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## Next step in America's ag trade agenda



**W**henever a new administration takes over in Washington, there is often a period where agencies review policies and decide how to approach complex issues.

One of these issues that is usually top of mind is trade – a critical tool for American agriculture to sustain our businesses and fulfill our mission of providing the food, fiber and fuel our nation and world depends on.

For nearly nine months, the office of the United States Trade Representative has been evaluating next steps with China.

The purchase commitment for agriculture in the Phase 1 deal negotiated under the previous administration is nearing its end, and America's farmers and ranchers need reliable market access in China and countries around the world.

While agriculture exports to China have hit record highs, they are still far short of what China agreed to in the deal.

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai recently shared that the administration would keep tariffs in place on China while holding them

See **DUVALL**, page 6

## The President's Desk

By **Bryan Searle**

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

### Farmers facing significant challenges



**G**rowing and producing food is never an easy task but, that said, 2021 was an exceptionally challenging year for Idaho's farmers and ranchers.

Still, they got the job done and that's a good thing for those who like to eat and also for the state's economy, which is heavily dependent on Idaho's vast and varied agricultural sector.

When it comes to the production of food, Idaho is a national leader in many different commodities.

Idaho typically ranks No. 1 in the United States in four agricultural commodities (potatoes, barley,

trout and peppermint oil), No. 2 in two commodities (sugar beets and hops), No. 3 in two commodities (alfalfa hay and milk), No. 4 in three commodities (dry onions, spring wheat and lentils) and No. 5 in two commodities (dry edible peas and haylage).

This year, Idaho's almost 25,000 farms and ranches were dealt some bad cards when it came to weather and other growing conditions.

The growing season started out with a hard frost, which is never a good way to start the crop year.

Then came an early-season heat wave, followed by

See **SEARLE**, page 7

## Inside Farm Bureau

By **Zak Miller**

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

### Let's not eat our Golden Goose



**I**t requires a very enterprising marketing executive to convince people that some states are great. But for those of us in Idaho, such creativity isn't as necessary.

We live in a great state and a good window is all that most of us need to know that. Of course, Idaho does have some issues, as all states do, but all and all, if our state can be compared to a goose, it is laying some golden eggs.

Continuing with the Golden Goose metaphor, I would like to address one essential ingredient of the bird feed that allows Idaho to lay the golden

eggs that it does: the state's economy.

Idaho consistently ranks very high in different state quality rankings and our vibrant economy is always one of the main reasons for that.

Idaho's agriculture industry is the single largest contributor to Idaho's overall economy, according to University of Idaho studies.

Water, fertile soils, and a hospitable environment are God-given resources that enable agriculture to thrive in our state. Careful and respectful management of those resources is the final

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**COVER: A farm in Juniper, Idaho, is shown in this photo taken Oct. 13. Idaho leads the West in farm income on a per capita basis. See story on page 37. (Photo by Michaela Andrus)**



Photos by Sean Ellis

Barley is harvested in a field near Soda Springs in 2020. The U.S. barley crop is way down this year and farmers in Idaho, which leads the nation in total barley production, are being offered a lot more money to grow their crop next year.

# Contract prices for Idaho barley up significantly


By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Idaho barley farmers are being offered a lot more money to grow their crop next year.

Major beer brewers are aggressively pursuing contracts with Idaho farmers to grow barley next year and the amount they are offering is well above what barley farmers are normally paid for their commodity.

Rupert farmer Mike Wilkins normally gets paid



between \$9.50 and \$10 per hundred-weight (cwt) for his barley. He will be paid \$14 per cwt for his barley next year.

“This is the highest price I’ve seen since I’ve been growing barley,” said Wilkins, who has grown the crop for three decades.

Idaho farmers typically grow about a third of the nation’s barley crop.

Malt barley is a critical part of the beer-brewing process and about 75 percent of the barley produced in Idaho is malt barley, while the rest is used for human food or animal feed.

Most of the malt barley produced in Idaho is purchased by major beer companies such as Anheuser-Busch and Molson Coors.

The vast majority of Idaho’s malt barley crop is grown under contract and major brewing companies are aggressively seeking contracts for next year, said Laura Wilder, executive director of the Idaho Barley Commission.

These companies are contracting earlier than normal and offering a lot more money for the 2022 crop because they need to get their supply locked down for next year, she said.

Wilder said barley contract prices for growers in the nation’s top beer-producing states of Idaho, Montana and North Dakota are expected to be up 40 percent or more for the 2022 season.

Idaho plays a critical role in the nation’s beer industry and the state’s farmers typically grow enough barley to produce about 12 million barrels of beer or 4.1 billion 12-ounce bottles of beer each year.

Total barley production in Idaho and the United States was way down this year compared with 2020, resulting in a frenzied push by brewing companies to lock up supply for the 2022 season, said Clark Johnston, owner and manager of JC Management Co.

“Malt companies are aggressively pursuing contracts for malt barley for next season,” said Johnston, who contracts with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation to help farmers and ranchers market their commodities. “They need to in-

crease their acreage to try to fill up the pipeline again, as well as their storage.”

Johnston said the increased price for malt barley contracts is a great development for growers, especially considering that their input costs have risen sharply this year.

“When the opportunity’s there, you’ve got to take it,” he said.

According to USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, total barley production in the U.S. this year is forecast at 118 million bushels, down 31 percent from 171 million bushels in 2020.

NASS estimates Idaho’s total barley production this year will be 44 million bushels, down 20 percent from 55 million bushels last year.

That has resulted in beer brewing companies scrambling to lock up contracted malt barley acreage for 2022. To do that, they have to offer contracts that compete with wheat prices, which are up substantially this year.

Blackfoot farmer Allen Young is getting \$10.50 per cwt this year for his barley but will receive \$14 next season.

“You can get a little more money growing wheat but barley is a little cheaper to raise,” he said.

Teton farmer Dwight Little said brewing companies are offering a lot more money for barley contracts for the 2022 season and “they have to because wheat prices are pretty strong right now.”

“The increase is definitely needed,” he said. “We’ve been just barely scraping by on this barley thing for 3-5 years, getting just enough to keep us in business.”

But he also said farmers are paying a lot more for inputs this year.

“A lot of the increase in prices that the malt companies are offering for barley will be gobbled up by the increased costs that we are paying for inputs,” Little said.

Idaho farmers typically grow a little more than 1 million acres of wheat each year and about 500,000 acres of barley. Those two crops could compete more than usual for acres during the 2022 season.

Johnston said that if substantially more barley acres are grown in Idaho next year, “it’s not going to take acres away from potatoes or sugar beets and it’s not going to come away from corn silage either; if they take some additional acres in malt, it’s going to come away from wheat.” ■

# DUVALL

*Continued from page 2*

accountable for their commitments under Phase 1.

However, it wasn't reassuring to hear that the administration won't pursue any negotiations for a Phase 2 deal.

As we deliver safe, sustainable products to our customers near and far, we must also ensure American farmers and ranchers have a level playing field in new and existing markets.

For example, we should reengage with the countries in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Tran-Pacific Partnership so the United States can access more markets in the region.

In the past few months, China, Taiwan and the United Kingdom have all applied to join the CPTPP and the U.S. should be next. We can't be left behind.

When exploring trade partnerships across the Atlantic, we must remove the

non-tariff barriers that limit our ability to compete in the European Union.

American farmers and ranchers lead the world in climate-smart practices, and it's critical that our trade partners recognize these gains without placing limits on the tools we need to achieve our sustainability goals.

When Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack visited the EU recently, he emphasized the importance of allowing countries to approach sustainability in their own way and not limit which agriculture goods can be imported based on restrictive policies in the EU's Farm to Fork initiative.

The USDA estimates that food insecurity would skyrocket if those policies were implemented worldwide because of decreased food production.

In September, I had the opportunity to join a group of leaders in meeting with the World Trade Organization's director-general and these were some of the issues I raised.

I also shared how removing tariffs and non-tariff barriers, strengthening science-based foods safety standards, and greater global trade transparency will help us succeed.

The timing of this meeting could not have come at a better time. Trade representatives from many countries were scheduled to meet during the latter part of October at the WTO's ministerial meeting to discuss these very issues.

