

GEM STATE **Producer**

Idaho Farm Bureau

June 2020 • Volume 24 Issue 4

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation CEO retires after 41 years



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Keeping our eye on the ball



Lately it has seemed as if responding to COVID-19 and its impacts on farmers and ranchers has been the only thing that matters.

Working to lessen the negative impacts certainly has been at the top of our list, and I'm proud of how Farm Bureau leaders and staff swung into action to address the disruptions we've seen in everything from access to farm workers and meat processing to ensuring Congress provides funding to help farmers and ranchers make it through the economic upheaval caused by demand shifts.

But we also continue to move our long-term policy priorities forward. Here are a few examples of how your Farm Bureau is keeping our eye on the ball.

Opening foreign markets continues to be a priority, especially as we work to get the farm economy back on track. A couple of weeks ago, U.S.-UK talks began. We are engaging with our agricultural negotiators to ensure we get a good deal with this key market, now that the UK has exited the European Union.

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Rick Keller leaves big shoes to fill at Idaho Farm Bureau



Rick Keller retires as CEO of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation at the end of June and it's not easy to put into words what he has meant to this organization.

Dedication. Honor. Commitment. Determination. Patience. Wisdom. Leadership. Compassion.

All of those words could be used while describing Keller's 21-year-tenure as CEO, which, by the way, makes him the longest-serving chief executive officer in IFBF history.

But those words still seem to fall short in trying to describe what Keller has meant to Idaho Farm

Bureau Federation not only during his 21 years at the helm of the organization but also the total 41 years he spent working for IFBF.

Keller started with Farm Bureau as an East Idaho field representative in 1979.

I have never forgotten that year and have teased him that is the year I graduated from high school, but his comeback is always quick: "But I was only a couple of years older than you when I started."

His life for those 41 years has been one of complete commitment to Farm Bureau.

See **SEARLE**, page 7

Inside Farm Bureau

By Rick Keller

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Virtues, strengths, and mosaics of Farm Bureau



For the past four decades I have had a unique observation post to see the virtues, strengths, and mosaics of the Farm Bureau organization.

Few have had the privilege of this vantage, but it has been a marvelous blessing and opportunity to witness. It will be very difficult to describe in less than the 600 words allotted.

Farm Bureau has a rich legacy in its over 100-year history of existence in Idaho. Farm Bureau was started and continues to be led by farmer and ranchers, your peers, and your neighbors.

They, like you, seek what is best for your industry, the nation, your community, and your family. They suffer when you suffer. They rejoice when you rejoice. They prosper when you prosper, and when the markets turn, they hurt when you hurt.

At each given time there are 18 directors who are elected from your peers to represent you. These directors come from all over the state and their backgrounds and operations are as diverse as the state.

See **KELLER**, page 6



Idaho Farm Bureau.

Volume 24, Issue 4

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COVER: Idaho Farm Bureau Federation CEO Rick Keller, left, chats with Fred and Stacy Burmester at their farm in Downey May 8. See page 12 for story on Keller retiring after 41 years of service to IFBF.

From the editor

Documenting ag's response to coronavirus

As Idaho joins many other states in easing previous stay-at-home orders, things appear to be slowly heading back toward normal.

But the coronavirus outbreak is still at the forefront of people's minds and that's why this June edition of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Producer magazine is once again filled with stories related to COVID-19.



As was the case with the Spring Quarterly magazine that Farm Bureau members received in May, keep in mind that things can change quickly when it comes to the coronavirus response and how it impacts farmers and ranchers and some stories possibly could seem a little outdated since there is about a 17-day lag between the time the magazine is sent to the printer and when it actually appears in mailboxes.

History will remember how certain people, groups and industries responded to the outbreak and we feel it is important to document, in the magazine, how agriculture reacted to and was impacted by the pandemic response.

So throughout the 40 pages of this magazine, as well as the 40 pages of the Spring Quarterly, you will see a wide variety of stories documenting how farmers and ranchers were affected by the coronavirus and how they are handling the many challenges the response to the outbreak has caused.

We also encourage any feedback people may have on the issues written about in this magazine or ideas for possible future stories about how the coronavirus outbreak is affecting the state's important agriculture industry.

Not all stories Farm Bureau staff members have written about the coronavirus outbreak appear in the magazine. For more stories and videos, visit IFBF's website at www.ifbf.org. Under the "Newsroom" icon, you can view various articles and videos related to the pandemic as well as the latest updates.

Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
publications editor*



Photo by Sean Ellis

Farm workers earlier this spring prepare to lay drip irrigation tape in a field near Weiser that will be planted to onions.

What's next?

How long will it take ag to return to normal?

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – When it comes to COVID-19's impact on the economy, there appears to be at least some glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel.

Many states, including Idaho, have released plans to reopen their economies in stages. That has created some optimism in farm country

that maybe things are starting to get back to normal.

But farmers and agricultural industry leaders caution it will take more than just a few weeks or months for the farming industry, which has been hammered by declining commodity prices linked to the coronavirus outbreak, to get back to normal.

The farming industry won't return



Photo by Sean Ellis

Sugar beets are planted in a field near Weiser Idaho this spring.

to pre-coronavirus levels quickly, said Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director Laura Wilder.

“It’s going to take some time and it could take up to two years,” she said.

North Idaho farmer Bill Flory said he’s optimistic the economy will open back up sooner rather than later but he agrees pre-virus normality levels won’t happen immediately.

“I’m optimistic that the states are going to continue to loosen criteria and stay-in-place orders and commerce will begin coming back, but I don’t think it’s going to be fast,” he said.

Kam Quarles, CEO of the National Potato Council, said nobody thinks that resumption of the normal farming economy will be like flipping a light switch.

“Most optimistically, it will take many months of gradual attempts to get back to where we were,” he said.

“It’s going to take six months or longer

to get this thing headed back in the right direction,” said Don Tolmie, production manager of Treasure Valley Seed Co., a Homedale company that markets dry bean seed.

Dry bean prices have fared well during the outbreak because that product has flown off grocery store shelves at a rapid rate, Tolmie said. But many other farm commodities, including corn, potatoes, hops, dairy and beef, have experienced some tough prices, he added.

“The outbreak response has backed up so many things like potatoes, onions and other vegetables,” Tolmie said. “This whole thing is going to impact agriculture in a lot of ways and some of them we haven’t seen yet.”

Meridian farmer Richard Durrant said the disruptions caused by the outbreak have created a lot of challenges for farmers and many of them won’t go away as soon as the lock-down orders

are lifted.

“We’re going to see these ongoing trickle-down effects go on maybe for years,” said Durrant, who is vice president of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

The stay-at-home orders have caused major disruptions for many agricultural commodities, including Idaho’s important potato industry, which contributes billions of dollars to the state’s economy.

Sales of potatoes and potato products through foodservice channels such as restaurants and schools have basically ceased, said Blair Richardson, president and CEO of Potatoes USA, which markets and promotes U.S. spuds.

Americans used to spend the majority of their food dollars outside their homes but “now the majority of our food dollars are being spent at home, by a wide margin,” he said. “The demand channels have just shifted dramatically.”

See **NEXT**, page 25

DUVALL

Continued from page 2

We're also continuing to push for agriculture to be included in any U.S. negotiations with the EU. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada agreement should be going into effect this summer, now that all three countries, the U.S., Canada and Mexico, have approved it.

We will be monitoring implementation of the new agreement to ensure that our closest trading partners adhere to their commitments.

Speaking of implementation and enforcement, we're also keeping our eye on China's commitments in the Phase 1 trade deal announced to much fanfare in January. China will need to pick up the pace of purchases to meet its commitments, and we are watching to ensure it does.

On the regulatory front, we're watching an effort in Congress to roll back the new Navigable Waters Protection Rule, which replaced the overreaching Waters of the U.S. or WOTUS rule.

USDA recently announced a new final biotechnology rule that we support, so we have an eye on implementing that.

KELLER

Continued from page 2

They are small and large, irrigated and dry, row crop and cattle. They milk and hay and toil and sweat, the same as you. They listen to you and then collectively act and direct the organization to address those concerns.

The directors do not do it alone. They combine the efforts of fellow farmers and ranchers, your neighbors in each county of the state and nation, at the county Farm Bureau level, making a united fellowship that is knowledgeable and responsive.

This combination acts not in isolation or among the few, but in the hundreds and thousands.

Adding to this collective effort, are the dedicated professional employees who assist, tutor, lead, and carry out the direction of the farmer and rancher leadership.

These professionals bring to the beautiful Farm Bureau mosaic skills in legal, accounting, public relations, economic, legislative and administrative advisors, communication, organizational, human resources, commodity, marketing, information systems and other vital services which are required and necessary to benefit the member.

Farm Bureau's emphasis is not singularly but broad and general. From legislative and executive representation, to economic benefits that assist in reducing farm expenses, to social platforms telling agriculture's and the farmer's story, to marketing this and last year's crops, to defending in the various courts of law, to a host of other services, Farm Bureau serves its member.

And most of these are unseen by the many, but the many benefit from each.

