emissions and leaving our land healthier for the next generation.

And now more than ever, we will continue to rely on innovative solutions to drive agriculture forward.

Throughout the pandemic, we've seen farmers adapting to meet changing needs and finding new ways to connect directly with customers in their communities. At Farm Bureau, we also believe in the potential of creative entrepreneurs to take on the unique challenges facing agriculture and our rural communities and to help drive our economy.

That's why we're partnering with Farm Credit to host the Ag Innovation Challenge for the seventh year. The Challenge has evolved to become more than a competition: it's a valuable experience for entrepreneurs to learn

from each other and industry leaders and access tools to help expand their businesses.

I am amazed every year by the inspiring, hardworking entrepreneurs we meet from across the country through this event, but I wouldn't be surprised if the 2021 Ag Innovation Challenge brings out the most innovative group yet.

Tough times can bring the most creative solutions, as they give us an opportunity to think differently, to ask ourselves difficult questions and find a better path forward.

I believe today's innovators will carry on the great tradition of American agriculture and rise to that challenge. ■

## MILLER

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*Continued from page 2*

like barometric pressure thresholds, chemistry interactions, exposure limits, etc., enter into the discussion.

There appears to be a significant number of people who automatically equate pesticides and herbicides with something bad. For whatever reason, when the words "pesticide" or "herbicide" are used, they conjure up fear and confusion in some people.

But without such chemistries, our nation's food supply would not be as plentiful or healthy.

Any pesticide or herbicide on the market today has been thoroughly vetted by a host of scientific studies and been proven to be safe. They are also regulated by several government agencies that have certified they are safe to use and are not harmful to people or the environment.

If new information becomes available to the scientific community and it is prudent to change course on any approved farm chemical, then it would be appropriate to change course.

However, fear and confusion should never be the reason tools that scientists have proven are safe and effective are taken away.

Such change should only occur when science, not fear or confusion, warrants

*'We can't choose when we will trust scientists, whether it's when they are creating pesticides or herbicides that enable farmers to produce an abundant, safe and affordable food supply, or when they are trying to find a cure for a global pandemic.'*

it.

As we continue as a society to fight COVID-19, our collective thoughts and hopes have caused us to cheer for the scientists and researchers who are working hard to try to find a breakthrough cure.

Most of us do not understand the processes in that race to find a cure and in fact, most of us have no idea what it entails. However, we do trust the scientists who are pushing to find a cure for COVID-19 and cheer for their success.

We're all hoping and praying for a cure but we don't understand the scientific processes by which that cure is going to come about. We just know really good scientists are working on it.

Shouldn't that same trust be extended to the scientists and researchers who continuously work to improve existing chemistries that enable farmers and ranchers to do what they do best – feed the world?

We can't choose when we will trust scientists, whether it's when they are creating pesticides or herbicides that enable farmers to produce an abundant, safe and affordable food supply, or when they are trying to find a cure for a global pandemic.

We are lucky that in both agriculture and especially medicine that we have been able to find tools more effective than a young boy with a hoe. ■

Continued from page 2

No doubt about it, those of us who live in the United States of America are blessed to live in literally the freest and most prosperous nation in the history of the world.

Never in history have so many people enjoyed so many basic freedoms and blessings as Americans do now.

We enjoy economic freedoms and the overall highest standard of living of any nation.

We enjoy religious liberty and people of every possible persuasion are free to worship as they please or not to worship at all. Because of our First Amendment, the government cannot make any law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

That same amendment provides every American the right to speak freely and to assemble peaceably.

In their totality, our laws and traditions provide Americans the greatest overall level of freedom of any nation that has ever existed.

We are free to live anywhere we choose and we are free to choose any career we want.

As farmers, we are free to plant any crop or produce any farm commodity we want. I could literally choose to grow bananas if I wanted to, although I would soon be broke if I tried to do that in Idaho. But the moral of that story is I'm free to do that if I choose to.

The freedoms and blessings that Americans enjoy have allowed American farmers and ranchers to produce the most abundant, affordable and secure food supply in the history of the world.

Because our system protects basic liberties and private property, American producers feel confident that if they put in the work, they can enjoy the fruits of their labor. That same level of certainty doesn't exist in many other countries.

Idaho Farm Bureau's mission states it "is a voluntary grass-roots organization dedicated to strengthening agriculture and protecting the rights, values, and property of our members and their neighbors." We work each day to protect and promote these God given rights.

As we witnessed a panic when the pandemic first hit and watched as people cleaned off grocery store shelves, farmers and ranchers continued to choose to produce food and fiber. There never was a shortage of food, just a challenge of how to process and deliver it differently as the demand changed.

American Farm Bureau Federation during that time put forth a social media campaign titled, "stillfarming," that had farmers and ranchers across the nation reassuring the public they were forging ahead with their normal plans to produce an abundant food supply.

*'The freedoms and blessings that Americans enjoy have allowed American farmers and ranchers to produce the most abundant, affordable and secure food supply in the history of the world.'*

That campaign had more interest and response by far than any other AFBF campaign because of the concern people had about the unknown and how the pandemic might impact the availability of certain items on grocery store shelves.

Because they are free to choose, innovate, invest and take risks, American farmers and ranchers have created an agricultural system that is the envy of the world.

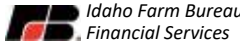
In fact, America itself is the envy of the world.

The Bill of Rights and our system of checks and balances in government that this nation's founding fathers set up to ensure our basic liberties has enabled millions of people to flourish and create a prosperous and free nation that has people from all corners of the Earth flocking to.

I believe we still are, as President Ronald Reagan so eloquently put it during his 1988 farewell address,

that "shining city upon a hill."

I'm not ashamed to say that I know I live in the best place on Earth. I'm more than proud to be an American and I hope you are, too. ■

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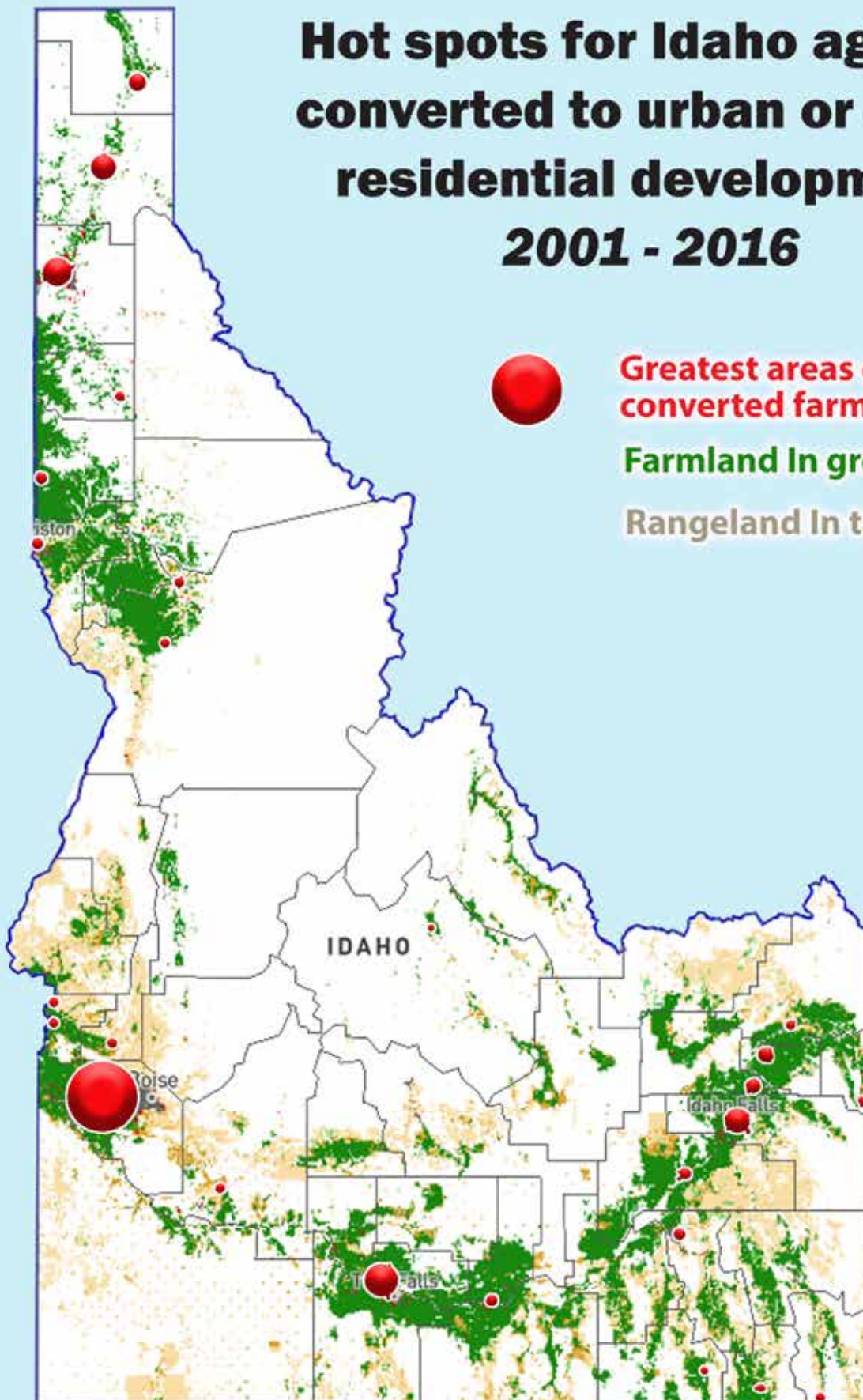
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# Hot spots for Idaho ag land converted to urban or other residential development 2001 - 2016