U.S. agriculture has long been a global leader in trade and we know that when we have a level playing field with other countries, our farmers and ranchers will continue to lead the way thanks to the care and dedication we put into our work.

That is why it is so important whenever any country institutes unfair trading practices, we work to remove non-tariff barriers that stifle competition and create an uneven playing field for America's farmers and ranchers. ■

# MILLER

*Continued from page 2*

element that makes Idaho agriculture and Idaho's economy in general work.

As romantic as it sounds and is to farm and ranch in Idaho, it also takes a lot of effort and human resources.

Going back to the goose feed analogy, human effort with respect for natural resources makes for some mighty fine bird feed.

It is essential to provide good feed to keep the goose laying, and as all bird enthusiasts will attest, good food needs to be provided often.

One good feeding and then neglect is not a recipe for many eggs to be laid.

Idaho's increasingly tight labor supply is a major challenge to ensuring the state's economy is provided with enough good feed to allow Idaho to keep laying its golden eggs.

An interesting number appeared in September regarding Idaho's employment situation. According to the Idaho Department of Labor, there were almost two job

listings in the state for every unemployed person.

That means there are roughly two job openings for every Idahoan that is looking for work.

All businesses, including farms and ranches, are feeling pressure from the lack of available workers in the state. While innovation could solve some of the job supply issue, some things just cannot be innovated or managed out of as quickly or easily as we would like.

Using farm country as an example, cows still need to be milked, potatoes dug, grain thrashed, and on and on.

But in some cases, agricultural businesses simply cannot find enough people to work.

Agriculture, like every other sector of the economy, is learning to do more with fewer people, but zero people is not a good business plan.

If our goose – agriculture – doesn't eat, it doesn't lay, and if enough time goes by, desperation may lead to the eating of that goose that could have given us so much

more.

Our farmers and ranchers desperately need help. Farm work is challenging. The pay is fair, but it is earned.

Everyone looking for a job can choose between multiple options good for them, but because farming is hard work, jobs available in the agricultural sector are often ignored.

Federal labor reform and guest worker programs have been discussed for over 30 years now, with no real results.

There are people anxious for the opportunity to come here to work. Together as a nation we need to find a way to connect these people with the farmers and ranchers that desperately need them, in a fair and legal manner.

Personally, I have always preferred eating eggs to eating birds. It might just be the cow rancher in me.

Without the bravery from our elected officials to address the current labor supply shortage, our golden goose of Idaho's economy will be closer to the cooking pot than the laying nest. ■

severe drought conditions throughout most of the state that lasted the entire summer.

Finding enough water to get their crops to harvest was a major challenge for many Idaho producers in 2021.

The constant smoke from wildfires that covered the skies for a good portion of the summer added another woe the state's ag producers had to deal with.

The combined result of the frost, heat, drought and smoke was felt in significantly reduced yields for most of the state's crops.

For example, wheat production in Idaho was down 32 percent this year compared with 2020, barley production was down 21 percent and yields for large and small chickpeas were down 46 percent and 57 percent, respectively.

Though the final numbers aren't in yet, it appears Idaho spud yields will also be down substantially this year.

The drought and heat also reduced the amount of food on rangeland available for cattle and the reduced yields for hay and other animal feed crops had a major negative effect on the state's cattle and dairy sectors.

Despite the reduced yields, Idaho farmers and ranchers still produced an amazing amount of food and fiber this year.

However, it wasn't easy and the myriad challenges farmers and ranchers in Idaho and across the nation face are not going away. In fact, they seem to be getting worse.

Farm input costs continue to rise at an alarming rate, which is putting a severe financial strain on many agricultural operations, some of which, unfortunately, are on the verge of not being able to continue.

Adding to the uncertainty, Idaho's reservoirs are mostly empty and the state needs a pretty good snowfall this winter to ensure farmers and ranchers have enough water for the 2022 season.

We've also faced several regulatory challenges, including the new administration repealing the waters of the U.S. rule that protects our water rights, keeping them in our hands and not the hands of the federal government.

Be assured that Farm Bureau as an organization is very engaged in defending and fighting for our rights and doing everything possible to protect agriculture.

As I have visited with my colleagues, particularly from the West, I have learned that agricultural producers in every state have been impacted as much or even worse than we have here in Idaho. In fact, it's believed there may be a few items that are in short supply this year on grocery store shelves.

Not to panic, as there is plenty of food, but there have been some needed adjustments made in which crops were planted or not planted due to water and other challenges.

While agriculture continues to underpin the state's economy and acts as a stabilizing force in many rural economies, the economic, regulatory and other challenges that farmers and ranchers face right now are daunting.

That's the bad news.

The good news for the state's economy is that despite the challenging growing year, the impact that the agricultural industry has on the

state's fiscal well-being will still be significant this year.

According to a University of Idaho study, agriculture accounts for one in every eight jobs in the state, 13 percent of the state's total gross domestic product and roughly \$26 billion in total sales.

Agriculture underpins Idaho's overall economy and does so even in poor production years.

That's because cows still need to be milked, regardless of the price the dairyman is getting for their milk, and potatoes still need to be planted and harvested, again, regardless of the price the potato farmer gets for his or her spuds.

This will be accomplished, again, due to the brilliant minds of farmers and ranchers, who will find a way to get the job done even with the many challenges they face.

But we as an industry and as a state can't take the economic engine that agriculture is for granted.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation volunteer members and staff continue to work on behalf of farmers and ranchers across the state to ensure everything that can be done is being done to address and overcome the many challenges that the state's agriculture industry is facing.

The same thing goes for American Farm Bureau Federation, when it comes to federal issues and issues that affect every farmer and rancher across the nation.

We appreciate all of those who join us in that task, from elected officials to your average, everyday Idahoan. We must all work together to ensure that agriculture continues to be the vibrant economic engine in Idaho that it is today and always has been. ■



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Photos by Sean Ellis

Employees at Cup Bop Korean restaurant in downtown Boise fill orders Sept. 25. Like businesses across the state, Cup Bop is finding it increasingly challenging to find enough workers.

# Every sector of Idaho economy facing worker shortage

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Finding enough workers to fill positions has been a major challenge for farmers and ranchers in Idaho for several years.

But now, a tight labor supply is not only a serious issue for the state's agricultural

industry. Businesses in virtually every sector of the state's economy are struggling to find workers.

"It's not just agriculture; it goes much deeper than that," said Georgia Smith, communication and research administrator for the Idaho Department of Labor. "Labor is the No. 1 issue for businesses as a whole."

It's also not just an Idaho issue.

"It is an increasing challenge nationwide," said Craig Shaul, a research and analyst supervisor for the IDL.

But the labor shortage has reached a crisis point in Idaho in large part because the state's economy is doing so well, he said.

Idaho's unemployment rate was 2.9 percent in August, a level that many econ-



omists consider to be full employment, Smith said.

As an example of how tight the state's labor supply is, as of Sept. 17, there were 50,000 unfilled job postings in Idaho and 26,400 people who were unemployed, Shaul said.

That means that even if all those unemployed people suddenly found work, there would still be more than 23,000 unfilled job listings in the state.

"Idaho's labor force is as tight as it was before the pandemic hit," Shaul said. "The labor force that was available to some industries is no longer there."

That's good for employees but not so great for employers, as workers can shop around for a higher wage or "ideal" job.

"It's not even just ag competing with ag for workers right now," Shaul said. "It's the ag industry competing with everybody else at this point."

Around the state and particularly in the fast-growing Treasure Valley region that includes Boise, some businesses are having to cut back hours or even close on certain days because they simply cannot get enough workers.

"It has been pretty difficult to find workers for the past six months," said Cliff Harris, manager for Cup Bop, a Korean restaurant in the heart of downtown Boise.

Although the restaurant has not had to close or cut back hours because of the tight labor supply, Harris said, "We have gone through periods of being really short-staffed (and that) makes it difficult to get everything done."

"Everybody is competing hard for labor," said Matt Hunter, president and CEO of the Greater Pocatello Chamber of Commerce. "It's everywhere and it's everybody."

