

GEM STATE **Producer**

 Idaho Farm Bureau[®]

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Rising Food And Farm Costs



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Investing in the future of agriculture

I often share how I first got outside my fencerows as a young farmer after complaining to my dad about all the problems I was facing in the dairy business.

He took me to a Farm Bureau meeting where the members elected me to chair my county Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee. I wasn't quite sure what I had gotten into, but that meeting was a pivotal moment in my life.

As a member of our YF&R Committee, I was immersed in training, conferences

and networking opportunities all over the country.

As a young farmer, I never would have imagined that I would one day be the president of the American Farm Bureau. And I wouldn't be if it weren't for the leadership development programs and opportunities at every level of Farm Bureau.

These programs can introduce young people to other Farm Bureau members from around the country and help them develop leadership skills to use in the

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



An important message on rising food prices

Virtually everyone around the world is greatly concerned with rapidly rising food prices and rumors of looming shortages.

So are farmers.

Some recent headlines about skyrocketing food prices and alleged coming shortages can be downright scary.

Farmers and ranchers, of course, are at the forefront of this nation's and world's food supply system and I believe we owe the general populace a response to these questions.

No one knows exactly what the future holds but what Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, the state's largest general farm organization, can tell you is this: Yes, food prices are up significantly and, yes, it does appear they will continue to rise at least in the near term.

How much they will rise, nobody knows for sure.

Will there be global food shortages? We sure hope not. But we can tell you this with confidence: Idaho farmers and

See **SEARLE**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Why work the land?

Over a month ago, my brother, who manages and operates our family farm and ranch, asked me for some help on the ranch for the week of March 1, the week that calving season begins for us.

I believe some of the most profitable work that can be done on a farm is to leave it for a time to advocate on behalf of agriculture.

My brother needed to travel for the week to advocate for the potato industry. Of course, I had to do what I could to help.

Much has been written about the trials and challenges of working the land. There are stories of challenge and triumph, such as the thrill of delivering a backward calf just in time and despair when the fight is lost for another.

Ranchers and farmers both know what it is like to be alone on the land in the pre-dawn mornings and the after-sunset evenings. The demands of the land never really rest.

With such a persistent and, at times,

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Idaho Farm Bureau.

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Photo by Sean Ellis

A new study shows Idaho's barley industry has a sizable impact on the state's overall economy.

Idaho barley industry has large impact on Idaho economy

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – A new study shows that Idaho's barley industry has a sizable impact on Idaho's overall economy.

The study by Timothy Nadreau and Steven Peterson, economists with ties to University of Idaho and Washington State University, was funded by the Idaho Barley Commission and shows the state's barley industry contributes, on average based on the past 10 years, \$274 million to Idaho's total gross state product.

The study also shows the state's barley industry supports 2,698 jobs in Idaho and is responsible for an average of \$551 million in total sales each year in Idaho.

Barley's contribution to the state's GSP last year was "only" \$216 million and the barley industry was "only" responsible for \$434 million in total sales in 2021, but that was because the severe drought conditions in Idaho last year resulted in total barley production being down 21 percent compared with 2020.

"The 2021 contributions were still substantial and nothing to shake a stick at," Nadreau, president of Recon Insight Group, told members of the Idaho Barley Commission

See **BARLEY**, page 15

COVER: Farm fields are shown in this photo taken last year in Cassia County. See page 8 for a story on rising food and farm production costs. (Photo by Joel Benson)



Photos by Sean Ellis

About 200 people involved in Idaho's agricultural industry attended the annual Larry Branen Idaho Ag Summit, which was held in Boise Feb. 22.

Five receive governor's awards for excellence in agriculture

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Five Idahoans received governor's awards for their contributions to the state's agricultural industry Feb. 22 during the Larry Branen Idaho Ag Summit.

Governor's Excellence in Agriculture awards are presented during the annual event to people who have made outstanding contributions to Idaho's farm and ranch industry.

"Every one of these people is a fabulous, fabulous, fabulous ambassador for those of us in agriculture," Idaho State Department of Agriculture Direc-

tor Celia Gould said about this year's award recipients.

Lifetime Achievement

Bob Naerebout, former executive director of the Idaho Dairymen's Association, received a lifetime achievement award. Dairy is the state's top agricultural commodity in terms of farm-gate revenue.

"Bob Naerebout has spent his entire career advocating for the dairy industry," his award bio states.

While serving as IDA director, it adds, "Bob represented dairy farmer interests in public policy and regulatory discussions, navigated through challenging legal situations and created

an innovative agricultural association, which earned him renowned credibility locally, regionally and nationally. Bob has worked on and successfully passed countless pieces of legislation during his time with IDA."

"Bob is a well-respected member of communities throughout Idaho as they related to agriculture and the environment," the award bio states.

Technical Innovation

Gary Fornshell, who has been involved in aquaculture education his entire professional career, received an award for technical innovation. He has served as a University of Idaho aquaculture Extension specialist in Twin

Falls for the past 28 years.

According to his award bio, Fornshell has “represented the aquaculture industry as a credible voice before ... Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and media and consumers.”

“He has digested sometimes difficult research results into language producers and processors could understand and apply,” his award bio adds. “Gary has been a vocal advocate for Idaho aquaculture not only locally, but regionally and nationally as well ... Gary’s leadership, expertise and eagerness to take on and complete projects has had a huge impact on aquaculture throughout the nation.”

Marketing Innovation

Tom Iverson, who farms in Bonners Ferry, received an award for marketing innovation. He and his son, Ty, run T&T Farms, which grows wheat, barley, canola and hay.

“In his years farming, Tom has nearly doubled the size of the family farm and expanded the operation to include more diverse crops and custom farming,” his award bio states.

It adds that Iverson was one of the first farmers in the area to adopt conservation practices on the farm.

While serving as director for the former Idaho Wheat Growers Association (now the Idaho Grain Producers Association), he also recognized the need to create an advocacy group for barley – the Idaho Barley Commission – to support this major cereal crop in Idaho.

He was also instrumental in the establishment of the National Barley Growers Association.

“Tom has been instrumental in the development of the grain industry in Idaho,” his award bio states.

Environmental Stewardship

Genesee farmer Russ Zenner, who has farmed in the Palouse region of Idaho for more than 40 years, received an award for environmental stewardship.

“Russ has spent his entire farming career trying to improve the farming methods used on the Palouse,” his award bio states.



Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould presents Bob Naerebout with a Governor's Excellence in Agriculture award Feb. 22 during the Larry Branen Idaho Ag Summit.

According to the bio, the rolling hills of the Palouse have been seriously degraded and eroded from years of intensive tillage, short rotations and poor management of residues.

“A tireless advocate for the environmental benefits of seeding directly into standing stubble and minimal soil disturbance, Russ has influenced many farmers in the region,” his award bio states. “Russ also pioneered diversity in rotations, extending typical two-year wheat-pea rotations to include spring cereals, pulses and oilseeds.”

Education and Advocacy

Mark and Wendy Pratt, who operate a cow-calf operation near Blackfoot, received an award for education and advocacy.

Mark has served as the agricultural education teacher at Firth High School and then as a farm business instructor at Idaho State University. In addition to feeding the cattle during the winter and calving season, Wendy also assisted with irrigating, cutting and hauling hay, sorting cattle and moving cattle.

Even though the ranch keeps them busy, both are actively involved in various organizations, their award bio states.

“Mark and Wendy, both fourth-generation Idahoans, recognize the importance of educating the general public about agriculture and take every

opportunity to do so,” the bio states.

Pat Takasugi Leadership Award

During the summit, Blackfoot beekeeper Jay Miller was presented with the Pat Takasugi Leadership Award, which is named after the late director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and given to someone who has shown strong leadership for Idaho agriculture.

Miller has served as president and commissioner of the Idaho Honey Industry Association and currently serves as vice president of the American Beekeeping Federation.

Tell Agriculture's Story

The couple hundred people who attended the 2022 Idaho Ag Summit, which is presented by the Leadership Idaho Agriculture Foundation, were encouraged by a keynote speaker to tell the stories of the many creative and innovative things happening on the farm and ranch.

As farmers, ranchers and ag-related businesses, “You are the keeper of the (stories),” said Jenny Mesirow, senior vice president of government affairs for the Farm Credit Council, the national trade association that represents Farm Credit institutions at the national level. “Start telling them. If we don’t tell our story as American agriculture ... then we will get lost in the conversation.” ■

DUVALL

Continued from page 2

organization and their communities.

Long before I was a member of Farm Bureau, and in the decades since that first meeting, our organization has continued to invest in our young members because they are the future of farming and ranching.

We should always leave something in better shape than we found it, and I want to leave this organization in a better position for the future than when I was elected in 2016.

Investing in our young farmers and ranchers is time and resources well spent, which is why I want to make sure that our YF&R committees at every level have all they need to be successful and pursue their goals both on and off the farm.

Around 800 young farmers and ranchers gathered in Louisville recently for the national Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference.

There they worked on building their leadership skills and being better farm-

‘Investing in our young farmers and ranchers is time and resources well spent.’

ers. But most importantly, they were building relationships with each other.

I shared with these young people how we can't overcome challenges on our own. We all need help at different times throughout our lives.