We've held a few conferences via Zoom, such as a Health & Safety Conference and Young Farmers & Ranchers Conference, and in place of our annual Environmental Issues Conference we have scheduled several virtual conferences on topics of interest.

We're monitoring ag labor issues and more. The work of our organization goes on!

With respect to COVID-19, we've asked the presidential administration to look into price disparities between what gets charged for meat at the retail level and the much lower prices that producers receive from the packers. If there's something fishy going on, we will get to the bottom of it and identify the best way to prevent it in the future.

And of course we are working to ensure that agriculture gets the aid it needs in the Coronavirus Aid and Response packages passed by Congress.

I've never been prouder to be part of Farm Bureau or to see how hard our volunteer leaders and staff work for you, the American farmer and rancher.

Stay safe and well, everyone. ■

A most recent example is the actions of Farm Bureau in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While much of the nation was sheltering in place, Farm Bureau was engaged, working with national, state, and local governments, delivering the narrative that agriculture is essential and must continue.

Farm Bureau not only worked with state and national departments of agriculture and executive branches, but with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Department of Labor, Treasury, IRS, Transportation, Health and Human Resources and a multitude of other agencies and departments to secure needed funding, reduction in regulations, or other assistance for the farmer and rancher.

Farm Bureau is working with state attorneys general to ensure an open, unimpeded food supply continues, unrestrained and void of profiteering.

Farm Bureau not only is proclaiming to the world the story that farming is moving forward but is also providing its members with factual and timely information of opportunities available during these unprecedented times.

Farm Bureau assists in moving stalled commodities into the marketplace by generous and abundant donations to food banks across the state and nation, serving the underprivileged which has expanded exponentially. Farm Bureau is engaged. All hands are on deck.

It has been a privilege for me to observe the virtues, strengths, and mosaic of Farm Bureau. It will be missed, but because of what I have witnessed, I know Farm Bureau will continue moving forward, battling the battles, and fighting the fight.

I am grateful Farm Bureau is here. Thank you and may God bless. ■

'He has worked tirelessly traveling the state and nation on behalf of the organization and the state's farmers and ranchers and has helped shepherd IFBF through good times and rough times.'

SEARLE

Continued from page 2

Forty-one years later, Farm Bureau is bigger, better and stronger today and we can give credit to Rick Keller, who has given four decades of his life leading the organization and helping to achieve that.

His understanding of how to strengthen the grassroots organization through county Farm Bureaus has been the key to that success.

When Keller took over as CEO in 1999, IFBF had 49,801 member families across the state. Today, that number is 80,635.

IFBF membership has seen a steady growth through his leadership as CEO.

But not only has Idaho Farm Bureau Federation grown in members during Keller's time as CEO of the organization, it has also grown in effectiveness, financial stability, and prestige.

Keller fondly and good-naturedly has often shared that during his first year with the organization, he had a paycheck bounce and a Farm Bureau credit card rejected at the gas pump while he was driving the Idaho attorney general to a county Farm Bureau meeting.

Today, IFBF is in a strong financial position due to his expertise and management.

The organization is also well-respected around the state and nation, not only among other farm groups but among Idaho residents and elected officials as well. Keller is well-known and respected throughout the American Farm Bureau family.

In the "old" days, many farm groups didn't necessarily get along that well, to put it nicely. Today, the various agricultural organizations that represent the state's 25,000 farms work together on issues important to the ag industry and even when the don't see eye-to-eye on a certain issue, they agree to disagree, respectfully.

I don't say this lightly and it's not a stretch to say it, but a lot of the strides IFBF has made in these areas can be attributed to the effort Keller has put in over the years.

He has worked tirelessly traveling the state and nation on behalf of the organization and the state's farmers and ranchers and has helped shepherd IFBF through good times and rough times.

Besides being a great leader, Keller is also a wonderful person and I believe what Farm Bureau members, staff and the organization's volunteer leaders will miss most about him is his gentle, caring way of leading.

I have paid credit to him many times through the years for helping me to learn how it's much more important to use my ears by listening and engaging my brain than being quick to speak. He is a professional listener and is very methodical and

that is something we have all benefited and learned from.

Besides wisdom, his dealings with people have always involved a good helping of compassion and patience.

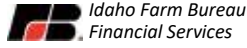
One of my many memories of Keller was while we were on a Farm Bureau ag tour in Australia and one member of our group ended up in the hospital. Rick and his wife, Alene, unselfishly sent us on our way while they remained behind with her until she was stable to fly home.

There are countless kind deeds such as this involving Rick and Alene.

Rick has always put others' needs before his own, being willing to make whatever sacrifice was needed. Those deeds will never be forgotten.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation has been blessed to have had Rick Keller as an asset for these past 41 years and he will be sorely missed.

We wish him and Alene the best as they head into retirement. ■

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Doug Lindley/Idaho State Journal

People glean through potatoes that Emily Tolley brought into Pocatello from a Holbrook potato farm in her pickup. A large crowd gathered to take advantage of the spuds in the parking lot of Pocatello's City Hall recently.

The dumping of crops is only done as a last resort

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The reports of some farmers, ranchers or dairy operations dumping their farm commodities is not easy news to digest.

But imagine how the farmer feels?

When a producer makes the decision to destroy some of their crop, it is their absolute last resort and they do it with a

heavy heart, farm industry leaders say.

A lot of producers are donating their crops to food banks and other feeding programs right now but sometimes that isn't an option due to logistical hurdles or economics, said Pat Kole, director of industry and government relations for the Idaho Potato Commission.

Most of the producers who are currently donating their product to help needy Americans are doing so quietly and it

doesn't make the news, he said. But when a producer makes the difficult decision to destroy their product, it does make the news.

"Farmers would rather sell or donate their crop than see it go to waste," Kole said. "Every farmer, every dairyman, every rancher. Everybody that grew up on a farm or ranch or who understands what it means to be in agriculture hates to see food go to waste, particularly the guy

who grew the crop or milked the cow.”

Farmers would welcome any ideas people have to put their unsellable product to use, he said, and the IPC and other farm organizations will do what they can to help make that happen.

“Farmers can’t put more of their livelihood at risk, so help them out here,” Kole said. “Help them get it to people in need and we’ll do what we can to help facilitate that.”

The near shutdown in food service channels – restaurants, schools, cafeterias, etc. – has caused demand for many agricultural commodities such as milk, potatoes and onions, all of which are grown on a large scale in Idaho, to decrease significantly.

Farm-gate potato prices – the price that farmers receive for their spuds – have dropped more than 50 percent since the coronavirus outbreak started, and farm-gate milk prices are nearing levels not seen since 2009, which was the worst-ever year for the nation’s dairy industry.

The reaction to the coronavirus outbreak has also had a major negative impact on the Spanish bulb onion industry. The Idaho-Eastern Oregon growing region is one of the nation’s largest onion producing areas.

Exacerbating the situation, many processors that buy those commodities from farmers have significantly decreased the number of acres they normally contract with producers to deliver them product.

That has caused prices to drop, in some cases dramatically, leaving many farmers in a very difficult financial situation. Sometimes, a farmer has no other choice than to destroy their product.

When a dairy operation decides to dump some of its milk, that operation has no other option, said Rick Naerebout, executive director of the Idaho Dairymen’s Association.

“The dumping of milk is absolutely the last resort,” he said. “Every other option has been explored and exhausted. When you are facing the kind of financial losses dairymen are facing right now, there’s just no cash to spend

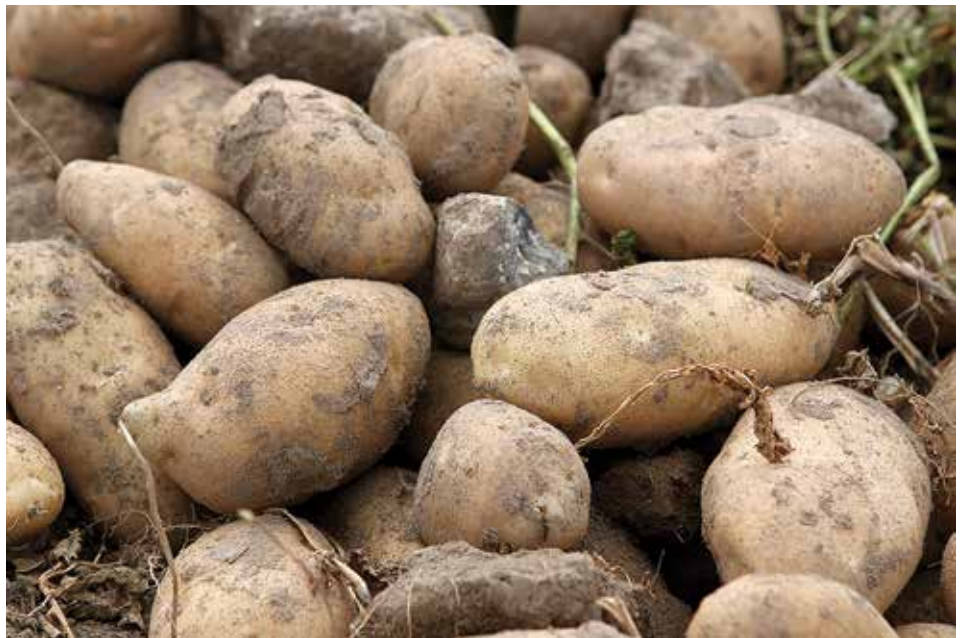


Photo by Sean Ellis

When a farmer makes the difficult decision to dump some of their crop, it’s the absolute last resort, ag industry leaders say.

to do anything else.”