Source: American Farmland Trust





Photo by Joel Benson

Homes are taking over farmland as more people move into Idaho.

# Addressing the issue of disappearing farm ground

**By Sean Ellis**

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – A new national report shows that 68,823 acres of Idaho farmland – an area larger than the city of Boise – was developed or compromised between 2001 and 2016.

Idaho was not the only state that lost a good chunk of agricultural land during that time.

The report, which includes state and

county level data, shows that 11 million acres of agricultural land in the United States met a similar fate.

Not surprisingly, much of the farmland that disappeared in Idaho during that period was in the Treasure Valley of southwestern Idaho, which is one of the fastest-growing areas in the nation from a percentage standpoint.

Recently retired Meridian farmer Drew Eggers said the Treasure Valley, which includes Boise, Meridian and Nampa, the

state's three largest cities, is a great place to live and he's not surprised at all that a lot of farmland in the area has been lost to development.

It's disappointing, but not surprising, he said.

"I saw it coming 20 years ago," said Eggers, who still rents out his farmland. "People want to move out into the areas of rural farmland in Ada and Canyon counties because it's a great place to live."

Eggers was born and raised in Meridian,



Photo by Sean Ellis

**A farmer works his land next to a busy city road in Meridian.**

which had a population of 3,000 when he graduated high school in 1971. Now the city has 107,000 people.

Many of those people live on land that was until very recently growing mint, beans, sugar beets, corn, wheat or many of the other crops grown in the region, which is one of the global leaders in seed production because of the favorable growing conditions and reliable supply of irrigation water.

Eggers, who lives on the outskirts of town, said that when he drives toward downtown Meridian now, “I don’t know where I’m at and have to look at the road signs. The landmarks, such as the old barns that I used to know, aren’t there anymore.”

“Farms Under Threat,” a multi-year effort by American Farmland Trust, shows that from 2001-2016, 11 million acres of

ag land in the United States were paved over, fragmented or converted to uses that jeopardize agriculture.

The study, which used spatial mapping analysis, also shows that 4.4 million of those acres were nationally significant land, or the most productive land for crop production.

In Idaho, 17,800 acres of the ag land lost during that period were considered nationally significant land.

Besides the Treasure Valley area, the other hotspots in Idaho for ag land loss, according to the report, were centered around the urban areas of the state and were most pronounced near Idaho Falls, Twin Falls and Coeur d’Alene.

The pressure to develop farmland to accommodate Idaho’s rapidly growing population is being felt not only in the Treasure Valley.

“Some of the best land in the United States is around the Twin Falls and Kimberly area and they are building on it. It’s sad to see,” said Sen. Jim Patrick, a Republican farmer from Twin Falls.

But the loss of farmland in Idaho is most pronounced in Ada and Canyon counties in the Treasure Valley.

“It’s very discouraging to see bulldozers moving perfectly good farm ground so they can put up houses,” said Nampa farmer Janie Burns.

About 8,000 of Idaho’s 24,000-plus farms are located in the greater Treasure Valley area, which is also by far the state’s most populous region. The result is constant pressure to develop.

Development pressure in Ada County, which includes Boise and Meridian, is extreme, said Ada County farmer Neil Durrant, whose family farms wheat, beans

and seed and runs a warehouse that deals with about 250 farmers in the region.

“You look to the north of us and the farmland is almost non-existent there anymore,” he said. “They’re coming out closer to where we’re at near Kuna and any place you drive, you see the subdivisions coming in. There are for sale signs everywhere.”

Durrant said his family gets offered money from developers about once a week for the land they own.

The Durrants farm 1,500 acres and the majority of that land is rented. While the family has still been able to find land available to rent, the rapid development has resulted in them having to travel further from their base of operations – Big D Ranch in Meridian – to find it.

“A lot of the land we do rent now is owned by developers and we’re just farming it until they decide to put the homes in the ground,” Durrant said. “I still think there is a future for farming here for my generation. For my kids, I’m not sure.”

The AFT report differs from the USDA’s Census of Agriculture report, which is conducted every five years and uses different categories to describe ag land classes. The Farms Under Threat report is based on satellite-derived data in combination with other datasets.

Besides documenting the loss of farmland, the report also serves as a call to arms to preserve the nation’s remaining agricultural land, AFT President John Piotti said during a May 20 webinar unveiling the results of the report.

While the loss of agricultural land documented in the report is sobering, the good news is that “we can protect our ag land and the people who work on it,” he said. “But to do so, we must seize the moment. Today, we are issuing a call to action.”

Piotti called on farmers, elected officials and others to work with AFT to address the loss of ag land in the U.S. He encouraged people to read the report at [www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat](http://www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat) and engage AFT, elected officials and others with the information included in it.

“AFT is taking action but we can’t do it alone,” he said. “Together, we can make a huge difference. American Farmland Trust

stands ready to work with any state to achieve those goals.”

The AFT report looked at how states have addressed the issue of disappearing ag land and assessed six policy tools commonly used to protect farmland.

They include the purchase of agricultural conservation easements that permanently protect working farm and ranch land; land-use planning policies that manage growth and stabilize the land base; property tax relief for ag land that improves farm and ranch profitability; ag district programs that encourage landowners to form areas to protect farmland; programs that connect land seekers with landowners who want their land to stay in agriculture; and state leasing programs that make state-owned land available to farmers and ranchers.

Twenty-nine states have funded voluntary ag conservation easement programs, which pay farmers a certain price per acre in exchange for an easement that preserves the land as farm ground.

In recent years, several groups in Idaho have discussed ideas to preserve farmland and the idea that has risen to the top of those discussions is a voluntary ag easement program.

Durrant said that type of program would probably be the most viable in Idaho because the support of private property rights runs so deep here.

Whatever the solution, it has to include a rock-solid support of private property rights, he said.

“You can’t tell somebody, we’re not going to let you develop your land because that is infringing on your rights as property owners,” Durrant said. “Who can blame a farmer who has worked hard his whole life, and now has his wealth in that farm ground, if he wants to sell his land?”

Patrick, the state senator, agrees with that viewpoint.

“I hate to see the loss of farmland but I also believe that a farmer should have the right to sell their land because it’s their retirement,” he said.

George Crookham, CEO of Crookham Seed Co., which is located in the Treasure Valley, believes adopting smart growth strategies such as developing cities from

the inside out instead of allowing subdivisions to be plopped into the middle of ag land, is one way to slow the loss of farmland.

Without solid zoning rules that support smart growth, he said, farmland will continue to be lost in the valley and more farmers will have to resort to farming between the cracks.

“Some people say, one little subdivision over here or there, how does that hurt?” he said. “Well, it pushes us into the cracks and we can’t farm between the cracks. It also has a domino effect. If you sanction one rezone or redevelopment, how can you reject a similar request?”

“Zoning is really for the benefit of everybody,” Crookham added. Without it, “it’s just going to be a free-for-all. We’re going to grow but we should grow from the inside out.”

An urban growth model created by a team of Boise State University researchers in 2017 projects that between 110,000 and 240,000 acres of ag land in Ada and Canyon counties will be lost to development by 2100. Those two counties currently have about 360,000 acres of ag land combined.