And every successful person has had someone lifting them up when they are struggling or encouraging them when they feel like giving up.

These young farmers are helping to lift up their communities, too. Last year, young farmers from across the country collected enough food and funds to provide 30.5 million meals to those in need as part of our Harvest for All program.

And many county and state committees work in their communities to raise

funds for scholarships, support local organizations and step up to help community members after disasters.

These men and women are shining examples of how Farm Bureau is committed to strengthening farmers and ranchers and our rural communities.

I'm proud of the work all our grassroots members are doing across the country. You all are helping make rural America an even better place to live and start a family.

And just as we work together to invest in our communities for a better future, we can ensure a bright future for American agriculture by creating opportunities for the next generation of farmers and ranchers and giving them the tools they need to succeed. ■

SEARLE

Continued from page 2

ranchers and agricultural producers around the country are plowing ahead with their annual plans to produce food and lots of it.

As I write this, plenty of farmers are still putting pencil to paper to try to figure out how to balance their input costs in a way that makes financial sense for their farm and will result in them at least making some kind of profit this year.

But they 100 percent plan to plan and harvest crops in 2022.

How the world's food production situation will ultimately pan out this year will not be known for several months but know this: farmers everywhere across the state and nation are planting or very soon will be planting.

Food production in Idaho and the

‘Farmers are price takers, not price makers, and are near the bottom of the price pole when it comes to the food supply system.’

U.S. is forging ahead and American farmers will do their part to the best of their ability to ensure this nation once again produces an abundant supply of food.

To help people better understand what is happening right now with increased food costs, consider this recent headline, which I believe does a great job of capturing, in one sentence, what is happening with food right now: “Farmers hit hard by price increases as food price spike looms.”

The cost of farming and ranching rose significantly last year and is rising at least as fast this year. That almost by default means higher food costs.

Keep in mind that higher food costs at the grocery store are a result of higher costs at every level of the food supply system: farm, processing, packaging, transportation, retail, etc.

I urge people not to blame the farmer and rancher when your grocery bill goes up. Farmers are price takers, not price makers, and are near the bottom of the price pole when it comes to the food supply system.

The cost of literally every farm input, from fuel to fertilizer to labor and seed, pesticides, herbicides and equipment, has risen and in some cases has risen dramatically.

Fertilizer prices, in particular, have soared, as much as 400 percent in

some areas of the nation.

[See page 8 for a story on rising food and farm production costs.]

In general, we are hearing from farmers that their total production costs rose in the 15-20 percent range last year and that they will rise at least as much this year.

Food and farm production costs were already on the rise when the war in Ukraine broke out and that conflict has added great uncertainty to the world's food supply outlook.

MILLER

Continued from page 2

harsh partner as the land, a very legitimate question can be asked: What is it that ties farmers and rancher so fiercely to the land?

In the early 20th century, Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton is said to have published the following advertisement:

“Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safer return doubtful, honor and recognition in case of success.”

The story goes that over 5,000 men responded to that ad.

Those who choose to spend their lives working the land may find honor and glory. I love to see farmers and ranchers recognized for a lifetime of effort.

They may find riches. I wish that every honest rancher or farmer would find wealth.

They are all undoubtedly brave, as they regularly face danger, bitter weather, and many forms of isolation.

But the question continues, why bind oneself to the land?

Working the land offers time to reflect upon the responsibility of caring for nature's resources and provides one with an appreciation for nature's awesomeness. Few people understand just how fragile and yet resilient life can be. Working the land helps teach a person that.

The tenderness and grace that goes

The region around Russia and Ukraine is known as the world's breadbasket and Russia is also one of the world's major exporter of fertilizers.

The ultimate impacts that this war will have on global food production and price are unknown but there is great concern about what they will be.

Again, what the future holds is not known by any person.

But I think it's important to re-emphasize that Idaho farmers and ranchers are pushing ahead with their usual

into rearing animals and crops requires an alignment, humility, and respect for elements outside of one's control that few can truly appreciate.

Profitability is seldom the primary motivator for farmers and ranchers, but it does come as the land is maintained and cared for.

I have heard few farmers brag about their wealth. It is not our way. However, many willingly boast of the progress and improvements to their land and animals.

Society should realize its desire for sustainability aligns with what those who work that land have always pursued: The unrelenting and straightforward desire to take the natural resources in our charge and leave them better than how we found them. That truly is what sustainability means to me.

I was reminded of this recently during the early mornings and long days spent helping on my family ranch. What binds me to the land is the


food production plans.

If fields were being left unplanted on a large scale, we would know about it and it would be our duty to report it to you, but that is not happening.

As the nation and world heads into a time of great uncertainty, know that farmers and ranchers are heading there right with you and we are not shirking from our responsibility to produce food for the nation and world. ■

love of the land and my belief that I can be a steward of it for my heritage, my children, and the people I feed.

I will face danger, bitter weather, long times alone and gladly do it if only for the honor of being counted as one of the few who works and cares for the land. ■



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Photo by Sean Ellis

Farm production costs were up significantly last year and are expected to be up again substantially this year.

Food, farm production costs on the rise

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Food costs have increased substantially over the past year and are expected to continue to rise in 2022. At the same time, farm production costs are also increasing, sometimes dramatically.

“Farmers are getting hit by higher costs every which way,” said Hammett farmer

Nick Blanksma, who estimates his overall farm production costs are up at least 30 percent over the past year.

Rising farm production costs are at the top of farmers’ minds right now, said Meridian farmer Neil Durrant, president of Ada County Farm Bureau.

“All of our prices are way up,” he said. “Our costs are up on every input we have.”

Food prices were already rising significantly before the war in Ukraine and that

conflict has exacerbated things, said Andy Harig, vice president of tax, trade and policy development for The Food Industry Association, which represents large and small food retailers and food manufacturers, including Walmart and Amazon.

The Russia-Ukraine situation “just threw a monkey wrench in things,” he said.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, overall food prices in the United States were up 8 percent in February compared

with a year ago.

The price of many animal proteins increased by double digits while other food products, including produce, were also up significantly compared to the same time last year.

A report by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization claimed global food prices increased by 21 percent in February compared with a year ago. That report was based on data compiled before the Ukraine war.

Ukraine and Russia together account for a large portion of total global food exports, particularly wheat, and Russia is also a major world exporter of fertilizer.

Rising fertilizer prices were among U.S. farmers' main concerns heading into 2022 and global fertilizer markets were already seriously challenged before the war in Ukraine broke out. Now, that conflict complicates issues in the fertilizer market.

Many people are concerned about how high food prices will go and whether there will be shortages. A look at recent headlines since conflict broke out in Ukraine don't allay those fears.

"Record food prices could leap 22 percent more on Ukraine War," a March 11 headline read. "Ukraine war 'catastrophic for global food,'" read another.

One U.S. congressman has even asked the Pentagon to look into what kind of potential conflict could result from a global food supply reduction of 5 percent.

"I think globally there is a lot of concern about" potential food shortages, Harig said.

But that's not the case in the United States, he added, although there likely will continue to be spot shortages of certain food products due to ongoing supply chain issues.

"That's not a huge concern in the U.S.," he said about the possibility of food shortages. "The U.S. food system has been really resilient through all of this."

"We're watching our expenses real closely. We're reducing inputs wherever we can, trying to find out what is absolutely essential to operate while still being able to produce a quality crop."

- Michael Williamson, Williamson Orchards and Vineyards



Photo by Michaela Andrus

Food costs were on the rise before the Ukraine-Russia conflict and they are expected to continue to rise this year.

But food prices likely will continue to increase this year, Harig added.

"Prices, we think, are going to keep going up," he said.

How high?

"That's the million-dollar question," said Darren Krzesnik, production manager for Treasure Valley Seed Co. in Homedale, which specializes in dry bean seed.

One thing that is known, he said, is that production costs for farmers and ranchers are continuing to rise rapidly. A lot of farmers right now are trying to figure out equations that work for their operation financially, he adds.

"It's just stuff nobody had even envisioned," he said about rising farm costs. "I don't think anybody foresaw the jumps in costs that we've had in farm country. The equations are tough for these growers right now."

Overall production costs for Idaho potato growers rose by 15-18 percent last year, said Ben Eborn, president of North American Potato

Market News. Those costs are expected to increase by about another 18 percent in 2022, he adds.

"That's if things stay where they are now," Eborn said in mid-March. "We haven't even planted yet."

North Idaho farmer Bill Flory said some farm inputs, such as fertilizer, are double in cost what they were last year and other inputs such as insecticides and herbicides are up between 5-50 percent.

"We are facing a lot higher input costs," he said.

Availability of some important inputs, such as fertilizer and other chemicals, is a major concern for a lot of farmers, he added.

While Flory has all of his farm inputs wrapped up for the 2022 growing season, he is worried about the impact ongoing supply chain disruptions could have on the availability of some inputs for the 2023 season.

He said he used to ask suppliers about price and availability, in that order. "Now I ask availability and price. If they're not available, price doesn't mean anything."

Michael Williamson, manager of Williamson Orchards and Vineyards in the Sunny Slope area of Caldwell, said labor is where his operation is feeling the cost



Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho's livestock industry, as well as the state's crop industry, is being challenged by significantly higher input costs.

pinch the most but every other input cost is up as well, particularly fuel and fertilizer.