The reaction to the coronavirus outbreak has caused a major disruption in the normal shipping channels for major agricultural commodities and that has led, unfortunately, to some farmers having to

“Farmers would rather sell or donate their crop than see it go to waste.”

— Pat Kole, director of industry and government relations for the Idaho Potato Commission

destroy their product, said Idaho potato farmer Randy Hardy.

“The normal way of conducting business, the traditional methods of moving commodities, has been disrupted by this thing and it is affecting every farmer a little differently,” he said. “Whatever worked in the past is not working right now and it’s caught some guys in a really bad situation.”

Yes, some farmers are having to dump their crop but a lot of others who can are donating their product either directly to consumers or to food banks or other

feeding programs, Hardy added.

“A bunch of that is being done behind the scenes that you don’t hear a lot of noise about,” he said.

Idaho leads the nation in potato production and Gem State farmers grow about

14 billion pounds of potatoes each year, which is enough spuds to fill the Boise State University football stadium one mile high from end zone to end zone.

A lot of potatoes are being donated to feeding programs right now, Hardy said, “But there is only so much those (feeding program) channels

can use.”

The potato commission is doing everything it can to help facilitate the moving of spuds to feeding programs, said IPC President and CEO Frank Muir.

“If we can economically get the potatoes to where they are needed, we will do that,” he said.

But he also pointed out that the donation of large amounts of Idaho potatoes to food banks happens every year.

“That’s been an ongoing part of what we do,” he said. “What’s unusual is all the attention it’s getting right now.” ■

Curds + Kindness program helps dairies and needy Americans

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Thinking outside the proverbial box, the organization that represents dairies in Idaho and Utah has found a way to help producers and needy Americans at the same time.

Dairy West has launched a program called Curds + Kindness that will direct surplus dairy foods to “food-insecure” people throughout Idaho and Utah who are unable to afford groceries.

Dairy West’s board of directors, which is made up of dairy operators in both states, has given the group the go-ahead to use \$3 million in reserve funds to purchase milk from dairy operators that might have otherwise gone to waste because markets for those operators have dried up due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The milk will be turned into dairy products by processors with additional production capacity and given to needy residents of Idaho and Utah, which have a combined population of almost 5 million people.

“This program allows us to immediately provide relief to our producers and get dairy products to people who need it the most,” said Dairy West CEO Karianne Fallow.

Since the project was launched in early May, more than 145,000 pounds of milk has already been purchased from producers and turned into cheese, butter and other dairy products, she said.

Some county Farm Bureau organizations have also started donating money toward the program.

Dairy West, which is supported by a “checkoff” fee paid by dairy operators, promotes the health and nutritional benefits of dairy foods, funds research and encourages global demand for dairy products produced in Idaho, Utah and the Western United States.

The Curds + Kindness program “is a really innovative way to use checkoff dollars



Dairy West photo

Dairy West has launched a program called Curds + Kindness that will direct surplus dairy foods to “food-insecure” people throughout Idaho and Utah who are unable to afford groceries.

and provide some immediate relief for the dairy industry while helping the needy at the same time,” said Idaho Dairymen’s Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout. “Kudos to Dairy West ... for being willing to think outside the box and come up with something like this that will benefit the industry.”

Idaho plays leapfrog with New York as the No. 3 milk producing state in the nation and about 60-65 percent of the milk produced in the state is turned into cheese. Most of the rest is turned into milk powder.

When many foodservice channels such as restaurants, schools and hotels mostly shut down because of the coronavirus outbreak, that caused a surplus of milk and there have been some reports of producers dumping milk as a result because they currently have nowhere to sell their product.

The Curds + Kindness program, which will continue at least through the end of May, has put an end to dumping in Idaho, Fallow said.

“Dairy farmers want to get dairy foods into the homes of those who need them most,” Kristi Spence, Dairy West’s senior vice president of marketing, said in a news

release. “By working with community partners, dairy companies have devised a mutually beneficial solution that directs nearly 200,000 gallons of milk per week that would have otherwise been disposed.”

Fallow said the program is an unprecedented collaboration between dairy farmers, who supply the milk, processors who turn it into nutrient-rich products, and local community partners, who help distribute it to hungry people.

“It’s a huge, huge industry-wide effort,” she said. “It’s unprecedented, really.”

Fallow said that in developing the project, Dairy West officials started with the question, How can we help prevent milk from being disposed of?

When the idea started to take shape, Dairy West employees started calling milk processors to find out which ones had additional production capacity.

Fallow said the processors didn’t hesitate to support the program, which moves the excess milk to those processors with additional capacity.

“A lot of credit goes to the processors,” she said. “They jumped on it and a lot of them have helped us out in many ways.” ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho ranks No. 5 in the nation in terms of a state's gross domestic product from farming as a percent of that state's total GDP.

Data show how important agriculture is to Idaho's economy

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – University of Idaho economists have come up with different ways to show how important agriculture is to Idaho.

During a presentation to lawmakers earlier this year, U of I Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor provided another example.

According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Idaho ranks No. 5 in the nation when it comes to a state's gross domestic product from farming as a percent of that state's total GDP.

Gross domestic product is the total value of all finished goods and services and a comprehensive measure of economic activity.

Idaho ranks very low in total population but ranks right with the traditional heavy-weight farm states in that measure, trailing only South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa.

According to U of I calculations, Idaho's vast agriculture industry is responsible for 13 percent of the state's total GDP, one in every eight jobs in the state and \$26 billion in sales annually.

"If I could leave you with one slide today,

it would be this one, which shows Idaho is the fifth largest agricultural economy in the nation in terms of total farm GDP as a percent of a state's total GDP," Taylor said. "That's remarkable, really."

"That is an incredible figure that shows how important agriculture is in the state," he told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation following his presentation to lawmakers on the condition of Idaho's agriculture sector.

Taylor's presentation, which synopsized the findings of several U of I ag economists, included slides that show Idaho's agriculture sector is growing at a faster rate than the nation's farming sector and also faster than the state's overall economy.

Since 1997, total farm cash receipts in Idaho, adjusted for inflation, have grown by 70 percent, while they have grown by 20 percent nationwide, according to USDA Economic Research Service data crunched by U of I economists.

"Idaho is far outstripping the growth in the United States in farm cash receipts," Taylor said.

He said that's largely due to the fact that Idaho produces a very different portfolio of farm commodities than the rest of the country.

Idaho's No. 1 farm commodity in terms of cash receipt is dairy and milk cash receipts have grown by 200 percent since 1997.

Idaho's No. 2 farm commodity is beef cattle. Together, dairy and cattle account for 60 percent of the state's total farm cash receipts and when feed crops such as hay, corn silage and sugar beet pulp are factored in, that number rises to more than 70 percent, Taylor said.

Idaho also leads the nation in potato, food trout and barley production, ranks No. 2 in hops and also is a significant producer of wheat, hay, beans and sugar beets.

"Agriculture is far different in the state of Idaho than it is in the United States," Taylor said.

Not only is agriculture the most important part of Idaho's economy, he said, that sector is also growing much faster than the state's overall economy.

Based on data from the BEA and U.S. Department of Commerce, farm GDP in Idaho has grown 40 percent more than total Idaho GDP since 1997, Taylor said.

"Stodgy old grandma and grandpa on a tractor ... are far outstripping the state's total growth in GDP," he said. ■



Rick Keller, shown here with his wife, Alene, will retire as Idaho Farm Bureau Federation CEO on June 30.

IFBF file photo

Idaho Farm Bureau CEO retires after 41 years with organization

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Rick Keller, who has served as Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s CEO and executive vice president for the past 21 years, will retire at the end of June.

Keller, 65, is the longest-serving chief executive in IFBF history and he has worked for the state’s largest general farm organization for a total of 41 years.

When he accepted a position as an IFBF field representative in 1979, he and his wife, Alene, thought it would be a temporary job.

“Boy, it’s been the best temporary job we’ve ever had,” he said.