As Idaho's harvest typically gets rolling in August, peak employment for full-time and temporary positions at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture is around 550 workers. But this year, the ISDA could only fill about half those positions, said ISDA Deputy Director Chanel Tewalt.

As a result, department heads and even ISDA Director Celia Gould have been out walking fields doing inspections this year, in addition to their other duties.

"We're at a point where everyone wears multiple hats," Tewalt said. "You're not



**This is one of many "we're hiring" signs that can be seen in downtown Boise. Help wanted signs and postings are on the rise across the state.**

wearing two hats anymore; you're wearing four hats."

In addition to fulfilling its statutory duties, the state ag department also must do things, such as field inspections, that the state's farming and ranching industry has asked it to do, she said.

"We're just figuring out creative ways to get work done," Tewalt said. "We understand that our job with industry keeps the wheels of commerce moving. They count on us to perform duties such as inspections ... so when we have a job to do, we'll get it done."

Of course, farmers and ranchers continue to struggle to find enough workers, especially during the planting and harvest seasons.

Williamson Orchards and Vineyards had to raise the average wage it pays its laborers by \$1 an hour last year to get enough workers to complete the harvest. This year, the Caldwell business had to raise its average wage another \$2 an hour.

"The labor supply is pretty tight," said Williamson manager Michael Williamson. "It's really critical at this point."

He said the company has for a few years now considered bringing in foreign workers through the federal H-2A agricultural

guest worker program but hasn't because of the additional cost involved.

But the labor supply situation has reached such a critical point that "we're really considering it this year," Williamson added.

LaNae Nalder, who raises cattle on irrigated pasture in Rupert, said she has had unfilled job postings for the past several months.

"It's a struggle to find qualified applicants willing to work," said Nalder, who also is part of her family farm in Butte County. "There is just no labor."

She said the situation is at a point now where more automation to make labor jobs go further is almost a must.

"We have to have it," Nalder said. "It has become a necessity. It's impossible to find workers."

In a way, when it comes to labor availability, Idaho's economy has been a victim of its own success, Smith said. The state's economy is doing so well that it has created a serious labor shortage.

Idaho was the first state in the nation to return to its post-pandemic job level, Smith said. The state has added 7,000 new businesses since the onset of the pandemic and the new Amazon distribution center



Farm workers pick wine grapes at a vineyard in southwestern Idaho last year. Farms, ranches and other businesses around the state are having a hard time finding workers right now.

in Nampa alone hired more than 2,000 people.

“Anyone who wants a job can have a job,” Smith said. “A lot of this is because our economy is doing so well.”

Some businesses are struggling just to stay open because they can’t find enough workers, said Dan Cravens, director of Idaho State University’s Bengal Solutions Consulting, which consults with businesses.

“I work with a lot of employers who are having difficulty finding workers, especially for lower-paying jobs,” he said. “It’s very hard for a lot of employers to find folks. It’s a struggle and it’s a significant problem.”

Smith said labor is the No. 1 issue for businesses as a whole.

It’s also the top issue for farmers and ranchers across the nation, American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members in June during his visit to the state to learn about the importance of dams.

“As I’ve traveled America, labor is the biggest issue we face in agriculture,” he said during a stop in Caldwell. “Labor is so hard to come by (and) the labor situation probably concerns me more than anything across the board.”

Duvall said AFBF continues to try to

find a solution.

“We’ve beat our heads on that issue for 20 years,” he said. “We’re working on it. I’d love to find a solution to it.”

Shaul said Idaho’s very tight labor situation is a result of several factors, including people retiring early, COVID concerns, some people staying on the sidelines for a variety of reasons and people shopping around for a higher wage.

Several factors “all at the same time are contributing to this,” he said.

Until that changes, he added, “employers will be facing some stiff competition for workers and maybe even a threat to their business because they can’t get workers.” ■



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# Idaho cloud seeding program could expand

By **John O'Connell**

*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

The Idaho Water Resource Board is taking the initial steps toward expanding its longstanding cloud seeding program into new areas of the state.

On Sept. 17, the board approved a \$389,000 year-long contract with Sandy, Utah-based North American Weather Consultants to launch a cloud seeding pilot program this winter on the Idaho side of the Bear River Basin.

The Utah company was the lowest bidder, beating out Idaho Power's bid of \$715,000.

"Right now, there's a lot of need in the Bear watershed. We saw that particularly in this past year when there just wasn't enough water for all of the agricultural

needs in the area," said Garrett Cammans, president of North American Weather Consultants. "We're excited to be part of the solution."

The board also approved a \$300,000 contract with a Boulder, Colo., research-based entity. The National Center for Atmospheric Research will design the Bear River program, identify additional Idaho basins in which cloud seeding might be a good fit and assess the efficacy of the state's existing cloud seeding programs.

NCAR was established by the National Science Foundation in 1960 to "provide the university community with world-class facilities and services that were beyond the reach of any individual institution."

In April, Gov. Brad Little signed legislation directing the board to assess the state's

cloud seeding programs and expand upon them.

The science of cloud seeding entails emitting silver iodide vapor into the atmosphere using ground-based propane generators or dropping it from an aircraft amid a storm.

The silver iodide particles serve as nuclei on which super-cooled cloud droplets can attach, forming ice crystals that fall and become raindrops.

Research has shown a well-run cloud seeding program can bolster precipitation throughout a targeted area by 5 to 15 percent.

Kala Golden, cloud seeding program coordinator with the Idaho Department of Water Resources, said the return on the state's investment in cloud seeding has

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photo

The Idaho Water Resource Board plans to expand its long-standing cloud seeding program into new areas of the state.

equated to about \$3.50 for every additional acre-foot of water.

By comparison, the current cost of renting an acre-foot ranges from \$20 through the board's water bank to upwards of \$40 through other rental pools.

"Cloud seeding has been something the board has progressively gotten more and more involved with," Golden said, explaining cloud seeding should be viewed as a long-term investment with benefits accruing over time rather than a quick fix to implement amid a drought.

North American Weather Consultants will utilize a single aircraft in the initial year of Idaho's Bear River cloud seeding program, which will run from Nov. 1 through April 15.

They'll subcontract with a Texas company, SOAR, to provide the pilot and aircraft. The plane will likely be based out of the Pocatello Regional Airport.

Cammans explained Texas conducts its cloud seeding during the summer months, making the aircraft available when it's needed in Idaho.

Cammans said his company has conducted a cloud seeding program on the Utah side of the Bear River watershed since the mid-1980s.

That program utilizes manually operated

ground-based generators, which are operated by ranchers and other landowners when storm conditions are right.

"They're individuals who have a lot at stake, so they're pretty eager to participate in the program," Cammans said.

Cammans said his company already has meteorologists who study storm systems moving into the Bear River watershed because of the program on the Utah side, which will make running an Idaho program far more efficient.

He said Utah's Bear River program has supplemented the snowpack by 8 to 10 percent on average throughout the years.

The science shows benefits of cloud seeding extend as far as 300 miles from a target area, and the local gains that are reaped don't come at the expense of other downwind regions, he said.

Cammans explained most storms drop about 10 percent of their available moisture, and cloud seeding simply extracts an extra percent or so, leaving ample moisture remaining in the clouds.

After this pilot year, Golden said, the board intends to supplement its aircraft in the Bear River watershed with ground-based generators.

Golden said the board will evaluate potential generator sites that would be

"meaningful to the basin."

"It is the board's intent to build out a comprehensive program that is comparable to our other programs we partner with Idaho Power on," Golden said.

Idaho Power — which generates most of its electricity from hydropower turbines — the board and water users collaborate on longstanding cloud seeding programs in the Wood River basin, the Boise basin and in the Upper Snake basin above Palisades Reservoir and in the Henry's Fork.

Idaho Power, the board and the water users who benefit all contribute a third of program costs. Idaho Power also operates an independent program in the Payette basin.

Paul Arrington, executive director and general counsel for the Idaho Water Users Association, represents groundwater districts and canal companies throughout the state. He said the water users have become believers in cloud seeding.

"We were skeptical at first but most if not all of us have come around to understanding and appreciating that cloud seeding is a valuable tool to help sustain and shore up water supplies — like an arrow in your quiver so to speak," Arrington said. ■

**Where  
does Idaho  
wheat go?**



# Idaho wheat used in numerous well-known products

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – If you eat wheat products, chances are you regularly consume wheat grown in Idaho.