"We're watching our expenses real closely," he said. "We're reducing inputs wherever we can, trying to find out what is absolutely essential to operate while still being able to produce a quality crop."

Ranchers and dairy operations are also facing substantially higher operating costs, largely due to the rising cost of feed.

Dairy is Idaho's main agricultural commodity when it comes to total farm-gate revenue and most of the state's dairy operations are above the break-even point right now but barely and only because of high farm-level milk prices.

Two years ago, Idaho dairy operations had to make about \$16.50 for every hundred pounds of milk they produced to break even. Today, that break-even point is closer to \$19, said Idaho Dairymen's Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout.

"We're above break-even but we have to hold at historically high milk prices just to break even right now," he said.

The commodity prices that farmers and ranchers receive are on the rise and in some cases, such as wheat, they are up substantially. But they might not be up enough to keep pace with the rising production costs those producers are facing.

According to a recent Market Intel article by American Farm Bureau Federation, "Production costs are rising faster than commodity prices, making it harder to just break even."

"Heading into the 2022 growing season, farmers are facing supply chain challenges like never before and that's why it's hitting their wallets like never before, too," the Market Intel article said.

"While crop revenues may be up this year, as projected by USDA, crop production expenses are rising just as quickly and could potentially outpace revenues," the AFBF article states. "This is leaving many farmers to question their ability to just break even this year, despite high crop and livestock prices."

In Idaho, the prospect of a potential second consecutive year of severe drought conditions is also weighing on producers' minds.

Durrant said many Gem State farmers are wondering, "How much water are we

If there's any good news, it's that Idaho and U.S. farmers are plowing ahead with their annual food production plans, despite the great uncertainty.

- Bryan Searle, IFBF President

going to have this year to grow anything?"

According to the AFBF Market Intel report, the Ukraine war has significantly increased the uncertainty of agricultural supply and demand conditions in that region and beyond.

What that ultimately means for food prices and agricultural producers is unknown at the moment and it's causing a great deal of concern among the nation's agricultural and food industry.

"There is so much uncertainty coming from the situation in Ukraine," said Blanksma, president of Elmore County Farm Bureau.

Russia and Ukraine are major suppliers of food products – they together account for about 29 percent of global wheat exports – and Russia is a major global supplier of fertilizer.

According to a fact sheet on the Russia-Ukraine conflict by The Food Industry Association (FMI), "Russia's invasion of



Photo by Sean Ellis

Farm input costs rose significantly last year and are expected to rise substantially again in 2022.

Ukraine will likely have significant impacts on the food and agriculture sector."

"While U.S. food imports from Russia and Ukraine are small, the pressure this geopolitical situation has on other nations could have a ripple effect on prices at the grocery store in America," the FMI fact sheet states. "The conflict could temporarily drive prices for raw materials and

finished goods even higher at a time when the U.S. is already experiencing significant inflation."

The rising price of fuel in particular could have a big impact on farm production and food prices, FMI said. "Agriculture and food production are energy intensive. Changes to the price of oil and energy have broad ripple effects throughout every step of the supply chain ... The rise of energy prices could impact the cost of food in both the short and long term."

If there's any good news, it's that Idaho and U.S. farmers are plowing ahead with their annual food production plans, despite the great uncertainty, said Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, a potato farmer from Shelley.

"While increasing food costs are concerning, fallow farm fields on a large scale would be frightening, but we are not seeing that happening," he said. "While many farmers are reconsidering their usual crop mixes, they are pushing ahead with their annual planting plans." ■



Photo by Michaela Andrus

Food prices are expected to continue to rise this year.

Idaho's first hemp crop is months away

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO –Idaho farmers will grow the state's first-ever hemp crop in 2022 but it will be a very small one.

No one knows exactly what to expect from this year's hemp crop because it's never been grown in Idaho, which was the last state in the nation to allow hemp production.

People interested in the state's nascent hemp industry were reminded recently that they are the trailblazers for this new crop and it will take time for hemp to take hold in Idaho.

"It starts with you guys," Morgan Tweet, chief operating officer and co-founder of IND Hemp, told people who attended an informational meeting on hemp Feb. 4 at 1000 Springs Mill in Buhl.

More than 100 people attended the meeting, including farmers, processors and other interested individuals.

Tweet said hemp production is a marathon, not a sprint, and she counseled people interested in growing or processing hemp in Idaho to pace themselves.

"There are a lot of learning curves we have to (go through)," she said. But, she added, "I think it has so much potential here in Idaho."

IND Hemp is an industrial hemp fiber and oilseed processor based in Montana.

The company was invited to address Idahoans interested in hemp by Tim Cornie, owner of 1000 Springs Mill, a food company that contracts with growers in the area.

IND Hemp has contracted with Montana farmers to grow hemp since 2019 and the company is looking to contract with Idaho growers as well, Cornie said.

"They have the knowledge and experience with hemp, so we wanted to bring them here to educate growers in Idaho," he said.

Tweet said IND Hemp is interested in helping Idaho's hemp industry get off the ground.

"We want to have a grower network of producers here in this region," she said.

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture in November began accepting applications from people interested in growing or processing industrial hemp this year.

Industrial hemp, by federal law, must not exceed 0.3 percent of THC, the psychoactive compound that gets a user of marijuana high. According to experts, it is impossible to get high from industrial hemp.



National Hemp Association photo
A hemp plant is shown in this submitted photo. Idaho will have its first hemp crop this year and so far, it looks like about 270 acres of hemp will be grown in the state during 2022.



Photo by Sean Ellis

More than 100 people attended an informational hemp meeting Feb. 4 at 1000 Springs Mill in Buhl.

Idaho's hemp program, as required by federal law, has safeguard to ensure hemp grown in the state does not exceed that 0.3 percent THC threshold.

Industrial hemp products have always been sold legally in the United States but not until the 2018 farm bill was passed was it legal to grow and process hemp commercially in the U.S.

The hemp products sold in the U.S. previously came from other countries.

Idaho became the last state in the nation to legalize the production and processing of industrial hemp when Gov. Brad Little signed House Bill 126

“I think it will happen in phases. It will be a process. I do think it will take time to mature.”

- Mattie Mead, Owner, Hempitecture

into law last April.

The bill passed in the Senate by a vote of 30-5 and in the House by a vote of 44-26.

The legislation is a narrow bill and only allows for people to grow and process industrial hemp if they obtain a license from the ISDA. People can also transport it on behalf of someone with a license.

According to Casey Monn, the ISDA bureau chief for hemp, 22 hemp applications have officially been submitted to the ag department for review.

A total of 81 total hemp applications have been started but only 22 of those have officially been submitted to ISDA for review.

Of those 22 applications, 10 are from hemp handlers or processors and 12 are from farmers who seek to grow a combined 270 acres of hemp in Idaho this year.

That's more than the 0 acres grown in the state in previous years but it pales in comparison to many other crops grown in the state.

For example, Idaho farmers grow about 1 million acres of wheat, 500,000 acres of barley, 350,000 acres of corn and more than 300,000 acres of potatoes each year.

Cornie said it will take time for hemp to catch on as a crop of any significance in Idaho and it's likely a lot of farmers who have some interest in the crop are waiting to see how other farmers fare with it before trying it themselves.

“Some people are going to watch their neighbor play with hemp,” he said. “It's just people putting their toe in the water right now.”

One of those is Twin Falls County farmer Rick Brune, a member of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation board

of directors.

Brune attended the Feb. 4 hemp meeting in Buhl and said he learned a lot from it: “It definitely helped fill me in on what’s going on with hemp.”

But, he added, “I’d prefer to sit and watch it for a while and see how it goes.”

Based on information on crop prices and what it would cost the grower to transport hemp to Montana provided by IND Hemp officials during the Feb. 4 meeting, Brune said hemp wouldn’t pencil out for his farm at this time.

“If you’re shipping it locally, it would work but if you’re shipping it to Montana, it doesn’t work for me,” he said.

For now, farmers plan to grow hemp on a small scale in Idaho but Cornie, who plans to grow 10 acres this year, and others believe the potential is there for it play a much bigger role in Idaho in the future.

“I think it’s a viable commodity and I think it’s going to work,” he said.

Hempitecture is a company based in Ketchum that specializes in building materials derived from hemp biomass.

The company last year received a \$207,000 Global Entrepreneurial Mission grant from the state to partner with University of Idaho on research and development of a natural fiber insulation product Hempitecture produces for the building industry.



Photo by Sean Ellis

Hemp products were on display at an informational hemp meeting Feb. 4 at 1000 Springs Mill in Buhl. More than 100 people attended the meeting.

For now, Hempitecture uses hemp imported from other areas, but Mattie Mead, the company’s owner and founder, looks forward to the day Idaho farmers can produce hemp for the company’s manufacturing plant in Idaho.

For now, Hempitecture plans to bring most of the hemp fiber it needs to Idaho from IND Hemp.

Ben Brimlow, an IND Hemp agronomist, told people during the Feb. 4 hemp informational meeting that the company believes hemp would fare well in Idaho’s climate and because the state has a reliable source of irrigation water.

“Fiber hemp loves heat and it loves water,” he said. “It would prefer the Idaho environment.”