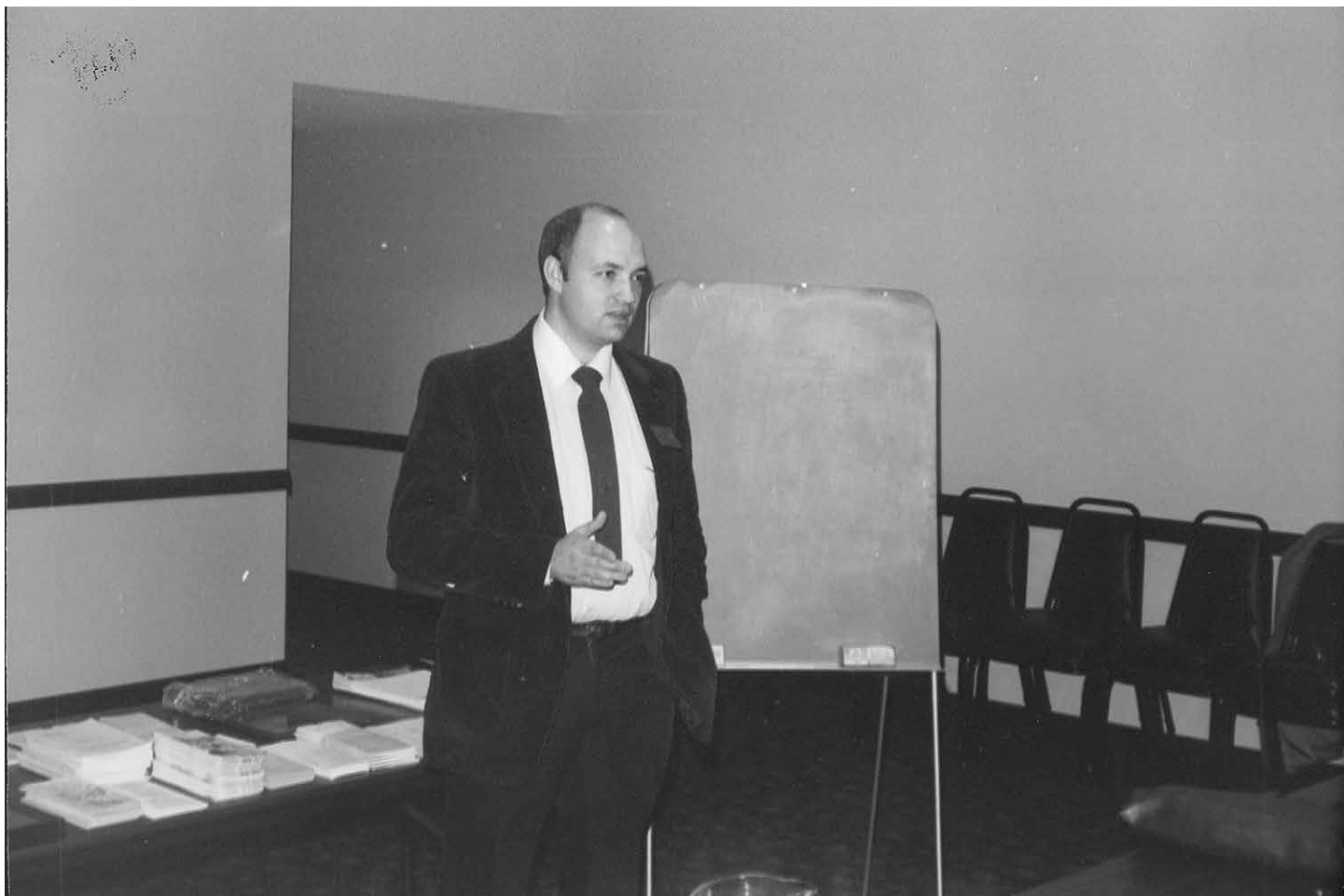
Looking back on his four decades of service to Idaho Farm Bureau, Keller said the fact that he has held the CEO position longer than anyone else is not that important to him. The thing he will miss the most during his retirement is the interaction with people that went with being a Farm Bureau employee.

“Like with any job, there are some things you don’t relish,” he said. “But one thing I do relish is the people. The volunteers, the staff, the government officials and agency people we work with, the

university people. You develop a relationship, a bond, with those people and I will greatly miss those day-to-day contacts with them.”

IFBF members who were interviewed for this story said they will miss Keller not only because of his accomplishments but because he was a people person.

“Besides being not only a great executive for Farm Bureau ... he and Alene are great people,” said Scott Steele, an Idaho Falls cattle rancher and member of IFBF’s board of directors. “I admire them greatly for all the things they have done, not just with Farm Bureau.”



IFBF file photo

Rick Keller delivers a presentation during an Idaho Farm Bureau Federation meeting in this undated file photo.

Former IFBF Vice President Mark Trupp, a wheat and barley farmer from Driggs, said Keller has been an amazing asset to Farm Bureau.

“He has stewarded Farm Bureau through a lot of times, both good and bad. I admire his leadership skills,” Trupp said.

But Trupp said he will remember Keller as much or more for the way he treated other people.

“There isn’t a kinder, more compassionate person out there,” he said. “He’s always used compassion in his dealings with people. He always kept an open mind and kind heart toward everyone.”

IFBF board member Fred Burmester, an alfalfa hay farmer from Downey, said Keller “exemplifies the word leader. He serves and teaches and leads by example. It’s people like Rick that keeps me involved in Farm Bureau.”

Total IFBF membership increased

during 39 of the 41 years Keller served the organization.

When he took over as CEO in 1999, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation represented 49,801 member families. IFBF now represents 80,635 member families in Idaho.

“The organization has definitely thrived under Rick’s leadership,” said IFBF Vice President and Meridian farmer Richard Durrant. “He has provided some excellent leadership for Farm Bureau and kept the organization on the right path to be profitable and engaged with members, helping them address their challenges.”

IFBF’s 19-member board of directors released a statement thanking Keller for his lengthy service.

“Rick has been an integral part of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation for more than four decades and he has served this organization faithfully and well,” the statement said. “While his leadership will be missed,

he has more than earned his upcoming retirement and we wish him well in his future endeavors.”

Keller started out with Farm Bureau as a regional field manager for southeast Idaho and then worked as IFBF’s organizational director, a position that had him responsible for working with IFBF membership and the 37 county Farm Bureaus throughout Idaho.

Jefferson County Farm Bureau President and Rigby farmer Holly Hancock said she has been impressed with Keller’s various presentations and speeches to IFBF members over the years. She is also impressed that Keller took the time to speak to her and her husband at every meeting they attended together over the past 19 years.

“He showed that he can think inside and outside the box, on both sides of questions, and offer sound advice and guidance,” Hancock said. “Rick may not have



IFBF file photo

Rick Keller, who will retire as Idaho Farm Bureau Federation CEO on June 30, speaks during a bus tour in this undated file photo.

earned his living by farming/ranching, but he truly is one of us.”

IFBF President Bryan Searle, a farmer from Shelley, said Keller’s experience and leadership within the organization will be sorely missed.

“The vast experience that Rick has gained working for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation and his knowledge about the organization as well as Idaho’s agriculture industry is hard to put in words,” he said. “He has breathed Farm Bureau and agriculture for more than four decades and his leadership and experience truly will be missed.”

Keller said he and Alene look forward to spending more time with their family, which includes five sons and 14 grandchildren.

“Working for Farm Bureau requires a lot of night meetings and a lot of time away from home,” he said. “I’ve missed a lot of Little League games and I’m looking

forward to being able to watch some Little League games again.”

He said he and Alene will also continue to look for opportunities to serve their neighbors, community and church.

He also said he will enter retirement with fond memories of his time working for Farm Bureau.

“It’s been wonderful to be able to go visit farmers and ranchers, sit at their tables, watch them drive their tractors and see the sense of pride that they have in their operations,” Keller said. “You gather that they really love their work and when you work around people like that, it’s contagious. You love your work, too.”

He said the organization has advanced a lot over the years, financially and in prestige as well as in how it interacts with other farm groups and elected officials.

When Keller started working for Farm Bureau, his first paycheck bounced.

During that period, there was also some

friction between the various farm organizations, he remembers.

“There was a period of time where there was a lot of animosity among the different farm groups,” he said. “But over the years, that animosity is gone and they now work great together on many key issues. Oh, there’s a couple of things we may not see eye-to-eye on, but overall I see these farm organizations more united in helping each other, working together and forming coalitions....”

And the issue of paychecks bouncing is long gone, he said.

“Financially, the organization is strong,” he said. “We’re a very viable organization now, we’re very conscientious of our corporate responsibilities and we’re in a sound position. We have a good, strong volunteer leadership base that is diverse, that represents the state well, that understands the issues and that are respected in their own fields.” ■



People shop at the Nampa Farmers Market April 18.

Photo courtesy of Nampa Farmers Market

Farmers markets begin opening, with an emphasis on safety

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Farmers markets around Idaho have begun opening for the 2020 season, but it will be far from business as usual at these outdoor markets that are an important income source for many small farms around the state.

The Boise Farmers Market opened

April 11, one week later than it had originally planned, but without the thousands of people who typically flock to the market each Saturday.

The BFM is currently operating only as a drive-through market that allows people to pre-order online and reserve a time where they can pull up in their cars, pick up their order and leave.

The Saturday market still has its usual

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. hours but now, instead of consumers browsing through the market, automobiles roll into the parking lot every 15 minutes, have their pre-ordered products delivered to their cars, and then drive off.

Vendors drop off their products and volunteers sort them and get them ready to be picked up.

“It took us one and a half weeks to

set the system up and it took us three weeks to get it right,” said BFM Manager Tamara Cameron. “People have really liked the ability to just come and pick up their order. I think we’ll figure out a way to continue it once things get back to normal.”

The market started with 400 orders the first Saturday and then had 500 during its second week.