The Gem State typically ranks No. 5 or 6 in the nation for total wheat production.

“Anything you see on the grocery store shelf that has wheat in it could have been made from a variety of wheat grown here in Idaho,” says Casey Chumrau, executive director of the Idaho Wheat Commission, which represents the state’s wheat growers.

Wheat is grown in 42 of Idaho’s 44 counties and the state’s 2,500 wheat farmers typically produce more than 100 million bushels of wheat each year off of about 1.2 million acres.

Idaho farmers grow five of the six classes of wheat, which means Idaho wheat is used in a wide variety of products.

Idaho wheat is used in a lot of big-name products, including Papa Murphy’s pizza dough, Mission tortillas, Taco Bell products, Cheez-It crackers, Goldfish crackers and other Pepperidge Farm products, red licorice and Nabisco products.

A large number of breakfast cereals also use Idaho wheat.

“If people are eating wheat products at breakfast, lunch and dinner, there is a good probability that they are eating wheat from Idaho at every single meal,” Chumrau says. “A lot of the big brand names that everybody knows and puts in their kids’ lunches are made with Idaho wheat.”

It’s likely the vast majority of Idahoans



Idaho Wheat Commission photo

**Wheat is harvested in a field near Firth this year.**

**LEFT: Wheat grows in a field near Rockland earlier this year.** (Photo by Cory Kress)



Photo by Kristin Calvert

**Wheat is harvested in a North Idaho field this year.**

have no idea Idaho wheat shows up in so many products and Meridian wheat farmer Neil Durrant believes a lot of Idaho farmers don't know either.

"I don't think many farmers know what products their wheat goes into," he says.

Ririe farmer Gordon Gallup says he didn't know until he served on the Idaho Wheat Commission.

"It was kind of an eye-opener and a fun fact to learn," he says.

Most states produce one or two classes of wheat but Idaho produces five of the six wheat classes: soft white, hard white, hard red spring, hard red winter and durum wheat.

"We have a wheat class for every single end product, so there is a huge variety and range of products that our wheat goes into," Chumrau says.

The reason Idaho is able to produce so many classes of wheat, she says, is that "we have great geographic diversity in Idaho – we have a lot of micro-climates here – and our irrigation infrastructure helps a lot because it allows us to have a very consistent crop year after year and control

that Mother Nature side of the production process."

According to farmers, Idaho's hot, dry summers, coupled with adequate irrigation water from the state's reservoirs – almost two-thirds of Idaho's wheat is grown under irrigation – creates ideal growing conditions for wheat.

The desert environment in southern Idaho also means fewer plant pests and diseases.

Chumrau says Idaho has a reputation for producing a consistent supply of quality wheat, which makes the state important to many large wheat buyers across the nation and world.

That means that besides ending up in many different products, Idaho wheat also ends up in many different locations.

Wheat grown in Idaho is shipped to at least 26 different states and is exported to a long list of other countries.

According to the IWC, in the past five years, dozens of wheat buyers from countries representing 35 percent of the world's population have visited Idaho wheat farms and elevators to inspect the

state's wheat crop.

Chumrau says Idaho's wheat industry focuses not only on good agronomic qualities of the wheat varieties grown here but also on the end-use quality specifications that wheat buyers are looking for.

"So the customers, both domestically and internationally, know that Idaho always has a high-quality product to offer," she says. "The fact that these customers can get multiple classes of wheat from one source and one area makes it a lot more attractive to them and logistically, more economical."

Wheat is Idaho's No. 2 crop, behind potatoes, in terms of total farm-gate receipts, which is what the farmer receives for their commodity, and is an important part of farmers' crop rotations across the state.

The majority of Idaho's wheat crop is soft white wheat, which is used in sponge cake, noodles and cookies.

The hard wheat varieties go into everything from pan to artisan breads, tortillas and some pastas. Durum wheat is used for pasta. ■





Photos by Bill Schaefer

University of Idaho researcher Mike Thornton checks to make sure a potato roller is operating at the correct speed.

# UI research aims at protecting Idaho spuds' reputation for quality

**By Bill Schaefer**

*For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

What began in 2017 as an effort to remedy a quality issue of Idaho's fresh-market potatoes eventually developed into an offensive to limit defects in both the fresh and processed potato market sectors.

During the past four years, two University of Idaho potato researchers, Mike Thornton and Nora Olsen, have followed the journey of Idaho potatoes from harvest to storage and then from out of storage in transit to distribution centers to find the sources of potato defects, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of Idaho's potatoes.

Thornton, a professor of plant sciences working primarily on potatoes and onions

at UI's Parma Research & Extension Center, said impact-bruising contributes to an array of other potato defects.

"If you take the things that are directly related to a bruise ... it's like 70 percent of all the rejection notices are tied to those things that are related to impacts that happen at harvest or while we're handling them or shipping them," Thornton said.

Olsen, a professor specializing in potato storage at UI's Kimberly Research & Extension Center, said the many factors that create quality control issues include potato variety susceptibility to bruising, ideal temperatures for harvesting, storage, transportation and late-season soil moisture.

"There's just so many layers to bruise, we just need to keep peeling it back and figuring

out what are the bigger targets," Olsen said.

Both Thornton and Olsen have spent countless hours over the past four years observing potato harvest practices, measuring the drop heights of harvest equipment, the speed of the rollers and the amount of padding and quality of conveyor belts moving the potatoes into storage, as well as moving the potatoes out of storage and to distribution centers around the country.

At the same time, they have overseen production of a series of instructional videos on best management practices to avoid potato bruising. The videos come in both English and Spanish narration.

The videos illustrate proper techniques to minimize drop heights in the field operations of windrowers, potato harvesters, stingers,

conveyors and pilers when transferring potatoes from trucks to the storage cellars.

The videos also cover the correct operation of the potato scooper and the drop height of the conveyor into the trailer when moving potatoes out of storage.

An important partner throughout their quality control research was Walmart.

“They have this massive data set from all the distribution centers,” Thornton said of Walmart. “They have the best data set that they could share with us where we could see what’s going on in real time. They sent us those every week.”

Olsen said Walmart provided a lot of in-kind information and a lot of details that provided insight into the data they were collecting.

“You can collect any data but if you don’t have the context behind it then it’s hard to put it into action,” Olsen said. “Walmart did a nice job of doing that and then, also, a lot of our packers were great. Our fresh packers were so welcoming and helpful, trying different things and being very open with us, as well. I think that was key.”

One of the Idaho shippers working with Thornton and Olsen was Wada Farms out of Pingree. Wada Farms is one of the major suppliers of Idaho potatoes to Walmart.

Eric Beck, director of marketing for Wada Farms, said Walmart was the driving factor behind the project. According to Beck, Walmart wanted to identify not only ways to promote potato health at harvest but specifically for potatoes coming out of storage.

“It was pretty cool to see a retailer say we want to be part of the process,” Beck said. “Let’s utilize our resources and let’s work together to find a good result not just for Walmart’s customers but for the industry in general.”

Beck said that Thornton and Olsen “did tremendous amounts of sampling on the product that was coming inbound that day in the storages, getting data from that aspect of it so we could see from storage to final destination what were the core factors that were affecting potato health at that time.”

After sampling potatoes coming out of storage, Beck, Thornton and Olsen would meet the trucks at their final destination — Walmart distribution centers in Utah, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas



**University of Idaho researcher Nora Olsen checks potatoes held in storage at UI’s Kimberly Agricultural Research and Extension center.**

and New York.

“We met them when they opened up the doors,” Olsen said, referring to meeting the trailers when they arrived at the distribution centers.

“We were able to go in to all the Walmart facilities and work with their (quality control) teams,” Beck said. “We were able to observe their quality control and inspection processes in order to see if there’s any anomalies and then identify the consistencies that we’re seeing across the board.”

Beck said there were several items they identified during the process that improved their understanding of how to improve the quality of potatoes from the field to the consumer’s table.

“I think every little bit kind of helps overall in the bigger picture,” he said.