In Idaho, hemp grown for fiber would be planted in mid-April into May and cut in mid-August.

Fiber hemp grown in Idaho would likely reach up to 15-20 feet tall, Brimlow said.

“If you do choose to grow this, so many people will stop by and take a picture,” he said.

Grain hemp grown in Idaho doesn’t need to be planted early and could be planted in May. There is a wide window to harvest grain hemp, Brimlow said.

He said hemp is grown and harvested using standard farming equipment.

“If you can plant wheat, you can plant hemp. If you can combine wheat, you can combine hemp,” he said. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Ben Brimlow, an agronomist with Montana-based IND Hemp, addresses some basic agronomic questions Feb. 4 during an informational hemp meeting at 1000 Springs Mill in Buhl.

BARLEY

Continued from page 3

Feb. 24 during the IBC's regular meeting.

He pointed out that Idaho barley growers produce more than one commodity and "if you take production agriculture together as a whole, it is contributing a huge amount to Idaho's overall economy."

"This is really good, applicable information," said IBC Commissioner Wes Hubbard, a barley producer from Bonners Ferry.

This is the first study that shows the impact barley has on Idaho's economy, said IBC Executive Director Laura Wilder.

"For the first time, we have accurate information that shows the relevance of the industry to the state," she said.

She said the information contained in the study will be very useful when speaking with state legislators and other elected officials.

"This is what legislators want to know; what the economic impact of the barley industry is in the state," Wilder said. "Those are big numbers. It's a big contribution to the state."

The study points out that Idaho's total barley acreage and production is normally very stable, especially compared with the other major barley producing states.

It shows that North Dakota dominated U.S. barley production until Idaho took over the No. 1 spot in 2011.

"Since then, it has been Idaho," Nadreau said. "Idaho's barley output is very stable. We have a very mild to upward trajectory (in total barley production)."

In 2003, North Dakota produced 43 percent of the nation's barley, Idaho produced 17 percent and Montana produced 12 percent.

Over the past several years, total barley acreage in Idaho has remained about 500,000 while average yields

per acre have risen steadily, reaching a record 110 bushels per acre in 2020.

In 2020, Idaho produced 32 percent of the nation's total barley supply, Montana produced 29 percent and North Dakota produced 17 percent.

Despite last year's severe drought conditions in Idaho, the state produced 37 percent of the nation's barley supply, Montana produced 20 percent and North Dakota 19 percent.

About 80 percent of the barley produced in Idaho is malt barley that is used for beer brewing and the rest is used for human food or animal feed.

Idaho farmers typically produce enough malt from barley each year to produce 12 million barrels of beer or 4.1 billion 12-ounce bottles of beer.

Most of the malt barley produced in Idaho is purchased by major beer companies and maltsters, including Anheuser-Busch, Molson Coors and Great Western Malting. ■



Submitted photo

Twin Falls County Farm Bureau President Larry Hollifield presents Samantha Doty, a chairwoman with Twin Falls County 4-H, with a \$10,000 check that will be used to replace the 4-H swine pens at the Twin Falls County Fair.

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David Henslee (center) of Bonners Ferry, the winner of our third quarter Refer A Friend, Get A Gift \$500 drawing.



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Idaho ag department awards \$1.85 million in grants

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Several farm commissions and other organizations were awarded \$1.85 million in grant money through the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's 2021 specialty crop block grant program. The money will be used for research, promotion activities, and other projects designed to benefit specialty crop growers in Idaho.

ISDA awards money each year through its specialty crop block grant program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The program is designed to solely benefit specialty crops, which include vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, dried fruits, nursery and horticulture crops.

Fifteen projects were awarded grant money this year.

Since it was created in 2009, the ISDA program has awarded a total of \$16.5 million to 165 projects.

That money has proved especially important for some of Idaho's smaller farm commissions, which are funded by growers and have limited budgets. For example, the money has enabled the Idaho Bean Commission to fund several research projects that have paid dividends for the state's dry bean farmers.

"Those research dollars are a huge benefit for small ag commissions like ours and allow us to do research projects that we wouldn't otherwise be able to afford to do," said IBC Administrator Andi Woolf-Weibye.

The bean commission this year was awarded a \$133,000 grant to help fund a project led by University

of Idaho researchers that will develop advanced diagnostic and detection methods to try to safeguard the health of bean plants in Idaho.

Idaho is the nation's top bean seed producing state because of a statewide certification program that ensures bean seed grown here is 100 percent disease-free.

This project will help ensure Idaho uses the latest technology to help keep its reputation as the premier bean seed state in the nation, Woolf-Weibye said.

ISDA also awarded a \$125,000 grant to a project by researchers from U of I, Boise State University and McCain Foods to study the impact of smoke on the storage and profitability of three common Russet potato varieties: Alpine, Burbank and Clearwater.

BSU researchers received a \$165,000 grant to demonstrate the potential of using "pulsed electric field" technology to improve the quality of wine produced from grapes grown in Idaho.

According to the project application, "the implementation of (PEF) technology following grape harvest and prior to wine production has been demonstrated to amplify the quality of the wine product..."

The Idaho Apple Commission received a \$175,000 grant to fund an ongoing research project by U of I's pomology program that is studying the



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation graphic

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture has awarded a total of \$1.85 million in grant money to 15 projects designed to benefit specialty crop growers in Idaho.

impact of different fruit wall and tree training configurations on tree growth, yield and fruit quality attributes of Fuji apples.

The Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee was awarded a \$140,000 grant to fund a project that is investigating the emergence of two onion plant diseases in the region: onion leaf blight and bacterial bulb rot.

The Treasure Valley of Idaho and Eastern Oregon produces almost a third of the nation's dry bulb onion supply and production costs for farmers can be significant, reaching up to \$5,000 per acre. These two diseases "are potential threats to yield and profit for onion producers," the project application states.

The Idaho Hop Commission received a \$30,000 grant to help fund a project led by U of I researchers that seeks to validate real-time diagnostic tests for four key diseases that affect hop foliage and can limit hop yield and quality. This project also seeks to determine the status of an emerging hop pathogen in Idaho and gain preliminary data on the use of spore traps for disease prediction.

ISDA awarded a \$91,000 grant to the Idaho Nursey and Landscape Association for a project that looks to multiply species of astragalus, which are economically and ecologically important plants for medicinal purposes, animal forage, habitat restoration and landscaping.

This will be done through micro-propagation, which refers to a process where plant material is regenerated to produce thousands or millions of plants that can be transferred to the field.

According to the project application, micropropagation of astragalus "will benefit Idaho nurseries, conservationists and ethnobotanists."

The Idaho Potato Commission received a \$100,000 grant to continue a marketing program in Taiwan that seeks to give Idaho farmers a competitive advantage in that market by developing awareness programs for



importers, retailers and foodservice operators.

The Idaho Preferred program, a marketing development division within the ISDA, will get a \$222,000 grant to promote Idaho specialty crops. According to the grant application for that project, "Consumer interest in purchasing local products has been very strong and the COVID pandemic accelerated the local trend even more."

ISDA awarded the Idaho Wine Commission an \$89,000 grant to help fund a marketing campaign that targets journalists and social media influencers.

Through targeted efforts, "the IWC hopes to strengthen consumer and media knowledge of the Idaho wine industry and expand sales and production within the region," the project application states.

The wine commission also received a \$124,000 grant to improve weather and data-driven decision tools for Idaho wine grape vineyards. According to the project application, the project is designed to "develop and provide tools that enhance and support decision making efforts for disease control, as well as improving irrigation efficiency."

The Robotics Vision Lab at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa received a \$68,000 grant to develop an app for mobile devices that estimates early fruit yields in orchards. According to the grant application, an algorithm will be implemented in a

farmer-friendly app for mobile devices that have an integrated camera and computer in one unit.

According to the application, "The goal is to equip fruit growers with a tool that can support orchard management in a simple but functional app."

U of I researchers received a \$129,000 grant to develop a new tool known as "direct tuber testing" that could drastically shorten the period of decision-making for sales of seed potato lots. The researchers propose to develop a methodology to conduct post-harvest tests in dormant tubers almost immediately after harvest.

This new methodology could replace the winter grow-out test and enhance the marketing potential of Idaho seed potatoes.

The U of I received a \$120,000 grant to develop a specialty crop seed health center of excellence. The project aims to provide a world-leading resource for growers and seed organizations in Idaho and the United States.

ISDA awarded U of I's pomology program a \$135,000 grant to continue research trials aimed at proving whether almonds and walnuts can be grown profitably in Idaho. This project is looking at growth, quality, bloom and maturity dates, cold tolerance and oil profiles of fully mature almonds and walnuts. ■

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Thistles and the Northwest

By **Tim Prather**
University of Idaho

Our most famous thistle in the Northwest must be *Cynara scolymus*. It is one of the larger thistles you would encounter and probably the best tasting.

It is a thistle commonly known as artichoke. Other thistles we are familiar with are for other reasons and include bull thistle and Canada thistle. We often encounter these two in forested areas and they tend to increase after tree harvest.

We have many options for site preparation that will control these species and after planting, we still have herbicides containing clopyralid that are effective when applied during dormant season.

The Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook (<https://pnwhandbooks.org/weed>) had a major update this year so be sure to consult it for managing thistles.

We have other thistles that are weedy that you may encounter including Scotch thistle, musk thistle, plumeless thistle and Italian thistle. Most of these species can be

found in “Idaho’s Noxious Weed” handbook, except Italian thistle.

There are several thistles that are similar to Italian thistle including slenderflower thistle in neighboring Oregon and Washington. Slenderflower thistle currently is known to occur in western Oregon and Washington.

These thistles tend to be found in drier areas but plumeless thistle, Italian thistle and slenderflower thistle are found along rivers and mountain slopes from California to Washington.

The location information suggests these thistles are also adapted to our forest systems and we should be on the lookout for them.

There will be a new addition to the University of Idaho bulletin on noxious weeds this year because of new additions to the noxious weed list.

There is a new thistle added and it is closely related to Italian thistle and slenderflower thistle. It is called Turkish thistle and its scientific name is *Carduus cinereus*.

The reason for talking about how related they are is that in some parts of the world all three – Italian thistle, slen-

derflower thistle and Turkish thistle – are considered the same species, just different subspecies.

So, for Italian thistle it is *Carduus pycnocephalus* and slenderflower thistle is *Carduus pycnocephalus* subsp. *tenuiflorus*. Turkish thistle then can be called *Carduus pycnocephalus* subsp. *cinereus*.

Some readers may say, “So what?” Yet one of the challenges can be telling the difference among the three species. All three have multiple flower heads all close together and all have spines on leaves and stems. Of the three, Turkish thistle has a short stem attached to each flower head despite being clustered.

When we try to determine how long these species have been present, our historic records become very important. Just in the past few years some plants were thought to be Italian thistle but the short stems below the flower heads presented problems and botanists in Oregon pursued identification and with the help of John Gaskin, a USDA researcher in Montana, they determined they were actually looking at Turkish thistle and not Italian thistle.

Turkish thistle was not known to be found in North America!

Our former curator, Ben Legler at the Stillinger Herbarium on the University of Idaho campus, went through collections at Stillinger and found something interesting.

One herbarium sheet collected in 1982 along the Snake River at Pine Bar was identified as Italian thistle but Legler could tell it was Turkish thistle.

So, we now know that while the discovery is recent, the species has been hiding in plain sight in Idaho and in Oregon.

Rather than a small radius of plant survey to determine the extent of the distribution of Turk-

ish thistle, we need to consider it may be located farther from the Snake River and tributaries of the Snake River.

One function of an herbarium like Stillinger Herbarium is to maintain a historic record of plant distribution through its collection of plant mounts. Those plant mounts then can always be reexamined as we have new information.

In our present case, we know Turkish has been here at least since 1982 because we have Stillinger Herbarium. In addition, curators can be great resources to create helpful guides to plant distribution and plant identification.

Prior to Legler leaving University of Idaho, he created a draft of a document called *Thistles of the Inland Pacific Northwest*. He and I will continue to work on the document and get it published through Idaho’s extension publication system.

Herbaria across the Pacific Northwest have worked together to allow anyone to access herbarium collections from their own computers. Any of us can access www.pnwherbaria.org to see any herbarium specimen in the collection.

These are high-resolution pictures and the pictures also include the information on when and where a plant was collected. While there is great interest in maintaining the Stillinger Herbarium as a resource for Idaho, funding at universities is tight, so staffing and maintenance is a challenge and there are efforts to bolster financial support for the herbarium.

Another factor to consider as we search for these weedy thistles is that we do have native thistles and we need to be sure we don’t allocate resources to their control.

The *Thistles of the Inland Pacific Northwest* will include native thistles, so we know when we encounter a native thistle we don’t have to worry about. Native thistles, like many of the weedy thistles, are beautiful to look at and not so comfortable to hold.

Plant species around the globe move with our activity. Learning identification of these new plant species is essential so that we can limit their potential impact when they end up in the Pacific Northwest.

Currently, our weedy thistles, Canada thistle and bull thistle, in forest systems cause us problems and we don’t want to expand the number of species we have to manage between harvest and early growth of new trees.

So please be on the lookout for these closely related thistles because they do have characteristics that would allow them to move into forest systems after harvest.

If you find a thistle you suspect might be a weedy thistle, you can send pictures of the plant to ericksonweedid@uidaho.edu. The identification process is free to those who submit plants and you receive an identification within a few days.

Tim Prather is a professor in the Department of Plant Sciences and is Senior Associate Director of the University of Idaho Rangeland Center. ■

OPPOSITE PAGE: Bull thistle, next to stump, often colonizes early after tree harvest. (Photo by Joe DiTomaso)

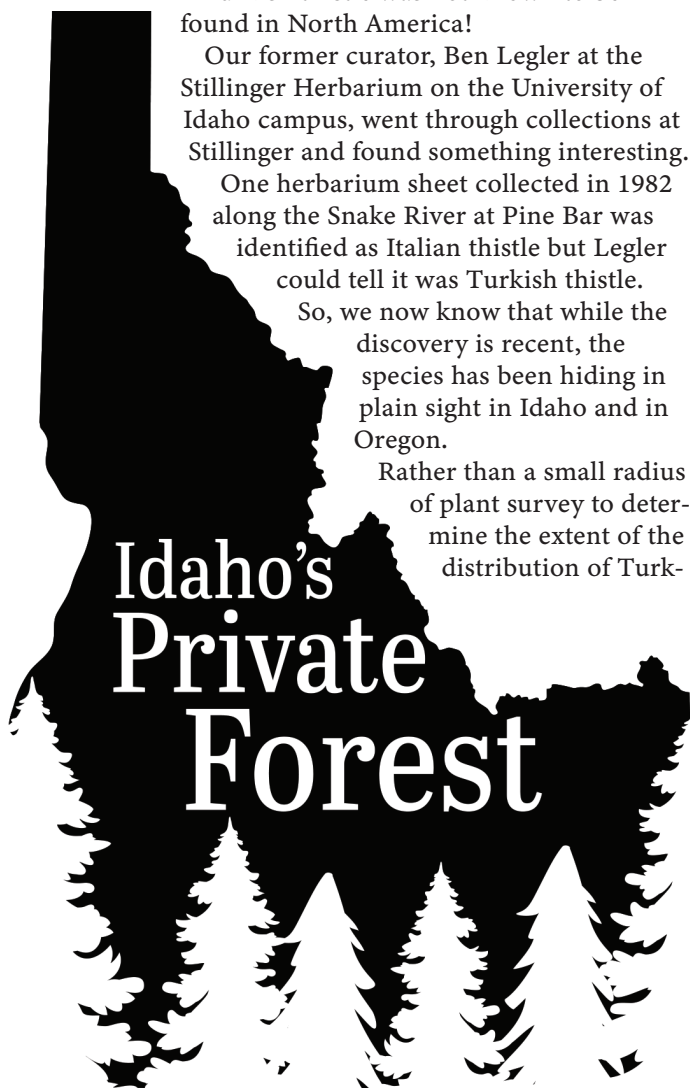




Photo by Sean Ellis

Potatoes are harvested in an East Idaho field in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. Total federal government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers dropped 41 percent in 2021 compared with 2020.

Federal payments to Idaho farmers down 41 percent

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Total federal government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers dropped 41 percent in 2021 compared with 2020.

Government payments to U.S. farmers and ranchers increased substantially in 2020 due to the financial assistance provided to agricultural producers through USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

That money was approved by Congress to assist farmers and ranchers that were impacted financially by the government-ordered shutdowns due to COVID-19.

Some of those payments carried over into the 2021 calendar year but for the most part, they decreased substantially last year compared with 2020. As a result, total federal government payments to ag producers around the nation decreased substantially last year.

CFAP payments to Idaho ag produc-

ers totaled \$337 million in 2021, which was half of what they were the previous year.

Total federal government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers in 2021 are estimated at \$488 million, which is 41 percent lower than what they were in 2020.

Those estimates are provided in University of Idaho's "Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2021" report, which was released to state lawmakers Jan. 6.

The CFAP payments were an anomaly and in a typical year, Idaho farmers and ranchers get a very small percentage – from 1 to 2 percent – of their total farm income from federal government payments.

For example, in 2018 and 2019, according to the Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture reports for those calendar years, government payments to Idaho ag producers totaled about \$180 million, and in 2014 and 2015, they totaled about \$90 million.

On average, U.S. farmers and ranch-

ers get a much higher percentage of their overall farm income from federal government payments.

"Idaho farmers don't farm the government," U of I Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor regularly reminds Idaho lawmakers when he presents the Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report each year.

This year's report estimated Idaho farmers and ranchers received 0.7 percent of total federal government payments to U.S. ag producers in 2021.

CFAP payments accounted for 69 percent of total federal government payments to Idaho ag producers in 2021.

Grain commodity program payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers in 2021 are estimated at \$96 million by U of I economists, while conservation program payments are estimated at \$29 million.

Disaster program payments to Idaho ag producers are estimated at \$26 million in 2021, the highest total in the past decade. ■

Idaho agriculture is big and growing

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – When it comes to total revenue and economic output, Idaho’s agriculture industry is big and it’s getting bigger.