In the model’s best-case scenario, which has population density increasing as a result of so-called “smart growth” policies, the valley loses 110,000 acres of ag land by 2100.

The worst-case scenario, which has population density unchanged from what it is now, shows the valley losing 240,000 acres of ag land.

Crookham said the BSU report is downright scary for farmers and “it makes the ag industry question our future and whether we should start looking at alternative areas.”

He said the loss of farmland has to be addressed in one way or another if Treasure Valley residents want to continue to have agriculture as one of the area’s economic bases.

“Farmland is essential to agriculture,” Crookham said. “If the citizens of the Treasure Valley want to continue having agriculture as a part of our economic base, then we need to address the loss of farmland.” ■



Photo by Steve Stuebner

Jeff Lord is happy with a drill-seeding of native grasses, bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue, in the Danskin Mountains. He drill-seeded the native grasses next to a patch of land on Forest Service ground that had been aerial seeded. Now you can't tell which area had been drill-seeded or aerial-seeded. It has recovered with a vengeance.

# Restoring rangelands in the Danskin Mountains

**By Steve Stuebner**  
*Life on the Range*

Like many ranchers, Mayfield rancher Jeff Lord watches for opportunities to improve the public range where his cattle graze.

Following the 280,000-acre Pony-Elk Complex wildfires in 2013, Lords part-

nered with state and federal agencies to assist with range-rehabilitation projects in the Danskin Mountains.

Wildfires can be tough on the landscape and cause economic hardship. But after the fires die out, there's a chance to replant and start anew. That's a big priority for the Idaho Department of Lands, the BLM and the Forest Service, too.

The agencies spent more than \$6.5 million on rehab and restoration projects following the wildfires.

Timely and extensive seeding activities, combined with a string of good winters and spring rains, plus well-managed grazing, are helping rangelands in the Danskin Mountains rebound nicely, officials say.

The Lord Ranch is located just north

of Mayfield, east of Boise. He runs cattle on private, state and federal range in the Danskin Mountains.

“Turned out to be a pretty good project, and everybody’s pretty happy with it,” Lord says. “I’m not saying it’s perfect, but it looks pretty damn good. Pretty significant improvement.”

“I think this area looks fantastic after the fires,” says Cindy Lancaster, a range management specialist for the Boise National Forest. “It’s been six years since the Pony complex fires came through. Quite a variety of plant species have come back.”

Lord and Lancaster remember how cooked the soil looked after the Pony-Elk Complex fire. Fortunately, the burn severity to soils was rated low to moderate.

The Life on the Range crew toured the Danskins with Lord and Lancaster last June as part of an ongoing series on rangeland restoration projects following the Pony and Elk complex fires.

At Stop No. 1, we looked at a drill-seeding on state land.

“We saw the opportunity to reseed it,” Lord explains. “I provided the dozer and the fuel, and the labor, the BLM provided rangeland drills, state determined the mix, and NRCS paid for the mix. It was just totally black. Very few skeletons around here. Very hot, very clean burn. Really easy to drill.”

Lord might say it was easy, but he actually finished drill-seeding in the snow as winter was coming on.

“We had a phenomenal fall, I came out of here in the snow after it rained for a week, doesn’t help the drilling process, but it helps the growing process,” he says with a grin. “We came back the next spring, wet cool spring, seeding did really well, we could see that it was recovering rapidly. We were able to come back on here after one growing season. It was perfect conditions.”

Since that seeding got established, plant diversity on the site has increased, Lord’s cattle have plenty to eat, and wildlife graze on it year-round.

Vegetative monitoring shows the site produced 165 pounds of forage per acre before the fires, and now it’s producing 800-900 pounds per acre, officials said.

“It’s two or three times as productive



Mayfield rancher Jeff Lord provided the labor and tractor for re-seeding a state land area in the Danskin Mountains. Photo by Jeff Lord

as it ever was before,” Lord says. “We’ve used it every year since then. We come in on the 1st of June, spend 2-3 weeks here, and then we move on.”

At Stop No. 2, we looked at a side-by-side area in Long Gulch where the Boise National Forest did an aerial seeding in 1992 following the Foothills Fire, and an area where Lords did a drill-seeding on state land in 2014.

The aerial seeding laid dormant for over 20 years under heavy stands of sagebrush and bitterbrush. But after the Pony fire came through, the aerial seeding took off.

“I was a real no-go guy on aerial seeding. I thought it was a waste of money,” Lord says. “If you can rangeland drill, year after year, it’s been proven that that’s better.”

That’s how a lifelong farmer and rancher would look at things. But seeing is believing.

“That residual aerial seeding ... it kind of hit a perfect storm. The seeding just took off and exploded,” Lord says. “I was convinced I was going to have one of those pictures where this is what I did on state land, and they did this, and you can see from the picture behind me that I lost

all of my credibility on that.”

Adds Lancaster, “It’s interesting to me. I’m very happy with how it’s come back.”

Boise National Forest officials have been monitoring plant composition and range health following the seedings.

Numerous sagebrush and bitterbrush plants also are growing up from the seedings and natural regeneration, just seven years after the wildfire.

“We come in here in July when it’s hot,” Lord says. “It’s got solid introduced perennial grasses, it’s fully mature when we come in here and graze it, then we get off it, and it has a chance to recover.”

This is where Lords pays attention to best grazing practices to conserve the range, referring to a range-management mentor, University of Idaho professor of range ecology, Karen Launchbaugh.

“It’s all about timing, intensity, duration,” he says, quoting Professor Launchbaugh. “So we graze it at the right time of year, duration is appropriate. Intensity – the trick there, is how many cattle do you get on it to get the utilization right, and get off after a short time.”

In Stop No. 3, Lord showed us a 20-acre patch of land where he drill-seeded native



Photo by Steve Stuebner

**Jeff Lord and Cindy Lancaster, range specialist for the Boise National Forest, check out the diversity of plants that have grown back after the Pony complex wildfire in 2013.**

bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue in the Danskins. He didn't think the seeding would survive.

"Right in front of me, you can see the drill row where I planted bluebunch wheatgrass," he says. "The seed was donated by BLM, bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue. I've never tried to grow native perennials before, I couldn't get permission to plant anything else, so I thought well, I'm going to find out if I can grow it.

"And we were just shocked. Tons of recovery here."

Lord says he's still learning new things after watching the various treatments perform well following the Pony complex fires. "Nobody knows everything," he says, laughing.

Ultimately, he's pleased with not only assisting in restoring rangelands in the Danskins, but also creating better habitat for birds and wildlife.

"Habitat is what you really have to look at," Lord says. "Too many times, people on all sides aren't thinking about what's best for the land, they're thinking about their personal agendas. But this is an ex-



ception to that. This is an example where everybody worked together."  
*Steve Stuebner is the writer and produc-*

*er of Life on the Range, a public education project sponsored by the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission. ■*



Photo by Sean Ellis

A barley field in East Idaho is shown in this file photo. Scoular Co. has announced it will build a \$13 million barley manufacturing facility that will initially process 1.9 million bushels of barley annually.

# Scoular to build \$13 million barley processing facility

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Scoular Co. has announced it will build a barley manufacturing facility that will initially process 1.9 million bushels of barley annually.

Though a firm location hasn't been chosen yet, Idaho is the likely spot where the \$13 million facility will be built, according to a news release by Scoular, a global grain, feed and food ingredient company that has several offices in Idaho.

Idaho leads the nation in barley production and Gem State farmers produced 55 million bushels of barley last year off of 520,000 acres.

The Scoular announcement was welcome news to Idaho barley growers who have faced economic pressure due to the response to the coronavirus outbreak.

"This is really exciting news for Idaho barley growers," said Rupert barley farmer Mike Wilkins. "This announcement is a really bright spot for our industry."

"Any time you get that kind of volume moving through a processing plant, that's

great," said Teton barley farmer Dwight Little. "It will give farmers a little more flexibility in their rotations. Anything that offers another option is good for the ag industry."

"Barley is an important part of our lifeblood in the Snake River Valley and North Idaho and it's great to get another facility that will use up some of the ... barley that we produce," he added.

According to Scoular's news release, the company has entered into an exclusive licensing agreement with Montana Microbial Products to produce and sell a barley protein concentrate in North America and Asia.