One factor that seemed to stand out was some trailers were not always kept at a temperature range of between 40 and 45 degrees.

Thornton said that when checking the tractor-trailer logs, they would find some trailer temperatures never dropped below 50 to 55 degrees.

“They’re not meeting the conditions in the trucks that they think they’re getting and that’s contributing to some of this loss in quality,” he said.

Travis Blacker, director of industry relations for the Idaho Potato Commission, said the IPC contributed about \$250,000 for the project.

“This project easily paid for itself,” Blacker

said. “This wasn’t just for shippers; this was for all growers — better practices and helping with harvest and handling and storage and packing. This is not just fresh pack growers but process growers as well. Really, it affects the bottom line of returns going directly back to the growers.”

Thornton said the success of the program could be seen in the reduction of rejected shipments at the distribution centers.

“The rejection notice data speaks for itself,” Thornton said. “We’ve seen a steady drop every year in the number of rejections. That’s telling us we’ve got less shipments that have a problem when they show up at the distribution center.”

Thornton said Walmart has taken notice of the program’s success and has started applying some of the lessons learned to other lines of fresh produce.

Thornton believes their work has helped to unify the fresh potato industry behind the goal of trying to improve quality controls.

“I think the best thing about this project was it brought the whole fresh industry’s attention to, ‘Hey, we have got to work hard to make sure we have quality potatoes 12 months of the year because one of our biggest customers is asking us to do that,’” he said. “I think all Nora and I did was give them some tools, give them some information, but they did all the work.”

“The fact that rejections have gone down is because shippers have started paying more attention to the quality assurance process.” ■

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After the

BURN

# How wildlife are affected

By Randy Brooks  
University of Idaho

We have focused a lot on wildfire effects in this column the last few months. After all, fire occurrence in 2021 is 161% of the 20-year average, and the number of acres burned is 578% of the 20-year average.

So far, 2021 has seen 115,971 acres of land burned across the state. The 20-year average is 20,049 acres burned in one year. Suffice it to say, wildfire has affected many of us and the ecosystems it has burned.

While we tend to focus on wildfire effects on structures, timber, soil and land, one thing that can be overlooked is the impact fire can have on wildlife.

You'll be glad to know that most wild animals do survive wildfires and they are much smarter than we give them credit for. Animals, forests and forest fires are all part of a natural, healthy cycle.

Who can forget the iconic forest fire scene in Disney's *Bambi* movie? For many young children, myself included, this is their first exposure to wildfire. Adorable and helpless bunnies, possums and deer running from a fire set by a man.

So, what exactly is the impact of forest fires on wildlife? It turns out that like most things in life, it's a mixed bag. On one hand, wildfire is a natural part of the ecosystem in the western United States, and wildlife has a long relationship with it.

Some species even benefit from the blazes. Many plants and animals depend on naturally occurring wildfire to flourish.

Many types of quail, foxes, bears, squirrels and other animals depend on fire to keep undergrowth in check. Consequently, all forest-dwelling plants and animals have co-evolved with the inevitable fires and have found ways to adapt.

On the other hand, of course fire can be dangerous to animals and plants that can't outrun it.

Wildfire provides habitat, cleans the forest floor, kills disease and insects, and so much more. Contrary to the *Bambi* movie, during the Yellowstone Park fires of 1988,



Photos by Bo Brooks

**These sheep were grazing by the Snake River while the Snake River Complex fire (burning in July 2021) was flaming above them and they appeared unconcerned about the fire occurring near them.**

**OPPOSITE PAGE: During the Yellowstone Park fires of 1988, animal behavioral scientists didn't observe large animals fleeing the flames. What they noticed was that most of them appeared completely indifferent even to fires that were crowning out.**

animal behavioral scientists didn't observe large animals fleeing the flames.

What they noticed was that most of them appeared completely indifferent even to fires that were crowning out (see photo No. 1 for crown fire example).

Bison, elk, and other big game grazed and rested within sight of flames, often less than 100 yards from burning trees. Smaller mammals and most birds that left their habitat while it was burning returned within hours or days.

One local example is the bighorn sheep in photo No. 2. These sheep were grazing by the Snake River while the Snake River Complex fire (burning in July 2021) was flaming above them and they appeared unconcerned about the fire occurring near

them.

An animal's ability to survive a wildfire depends on their mobility and on the fire's uniformity, severity, size, and duration.

Large animals die most often in very large, active fires with wide flaming fronts, crown fires, and thick ground smoke. For example, most of the large animals killed in the Yellowstone fires of 1988 died of smoke inhalation.

Animals with limited mobility living above ground are most vulnerable to fire-caused injury and mortality. Animals that live in moist habitats, such as amphibians, are the least likely to be affected.

Season is also important, with burning during the nesting season being the most damaging.



### Wildfire changes habitat.

Wildfire most commonly affects wildlife by altering their habitat. Wildlife habitats are not static, but can evolve in response to fires and the subsequent changes in vegetation and structure that follow (i.e. succession).

Immediately after a fire, food and shelter are temporarily lost. Hidden burrow openings become exposed and predation can increase.

Plant successional stages or structures are important to many wildlife species when looking for a place to hide, escape to, or reproduce in and wildfire can drastically alter the stage and structure.

Wildlife will move to new areas when the food and cover they need are not available after a burn. The time it takes for a particular species to return to a burned area depends on how much the habitat structures and food supplies were altered.

Unburned areas adjacent to burned areas create a mosaic, increasing wildlife choices from a range of habitat structures and conditions. Wildlife populations can shift from species that require cool, moist conditions, such as warblers and wood mice, to species that require warm, dry conditions, such as ground squirrels and quail.

Herbivores, and species that prefer herbaceous vegetation for cover, prefer early successional, grass/forb habitats or broad-leaved seedlings that establish quickly after

a burn.

Depending on the vegetation type, burning often increases and improves wildlife forage from a few years to as long as 100 years.

Sometimes, the nutritional content and digestibility of plants increases for a few years. Dead wildlife becomes food for scavengers, including bears, wolves, coyotes, eagles, crows, and ravens.

Fire-killed trees provide food for millions of insect larvae (and the animals that feed on them) and provide perches for raptors.

As succession continues after the burn, conifers succeed broad-leaved trees, which eventually become snags and add to dead wood accumulating on the ground. Snags and downed logs provide important habitat for cavity nesters, small mammals, and even large mammals like bears.

Shrubs and saplings invade openings created by downed and dead trees. When intermingled with patches of shrubs and trees in areas that have not been burned, openings provide excellent food and cover for elk and deer.

By suppressing wildfire, this mosaic of disturbance-born habitats succeed to forests, and wildlife species dependent on early and mid-successional stages move away.

Almost all forested areas have wetlands in the bottoms, and they are less likely to

burn, and when they do, they burn less severely than upland sites.

Wetlands provide a refuge from wildfires for many wildlife species and activities such as breeding by aquatic species may be carried out with little interruption.

Although fire in wetland areas usually increases open water and stimulates vegetation favored by many aquatic and semiaquatic species, removing adjacent riparian habitat can cause problems.

Riparian vegetation shades wetland habitats and vegetative root systems hold the soil and prevent or decrease deposition of sediment into the water.

When riparian vegetation is removed, water temperatures may increase and dissolved oxygen content decreases, which can increase fish diseases and reduce spawning efficiency.

In summary, wildfires are a part of a healthy ecosystem, and while they may inflict some animal casualties in the short term, they are a part of the natural cycle.