“If all goes well, we’ll add another 100 this week and our goal is to ramp up to 1,000 orders,” Cameron said.

The Nampa Farmers Market kicked off the season April 18 with what NFM board member Barbara Whitbeck called a “soft opening.”

“It was way scaled back from what it normally is,” she said.

The market included only vendors who sell items people would normally find in a grocery store, such as produce, meat, eggs, baked goods, etc.

The market was limited to 10 vendors during its first Saturday and will have 16 during its second week. As the area allows for vendors and customers to follow social distancing guidelines, that number will slowly be increased, Whitbeck said.

Vendor booths were kept a good distance apart, masks were provided to people who wanted one and there was no music and no ready-to-eat foods or seating areas.

See **MARKETS**, page 34

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Photo by Sean Ellis

Onions lie in a field near Wilder last September, waiting to be harvested. Reaction to the coronavirus outbreak has significantly decreased demand for the big bulb onions grown in Idaho and Eastern Oregon.

Idaho-Oregon onion region slammed by coronavirus reaction

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Onion Country USA has been hit hard by disruptions in demand caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

Demand for the Spanish big bulb onions grown in the Idaho-Eastern Oregon growing

region has screeched to a halt since the outbreak caused a virtual shutdown of restaurants and other foodservice channels.

“Everything has slowed down quite a bit,” said Eddie Rodriguez, co-owner of Partners Produce, one of about 35 onion shipping companies in the Treasure Valley area of Idaho and Oregon. “It’s devastating.”

Rodriguez said his company is shipping only about 10 percent of what it was before the stay-at-home orders related to the virus outbreak took hold.

The Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion region is normally the nation’s largest in terms of volume and growers there produce about 45 percent of the onions consumed in the Unit-

ed States from mid-August through April.

Onion shippers in that area, which is marketed by the industry as Onion Country USA, buy from farmers on both sides of the border.

Most of the big bulb onions produced in the region are sold to restaurants and through other foodservice channels, which have slowed considerably during the outbreak.

The current situation is bad enough but the industry is also extremely concerned about the future, said Kay Riley, manager of Snake River Produce, an onion shipper based in Nyssa, Ore.

“We’re very concerned about the upcoming fall if we don’t get restaurants and foodservice back open,” said Riley, who is the marketing order chairman for the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee. “There are big concerns for next year.”

Because of the major slowdown in demand, many of the big companies that buy the onions produced in this area have significantly reduced the number of acres they typically contract for from Idaho and Eastern Oregon farmers.

“Big companies don’t want to forward-contract” as much as they normally do, Rodriguez said. “That’s going to make it tough on us.”

As a result of the slowdown in demand, onion shipping volume and prices are both down and growers as well as shippers are under the gun financially, he said.

“Some friends of mine are getting \$3 to \$4 per (50-pound) bag, which is pretty much what it costs to grow the onions,” Rodriguez said. “The returns for growers are pretty much zero.”

Onion growing organizations recently sent a letter to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue outlining the industry’s current plight.

“As a result of the loss of orders, many of the area shippers who were close to finishing for the season will not be able to sell or in some cases even give away their onions,” states the letter from the Idaho and Malheur County (Oregon) onion growers associations and Idaho-Oregon Fruit and Vegetable Association. “The few onions that are being sold are being sold at a loss.”

According to the letter, the area’s onion customers have reported reductions in business of as much as 95 percent.

“This onion growing area has come to a



Photo by Sean Ellis

Onions are loaded into a truck for transport. Reaction to the coronavirus outbreak has significantly decreased demand for the big bulb onions grown in Idaho and Eastern Oregon.

standstill,” the letter states.

According to the letter, one onion shipper has reported they will be dumping about 5 percent of their overall production, or about 50,000 50-pound bags, which is equal to about 63 semi loads of onions. And that’s just one of the area’s 35 shippers.

Exacerbating the situation is the fact that most of the area’s onions for the 2020 season were already planted when the major stay-in-place orders related to the outbreak began to break.

What growers and shippers are facing now is serious but nothing compared to the challenges they will likely face when they begin harvesting the 2020 crop in early August, the letter states.

“It is likely that shippers will only be able to market a fraction of the crop,” it states.

Growers and shippers said the 2020 crop is progressing nicely and yields and quality will likely be superb.

However, processors have cut pre-season contracts significantly because of lost foodservice business, which means a lot of growers could face serious financial challenges

because their 2020 crop will have no home, Malheur County Onion Growers Association President Paul Skeen said in an April 28 news release outlining the dire situation the industry faces.

“Area processors are cutting pre-season contracts by 35-45 percent,” said Skeen. “Because of lost business and the foodservice business reduced by 50-75 percent, it leaves the growers with a crop that is planted and that likely can’t be marketed.”

The letter to Perdue asks USDA to keep onion growers in mind when the department determines how to distribute money contained in a \$19 billion ag relief bill announced April 17.

“There is concern in and for the onion industry that without some kind of assistance, the growers and shippers will see disasters beyond anything they have previously experienced,” the letter states.

In the news release from the Malheur County Onion Growers Association, Skeen said, “If this area doesn’t get help and fast, the outlook for one of the most famous onion regions in the nation is bleak.” ■

Idaho Farm Bureau

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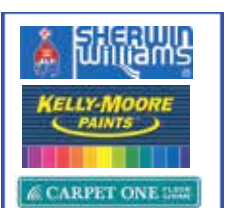
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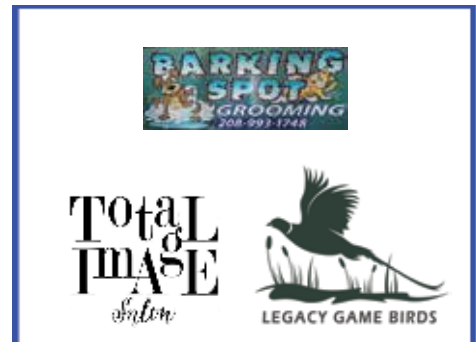
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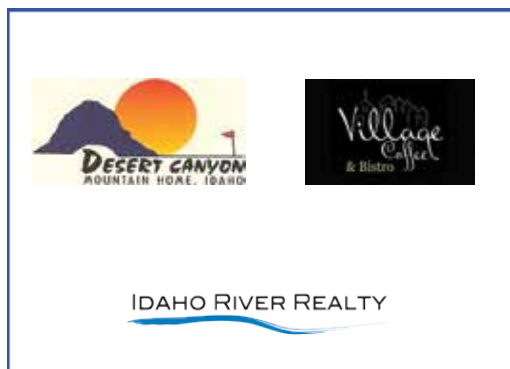
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Forest water quality and sediment

By **Randy Brooks**
University of Idaho

Water quality issues often bring to mind images of oils, pesticides and dead fish in our streams and rivers. However, the Environmental Protection Agency has noted that sediment, not toxic chemicals or municipal wastes, is our nation's number one surface water pollutant.

Much of the sediment in streams is the result of natural weathering and erosion. This is particularly true in the steep, mountainous terrain characteristic of our forestlands in the Pacific Northwest.

Superimposed upon this natural rate, however, is sediment produced by man's cultural activities. We often think of erosion occurring by water runoff, but wind erosion, soil particles moved by the wind and deposited into our water bodies, can also be an issue.

Sediment is an important factor determining water quality in forest streams because it affects the beneficial uses of water, especially for domestic water supplies, fish, and recreation.

The impact of sediment on these uses may be either direct or indirect. For example, public health standards prohibit the distribution of water with high sediment concentrations.

Municipalities that use water from forest watersheds, such as Portland, Ore., or Seattle, without filtration may be directly affected if sediment concentrations suddenly increase.





Photo by Robert Barkley

Sediment, such as what is seen in the photo above, has been deemed the No. 1 surface water pollutant in the U.S.

LEFT: Man-made activities can create or increase erosion but can be mitigated through best management practices. (Photo by Audra Cochran)

Sediment can affect fish populations in an important, indirect way. For example, sediment concentrations seldom reach levels that are directly lethal to fish, but sediment deposited on the streambed or incorporated into spawning gravel can disrupt the production of insects and other organisms that are basic to the food chain or worse yet, prevent successful emergence of fish.

Water quality standards and regulations invariably include restrictions on the amount of sediment that can be added to streams from man's activities. Essentially, no increases are permitted, reflecting the public's concern for sedi-

ment control.

Sediment reaches forest streams through a complex series of processes, all of which involve water. In a forest ecosystem, water is the principal sediment carrier, even though other forces, such as gravity or wind, may deliver sediment to a stream.

Understanding the runoff process for forestlands is important for understanding how sediment reaches forest streams and how this process varies within a watershed and among different watersheds.

The forested watershed soils also play an important role in the relationships between runoff and erosion. The soil

infiltration rate and the rate a soil transmits water, along with a soil's inherent resistance to erosion, determine both runoff and erosion rates.

Sandy soils permit faster infiltration than clay soils, but dry out quicker, leading to moisture deficit stress. Soils with large amounts of clay tend to swell when wet, which leads to surface sealing and surface runoff. Clay particles, however, may remain suspended in solution for weeks, while coarser particles are deposited in slow-moving waters.