Barley protein concentrate, or BPC, is a plant-based alternative protein used in aquaculture feed and pet food.

Idaho is one of the nation's leaders in aquaculture production and leads the United States in trout produced for food.

Montana Microbial Products, which operates a pilot plant in Melrose, Mont., and a research lab in Missoula, Mont., developed the patent-pending technology to create the BPC.

Little, who served on the Idaho Barley

Commission several years ago, said the idea of using barley in aquaculture feed has been explored and encouraged by IBC commissioners for many years.

"This has been a long time coming," he said of the new facility. "Kudos to the barley commission and those folks that encouraged this development to come into the area."

According to the news release, the facility is expected to be operational by May 2021 and annual production is projected to expand over the next several years.

"This is very positive news for Idaho's barley industry," said Idaho Barley Commission Administrator Laura Wilder. "It will be a long-term project that will benefit Idaho and Idaho's barley industry for years to come."

The facility will co-produce a high-energy liquid feed supplement for cattle feeders.

"After years of development and testing, we are excited to partner with the Scoular Co. to get this product into the market," Montana Microbial Products Co-owner Bob Kearns stated in the news release. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho potato acres in 2020 will be under 300,000, only the second time that has happened since 1970.

# Idaho potato acres dip below 300,000 for second time since 1970

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Idaho potato acres in 2020 will be under 300,000, only the second time that has happened since 1970.

Spud acres in Idaho, which leads the nation in potato production, totaled 308,780 last year.

Idaho potato farmers planted 295,790 acres of spuds this year, down 4 percent from 2019, according to United Potato Growers of Idaho, which conducts a physical count of potato acres in Idaho every year.

Most people involved in the state's potato industry had expected Idaho potato acres to dip below 300,000 this year because of demand disruptions caused by the government-ordered shutdowns related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

About 60 percent of U.S. potatoes go to the foodservice sector and the spud industry was hit hard by the closures of restaurants, schools, cafeterias and other foodservice channels.

Many industry members had expected Idaho's 2020 potato acres to be closer to 280,000, said Oakley farmer Randy Hardy.

"I kind of thought it would be down more than it is and I've heard different

people comment that they thought it would be down more than that," he said.

But Hardy also said the potato market is rebounding quicker than most people thought it would as restaurants and other foodservice channels have started reopening across the country.

"The foodservice sector, particularly quick-serve restaurants, is coming back faster than people thought it would," he said. "Right now, our market is strong. Demand is good."

UPGI's Idaho acreage estimate seems reasonable given the strengthening market, Hardy said.

"I think that (295,790-acre number) is a very manageable number," he said. "There is pretty good demand out there; people still have to eat. I think all in all, it's a pretty good number."

Travis Blacker, the Idaho Potato Commission's industry relations director, agreed with Hardy's take on the acreage count and market rebound.

"I think two months ago, if you had asked people what they thought the acreage count would be, they would have said maybe 280,000 or 275,000," he said. "It seems like the market has begun to rebound and processors are out looking for potatoes, which is a good thing."

To conduct its annual potato acreage count, UPGI sends two-man teams out to physically count every potato field in the state. The teams drive thousands of miles looking for every potato field in Idaho.

"They go to every county and they drive every road," Blacker said.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates Idaho's total spud acreage in 2020 at 300,000.

Idaho potato farmers generally place more stock in UPGI's estimate.

"I think United's (2020) count is probably accurate," Hardy said.


NASS projects the 2020 potato acreage count in Washington, the nation's No. 2 spud-producing state, at 145,000, down 12 percent from 165,000 last year.

Total U.S. potato acreage in 2020 is estimated at 921,000 by NASS, down 5 percent from 968,000 in 2019.

Bingham County remained the No. 1 potato producing county in Idaho with 57,110 acres planted in 2020, according to the UPGI estimate. That was down from 60,211 acres in 2019.

Power County ranked No. 2 with 30,424 acres, down from 33,471 acres in 2019, and Madison County ranked No. 3 with 30,279 acres, up from 30,066 in 2019. ■





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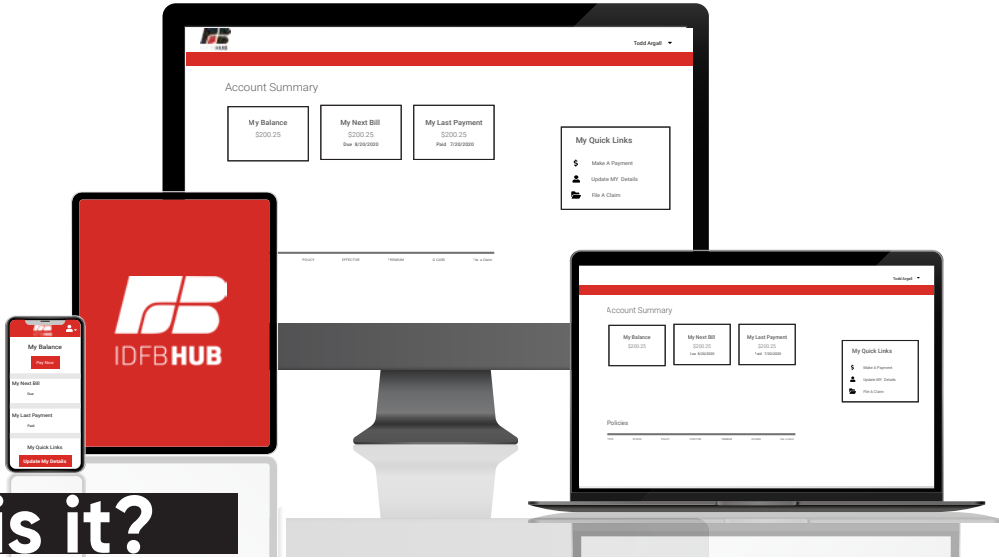
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# Idaho Farm Bureau

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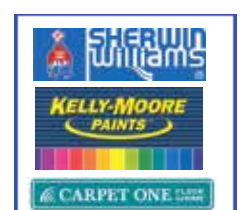
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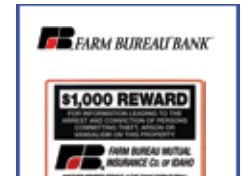
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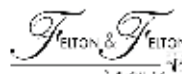




Photo by Bill Schaefer

Liyah Babayan and her son, Dominic, 10, with a collection of Make Peace soap bars.

# Idaho potatoes being turned into skin-care products

By Bill Schaefer

*For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

TWIN FALLS – Idaho’s famous potatoes have fed the world for generations but now, through the efforts of an Idaho entrepreneur, they are being used to produce skin-care products and at the same time help restore human dignity to displaced people around the world.

It’s a story that began during a conflict half-way around the world in Asia but

found a home here in Idaho.

The year was 2016 and Liyah Babayan was looking to begin a new start-up business making beauty products that would complement her boutique consignment shop, Ooh La La, in Twin Falls.

She was trying to decide what ingredients to use for the beauty products while listening to Beyoncé’s hit album “Lemonade.” She was considering a variety of ingredients, including goat milk and

honey, when suddenly an inspiration came to her.

“I thought, ‘yeah, you know, life’s never given me lemonade but life has given me potatoes,’” she said.

She also remembered how her grandmother would apply potatoes as a topical relief for headaches, fevers and rashes.

“I did research on this potato remedy and the (cultures) across time where it exists (and) the potato’s kind of been that dull, boring miracle,” Babayan said.

For Babayan, it was a recognition of the life she had made for herself and her family here in Idaho since arriving as a refugee from Azerbaijan in 1992.

“It brought me to Idaho and gave me potatoes, that was the reality but it was a metaphor, too,” she said of the refugee status that brought her family to Idaho.

And with that inspiration came the impetus to begin a cosmetic line made from Idaho potatoes that she would name, “Make Peace.” Make Peace skin care products include soap, skin lotion, lip balm, beard balm and a clothing line, but soap is the primary product at this time.

“You just have no control over where you end in the world, in life and what it hands you,” she said. “The main thing is to make peace of it and for me make peace became the philosophy of Make Peace but also the products being driven by potatoes, making sure to incorporate potatoes into the organic skin care line.”

Make Peace is not only a new enterprise but represents one more challenge in a life of challenges for Liyah Babayan. Make Peace is an attempt to bring her life’s journey full circle with a product dedicated to helping the world’s homeless and vulnerable population. This is something that resonates with her and her family.