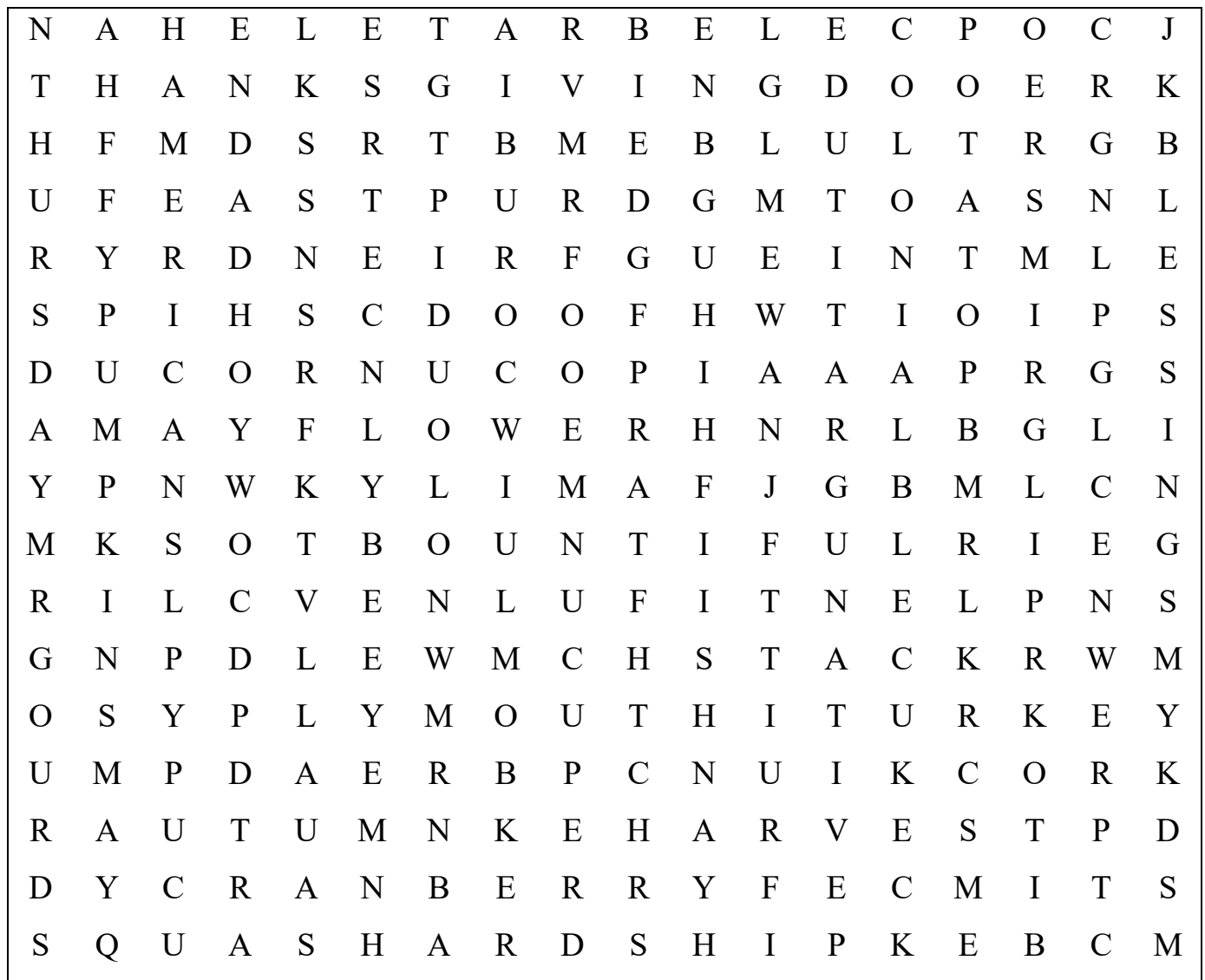
Without them, forests become overgrown and burn more intensely when they do catch fire. Animals have developed their own methods of avoiding fire danger, so don't worry too much about Bambi, he's gonna be OK.

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



# Word Search

## Thanksgiving



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YAMS



Photo by Melissa Fowler

Shortly after escaping from a hunting camp in Copper Basin in 1997, the horse was wandering around the Mine Hill above Mackay.

# The White Horse of Black Daisy Canyon survives alone for decades in the rugged Lost River Valley

By **Dianna Troyer**

*For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

An equine escapee from an elk hunting camp has become a beloved icon of western freedom, grit, and solitude in central Idaho's rugged mountainous Lost River Valley.

Mystery surrounds a cherished sturdy, compact white gelding living alone for 24 years in Black Daisy Canyon north of Mackay.

"You have to admire that he's survived all these years, especially with our cold winters and predators that are common around here like wolves and mountain lions," said Will Marcroft, an avid outdoorsman and hunting guide in Mackay.

"He's become a Mackay icon," said Marcroft, who saw him in the summer. "He still looks healthy after all these years."

Unanswered questions about his life linger.

Did he wander away slowly at night or

run like someone left the gate open – free at last? How has he endured living alone for nearly a quarter-century?

Who owned him? How old is he? Why did he settle in the canyon 5 miles north of town?

"He was brought here by some do-it-yourself elk hunters from Washington who camped in Copper Basin," Marcroft said. "He must have broken his hobbles and wandered away from camp. They looked for him but couldn't find him and had to get back home."

The horse walked about 15 miles from Copper Basin to Black Daisy Canyon on the western side of Mackay Reservoir.

When Marcroft first saw him, he still had half of a hobble above a front hoof. A brass bell dangled from a wide leather strap around his neck.

Marcroft noticed a freeze-brand on his neck, indicating he was part of a wild horse herd at one time and had been sold through the Bureau of Land Management's adoption program.

"He acts like a wild horse – curious but cautious," Marcroft said. "You can get only so close to him. He likes to keep a certain distance between himself and people."

Eventually, the horse shed remnants of civilization. The bell and hobble fell off or were rubbed off.

Marcroft has a theory of why he settled in the canyon.

"There's plenty of grass there along with a spring that fills a water trough for livestock," he said. "Sometimes in summer, he'll come down to the shore of the reservoir to graze."

During winter, he could have the companionship of wildlife.

"Deer and elk winter in there," Marcroft said. "They eat snow and whatever vegetation they can find."

Local insurance agent Jim McKelvey offers another theory about the canyon becoming home.

"There's a snow drift line in the mountains above the canyon that forms in late spring and resembles a full white horse," McKelvey said. "As it melts, this white horse signifies the high-water mark for the Big Lost River each year. This horse could have settled anywhere but chose this location – maybe finding a kindred spirit."

While boating on the reservoir in 2010, McKelvey and his wife, Donna, photographed the horse casually grazing alone.

Local residents wanting to provide him with shelter and food have tried to catch him, but he has eluded them.

"Right after he escaped in 1997, I was out in the field with a former supervisor when we ran across him on the Mine Hill," said Melissa Fowler, recently retired U.S. Forest Service recreational officer in Mackay. "We tried to catch him for about an hour, but he wasn't having it."



Photo by Dianna Troyer

**Black Daisy Canyon near Mackay Reservoir has provided food and water year-round for a distinct white horse living alone for nearly 25 years. In March, snow still lingers in the canyon.**

**TOP: While boating on Mackay Reservoir in 2010, Jim McKelvey happened to see the white horse, nearly 20 years old, grazing contentedly. (Photo by Jim McKelvey)**

He obviously preferred freedom to the security of daily hay and the companionship of other horses. Fowler could only capture him in a photo.

His eyes were half-closed as if he were dozing in the sunshine. The bell was still hanging around his neck.

A dapple gray, he had a distinct black blaze on his forehead, black mane, gray

tail, three black legs and a striking white front left sock. As he aged, his coat has turned white.

"He has to be in his late 20s," Marcroft said. "That's old – for a horse in the wild and a domestic one, too. It's always good to see him. We all know there will come a time when we don't see him anymore, but we hope that won't be for a while yet." ■



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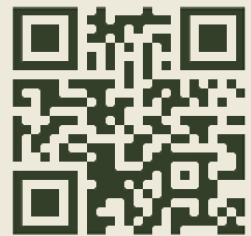
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Photo by Dan Dykema

A hay and corn field are shown in this picture taken in Payette County, which is Idaho's smallest county in size but ranks in the top third of counties statewide when it comes to total farm revenue.

# Payette County is small in size but big in agriculture

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

PAYETTE – Payette County is Idaho's smallest county in size but ranks in the top third of counties statewide when it comes to total value of agricultural production.

The county is very diverse in terms of agricultural production and the good climate, coupled with a reliable irrigation supply, makes Payette County a great place to grow a wide variety of crops, says New Plymouth farmer Mike Shoemaker, who raises Angus beef cattle and grows alfalfa hay, corn and pasture.