“We’re not only big but we’re also growing,” University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor told lawmakers Jan. 6. “Idaho is a very small state economically but we have big agriculture.”

While total net farm income in Idaho declined 8 percent in 2021 compared with 2020 because farm production expenses reached a record level, total gross farm-gate revenue in the state increased 9 percent to a record \$8.9 billion.

According to U of I’s annual Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report, farm-gate receipts for Idaho farmers and ranchers increased by almost \$780 million in 2021.

A separate University of Idaho report released in January shows the state’s agriculture industry directly and indirectly accounts for 17 percent of Idaho’s total economic output, 12.5 percent of Idaho’s total gross domestic product and one of every eight jobs in the state.

According to Taylor, Idaho is the fifth largest agriculture state in the nation when it comes to gross domestic product generated by agriculture as a percentage of a state’s total GDP.

And the impact that agriculture has within Idaho’s economy continues to grow, significantly, he said.

Over the past two decades, Idaho agriculture is growing at a faster rate than the state economy as a whole and also the national farm economy as a whole, Taylor told lawmakers.

From 1997-2020, in inflation-adjusted dollars, Idaho GDP grew by more than 100 percent, while Idaho farm GDP grew by more than 200 percent, Taylor said.

Based on data from USDA’s Economic Research Service, total Idaho farm-gate receipts grew by 60 percent on a real-dollar basis from 1997-2020, Taylor said, while total U.S. farm-gate receipts grew by 10



Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho’s agriculture industry is big and getting bigger, a University of Idaho agricultural economist told lawmakers Jan. 6.

“The major growth which we see in agriculture in Idaho has been in production agriculture, not in food processing.”

- Garth Taylor, U of I Agricultural Economist

percent during that same time.

Based on U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data, he said, while Idaho farm GDP grew 200 percent in real-dollar terms from 1997-2020, total GDP from U.S. farming grew 90 percent during that time.

It’s production agriculture and not food processing that is driving most of the growth in Idaho farm GDP, Taylor said.

For example, total GDP from Idaho’s food processing industry grew by 60 percent from 1997-2020.

“It’s your farmers – grandma and grandpa on a tractor – that are driving this growth,” Taylor said. “The major growth which we see in agriculture in Idaho has been in production agriculture, not in food processing.”

Taylor attributed the rapid growth in the

state’s agricultural economy to a pro-agriculture climate in Idaho, especially compared with some neighboring states.

While the agricultural community can have wild revenue swings from quarter to quarter and year to year, the good news is that the industry has a stabilizing impact on local economies, Taylor said.

That’s because regardless of the price a potato farmer or dairyman gets for their commodity, the potatoes still need to be planted, fertilized and harvested and the cows still need to be milked and fed, he said.

“That volatility (within the ag industry) does not transmit into the local economies surrounding agriculture; they’re insulated from a great deal of that,” Taylor said. “All the purchases agriculture makes in the rural communities ... are very stable.” ■



Photo by Julie Hillebrant

Five members of Eastern Idaho's agriculture industry were inducted into the Eastern Idaho Agriculture Hall of Fame March 18. About 300 people attended the induction ceremony.

Five inducted into East Idaho Ag Hall of Fame

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

FORT HALL – Five members of Eastern Idaho's agriculture industry were inducted into the Eastern Idaho Agriculture Hall of Fame March 18.

The Hall of Fame's 35-member board inducted Max R. Gould, a farmer and trucker; Dr. Robert Cope, a veterinarian; Mark R. Ricks, an agricultural producer; Dennis W. Snarr, a

farmer and rancher; and Matt Woodward, a farmer and conservationist.

"We're here to celebrate the legacy of great agriculturalists in the state," said Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould.

People who have made significant contributions to agriculture in Eastern Idaho are chosen for the honor each year.

"What a great blessing we have to live in this area," Ricks said after being

inducted.

This year's inductees were honored during the EIAHF's annual recognition dinner in Fort Hall. Idaho Farm Bureau Federation is a member of the EIAHF.

About 300 people involved with the state's agricultural industry, including Gould and Gov. Brad Little, attended the recognition dinner.

Cope said he has spoken to many groups throughout his career and add-



Photo by Julie Hillebrant

Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould speaks to members of the state's farm and ranch industry March 18 during the Eastern Idaho Agriculture Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

ed, "I do believe this is the most important group I've ever spoken to."

Max R. Gould, Teton

Alongside his brothers Ted and Vern, Gould started farming in the 1970s, growing seed and commercial potatoes on their family farm. Early operations involved developing an irrigation delivery system which moved water from the Teton River to Gould farm ground in both Teton and Madison counties.

About this same time, Gould began trucking the commodities grown on his own ground and for numerous Eastern Idaho producers and he did this for more than 40 years.



Max R. Gould

He is still involved in the day-to-day operations of both the farm and Max Gould Trucking, Inc.

Gould, his son Darrin and grandson Ryan still farm about 2,000 acres of potatoes, wheat and barley. He is also an owner in

Idaho Sunfresh, a fresh pack potato shed in Rigby.

He has also served in the United Potato Grower organization in the early 2000s.

Dr. Robert Cope, Salmon

The tag line on his e-mail address – "cowdoc75" – sums up the life of Salmon veterinarian Robert Cope. For more than 40 years he has taken care of livestock in the Lemhi Valley.

Raised on a small farm in Kansas, Cope attended the Kansas State University of Veterinary Science. He and his wife, Terry, settled in Lemhi County where he continues to practice veterinary medicine, has conducted research, and has spent countless hours serving as a county commissioner and a representative on various boards.

Cope worked with other veterinarians in finding answers

to "weak calf syndrome" and other disease control efforts in Lemhi County.

According to his Hall of Fame nomination, Cope has spent more than 43 years dedicating "himself to the betterment of the agriculture community of Central Idaho, both as a skilled veterinarian and as a leading officer of local government."



Dr. Robert Cope

Mark R. Ricks, Rexburg

Farming and the agriculture industry have been, and continue to be, the professional life of Ricks. In 1966, while working on the family farm, Mark, his father and uncles drilled the first deep irrigation well in Teton County.

Mark continued to work with family members and eventually went out on his own. The Ricks farming operation expanded from 180 acres in the early years, to a current total of 2,800 acres of ag ground.

He annually raises 2,200 acres of wheat and barley, 500 acres of seed potatoes and 100 acres of grass hay.

Working with, and participating in, the Natural Resource Conservation Service programs, Mark has been a leader



Mark R. Ricks

in conservation and providing irrigation to water thousands of acres in western Teton County.

He has long worked with other seed potato growers in Teton and Madison counties in maintaining the Teton Seed Management Area.

Dennis W. Snarr, Idaho Falls

Growing up on a farm in the Osgood area, Snarr enjoyed working alongside his father, Dean. After graduating from college, he went into partnership with his father and the corporation, "Dean Snarr and Son," was formed.

The two expanded the farm into the Roberts area in 1974 where it continued to grow into the operation it is today.

Dennis has been the managing partner of Dean Snarr and Son for almost 50 years. In that time, he has improved irrigation practices and profitability as new irrigation equipment advancements came available.

Good crop rotation has always been a focus of the farm.



Dennis. W. Snarr

Snarr also works closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency in Jefferson County to make changes that will improve soil health, water conservation and crop yields.

Most recently, some of the changes include the incorporation of cover crops and no-till planting into his farm practices. His farm also uses tools like spreading manure and using natural fertilizers, like fish compost, to help soil health.

Matt Woodard, Idaho Falls

Farming has been part of Woodard's life since his early life growing up on a dry farm in the Antelope Creek area near Ririe.

The Woodard family were among the first farmers in the Antelope Creek area to install terraces, creating a model conservation farm. Early on, the family has used conservation tillage, cross slop farming and chiseling/subsoiling to control soil erosion from spring runoff.

Their early efforts to incorporate soil and water conservation practices helped convince other farmers to do the same and these practices continue with success.



Matt Woodard

In addition to establishing conservation methods to preserve water on the farm, Woodard became involved in the Sharp-tail Grouse Enhancement Program, using 300 acres of his land to help the challenged species, and he has been involved with the Mule Deer Enhancement Program and other habitat projects.

Woodard's dedication to conservation has led him to leadership positions, enabling him to assist other producers with securing approvals and find financing for voluntary soil, water and habitat enhancement projects on private land. He has often served as a liaison between agricultural landowners, conservation groups and state and federal agencies.

Ed Duren Memorial Young Producer Award

During the EIAHF's annual recognition dinner, four farm

and ranch owners-operators received the Ed Duren Memorial Young Producer Award, which recognizes agricultural producers under the age of 45 for production innovations, leadership and who has had a positive impact on the Easter Idaho ag industry.

The award was established by the Eastern Idaho Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2018, to honor the memory of inductee and former board member Ed Duren (1935-2017), who spent his 39-year career as a University of Idaho Extension livestock specialist, educator, author, and mentor to hundreds of young farmers, ranchers and ag industry professionals.

The 2022 class of Ed Duren Memorial Young Producer Award recipients are Steve Shively; Luke Hicks; David Mundt; and Tyson Coles.

Luke Hicks, of Rigby, operates a diversified farm/livestock operation. As well as irrigated farms where he raises barley, wheat, silage corn and alfalfa, he has owned and rented pasture.