Born in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 1983, her family is of Armenian heritage. The majority of Armenians are Christian and are an ethnic minority in Azerbaijan, a country that is almost 97 percent Islamic.

Azerbaijan and Armenia shared a common border and they were two of 15 republics that comprised the former Soviet Union (USSR). With the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, both Azerbaijan and Armenia became independent nations.

A territorial dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia developed in 1988.

Tensions between the two countries during this time provoked civil unrest and resulted in a series of ethnic cleans-



Photo by Bill Schaefer

**Liyah Babayan cuts bars of soap from a block of soap.**

ing pogroms of Armenians living in Azerbaijan in Sumgait and Baku.

As a result of the pogroms Babayan’s parents would seek safe refuge for the family, which included her brother,

*“Children of war have a special place in my heart because I was one of them. I know their reality so Make Peace became a little bit bigger than just a soap for me.”*

— Liyah Babayan

Aram, in neighboring Armenia, abandoning their home and many of their possessions back in Baku.

During the next four years, they would live in exile in Armenia while her father petitioned the United States for asylum as political refugees.

Their petition was granted in 1992

and they would begin a new life in Twin Falls, Idaho.

Fast-forward 28 years and Babayan has established deep roots within the Twin Falls community. She is a college graduate, U.S. citizen, a successful business owner, a mother home-schooling her son and daughter and she has written an autobiography, “Liminal, a refugee memoir”.

Passion is a word that frequently comes up in discussions with Babayan. It’s a state of being that she emphasizes in everything she undertakes. Whether it is her work, her family or her community, if she can’t be passionate about what she is involved in then it’s time to move on and find a new passion in life and work.

When Babayan started Ooh La La in 2007, she made three promises to herself.

The first was that if she should ever lose the passion for her business for two con-



Photo by Bill Schaefer

#### Make Peace soap bars.

secutive weeks, she would consider that to be her two-week notice.

The second promise was that she would never compromise her family for her business.

The third promise was that if Ooh La La proved to be successful, she would begin another business in 10 years.

“If I’m still in business I have to just completely pivot and start something brand new,” she said of this third promise she had made. “Challenge myself in an industry I’m not familiar with so I can keep growing because it will then trickle into the business I already have.”

While seeking a new challenge after 10 years in business was the original motivation for Babayan, there was an even more important reason for this start-up for her.

“For me the driving factor was human rights when it came to this Make Peace company and brand,” she said. “Physical dignity and hygiene as a basic human right ... Human beings all deserve digni-

ty. All dignity begins physically. Physical dignity begins with hygiene.”

The Make Peace brand is more than just a product. It is a philosophy that is rooted in Babayan’s personal refugee experiences growing up.

“Children of war have a special place in my heart because I was one of them,” she said. “I know their reality so Make Peace became a little bit bigger than just a soap for me. As a belief that peace is born in the thoughts, words and actions of everyday life. Make Peace is the practice of peace-making within our own heart, our own mind, our own life, our own relationships.”

In the time since she started Make Peace it has remained a small enterprise but that hasn’t stopped Babayan from trying to make a difference in people’s lives.

“Soap is a life necessity but for millions of displaced people around the world this is unattainable,” she said. “So, the commitment was for every product sold, Make Peace would donate

a bar of soap to a child or adult in refugee camps as well as displaced people right here in the U.S.

“For me that’s the homeless, that’s the children that are going through the foster care system and many of our veterans, who may have shelter but they are displaced.”

Knowing that some people might not want to change their current beauty products for the Make Peace products, Babayan has extended the merchandising to include a clothing line of T-shirts and infant onesies. With each purchase, a bar of soap is donated to an organization dedicated to helping refugees and displaced people.

For Babayan, the core foundation for Make Peace is to help bring human dignity to displaced people.

“There is no more intimate way to care for another human being than to care for their cleanliness,” she said. “I’d liked to see the soap be able to generate scholarships and support other projects.” ■



# Word Search

## Barley Varieties Grown in Idaho

A	C	D	C	F	R	A	S	E	R	K	J	U	L	I	E	F
N	D	F	A	C	M	E	T	C	A	L	F	E	P	T	S	A
O	C	M	B	A	A	C	C	O	N	N	E	C	T	H	F	N
I	C	U	I	B	S	B	F	H	U	P	S	P	R	I	N	G
P	O	I	E	I	T	Y	I	L	F	A	N	D	A	G	A	I
M	P	N	A	G	M	P	N	V	B	X	M	A	N	T	A	O
A	E	N	G	R	O	C	M	E	O	D	Y	S	S	E	Y	X
H	L	E	L	O	R	L	O	T	R	Y	R	A	I	A	N	E
C	A	L	E	W	E	M	D	N	P	G	A	N	T	L	L	R
I	N	L	C	L	A	B	R	E	R	S	Y	G	D	T	E	O
D	D	I	D	E	N	K	X	B	N	A	D	R	E	O	N	M
A	R	M	O	R	A	V	I	A	N	H	D	I	S	R	E	Y
G	E	M	C	R	A	F	T	X	E	N	A	A	M	A	T	A
O	N	T	D	B	E	X	P	L	O	R	E	R	A	D	A	L
L	T	I	R	E	M	C	D	C	B	O	W	K	T	O	H	C
D	A	T	B	G	E	N	I	E	F	U	L	L	P	I	N	T

JULIE  
KARDIA  
TRANSIT  
GOLDENHART  
UPSPRING  
FANDAGA  
BENTE  
MORAVIAN  
FULL PINT

ESMA  
ODYSSEY  
GENIE  
SANGRIA  
MANTA  
EXPLORER  
ABI VOYAGER  
ABI EAGLE  
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Above left: Dave Meyer, the winner of our first quarter Refer A Friend, Get A Gift \$500 drawing.

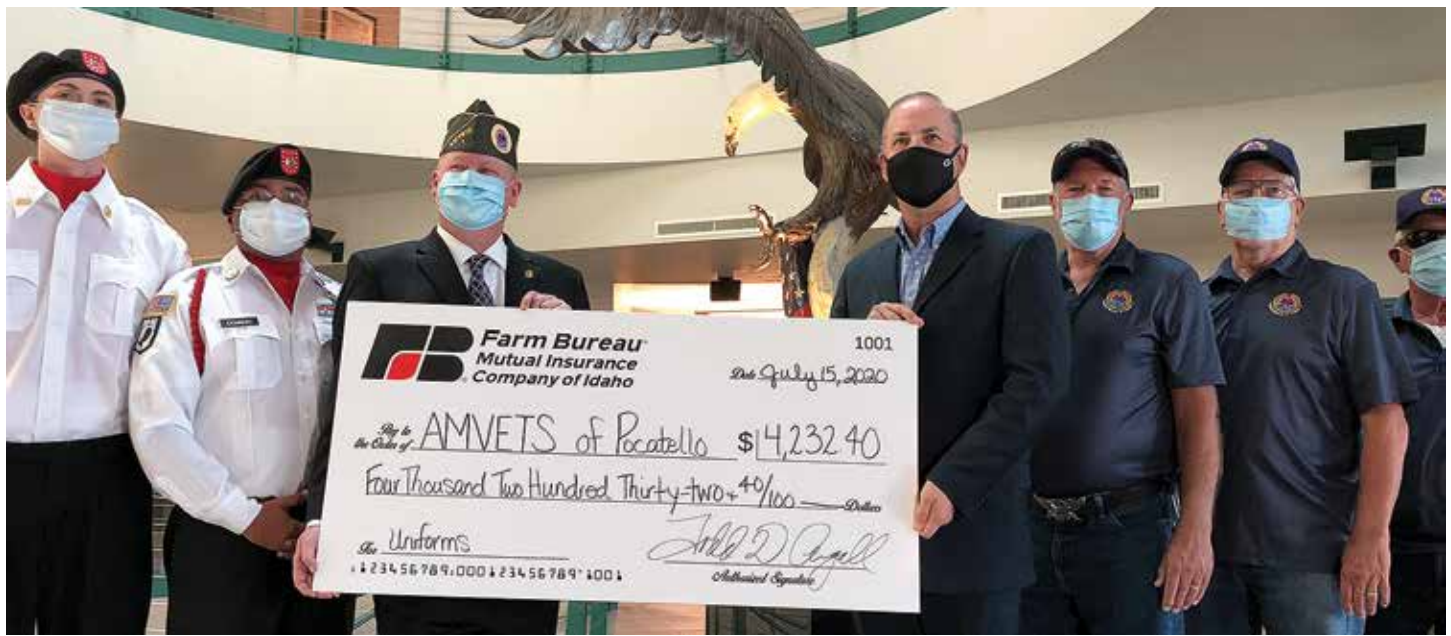


Photo by Sean Ellis

Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho CEO Todd Argall, center right, presents a check for \$4,232 to AMVETS Pocatello Commander Lance Kolbet, center left, July 15. The money will be used to help the local AMVETS chapter start its honor guard.