He has also grown seed beans, wheat, barley, teff seed and cannery corn in the past.

"We can pretty much grow anything here that can be grown in Idaho," says

Shoemaker, president of Payette County Farm Bureau.

He says this is "made possible by an affordable, adequate irrigation water supply and growing season that allows producers to raise whatever crops are profitable in the region."

With normally mild winters, it is also a desirable place to raise livestock, Shoemaker adds.

Several large operations summer their beef cattle in the upper country of Idaho or Oregon and winter in Payette County, and dairy operators like the area because of the availability of feed, he says.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were almost 19,000 acres of hay and other forage crops grown in Payette County during 2017, 7,000 acres

of wheat, more than 11,800 acres of corn for silage and grain, and 4,780 acres of vegetables.

There were also more than 57,000 cattle and calves in the county, which ranks No. 2 in the state in commercial fruit production and No. 7 in poultry and eggs.

"We have a good, reliable water supply in the county that is consistent from year to year and it's reasonably priced," says New Plymouth farmer Galen Lee, a member of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's board of directors. "The climate here is great for growing crops."

"Agriculture is still a bright spot in the county and we hope that consumers who may be stuck behind a tractor driving down the road realize that's what's feeding them," Lee says. "We hope they appreciate





everything that farmers do for them.”

According to the ag census, there were 640 total farms and 162,600 acres of land in farms in Payette County in 2017. The total market value of agricultural products sold by the county’s ranchers and farmers that year was \$167 million.

That makes agriculture a major part of the economy of Payette County, which has a population of just over 25,000.

There were a lot of very small farms in the county in 2017 – 213 farms were 1 to 9 acres in size and 237 were 10-49 acres in size – but there were also plenty of bigger farms there as well: 30 were from 500-999 acres in size and 20 were more than 1,000 acres in size.

Ninety-eight percent of the farms in Payette County are family farms, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

Seven percent of the county’s farms and ranches sell directly to consumers.

Payette County Farm Bureau members do a variety of things to support the local community, including supporting youth at the county fair fat stock sale, co-sponsoring rodeo events and providing scholarships.

PCFB also encourages community participation at its annual banquet and its last banquet in 2020 was attended by all three area state legislators and three county



Photo by Jake Putnam

**New Plymouth farmer Galen Lee harvests sugar beets in October. An adequate irrigation supply and ideal climate make Payette County a great place to grow a wide variety of crops.**

commissioners.

Shoemaker says PCFB is constantly looking for ways to get young farmers and ranchers more involved in Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. That includes paying the costs for people to attend IFBF’s Young Farmers and Ranchers events.

Lee says PCFB members keep in constant contact with elected officials,

planning and zoning folks and others to make sure farmers’ and ranchers’ concerns are being addressed.

“Payette County Farm Bureau is the voice of agriculture in Payette County, just like Idaho Farm Bureau Federation is the voice of agriculture in Idaho,” he says. “We make sure the farmers’ voice is heard in Payette County.” ■

# Zitlaus receive Century Farm/Ranch award

Idaho State Historical Society  
news release

RIGBY – Carl and Nessie Zitlau of the Zitlau Valley Farm and the Granite Creek Ranch received an Idaho Century Farm and Ranch Award Aug. 14.

The Century Farm and Ranch award honors and recognizes families that have continuously owned and actively farmed or ranched the same land their ancestors did 100 years ago or more.

Idaho State Historical Society Board of Trustees member, Cheryl O'Brien, presented Carl and Nessie and their family with a Century Farm and Century Ranch certificate signed by Gov. Brad Little, Idaho State Historical Society Executive Director Janet L. Gallimore, and Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould.

The family also received a commemorative Century Farm and Century Ranch sign.

Every Idaho farm and ranch has a history and unique family story. The Idaho Century Farm and Ranch program encourages families in agriculture to share their family stories and their century-long connections to Idaho and farming.

These centennial farms are truly the “roots” of our state, connecting our past to the present.

Peter and Amelia Zitlau, grandparents of Carl Zitlau, acquired the Zitlau Valley Farm in 1915.

Peter was one of five brothers who immigrated to America from Poland at a very young age. He found work in the New York shipyards and eventually made his way to Eastern Idaho.

In 1907, Peter and Amelia married and applied for an 80-acre Homestead in Jefferson County. The Zitlaus had a productive farming operation on the valley farmland and employed eight to nine men to help raise



Submitted photo  
Carl and Nessie Zitlau of the Zitlau Valley Farm and the Granite Creek Ranch, shown here, received an Idaho Century Farm and Ranch Award Aug. 14.

hay, grain, cattle, potatoes, sheep, milk, cows, a few pigs, and chickens.

In 1921, Peter and Amelia purchased 320 acres in Bonneville County on Granite Creek. The purchase, which is now known as Granite Creek Ranch, began another chapter of their life.

Peter began pasturing sheep and in the early 1940s phased the sheep out and enlarged the beef cattle herd. The cattle herd has ranged between 100-200 head.

Peter passed away in 1954, leaving his son Fred and grandson Carl to farm together. The two properties are approximately 25 miles apart, necessitating the sharing of machinery and coordination between the two.

In 1993, Carl and Nessie Zitlau began an additional venture to the farming and ranching operations – Granite Creek Guest Ranch. The goal was to bring guests in to stay at the ranch and help them learn about the

farming/ranching way of life in the West.

Carl has lived his entire life on the farm and ranch. He completed his degree at Ricks College and received a bachelor's degree of science in chemistry at Idaho State University.

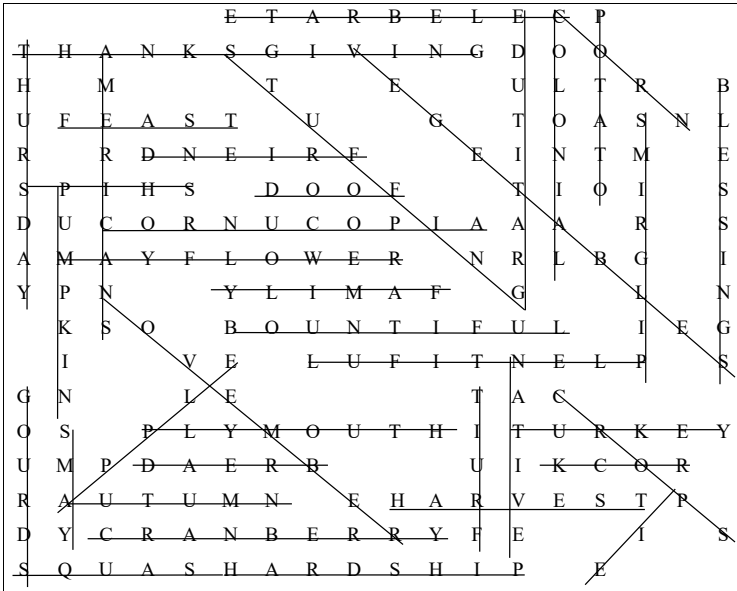
Carl then earned a master's degree in physics at Utah State University, all the while working on the farm/ranch nearly full-time. When Fred passed away, Carl left his career and returned to work on the farm/ranch full time.

The Century Farm and Ranch program, a partnership program of the Idaho State Historical Society and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, was created as part of Idaho's Centennial Celebration.

Since the Century Farm and Ranch program began in 1990, over 450 farms and ranches statewide have been designated Idaho Century Farms or Ranches. ■

# Word Search Answers

Thanksgiving



## Notice of Annual Meeting of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho

To all policyholders: The 2022 annual meeting for policyholders of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho will be held on Friday, Feb. 4, 2022, at 10 a.m. at the company's home office at 275 Tierra Vista Drive in Pocatello, Idaho. You are invited to attend.

Tom Lyons  
*Secretary*

## Notice of Stockholders Meetings

The following annual stockholders meetings will take place Friday, Feb. 4, 2022, at the Idaho Farm Bureau home office, 275 Tierra Vista Drive in Pocatello, Idaho.

The board of directors for each company will be elected at these meetings.

10:45 a.m. - Farm Bureau Marketing Association of Idaho  
11 a.m. - FB Development Corporation of Idaho

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# Idaho, again, tops per capita farm revenue ranking in West

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Recently released federal data show that Idaho, once again, is the top Western state when it comes to farm income on a per capita basis.