Hicks has developed a vertically integrated livestock program with raised and purchased calves, stockers, grass cattle, yearlings/feedlot cattle and cow/calf pairs. This model has enabled him to purchase cattle locally, and to access quality and volume market opportunities in several states, which in turn enables him to buy more local cattle.

Tyson Coles, of Milo, has brought attention to the benefits of regenerative agriculture by improving soil health and crop/pasture productivity on dry and irrigated ground with traditional and cover crops, multi-species and rotational grazing, and other practices.

His system has attracted national attention from ag media and those interested in learning about diversified and sustainable crop/graze systems, he hosts visitors and tours, and has been a presenter at farm and livestock educational events.

David Mundt, of Firth, raises grain crops and fresh-market potatoes and was among the first to test, then commercially grow and harvest the ancient grain, quinoa, as a new crop for the area, contributing to the acreage necessary for a quinoa processing plant to establish in Idaho Falls.

Mundt is a graduate of Northwest Farm Credit Service's AgVision program and has served as an officer on the North Bingham Soil Conservation board.

Steve Shively, of Terreton, is a fourth-generation farmer. He is a vested partner in Shively Custom Farming and runs a stand-alone ag commodity trucking business.

Always interested in farm technology and innovation, Shively plants and harvests about 1,000 acres of corn, custom stacks thousands of hay and straw bales, harvests corn and grain, markets commodities nation-wide, and worked with university and industry researchers as an early adopter and proponent of irrigation water efficiency measures, including LESA (Low Elevation Spray Application) sprinkler modifications. ■

2022 will be a challenging year

As the temperatures begin to warm and the amount of daylight each day becomes longer and longer, we all get just a little anxious about spring work. After all, that is what we do.

The futures markets have remained at fairly good levels that have given you an opportunity to forward contract some bushels at reasonable levels. Having said that, it now looks to be somewhat relative as the costs of doing business have also increased to levels that will still challenge you.

At times it looks as though we can't catch a break but on the positive side, we could have seen higher input costs without higher prices for the commodities we are producing. So I guess what I am saying is that every year is different with its own set of sometimes new challenges but at this time these aren't challenges that can't be overcome.

Many times, we don't have any say in what comes down the pike. Mother Nature can treat us good or not so good all within just a few days. What we are charged for fuel and fertilizer is at times completely out of our control.

Yes, we still need to do the very best we can at pricing our inputs but we will never be able to contract fuel at \$2 when the market is at \$4. We can only do the best we can do. The same holds true to the commodities we produce. Only history will tell us how good we did.

Let's take a look at where we are at this time. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has put some fairly good premiums in the futures markets.

'There is a positive as well as a negative side to every transaction.'



At the time I wrote this, we had moved down off of the highs but were still at good levels for selling into. The volatility was higher than I have ever seen. One week in the middle of March the Chicago May wheat contract traded an average daily range from the low to the high of 75 cents per bushel.

Possibly the largest challenge this year will be water and the lack of it in most areas. We are going to see a loss in some acreage for certain commodities as well as a reduction in production of others.

We are hearing of some areas with only enough water to produce two cuttings of hay this year. This leaves us with the possibility of steady to higher hay prices. This is good and not so good all at the same time depending on whether you are a seller or buyer.

What we do know (in some cases) is that yield is just as important if not more important than price. It all comes back to dollars per acre.

In the grain markets producers are currently a little hesitant to contract much of their crop with last year still fresh on their minds. There are still means to protect your downside risk in the markets

by using the futures markets.

Remember, we have visited about how nothing is perfect. There is a positive as well as a negative side to every transaction. That doesn't mean that one is good while the other is bad; it just means that they are different and you can accomplish your end goal by using a variety of programs.

An example is that at this time the basis for new crop soft white wheat looks to be low while the cash bid is OK; however, you could use the futures market or a "Hedge to Arrive" contract to set the futures price while futures are at these levels and then set your basis once it begins to strengthen.

This is without a doubt going to be a challenging year. One report is estimating that the cost of food worldwide could increase as much as 22% during the year.

When I say challenging, I feel it will be challenging for the producer to the brokers and elevators to the processors to the users (feedlots and bakers) to the consumers.

Often times, it is difficult for the consumers to think about us as producers and our challenges but we can always keep in mind the challenges of the consumers; after all, in the long run, that is who we are working for. ■



Photos by Nick Blanksma

This picture is of a potato field in Elmore County, which ranks as the No. 7 county in Idaho when it comes to total farm revenue.

Elmore is one of Idaho's top farm counties

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Elmore County is one of Idaho's most important counties when it comes to agriculture and it's also experiencing strong population growth like much of the rest of the state.

One of the main focuses of the Elmore County Farm Bureau organization is to make sure those newcomers understand the important role farmers and ranchers play in the county.

"We want to be the voice to educate people who move here on the benefits of agricultural production and how important farming and ranching are, not only to the county but the state as well," said ECFB President Nick Blanksma, who grows potatoes and alfalfa near Hammett.

Elmore County ranchers and farmers brought in a total of \$487 million in farm-gate revenue in 2019, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. That ranked the county No.

7 out of Idaho's 44 counties in that category.

When it comes to farm-gate revenue, which is the money agricultural producers receive for their commodity, cattle and calves and the dairy sectors are the two biggest contributors in Elmore County.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the livestock industry brought in \$311 million in farm-gate receipts in Elmore County during the 2017 census year and the crop sector

accounted for \$119 million in farm revenue.

“The cattle and dairy industries are definitely the two leading agricultural sectors in Elmore County,” Blanksma said.

According to the ag census, there were a total of 170,000 cattle and calves in Elmore County in 2017.

But agriculture in the county consists of a lot more than just livestock, Blanksma said.

“Elmore County has a healthy mix of agriculture commodities,” he said. “There are quite a few different crops grown here.”

According to the ag census, 45,846 acres of forage crops, mainly hay, were produced in the county in 2017, and also 19,751 acres of wheat, 15,296 acres of grain and 13,069 acres of potatoes. A decent amount of onions and other crops are also grown there.

“We have a good climate that supports a variety of crops,” Blanksma said.

Besides educating people about agriculture in the county, the Elmore County Farm Bureau also focuses a lot of time and resources on youth, including offering them scholarships.

“A big focus of Elmore County Farm Bureau is trying to increase scholarship participation among our youth and let them know that we support



Potatoes are planted in a field in Elmore County, which ranks as the No. 7 county in Idaho when it comes to total farm revenue.

them because they are the future of not only agriculture, but Farm Bureau as well,” Blanksma said.

According to the ag census, there were 340 farms in Elmore County in 2017 and 358,454 total acres of land in farms, including both cropland and

pastureland.

The average-sized farm in the county was 1,054 acres during the 2017 census year, which was more than double the statewide average of 468 acres.

There are plenty of big farms in Elmore County – 48 were more than

1,000 acres in size in 2017 – but there are also a lot of small farms – 122 were from 1 to 9 acres in size.

Ninety-six percent of all farms in the county were family farms in 2017 and 14 percent of Elmore County farms sold product directly to consumers, which was double the statewide average of 7 percent. ■



Elmore County ranchers and farmers brought in a total of \$487 million in farm-gate revenue in 2019, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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Bannock County farmers teach students about agriculture

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

McCAMMON – Bannock County Farm Bureau members went into the classroom March 3 to teach a group of fourth-graders in McCammon the difference between conventional and organic food production.

Bannock County farmers Stacy Burmester and Sandra Smith, who are both members of BCFB's Promotion and Education Committee, also taught the students at Mountain View Elementary School a little about Idaho agriculture in general.

At the beginning of the lesson, almost all of the students thought there was a nutritional difference between food raised through conventional methods vs. food raised through organic methods.

By the end of the lesson, the students understood that while there is consumer demand for both organic and conventional food, organic and conventional farming are just different methods of producing food but the nutritional value of organically and conventionally produced food is the same.

“Conventional farming and organic farming are both farming; they both grow food but they use different methods,” said Smith, who raises beef cattle as well as wheat and hay, in Arimo.

Holding up two apples, she said, “If you eat both apples, they have the same ingredients in them. The nutritional level is the same.”

“We need both methods of farming to survive,” said Burmester, a hay farmer from Downey. “You could not feed the world with just organic farming. You have to have conventional farming as well.”

“You can eat both and they are both nutritious; it's just a different way of farming,” she added.