Water, wind, and gravity may serve as erosion agents. Soil particles are eroded by three interrelated phenomena: detach-

‘Limiting sediment in water is the key to safeguarding the future of our water resources.’

ment, transport, and deposition.

Detachment occurs when a soil particle is dislodged from the soil surface or from the aggregate to which it was attached. The impact of falling raindrops is often sufficient to detach soil particles from the exposed soil surface.

Once detached, the bonds that hold soil particles together are no longer effective in keeping individual particles in place. At this point, water, wind, or gravity transports them more easily. The energy available and how the energy is dissipated determine the rate and distance that soil particles are transported.

When the energy is insufficient to continue soil particle movement, they are deposited. Particles may be deposited within a few millimeters of where they are detached or several kilometers downstream in rivers, impoundments, or estuaries.

The rate at which these processes combine to erode soil particles is highly variable. Soil scientists and geologists often characterize the rate of erosion on undisturbed lands as either “natural” or “geologic.”

Erosion on lands disturbed by man’s cultural practices is classified as “accelerated” or “man-caused” erosion. Erosion rates are highly variable in mountainous terrain. Natural erosion rates in unstable or erosive soils can easily be higher than erosion caused by man where soils are stable or cultural practices not very disruptive.

Suspended sediment is material light

enough to be suspended in the streamflow. It is often called “wash load” to indicate that the sediment is washed through the stream and does not settle readily. Sediment carried in suspension may be either organic or inorganic material.

Unless specified, both types are included in suspended sediment estimates. Suspended sediment is often reported as the concentration in water using parts per million (ppm) or milligrams per liter (mg/l) interchangeably to express the instantaneous concentration at a given point.

Combined with an estimate of discharge to give the number of parts or liters of water, suspended sediment concentration can be converted to instantaneous suspended sediment yield in pounds or grams.

Bed load is sediment too heavy to stay suspended in flowing water. This material rolls or bounces along the stream bottom. The size of particles making up the bed load varies with streamflow, velocity, particle density and shape, and many other factors.

The term is an arbitrary one but describes a process of sediment transport significantly different from the transport of fine material. Total sediment yield includes both suspended yield and bed load.

Water turbidity is the degree to which suspended material impedes light penetration. In forest streams with high organic loading, the turbidity may be quite high while the suspended sediment

concentration of these very lightweight but darkly colored and platy particles is very low.

Turbidity is a significant quality indicator where water is to be used for direct domestic consumption or in industrial applications where clarity is important. High quality paper products, beverages, and especially beer, rely on water with very low turbidity.

Turbidity may affect stream biota by reducing photosynthesis of aquatic plants. Such an impact would occur only from sustained high turbidity. Generally, turbidity levels in forest streams are far below levels fatal to fish, and generally, high turbidity is short-lived. Many fish can tolerate short-term high levels of turbidity.

Limiting sediment in water is the key to safeguarding the future of our water resources. In response to water quality issues, Idaho has developed a booklet that explains best management practices designed to promote forest activities that will protect and/or enhance water quality.

For more information, contact one of the UI Extension Foresters or your local county extension office and ask for the publication “Forestry for Idaho, Best Management Practices (BMPs), or go to the University of Idaho’s BMP website at: <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/idahoforestrybmps>

Randy Brooks is a University of Idaho Extension forestry specialist. He can be reached at rbrooks@uidaho.edu. ■

Continued from page 5

There has been a major effort by the Idaho Potato Commission and other spud industry groups to try to redirect potatoes that were destined to foodservice channels over to retail outlets, where fresh potato sales have soared.

The potato chip market is doing great, as are dehydrated potato products, Richardson said.

But that has not been enough to offset the loss of sales through foodservice channels, he added.

The U.S. potato industry is a \$4 billion industry in terms of farm cash receipts or what farmers get for their spuds. Sixty percent of those sales are to the foodservice industry.

“The foodservice sector is such an important part of our economy. If we don’t get that back up, soon, it’s going to be a very difficult thing for the potato industry,” Richardson said.

Because of the dramatic decrease in foodservice sales, many potato processors have stopped operating or significantly cut back. That has sent ripple effects through farm country.

American Falls farmer Klaren Koompin still has about 130,000 sacks of spuds left to market from his 2019 crop. They were under contract but he’s not sure if processors are going to need them any time soon.

“There is that hanging out there,” he said. “Are the fryers and dehydrators going to need everything they have contracted?”

On top of that uncertainty, Koompin had his contracted acreage for potatoes cut by 50 percent for the 2020 growing season.

“That’s huge. It means we will plant ... 500 fewer acres than we did last year,” he said. “It’s a big deal.”

The outbreak has affected Idaho’s barley industry as well.

A lot of barley grown in Idaho, the nation’s top barley producing state, is turned into malt that ends up being used in beer brewing plants in Mexico. That nation considered brewing as a non-essential business so breweries there were shut

down, which has impacted the delivery of Idaho malt to Mexico.

Idaho farmers who grow malt barley have contracts with malt houses to move the barley there on certain dates. But because of the slowdown in transporting malt to Mexico, “less of that barley is being stored at the malt houses and more on the farm right now,” said Wilder. “Everything is just backed up and the industry is working through those challenges.”

Most of Idaho’s barley is grown for malt but some is used for human food or animal feed.

Four percent of Idaho’s barley production is exported for food and feed, primarily to Asia, and there have been some slowdowns in those markets as well, Wilder said.

Idaho food barley acres could decrease somewhat this year as a result, she said.

Dry beans are one of the agricultural industry’s few bright spots right now and bean prices are doing well, said Parma farmer Mike Goodson.

“Open market bean prices are good right now,” he said. “I think beans are going to be kind of a bright spot.”

But because nobody knows how long the virus outbreak will last and what its impact will be, Goodson is also paying extra attention this year to finding ways to trim input costs as much as possible, just in case the virus catches up with bean prices.

“I’m just trying to make better decisions about input costs because the whole thing is, nobody knows for sure what’s going to happen,” Goodson said. “That’s what keeps me up at night more than anything is the uncertainty.”

Henggeler Packing Co., based in Fruitland and one of Idaho’s largest fruit companies, has not been negatively affected by the outbreak, yet.

“Luckily for us, the pandemic hit at a time of the year when we had sold all our fruit,” said field manager Chad Henggeler. “We’re not in the marketplace right now. That is a positive for us.”

But he is concerned about how the virus outbreak might impact the company’s

2020 crop of apples, peaches, plums, cherries and other fruit.

“We’re hoping things get back to normal this summer and that we don’t have a recurrence this fall,” Henggeler said. “There is a little bit of concern that if this persists into the fall, where does our commodity fit into this new market?”

Things haven’t changed on a day-to-day basis for Flory because he farms in a sparsely populated area.

“What virus?” he jokes. “There has been no impact here in northcentral Idaho. There is plenty of social distancing.”

His biggest worry is the transportation industry, which is critical to get the wheat Flory and other Idaho producers grow to national and international markets.

“My concern is that the transportation industry could have a high level of absenteeism because of the virus,” he said. “That could cause the industry some pain but that hasn’t happened yet.”

In the midst of all the concern and uncertainty, farmers and ranchers continue to move forward with their normal plans to produce food.

“The farming part is happening. The producers are farming like normal and all the businesses that support farmers are open,” Wilder said. “It’s just that there is a lot of uncertainty in the markets domestically and globally because there is not commerce happening the way it normally is.”

And while farmers are moving ahead, at the same time they are doing what they can to prevent spread of the virus.

“I think it’s a balancing act of being concerned about the virus and doing what we can to prevent it from spreading but yet at the same time still producing food,” Goodson said.

Henggeler officials are making sure the company’s employees follow all the recommended preventative measures such as hand washing and workers in the orchard are asked not to sit too close together during their lunch break.

“We are taking all of those recommended precautions that we can,” Henggeler said. ■



Photo courtesy of Coeur d'Alene Press

Kootenai County Fairgrounds Facilities Manager Allan Dykstra moves pallets of potatoes into a building April 27. North Idaho county Farm Bureau organizations purchased the spuds from East Idaho and donated them to food banks throughout North Idaho.

County Farm Bureaus donate food, money to feeding programs

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Making the best of a bad situation, many county Farm Bureau organizations in Idaho have provided food banks and other feeding organizations with food donations or financial help during the coronavirus outbreak.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members used financial donations from county Farm Bureau groups in North Idaho to purchase and distribute 1,100 50-pound bags of potatoes to food banks across North Idaho in late April.

In East Idaho, Bannock County Farm Bureau has donated \$3,000 to the Idaho Foodbank and another \$3,000 to a School District 25 program that helps feed needy students.

And in Southcentral Idaho, Minidoka County Farm Bureau is in the process of purchasing \$500 worth of food from local producers and donating it to a food bank in Rupert.

The North Idaho effort ended up helping farmers as well as food banks.

County Farm Bureau organizations from throughout North Idaho pitched in to come up with about \$7,000 that was used to purchase potatoes from East Idaho.