Per capita farm income is derived by dividing the total number of people in a state by the total amount of farm cash receipts produced in that state. Farm cash receipts is the revenue that farmers and ranchers receive for selling their commodity.

Idaho farmers and ranchers produced \$4,421 in farm income per Idahoan in 2020, according to data released Sept. 2 by USDA's Economic Research Service and crunched by University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Ashlee Westerhold.

That placed Idaho No. 1 among the 11 Western states in that category. Again. Idaho has ranked at the top in per capita farm income in the West for many years.

"It demonstrates how big agriculture is in Idaho, again and again and again," UI Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor said about the per capita ranking. "It shows how important agriculture is to the state's economy and to the average Idahoan."

California led the nation last year in total farm cash receipts at \$49 billion, but that state had 39.5 million people in 2020, making California's per capita farm income total \$1,241.

Put simply, that means farming is way more important to the average Idahoan than it is to the average Californian.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, a farmer from Shelley, said the per capita number is a simple yet effective way to show how important agriculture is to the average Idahoan compared to people in other states.

According to a U of I study, agriculture accounts for 13 percent of the state's total gross domestic product and one in every eight jobs in Idaho. It also accounts for



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Potatoes are planted in a field near Blackfoot earlier this year. Based on recently released USDA data, Idaho again ranks No. 1 in the West in farm revenue on a per capita basis.**

about \$26 billion in annual sales.

"That per capita number reflects how critical the state's agricultural industry is to people in Idaho," Searle said. "I hope it encourages people to think about how important farming and ranching are to the state's overall economy and way of life."

Taylor said the per capita number could also be viewed as a reflection of how agriculture is treated in Idaho vs. other states.

The economic and political climate in Idaho is favorable toward the farming and ranching industry, something that is not true in many other Western states, he said.

"Hardly a week goes by when you don't see an anti-ag article ... out of Oregon, California and some other states," Taylor said. "It's anti-ag statements all the time,

almost weekly, in those states. You don't see that in Idaho."

According to the recently released USDA data, Idaho farmers and ranchers brought in \$8.1 billion in farm cash receipts in 2020 and Idaho's population was 1.839 million last year.

That means the state's farmers and ranchers produced \$4,421 in farm revenue per Idahoan in 2020, well above second-place Montana, which had a per capita farm income total of \$3,460 last year.

Wyoming ranked third in the per capita category at \$2,629 and was followed by New Mexico (\$1,415), Washington (\$1,284), Colorado (\$1,258), California (\$1,241), Oregon (\$1,195), Utah (\$548), Arizona (\$538) and Nevada (\$215). ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

University of Idaho fruit researcher Essie Fallahi discusses a major almond trial being conducted at the UI's Parma agricultural research and extension station, earlier this year in Parma.

# Idaho almond trial drawing a lot of interest from California

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Interest from California growers in the possibility of growing almonds commercially in Idaho has not waned. In fact, it's increasing.

University of Idaho fruit researchers have been conducting a major almond trial at the university's agricultural research and extension station in Parma since 2014.

The researchers aren't ready to say for sure that almonds can be grown economically on a large scale in Idaho yet, but the almond trees have performed well so far and the scientists are fielding a constant stream of calls and emails from growers in California.

"I'm still getting interest from California almond growers, a lot more than before,"

says University of Idaho fruit researcher Essie Fallahi, who heads UI's pomology program. "It is amazing how many people from California are contacting us about the trial."

California is the global leader in almond production but growers there are increasingly concerned about burdensome regulations, an uncertain water supply and expensive land prices, Fallahi says.

That's why California almond growers are looking at southwestern Idaho, which has a comparatively secure water supply, more favorable regulatory environment and cheaper land prices.

Chad Henggeler, field manager for Henggeler Packing Co., which is located near Fruitland and is one of Idaho's largest commercial fruit growers, has spoken with California almond growers interested

in possibly locating orchards in Idaho, including one in early June.

There are several factors that make southwestern Idaho an interesting possibility for California almond producers but the main one is water, he said.

"They are running real tight on water; it's real expensive and hard to come by," Henggeler said. "That's one of the main reasons they are looking at Idaho."

Almonds have been grown on a small scale and only on a trial basis in Idaho over the years, including at the Parma research station. But the current trial that Fallahi is overseeing is a major one that is testing 14 different almond varieties to see how they perform in Idaho growing conditions.

The varieties are ones that are used commercially and researchers are studying how well they yield, as well as bloom and

harvest dates, and quality attributes such as taste.

The initial results are encouraging, UI researchers say.

“So far, the quality, fruit weight and fruit number are very acceptable,” says UI researcher Sara Mahdavi, who is assisting Fallahi with the almond trial. “The number of fruits and yield are very comparable (to commercial varieties grown in other areas) and they are good.”

One of the big questions everybody interested in the possibility of growing almonds in Idaho successfully has is whether they will survive the sometimes bitter cold weather conditions, says Jamie Mertz, co-owner of Symms Fruit Ranch near Caldwell.

“Everybody wants to know, are they going to survive the winter here?” he says.

The almond trees at the Parma trial have passed three big cold-weather tests so far.

The first came in November 2014, shortly after the trees were planted, when temperatures in the Parma area, and around the entire region, dropped from about 60 to below zero within two days.

“We lost millions of trees everywhere in the Northwest because of that cold event but all of our almond trees here survived,” Fallahi says. “That was quite shocking that we lost millions of peach trees, plum trees and apple trees, but almonds survived.”

The next cold-weather test came in January 2017, when temperatures plunged to levels that can be dangerous to fruit trees. Again, the almond trees in Parma survived.

The most recent weather test came this year, when temperatures fell to between 24-26 degrees during almond bloom. As a result of the cold and windy conditions during that time, 2021 was not a good pollination year for almonds, Fallahi says.

But now, the almond trees are doing fine and fruit set this year is good, Fallahi says.

“The initial concern was that every so many years, a killer cold event would wipe the almond trees out,” he says. “But we have seen that the type of extreme cold-weather events that we can have in this area don’t wipe out the almond trees.”

Despite the promising results of the trial so far, Fallahi is not ready to say conclusively, yet, that almonds can be grown



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Almonds grow on a tree at the University of Idaho’s Parma agricultural and extension research station. Initial results of the trial are showing promise that almonds could potentially be grown commercially in southwestern Idaho.**

commercially in southwestern Idaho. He says the trial needs to yield two or three more years of data before a definite conclusion can be reached.

“As researchers, we are very conservative; we are careful not to be wrong,” he says. “But what the research trial is showing so far is amazing.”

Almonds can be a lucrative crop when prices are high and California growers aren’t the only ones keeping a close watch on the UI’s Parma almond trial.

Almonds would fit nicely into the company profile of Williamson Orchards and Vineyards, a commercial fruit company near Caldwell, says manager Michael Williamson.

But before pulling the plug and proceeding with growing almonds on a large scale, he adds, the company would need to figure out a lot of end-market factors, such as whether almonds grown here match up to the commercial quality and production of almonds grown in other areas, such as California.

“That would be some of the research we hope to see from Essie’s almond trial,” Williamson says. “We’re keeping an eye on it.”

Symms Fruit Ranch planted about 20

almond trees about two years ago and they have all bloomed and have fruit on them, Mertz says.

But like Williamson, Symms also still needs to see some more research data before planting almonds on a large scale, he adds.

What’s most enticing to Symms about almonds is that the crop is very mechanized; equipment is used to shake the almonds off the trees and then gather them. With labor becoming increasingly hard to find and expensive, that mechanization factor is attractive, Mertz says.

“Their inputs as far as manual labor are a lot lower than peaches, for example,” he says. “Almonds are intriguing and really because of the labor issue. There is not as much manual labor involved...”

If almonds are grown in Idaho on a large scale, that could benefit the state’s commercial beekeepers, many of whom travel to California in February and March to pollinate that state’s almond crop.

If that happens, they could choose to stay in Idaho to pollinate almonds here or they could do that as well as travel to California, since Idaho’s almond crop would be pollinated in April or May. ■

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