# Farm Bureau donates \$4,232 to Pocatello veterans group

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – A recently formed organization that represents veterans in Bannock County got a boost from Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho, which donated \$4,232 to the group July 15.

American Veterans, which is known as AMVETS, represents about 250,000 veterans around the nation. The group is a federally chartered veterans service organization that was formed with congressional authority in 1944, but the Pocatello chapter was only formed last year and is in its infancy.

So far, it has 85 members in Bannock County, which has 8,400 veterans, the highest number of veterans per capita of any county in Idaho.

During a check presentation ceremony at Farm Bureau’s headquarters building in Pocatello July 15, Lance Kolbet, the commander of the local AMVETS chapter,

thanked the insurance company for the money, which will be used to help start the group’s honor guard.

“AMVETS really appreciates this contribution from Farm Bureau,” he said during the check presentation, which was attended by AMVETS members as well as Farm Bureau officials. “We’re really excited about this and we really appreciate Farm Bureau for their support of the veterans.”

Kolbet said the AMVETS chapter presented Farm Bureau with a wish list of what it would take financially to get the group’s honor guard off the ground and insurance company officials didn’t hesitate to fund the full amount.

“When we sent that over to Farm Bureau, they just said, ‘Done,’” he said. “That’s why the amount is so specific. It’s the exact amount that we needed to really put together the honor guard. It is expensive to get an honor guard off the ground and running.”

Before presenting the check, Farm Bu-

reau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho CEO Todd Argall thanked the veterans for their service.

“On behalf of the Farm Bureau, our employees (and) our agents, thank you for the service that each one of you have done unto your country and for your contributions to the community and we hope this helps (you) deliver on your mission to help veterans,” he said. “We’re very supportive of veterans and as the son of a Korean War veteran, it’s near and dear to my heart certainly to support veterans.”

The mission of AMVETS chapters is to support veterans and their families and enhance their quality of life. They do that by sponsoring programs and activities that achieve that goal.

The Pocatello AMVETS chapter has put the Farm Bureau insurance company’s logo on its official car and the local group also presented Farm Bureau with an American flag. ■

*Ramona Collins  
Hannah Clements  
Caldwell FFA Chapter  
Taylor Colman*

*Taylor Colman  
Nampa FFA*

*Brighton Campbell  
Aberdeen FFA  
CRA Pter*

*Cambry Ochsenbein  
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*Jillon  
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# Idaho dry bean acres up 38 percent

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Idaho farmers planted significantly more dry bean acres this year, as rising farm-level prices for that crop make it an attractive option for a lot of producers.

“Prices are good and most other commodities are down right now so beans look pretty attractive to a lot of farmers,” said Mike Goodson, who grows dry beans in the Parma area.

The United States is the global leader in edible dry bean production and American farmers plant about 1.5 million acres a year, according to the U.S. Dry Bean Council.

Idaho ranks No. 5 in the nation in dry bean production but is the country’s No. 1 bean seed producing state and about 70 percent of the dry beans grown here are grown for seed.

According to USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, Idaho farmers planted 65,000 acres of dry beans this year.

That’s up 38 percent from the 47,000 acres of beans that were planted last year in the Gem State.

NASS estimates U.S. dry bean acres this year at 1.58 million, up 23 percent over 2019.

A challenging bean production season last year in Canada and some of the United States’ main bean-producing states resulted in a significant decrease in dry bean supply, according to industry leaders.

As a result, farm-level dry bean prices rose significantly and are up 25-40 percent, depending on variety, over the same period last year.

According to NASS, the average marketing price for Idaho dry beans hovered in the mid- to low-\$30 per hundredweight (cwt) range from 2011-2015, then decreased to \$27 in 2016 and 2017 before dropping to \$23.40 in 2018 and \$22.40 in 2019.



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Dry beans are harvested in a southwestern Idaho field last September. Idaho farmers planted 65,000 acres of dry beans this year, up 38 percent over 2019, according to USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service.**

According to USDA’s Weekly Dry Bean market News, pintos, which drive bean prices, were selling in the \$38-40 range for the week ending June 30. That’s up from \$22-23 during the same period last year.

Given the current supply and demand scenario, it’s no big shocker that dry bean acres are up significantly in Idaho and the United States, said Idaho Bean Commission Administrator Andi Woolf-Weibye.

“There were some real shortages of beans world-wide last year and the shut-downs drove demand up significantly,” she said. “It doesn’t surprise me at all that acres are up that much.”

“We have a pretty strong bean market right now and pretty good forward contracts. The (bean acre) numbers don’t surprise me at all,” said Don Tolmie, production manager of Treasure Valley Seed Co., which operates a bean pro-

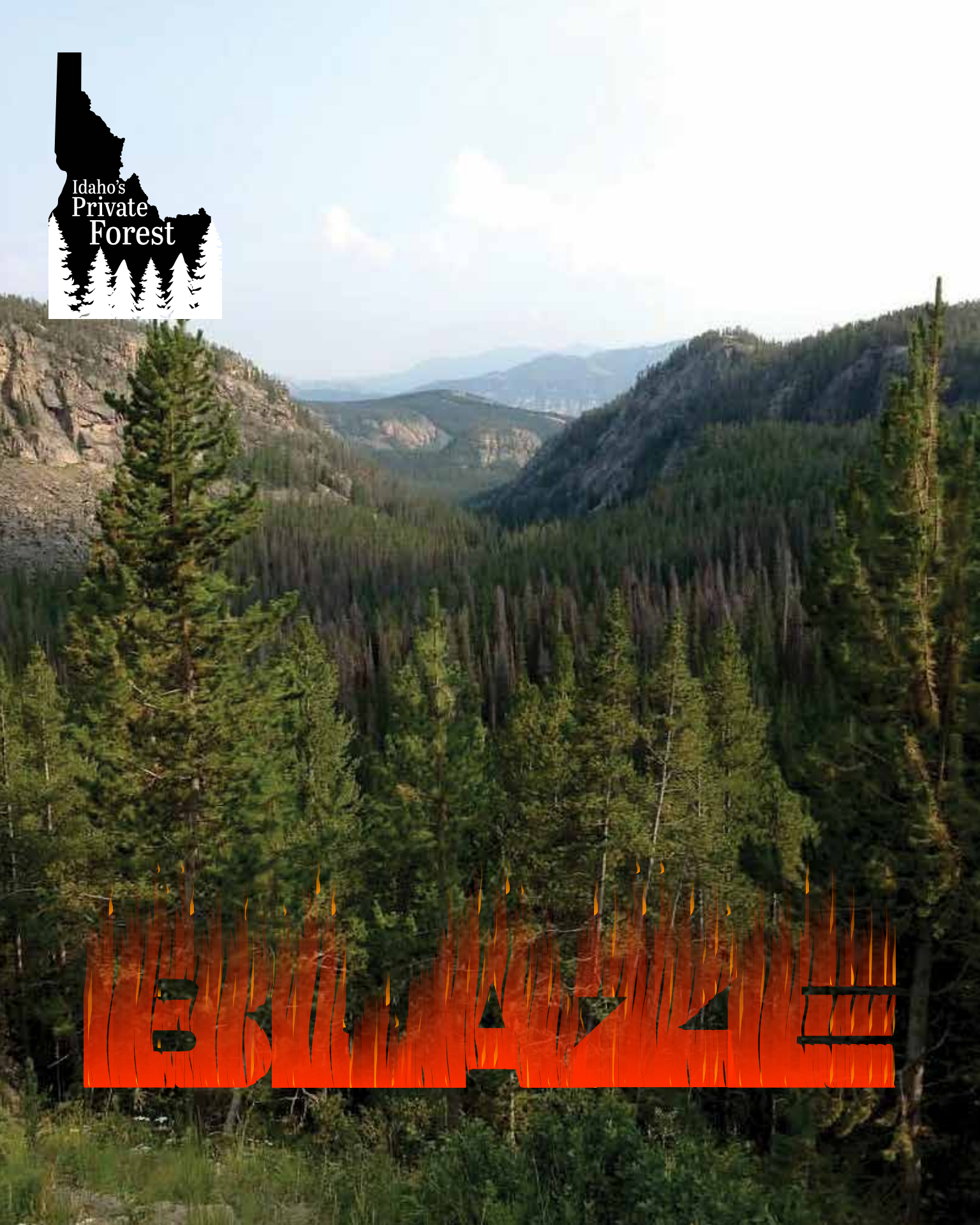
cessing facility in Homedale.