The lesson was a hands-on learning

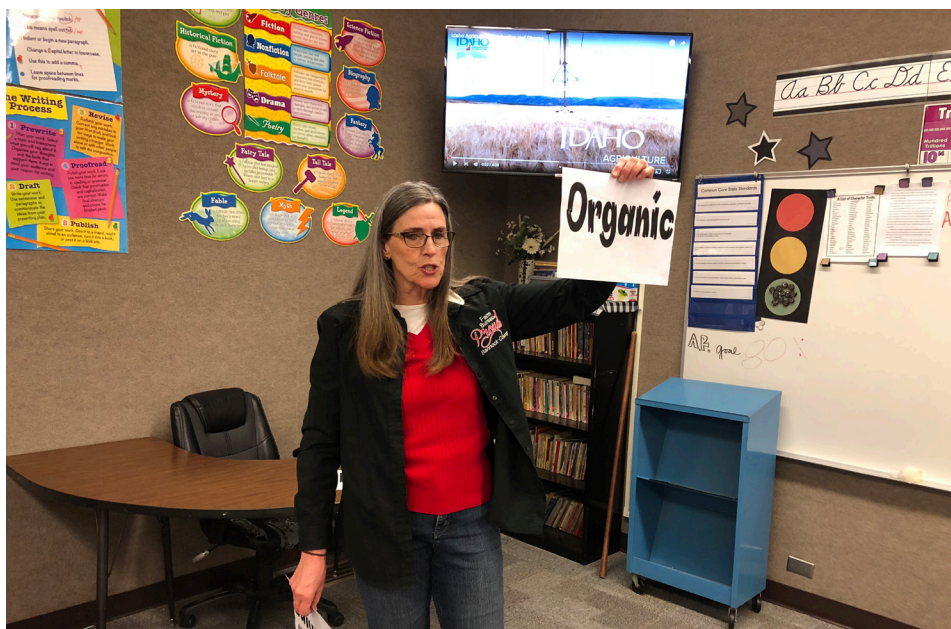


Photo by Sean Ellis

Sandra Smith, who raises cattle in Arimo, teaches fourth-grade students at Mountain View Elementary School in McCammon about the difference between conventional and organic farming March 3.

experience that included apples, pears, carrots, cucumbers, bananas and grapes.

The students also watched a short video that explained the difference between conventional and organic farming: “While they use different methods, they both work to meet the global demand for food.”

Another short video introduced the fourth-graders to some of the many agricultural commodities that Idaho farmers and ranchers produce.

It explained that Idaho farmers and ranchers produce 185 different commodities and the state ranks in the top 10 nationally in 25 agricultural commodities.

The video taught the students some things they already knew – Idaho is the nation's top potato-producing state – and some things they probably didn't know – there are more cattle than people in Idaho, seed produced in Idaho is prized globally, Idaho ranks No. 1 in alfalfa hay production, and the state, along with part of Eastern Oregon, is

home to the largest onion producing region in the United States.

Bannock County Farm Bureau members have been teaching fourth-grade students about agriculture for many years and in recent years have focused on explaining the difference between conventional and organic farming.

“The kids love that presentation; they have fun with it,” said Lorelle Anderson, the school's fourth-grade teacher.

Burmester said the Bannock County Farm Bureau organization believes it's important that youth understand where their food comes from “and that organic and conventional are just different methods of farming. They both produce nutritious food.”

“If we don't tell the story of agriculture and what we do, they won't hear it,” she added.

She concluded the lesson by telling the students: “We love what we do. It's not easy sometimes to farm, so keep the farmers in your prayers.” ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members watch a new rock-picking machine being demonstrated Nov. 30 during IFBF's annual convention, which was held in Fort Hall.

TerraClear 'rocks' Idaho Farm Bureau Federation convention

By Paige Nelson

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

FORT HALL – Idaho farmers are proud of the rich, volcanic soil in which they grow their crops.

But that fantastic soil originated from the erosion of rocks and, unfortunately for many farmers, those ancestral rocks are still nestled in, snug as can be, in many Idaho fields.

Trevor Thompson, president of TerraClear Inc., says that's where his new rock-picking machine steps in. Because

TerraClear is based out of Grangeville, Idaho, and Bellevue, Wash., basically all of the research and development done on the rock picker was performed in our neck of the woods.

"We know it works in Idaho," says Thompson.

Picking rocks in 2022

The picker, which was showcased during Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention in December, is designed with a mechanical arm fitted with rotating tracks that act as teeth. Behind the arm is a slotted

bucket with tines 3 inches apart. This allows the bucket to hold the rocks, letting the dirt fall through. The arm is operated with a joystick and moves left and right to distribute the rocks in the bucket efficiently.

Ultimately, explains Thompson, if you can get the bucket in the right spot, you just push a single button and the whole picking motion — tracks running and the arm going down at the rock — happens all on its own.

The rotating tracks then work to spit the rock into the bucket.

That's just the mechanical side of TerraClear. Using artificial intelligence and drone footage, the company also provides field mapping of rocks, up to 500 acres per day.

The AI looks at all the rocks in the field and creates the most efficient path for the operator to follow as they head out to work.

The AI even identifies the size of each rock in the field.

"We map fields so farmers know exactly where the rocks are, classified by size," Thompson says. "We designed a precision rock picker that hyper-efficiently removes the rocks. It allows farmers to travel directly to their problematic rocks and quickly remove them without disrupting the soil."

A better way

TerraClear claims it all began with the "classic founder story." The idea started where many good ideas start, in a field.

The founder was picking rocks by hand and had the same thought as anyone who has ever picked rocks: "There's got to be a better way to do this!"

He took his problem to Seattle where he had a network of professionals, from mechanical engineers to AI gurus

and robotics specialists, help find the answer. According to Thompson, the solution was two-fold:

- First, identify where all the rocks are. There's a huge efficiency problem in doing that. Farmers can't just roam a 500-acre field picking rocks very well. They can pick some of the rocks and put a dent in it, but they'll never know for sure how big the problem is or how well it's been solved.

- Secondly, there's got to be a better way to pick rocks. Traditional rock pickers are slow or very hard on the ground, so people opt to just pick their rocks by hand, says Thompson. The TerraClear team's aim was to mimic the human way of picking rocks.

The tool suite they designed answered both questions: thorough field mapping for efficiency in tandem with robotic arm picking for individual rocks.

Picking it right

TerraClear touts that its robotic arm is both versatile and compatible.

It's versatile because it can be used in any field condition.

"You're not restrained to a bare soil, cultivated field," says Thompson. "You can put it in a pastureland if you want. You can pick on a seeded field. You can

pick on a disced field. You can pick in any condition that you're comfortable getting the equipment out there."

The compatibility angle was a highly sought-after design component. TerraClear's team wanted their machinery to work for everybody and every piece of equipment possible.

"Everybody has a different skid steer," Thompson says. "We put a lot of engineering into bypassing the controls. As long as you have the minimum power requirements on a skid steer – 18-gallon flow and 2,800-pound tipping capacity – you can really control it on any piece of equipment."

But it's not just for skid steers; tractors with front-end loaders and even backhoes can run the picker.

This picker is designed for the operator to selectively pick rocks, and it may not be as efficient as a drum-type picker would be in dense areas with smaller rocks. However, Thompson says it will pick in super-dense areas, the operator just needs to be aware of how quickly the bucket is filling.

"We've tried to windrow the rocks and run this thing, and you can fill the bucket up in like 90 seconds," he notes.

The No. 1 question TerraClear team members are asked is how well do the tracks hold up?

Thompson's answer: a lot longer than you would suppose.

"When we first put these tracks on there, I would have guessed they would last about an hour. We've actually only had one track rip, and it was a guy trying to dig a stump out," he laughs. "Generally, it's designed for rocks."

Thompson says during R&D, the team has put 60,000-70,000 rocks through the test pickers and noticed the tracks start to wear on the outside but will still grab rocks. A replacement track comes in at \$100, so it's not generally cost-prohibitive to replace if needed.

Continuing the versatility conver-



A new rock-picking machine is demonstrated Nov. 30 during Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention, which was held in Fort Hall. (Photo by Sean Ellis)



Photo by Paige Nelson

Trevor Thompson, president of TerraClear Inc., explains how the company's new rock-picking machine works Nov. 30 during Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention, which was held in Fort Hall.

sation, the picker is designed to pick up rocks from 4 to 24 inches in size. Smaller rocks tend to fall through the tines on the bucket. Larger rocks – up to 30 inches – can be picked up but require a little more skill from the operator, explains Thompson.

He mentions that the trickiest rocks for any picker are flat rocks. The TerraClear picker can pick up flat rocks but their orientation may have to be changed for it to do so.

Making the picker work for everybody was critical. Thompson knows rock picking is typically thought of as the worst job on the farm, so the team designed the picker to be simple and fun to use.

“We really wanted to make it the first job or one of the more fun jobs on the

farm, so kids are eager to do it, or folks who aren't able to do a lot of the physical stuff can still get out and contribute to farming,” Thompson says.

Timing

The TerraClear rock picker is designed to be able to pick rocks under any field condition, giving farmers flexibility. Thompson says some farmers opt to pick in the spring, some in the fall, for differing reasons.

Obviously, skid steers offer one of the best field-of-vision options for the operator, but cause more ground disturbance than say a tractor would. Thus, timing may depend highly on the type of equipment to which the picker is mounted.

Most commonly, farmers wait until after harvest and before snow to get

out and pick rocks.

Field mapping is currently done by a third party. In eastern Idaho, a Blackfoot company offers the service. Picking can also be outsourced.

TerraClear has crews in northern and southern Idaho and another crew in Minnesota who offer mapping and rock picking.

Pickers can be purchased now. The TerraClear rock picker has a \$30,000 list price. Orders are being taken now for delivery in spring of 2022.

Contact Thompson with any questions at trevor.thompson@terraclear.com. Visit TerraClear online at www.TerraClear.com.

(Paige Nelson is a freelance writer from Rigby) ■



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