An almost complete shutdown in purchases of potatoes and potato products for restaurants and other foodservice channels due to reaction to the coronavirus outbreak has caused some pain for potato growers and processors, who suddenly have a lot more supply than demand.

“We wanted to help out the potato

industry, which has been impacted by the outbreak and has a glut of potatoes, while at the same time help supply food banks with an important product,” said Bob Smathers, an IFBF regional manager in North Idaho who coordinated the project. “There is a big demand up here for food and that demand has increased over the last six weeks.”

A semi-load of potatoes was delivered to the Kootenai County Fairgrounds on April 27. Food banks in Coeur d’Alene picked up their share of the spuds, while Smathers and IFBF Director of Commodities Zak Miller spent the next few days delivering the rest of the potatoes to other food banks.

A total of 18 food banks as far north as Bonners Ferry and as far south as Grangeville received the potatoes.

“The food banks are really excited

“We wanted to help out the potato industry, which has been impacted by the outbreak and has a glut of potatoes, while at the same time help supply food banks with an important product.”

— Bob Smathers, an IFBF regional manager in North Idaho



about it,” Smathers said. “One that will get 126 sacks said it would last two weeks and another food bank that will get 230 sacks said that’s about a three-weekly supply for them.”

Kootenai-Shoshone County Farm Bureau President Joe Dobson said the county Farm Bureau organizations plan to repeat the effort and soon deliver a similar amount of potatoes to food banks in the area.

“Certainly, there was a need from the food banks and with Idaho being the No. 1 potato state in the nation, we felt we could take one of our natural resources and utilize it to help our food banks out,” he said. “It’s one of those

staple foods that people could survive on alone if they had to.”

Dobson said feedback from the food banks that received the spuds has been very positive.

“They’re tickled to death and this is really going to help them,” he said.

In Bannock County, the annual spring Ag Days event at the Guthrie Ranch in Inkom was canceled this year because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Bannock County Farm Bureau officials decided to take the \$6,000 that was budgeted for the event, which teaches fourth-graders about agriculture, and give it to feeding programs instead.

“We thought that would be a good

place for the money and it is still helping the kids,” said BCFB President Brett Casperson.

Minidoka County Farm Bureau members asked officials of the Rupert food bank what items they needed the most. The answer: dry beans, potatoes, sugar and cheese and other dairy products.

“Those were four things we do grow here in our county,” said MCFB President LaNae Nalder.

MCFB is in the process of purchasing \$500 worth of those products and donating them to the food bank.

“Everything we will buy is directly from producers in our county,” Nalder said. ■



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Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins

Country Chuckles by Jonny Hawkins



“...And on top of that she’s my best producer.”

© 2012 Jonny Hawkins

Country Chuckles by Jonny Hawkins



Country Chuckles by Jonny Hawkins



“She specializes in western omelettes.”

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2020 Idaho Farm Bureau scholarship winners

The following are recipients of the 2020 Idaho Farm Bureau Scholarships. The scholarships are provided by the IFBF Scholarship Fund, Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee, State Women's Committee and Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company.

Ag winners will receive \$1,500:



Non-Ag winners will receive \$1,000:



Watch the trends in 'futures' and 'basis'

The old saying is that the best cure for cheap prices is cheap prices. Well, only time will tell if that is true in our current situation but so far, the USDA reports haven't been all that friendly to the wheat market.

The only bright spot in the wheat market this spring has been the soft white basis in Portland.

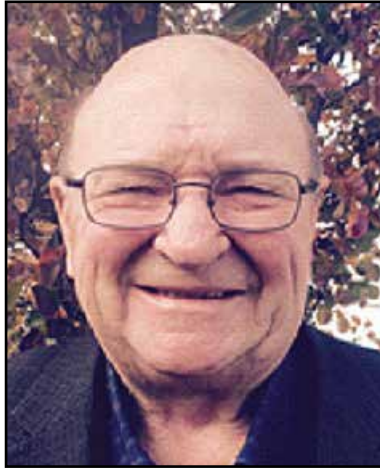
This strengthened considerably as the futures moved lower, keeping the cash bid relatively steady. The basis for soft white in southeast Idaho remained weak this spring as the futures trended lower, moving the cash bids lower.

To say the least there has been very little excitement in the wheat markets in southeast Idaho this spring. One of the positive lessons that producers have learned is how important it is to sell when someone wants to buy.

Recently we have seen producers contract into the smaller niche markets when they became available. They may not have been all that excited about the price but they recognized that someone would sell into that market, thus filling the needs of the buyer and then the market would be gone.

I will agree with everyone raising commodities when I say that prices ought to and should be higher for the commodities we produce. However, we really don't have much control over prices.

The thing we do know is that produc-



ers are at the top of the price chain for our input costs and at the bottom of the price chain for what we produce and it really doesn't do us any good to complain about it. We need to recognize what it is and continue to move forward doing the best we can.

Let's look at the futures and see if we have a carry charge in the market into the end of the year. If so, we should see if we have an opportunity to use the carry to our advantage.

Historically the December wheat futures will trend lower from the first week in July into the end of November. While the futures are trending lower, the basis historically will trend higher during this time-frame. The marketing strategy would be to sell December wheat futures using either your own futures trading account or a hedge-to-arrive contract with the local elevator or flour mill and lock in the basis at the time of delivery.

Marketing your grain using this type of strategy works and it works well. Trading your local basis may not be as exciting as talking about the export market and what the government needs to be doing to help us but watching and trading your local basis will make you more money each year than anything else you could do.

Remember, the basis is your best

indicator of the local supply/demand situation and yet this is probably the area we spend the least amount of time on.

The new crop basis for wheat in southeast Idaho is very weak at this time and probably will remain weak until we get through harvest. If we do see the basis strengthen into new crop it could be a good time to contract what you will move into the market at harvest.

At this time, it looks as though we could see old crop hard white as well as DNS being held over into the next marketing year.

The Chicago December wheat futures were trading near the bottom 20th percentile of the trading range over the past 12 months back in the middle of May. The Relative Strength Index was also at the 20th percentile.

The historical charts show the wheat market trending higher into the first week in July. It looks as though at least a couple of stars have lined up for the market to trend at least a little higher. You need to keep an eye on the futures for your opportunity to set that side of the price equation on your wheat.

You will have opportunities to contract your commodities at prices in the upper percentage of the range for the marketing year.

The challenge is that we really don't know the range until it has come and gone. Be sure to watch the trends in both the futures and the basis and then market accordingly.

Clark Johnston is a grain marketing specialist and owner of JC Management Co. of Ogden, Utah. He can be reached at clark@jcmangement.net. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Onions are sorted in a southwestern Idaho processing facility. Idaho farm product exports totaled \$257 million during the first three months of 2020, an 11 percent increase over the same period in 2019.

Idaho ag exports up 11 percent during first quarter

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The total value of Idaho’s agricultural exports during the first three months of 2020 was up 11 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

The increase is a good sign for the

state’s agricultural sector but it probably should come with an asterisk because it likely doesn’t capture the full impact the coronavirus has had on the farming industry.

“The (coronavirus-related) slowdown didn’t start until mid to late March and into early April, so that probably isn’t being reflected yet” in the latest export

data, said Idaho Barley Commission Administrator Laura Wilder.

The total value of Idaho farm commodity exports to other nations during the first quarter of the year was \$257 million, up 11 percent compared with the same period last year, according to data released by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

Even though the brunt of the coronavirus-related impact might show up in the second-quarter numbers, the outbreak response likely did affect the first-quarter data somewhat, ag industry leaders said.

“Idaho might have experienced even stronger export growth during the first quarter if the COVID-19 pandemic had not begun disrupting supply chains in March,” Doug Robison, Idaho president of Northwest Farm Credit Services, told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation in an email.

During the first quarter of 2020, there was strong demand for Idaho farm commodities from Canada and Mexico as a result of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement being signed into law in early January, Robison said.

Idaho also saw an increase in trade with Japan following the limited trade agreement with that nation signed last fall, which increased the level of ag exports from the United States to Japan, he added.

“The increase in trade with these three countries accounted for more than three quarters of Idaho’s increased agricultural exports during the first quarter of 2020,” Robison said.

According to the data released by ISDA, Idaho ag export value to Canada during the first three months of the year totaled \$71 million, up 6 percent.

Idaho ag export value to Mexico totaled \$59 million, a 32 percent increase over the same period in 2019, and ag export value to Japan totaled \$13 million, a 15 percent increase.

Canada and Mexico ranked as the No. 1 and No. 2 destinations for Idaho ag products during the first quarter and Japan was No. 4.

South Korea ranked No. 3 at \$18 million, a 13 percent decrease.

Those export value numbers are based on U.S. Census Bureau data that is available on a quarterly basis. They don’t capture all of the state’s farm exports because they are based on where a product was shipped from and don’t include some Idaho farm products that moved to another state before being sent overseas.

However, the data provides a good glimpse of how Idaho farm product exports are trending and the numbers

over 85 percent when they totaled \$21 million, a 69 percent increase.

Idaho exported a total of \$43 million worth of products included in the “fresh vegetables” category, a 9 percent decrease.