Most of Idaho’s dry bean acres are located in the Magic Valley of south-central Idaho and the Treasure Valley of southwestern Idaho.

The prices that farmers receive for selling dry beans was already high before the COVID-19 outbreak hit and the increased demand as a result of the pandemic has kept prices up, said Kimberly bean farmer Monty Hamilton.

“It’s almost a perfect storm,” he said. “There was a short crop last year in (many places) and then COVID hit and everybody is buying as many dry beans as they can. As a result, prices went up and guys planted as many acres as they could everywhere.”

“Everything is down (in price) right now and dry beans is up,” Hamilton added. “That’s one of the few crops guys can make any money on this year.” ■



# BLAZED



# Wildfires and the forest ecosystem

**By Randy Brooks**  
*University of Idaho*

If you keep up with world events, it seems that there have been a lot of natural catastrophes over the last few years. These range from hurricanes in the south, earthquakes and tsunamis around the world, locust plagues in Africa and wildfires all over.

I take a special interest in wildfires since I have a son who is a smokejumper and makes a career out of jumping out of perfectly good airplanes into raging fires occurring on the landscape!

Although not all fires are natural, many are a result of Mother Nature, in the form of lightning activity. The fire seasons of 2015 and 2017 raised many questions as to what effect fire has on the ecosystem, especially in the west, and particularly here in Idaho.

Historically, humans have thought that all fires were detrimental because they blackened landscapes and burned trees. In fact, plants and animals evolved together with fire, making it a necessary element in the survival of many ecosystems.

Throughout time, natural selection and adaptations have acted on plant and animal life to result in fire-dependent ecosystems. Many plants depend on fire to heat and scar their seeds as a process for germination.

Burned-out trees provide useful shelter for birds, reptiles, and small mammals. Decaying trees release nutrients into the soil and serve as a base for new plants to sprout. Much of the plant life in the United States has evolved to use fire directly as a catalyst for reproduc-

tion or benefited by the nourishment left in its path.

Fire-dependent ecosystems are an interesting study in the way plants and animals have evolved to profit from such a destructive natural phenomenon.

Fire is an important management tool for production agriculture. Excess wheat and barley stubble is often burned to ease tillage practices. This practice saves time and fuel costs, especially with the current high fuel prices.

Kentucky bluegrass growers burn grass to stimulate seed production. Woodland owners burn vegetative cover to decrease tree seedling competition.

Growing up in the south, we utilized fire to reduce bugs and unwanted vegetation on a yearly basis and I grew up knowing fire was a good management tool. In fact, removal of brush by fire improves range conditions and in turn grass production.

Prescribed burns prevent forest fires by “clearing out vegetation,” such as small trees, shrubs, and brush, which can eventually fuel a much larger fire. Firefighters can allow lightning fires to burn with less danger if fuel materials within the immediate vicinity of buildings, campgrounds and homes are cleared away.

Curtailed fuels also reduces the intensity of wildfires, which leads to easier management of them because they become more predictable and less powerful.

Fire serves many positive purposes in plant and animal life in ecosystems, but it can also damage communities just as well. Perhaps the most damaging effect of fire is erosion.

Intense fires, especially in small tree and shrub communities, can burn the vegetation down to the roots. On hillsides and mountainsides, the vegetation holds excess rainfall runoff.

When a fire destroys the intricate matrix of roots and grasses, devastating landslides can occur. Sediments can cloud streams, which can affect fish.

Humus, the decaying organic material on the ground within the vegetation, can hold five times its weight in water. Therefore, the increased runoff resulting from erosion can seriously damage the watershed.

Water and mud are not the only debris that can slide down a charred mountainside. Landslides, rockslides and avalanches are far more devastating and occur frequently when heavy rains follow a fiery summer or fall.

Soil and water temperatures are also greatly affected by fires. When the overhead canopy is destroyed, sunlight reaches regions that are not used to the added heat. Foliage that normally survived under the previously shady regions cannot survive because of the increases in sunlight and temperature.

Stream water temperatures are also affected by the increase in sunlight. Spring runoffs can lead to floods because snow reserves melt much sooner, especially on steeper, sunlight-facing slopes.

Fire erosion affects both landscapes and plant and animal habitats and often the effects are felt many years following a heavy fire because the regrowth can take years to occur.

Water quality can be affected by fire. Increased concentrations of dissolved nutrients generally occur in stream



Photo by Chris Schnepf

**Fires often increase stream sediment.**

**PAGE 32:** This is a photo taken in Yellowstone National Park. The park has burned many times over the millennia but forests can naturally recover quite rapidly from fire. (Photo by Randy Brooks)

water after a fire. These concentrations tend to get diluted as streams become larger. Nutrient concentrations vary with fire intensity, length of time for the watershed to revegetate and amount of precipitation the watershed receives in subsequent years.

Fires can affect animals in a variety of ways depending on the animals and the region involved. Seldom are animals left unscathed after a devastating fire sweeps through their habitat.

After a fire has burned an ecosystem, animals with specialized diets seldom survive as well as animals that can feed on a variety of food sources. If a fire destroys their habitat, their populations can be affected for many years.

After a fire, elk, deer and other large herbivores thrive on the newly sprouted grasses and shrubs that occupy recently burned forests. During long periods

without fire, trees in dense forests often out-compete (shade out) the grasses and shrubs that large animals feed on, resulting in a decline in big game.

Many birds also thrive after a fire when the seeds of many trees are dispersed. Birds, like the woodpecker, take advantage of burned-out trees to make nests or forage for dead insects. On the contrary, other birds, for instance the grey owl, flourish in old-growth forests and therefore decrease after a fire has destroyed their community.

Insects usually do not survive fires well because their escape range is too small. This can affect birds if the specific insects are a food source.

Trees can benefit from the death of insects that reside in their trunks. Many insects, in this case the mountain pine beetle in lodgepole forests, kill the trees in which they inhabit.

A lot of these forest pests, like the beetle, or the spruce bud worm, which resides in Douglas and subalpine fir forests, are burned out by fires.

Conversely, many mushroom hunters often seek last year's burned areas to find mushrooms.

In closing, fires are natural occurrences, similar to hurricanes, floods and heavy rains. Although they can be devastating, they are also important to the survival of ecosystems.

Fire acts as a necessary evil, destroying, cleansing, and diversifying wildlife communities. Fire has always been a part of the ecosystem here in Idaho and the impact of fire can vary dramatically with severity or intensity of the fire.

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

# Word Search Answers

Barley varieties grown in Idaho

A	C	D	C	F	R	A	S	E	R	K	J	U	L	I	E	F
N	D	F	A	C	M	E	T	C	A	L	F	E	P	T	S	A
O	C	M	B	A	A	C	C	O	N	N	E	C	T	H	F	N
I	C	U	I	B	S	B	F	H	U	P	S	P	R	I	N	G
P	O	I	E	I	T	Y	I	L	F	A	N	D	A	G	A	I
M	P	N	A	G	M	P	N	V	B	X	M	A	N	T	A	O
A	E	N	G	R	O	C	M	E	O	D	Y	S	S	E	Y	X
H	L	E	L	O	R	L	O	T	R	Y	R	A	I	A	N	E
C	A	L	E	W	E	M	D	N	P	G	A	N	T	L	L	R
I	N	L	C	L	A	B	R	E	R	S	Y	G	D	T	E	O
D	D	I	D	E	N	K	X	B	N	A	D	R	E	O	N	M
A	R	M	O	R	A	V	I	A	N	H	D	I	S	R	E	Y
G	E	M	C	R	A	F	T	X	E	N	A	A	M	A	T	A
O	N	T	D	B	E	X	P	L	O	R	E	R	A	D	A	L
L	T	I	R	E	M	C	D	C	B	O	W	K	T	O	H	C
D	A	T	B	G	E	N	I	E	F	U	L	L	P	I	N	T

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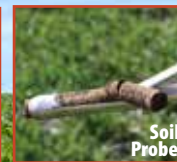
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# Idaho hop acres increase for ninth straight year

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Idaho hop acres rose again in 2019, the ninth straight year that has happened.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates Idaho farmers planted a record 9,374 acres of hops this year, 12 percent more than the 8,358 acres of hops that were harvested in the Gem State last year.

Hops are used as a bittering and flavoring agent in beer.

Propelled by the fast-growing craft brewing industry, Idaho hop acres have risen rapidly since 2011, when 2,265 acres of the crop were harvested in the state. That number rose to 2,596 in 2012 and then 3,356 in 2013, 3,743 in 2014, 4,863 in 2015, 5,648 in 2016, 7,125 in 2017, 8,140 in 2018 and 8,358 in 2019.

While the coronavirus outbreak did not stop Idaho hop acres from rising again this year, it could potentially be what stops the streak at nine years.

Idaho's hop plants were strung before the shutdowns related to the coronavirus outbreak hit and COVID-19's impact on the craft brewing industry could result in Idaho hop acres declining next year.

"Everything was planted before COVID hit," said hop farmer Brock Obendorf, chairman of the Idaho Hop Commission. "(Acres) will go back down next year. I wouldn't be surprised if they went down 10-15 percent next year."

Total hop acres in Idaho have soared since 2012 and that crop, once just a blip on Idaho agriculture's overall radar, is now one of the state's main farm commodities in terms of farm-gate receipts.

The rapid rise in hop acres has been a result of the nation's fast-growing craft



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Farm workers prepare a hop yard for planting in this file photo. Idaho hop acres are estimated at a record 9,374 this year, which is 12 percent more than the 8,358 acres of hops that were harvested in the Gem State last year.**

brewing industry but craft brewers were hit hard by the government-ordered shutdowns related to COVID-19.

"COVID shut down all these tap-rooms," said Idaho hop farmer Mike Gooding. "They can't sell beer and most of them don't have bottling facilities so they can't use the hops."

Obendorf said the coronavirus-related shutdowns have caused a lot of pain to the craft brewing industry and as a result, hop growers will also be negatively impacted.

Washington, Idaho and Oregon grow almost all the hops produced in the United States and, according to NASS, hop acreage in the three states combined totaled a record 59,174 in 2020, which

is 5 percent higher than the previous record of 56,544 set last year.

NASS estimates Washington growers strung 42,343 acres of hops this year, 4 percent more than they did in 2019, and Oregon growers strung 7,457 acres of hops, 2 percent more than 2019.

NASS has placed the total value of Idaho's 2019 hop crop at \$89 million, which will likely place that crop among Idaho's top eight farm commodities in terms of total farm-gate receipts when USDA releases that data later this year.

Until very recently, hops was nowhere near the top 10 Idaho farm commodities.

Since 2015, the total value of Idaho hop production has increased from \$31 million to \$89 million. ■



# Brady's Plant Ranch sees surge in beef deliveries during coronavirus outbreak

By John O'Connell  
*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

VIRGINIA — John and Karen Brady acknowledge they broke the cardinal rule of retail when they opened a large garden center in a sparsely populated area about 35 miles south of Pocatello.

For any retailer, location reigns supreme: The Bradys have built up an isolated complex of greenhouses supplying a shop by exit 36 of Interstate 15 over the course of decades, and customers still routinely ask, “Are you guys new?”

“We say, ‘Yes, we’re new — 35 years ago,’” Karen Brady joked.

Nonetheless, Brady's Plant Ranch, 3525 E. Virginia Road, has somehow maintained a steady clientele of loyal gardeners willing to travel to the sticks from as far away as Salt Lake City for the quality they supply.

Their customers' devotion has been reaffirmed amid the coronavirus pandemic, while the economy continues to nosedive and people stay isolated in their homes to ride out the health crisis. Despite the turmoil, the Bradys say sales of plants raised in their greenhouses have held relatively constant. Furthermore, deliveries of grass-fed beef from their cattle herd have quadrupled since the start of March.

“I think (customers) want a healthier product, but I think there's probably a little bit of scarcity mentality, too,” John Brady said.

Karen Brady added, “With this COVID-19 thing, people are anxious to stock up on beef, so beef sales are way up. It's been crazy.”

Brady's Plant Ranch encompasses 10 production greenhouses, where they raise their own plants, and a 10,000-square-foot retail greenhouse with four bays.

Their garden center is one of the few in the region

producing the bulk of its own plants, though the Bradys buy trees from outside suppliers. The nearest comparable garden centers can be found in Logan, Utah, and Idaho's Magic Valley.

John Brady, who was raised on a local dairy, said the business started in 1985 from a single greenhouse that was 110 feet long and 18 feet wide. Initially, he and his wife raised hydroponic tomatoes.

"We couldn't find a market for them," he said.

Two years later, Brady's shifted to producing ornamental plants, which quickly caught on. They were among the founding members of the Portneuf Valley Farmer's Market in Pocatello. They've been continually expanding their plant ranch ever since.

Karen Brady said she and her husband found their niche by raising plant varieties that were better suited to Southeast Idaho's short growing season and high elevation than materials competitors were bringing in from Utah. For example, they chose to stock peach trees that thrive in Maine's short season. Furthermore, their plants are acclimated to local conditions.

They produce about 3,000 hanging plants for sale per year, along with countless trays of vegetable starts and ornamental plants. During the summer, they raise produce in the greenhouse, selling the vegetables directly from their store or from a food stand along U.S. Highway 91 in Virginia.

They also allow customers to pick their own produce from their production greenhouses and surrounding fields, including an outdoor raspberry patch.

At the urging of customers, Karen Brady also started making her own floral arrangements for proms, funerals, weddings and other events.

About 15 years ago, they entered the grass-fed beef business, seeing an opportunity to fill a niche.

Karen Brady describes their beef, which is processed at an area USDA facility, as a gourmet product, and it fetches a premium price. They charge \$7 per pound of hamburger, and a ribeye sells for \$18 per pound. Their herd has about 120 cattle, with 65 mother cows, which are allowed to graze in lush, irrigated pasture.



Photo by John O'Connell

**Brady's Plant Ranch, located in the small town of Virginia, has somehow maintained a steady clientele of loyal gardeners willing to travel to the sticks from as far away as Salt Lake City for the quality they supply.**

Karen Brady said her animals are healthier than grain-finished livestock, as cattle can more easily digest grass.

"What you get out of ours is flavor," she said. "Our beef tastes like the beef you used to get with your grandmother and grandfather. It's real beef. It's not watered down or colored."

Grass-fed beef is also far richer in healthy Omega-3 fatty acids. John Brady said he had his herd tested, and the results confirmed his cattle had more than triple the Omega-3 concentration of conventional grain-fed beef.

They sell their beef directly from Brady's Plant Ranch, and they've started offering

curbside pickups of all merchandise in their lot. They also deliver beef to a central location in Pocatello weekly for pickup.

"I think the thing that drives consumers to us is first of all, flavor," John Brady said. "Second of all, we have a group that's interested in those health benefits. We have another group that's interested in local. Another group is interested in ecology and free range."

Brady's Plant Ranch has been allowed to remain open following the governor's recent order for certain businesses to close due to coronavirus, as food suppliers and greenhouses are both deemed to offer essential services. ■



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\*Farm Bureau Bonus Cash is exclusively for active Farm Bureau members who are residents of the United States. This incentive is not available on Mustang Shelby GT350®, Mustang Shelby® GT350R, Mustang Shelby® GT500®, Ford GT, F-150 Raptor, Bronco and Mustang Mach-E. This offer may not be used in conjunction with most other Ford Motor Company private incentives or AXZD-Plans. Some customer and purchase eligibility restrictions apply. Must be a Farm Bureau member for 30 consecutive days prior to purchase and take new retail delivery from an authorized Ford Dealer's stock by 1/4/21. Visit [FordFarmBureauAdvantage.com](http://FordFarmBureauAdvantage.com) or see your authorized Ford Dealer for qualifications and complete details. Note to dealer: Claim in VINCENT using #37408.