A category that includes mostly malt totaled \$36 million, a 40 percent increase. Most of that malt went to Mexico to be used in the beer brewing process.

There was a drop-off in malt exports from Idaho to Mexico due to the coronavirus outbreak because the Mexican government didn’t consider brewing companies as essential businesses and that slowed rail shipments of malt into that nation, Wilder said. Most of that decrease likely wasn’t captured in the first-quarter numbers, she added.

“However, our companies are reporting May orders (of malt) are back up to regular levels for the most part,” she added. “Hopefully, as the situation in Mexico improves, we’ll get back to business as usual with the rail shipments being able to be delivered there.”

Idaho exports of products listed under the “oilseeds, etc.” category totaled \$28 million during the first quarter, up 4 percent, and exports included in the “pre-

pared vegetables” category increased 22 percent to \$19 million.

Live animal exports rose 70 percent to \$15 million during the first quarter. A big shipment of dairy heifers worth \$6 million to Vietnam accounted for a large chunk of that total.

Exports from Idaho included in the “cereals” category increased 219 percent to \$14 million. Sixty-five percent of the exports in that category were wheat and 30 percent were barley grown for human food or animal feed.

According to the ISDA data, Idaho ag export value increased 6 percent during all of 2019 to \$897 million. ■

“Idaho might have experienced even stronger export growth during the first quarter if the COVID-19 pandemic had not begun disrupting supply chains in March.”

— Doug Robison, Idaho president of Northwest Farm Credit Services

do track closely with annual USDA data that is released in the fall and does capture all of the state’s farm exports.

The USDA data is more exhaustive while the Census Bureau data is more timely.

The dairy category, which includes cheese, whey, butter and milk powder, ranked as the state’s top ag export by value during the first quarter as \$47 million worth of those products were exported to other nations. That was a 17 percent decrease compared with the first quarter of 2019.

However, a separate category that includes high-protein dairy whey that is



The Nampa Farmers Market opened April 18 with a focus on customer and vendor safety.

Photo courtesy of Nampa Farmers Market

MARKETS

Continued from page 16

A drive-through option was provided for people who wanted to pre-order products.

“We made less money than we normally do on opening day but it wasn’t that bad,” Whitbeck said. “Everybody was sad that we couldn’t do things as normal – the market really is a social event – but they were glad that we could at least do something.”

Many of the state’s other 40 farmers markets typically open in May or June and they are waiting and watching and trying to develop plans, Ariel Agenbroad, a University of Idaho Extension educator for food systems and small farms in Ada County, told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation in an email.

She said some “have been reaching out to us and to the (Idaho Farmers Market Association) for input, to talk about ideas, etc.”

“There is no one-size-fits all, easy approach for a market or a community but we do know that it won’t be business as usual,” Agenbroad said.

Cameron, who is a member of the IFMA’s board of directors, said she has not heard of any market around the state that doesn’t plan to open this year.

“Everybody is doing it a little differently,” she said. “I think there will be different iterations around the state ... that they have figured out work for their community.”

Cameron and Whitbeck both said customer and vendor safety is their market’s main priority.

The NFM plans to slowly increase

its number of vendors “but we want to make sure each step we take is done safely,” Whitbeck said. “The priority is obviously the safety of people.”

Cameron said the BFM will continue with its current online pre-ordering system “until our customers and also our vendors feel safe to be back on the lot. Safety is our biggest concern.”

Agenbroad said the market managers and vendors she has talked to are deeply concerned about the health and well-being of their communities and vendors as well as providing access to fresh, locally grown food.

“We’re all working to figure out how to do this in the safest way possible,” she said. “Farmers are the most creative and optimistic people I know, so I’m optimistic, too.” ■



It's time to celebrate!

While 2020 has been unorthodox and unpredictable, it also has cause to celebrate. **2020 marks the 40th anniversary of the Idaho FFA Foundation!** For 40 years, the Idaho FFA Foundation has been supporting, encouraging, and advocating for Idaho FFA members and agricultural education. Now more than ever, it is vital to support these programs and students.

Join Us!

To celebrate, the Idaho FFA Foundation is hosting an online auction!

From **June 8-18**, go to www.40ffa.afrogs.org and join us in celebrating. Your support will grow our future agriculturists and "Ag-Vocates" that goes beyond the classroom and directly into communities across the state of Idaho.

FFA makes a positive impact on the lives of students as well as the communities those programs serve. Every day, the 5,200 Idaho FFA members are learning skills necessary to overcome future challenges and cultivating the next generation of agriculturists and leaders.



June 8-18, 2020

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Classifieds

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High Volume Jack Rabbit & Ground squirrel eradication, 5000 minimum. Idaho, North Nevada, North Utah, East Oregon. Call 6-9 pm PST 208-882-8963.

Responsible retired veteran looking for varmint hunting. Wolves, coyotes, chucks, squirrels. I live near Emmett but have gun will travel. leave message 208.365.1639.

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Movie Time - The Brady Bunch on DVD Seasons 1,3,4 excellent \$15.00 plus shipping; The Driver Shot Kennedy and The Kennedy Assassination, fascinating DVD's \$10.00 plus shipping. Bellman stovetop espresso/cappuccino coffee maker, charming and classic, excellent \$50. Grangeville, ID Kurt 208-983-0599.

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2006 Ford Fusion. Clean one owner car, low miles 66,500, V6 Automatic. Maroon w/beige cloth interior. \$4,700. Pocatello, ID 208-241-0800.

2003 Ford 31' Coachman RV - Queen bed, shower, bathroom, sink, toilet, kitchenette with microwave, fridge, oven, sink, couch, kitchen table, 4 chairs. TV, AC/Heater, generator, batteries, outside awning, 1 slide-out. \$18,000 obo. Am. Falls, Id. 208-226-1921.

"New"--Rocketeer Motorcycle Side-Car--In Box--\$3,250.00 Firm; 2007 Harley Davidson Highway Patrol W/21K. mi. Excellent condition, many extras. \$13,200.00. Selling due to age + handicap. Will send Pic`s on request. Orofino, Id. (208) 476-5767.

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Paying cash for old cork top embossed bottles and some telephone insulators as well as other vintage and antique

items. Call Randy. Payette, Id. 208-740-0178.

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

Pre-1970 Idaho License Plates Wanted: Also Revere Ware and Solar-Sturges Permanent

cookware, and old signs. Will pay cash. Please email, text, call, or write. Gary Peterson, 115 E D St, Moscow, ID 83843. gearlep@gmail.com. 208-285-1258

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Deadline dates

Ads must be received by **June 22** for July Producer.

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Non-commercial classified ads are free to Idaho Farm Bureau members. Must include membership number for free ad. Forty (40) words maximum. Non-member cost is 50 cents per word. You may advertise your own crops, livestock, used machinery, household items, vehicles, etc. Ads will not be accepted by phone. Ads run one time only and must be re-submitted in each subsequent issue. We reserve the right to refuse to run any ad. Please type or print clearly. Proofread your ad. Ads must be received by July 12 for the August Quarterly.

Mail ad copy to:
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Ad Copy _____

Art Contest Winners 2020

The Idaho Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee's poster and coloring contest began in 2000 as a way to promote the arts and further the understanding of agriculture in our lives. The contest is targeted to school-age kids.

Art Contest



1st Art - Lyla Hatch - Inkom



**3rd Art - Matix Jolliff -
Blackfoot**



**2nd Art - Scarlett Mortimer -
Menan**

Poster Contest



1st Poster - Emory Chandler - Weiser



2nd Poster - Taylor Ailport - Sandpoint

Idaho's Top ten Agricultural Commodities

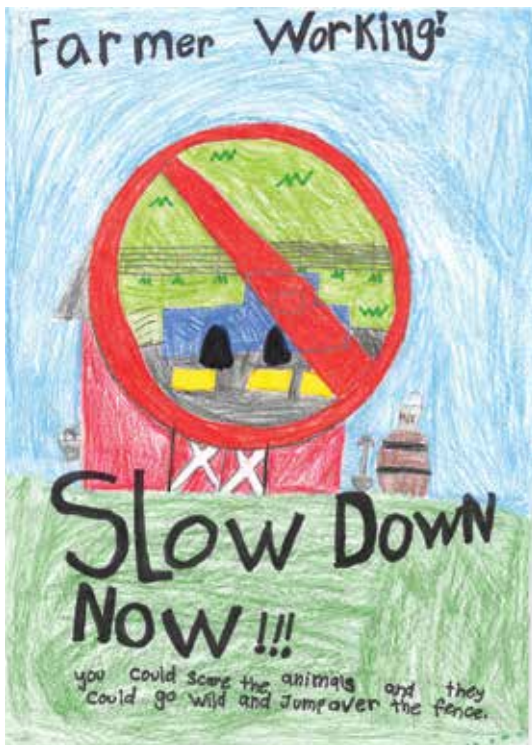


3rd Poster - Hunter Burrows - Sandpoint

Safety Flier Contest



1st Safety Flier Kaylene Clark - Rigby



**2nd Safety Flier -
Hadley Chambers - Rexburg**



**3rd Safety Flier - Hadley Griffin -
Rupert**



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