

GEM STATE **Producer** Idaho Farm Bureau.

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**Investing in Idaho's
Water Supply**



Farmer veterans, a legacy of service in rural America

During the week of Nov. 11, we pause as a nation to express our heartfelt gratitude to our veterans.

It never quite feels like enough, however, compared to all these men and women have sacrificed in service to our country.

They leave their homes and families for months and years at a time, put themselves in

harm's way, and often suffer serious wounds and loss in battle—all to keep us safe here on the home front.

Nearly a quarter of veterans return home to rural America, with many of them coming back to the family farm or beginning a new chapter as first-generation farmers.

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Farm Bureau supports Agricultural Protection Area concept

Finding ways to preserve farmland has been a topic of discussion in Idaho for many years, even decades.

With Idaho being the fastest-growing state in the nation, from a percentage standpoint, the past several years, that discussion has turned into a hot-topic issue of utmost importance.

As people continue to flow into Idaho at a rapid pace, a sizable portion of agricultural land within the state has been sold and developed.

Once that farmland is gone, it's gone and it will never return to agricultural production, unfortunately.

See **SEARLE**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Tender hands

Considering the close to another year, with its trials and triumphs, challenges and successes, the term "tenderness" comes to mind.

The same type of tenderness we use in agriculture, especially while caring for fragile roots or newborn animals, should also be a key element in our interactions with our fellow man.

Farming is such an intimate relationship between humanity and the land. It's a

marriage that requires sweat, grit, and a soft touch of understanding.

Raising crops is more than planting seeds and reaping the harvest; it is a hospital where the farmer is the doctor and nurse, seeing to the needs of each plant.

Tenderness is required to read the land, listen to the weather, and respond accordingly. It's a reciprocal relationship where only respect for the earth translates into a bountiful harvest.

See **MILLER**, page 7



Idaho Farm Bureau.

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Photo by Sean Ellis

Potatoes are harvested in a field near Firth this year. Idaho ranks No. 1 in the nation in five different agricultural commodities, including potatoes.

Idaho set a record for ag production value in 2022

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Idaho set a record for total agricultural production value in 2022, blowing away the previous record.

However, farm and ranch expenses also reached a record high last year and are expected to rise even more this year.

With prices for most of the major ag commodities produced in Idaho on the decline, some significantly, there will almost certainly be no state record for ag production this year.

In fact, that total is expected to decline significantly.

Idaho farmers and ranchers produced \$11.7 billion worth of agricultural commodities in 2022, according to data recently released by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

That total differs slightly from data that shows total farm-gate receipts, which are what the farmer or rancher receives directly for their commodity. Idaho's farm-gate receipts total for 2022 was a record \$11.2 billion, according to USDA.

The ag production value total includes commodities that are used on-farm and not sold, such as hay.

Ag commodity prices soared last year to record or near-record highs and so did total ag production value.

Idaho's total ag production value of \$11.7 billion in 2022 is 37 percent higher than the 2021 value of \$8.6 billion and 33 percent more than the previous record for Idaho ag production value of \$8.83 billion set in 2014.

But this year will be a different story.

See RECORD, page 10

COVER: Gov. Brad Little joined state water managers Nov. 2 to celebrate an \$8 million irrigation project they believe could serve as a template for similar projects around the state. See story on page 4.

Photo by Steve Stuebner

Governor, water supply managers tout \$8 million irrigation pipeline project

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

IDAHO FALLS – Gov. Brad Little was joined by water supply managers Nov. 2 to celebrate an \$8.2 million irrigation pipeline project they believe will serve as a template for the state's ongoing efforts to efficiently manage Idaho's water resources.

The project by Enterprize Canal Co. in Ririe will replace an old canal with a buried pipeline irrigation system.

The 1.6-mile-long pipeline will connect to Enterprize's existing irrigation network, which serves 204 producers who farm 5,436 acres of land northeast of Idaho Falls.

The 63-inch-diameter pipeline will have an estimated capacity of 110 cubic feet per second.

The project, which began this fall and is slated for completion in 2024, received a \$2.7 million Aging Infrastructure Grant through from the Idaho Water Resource Board and a \$1.9 million WaterSmart grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

According to a project fact sheet, the AIC grant is part of Little's Leading Idaho Initiative to modernize Idaho's water infrastructure.

Project manager Darrel Ker, an Enterprize Canal Co. board member, said the project will allow the company to replace its old canal system with a more efficient pipeline that will provide the ability to conserve water, enable system autonomy and ensure Enterprize doesn't lose its water supply.

Enterprize Canal diverts natural flow and reservoir storage water from the Snake River for irrigation purposes. According to the fact sheet, the water is distributed to half of the system's water users in the



Work is underway on an \$8.2 million project that will upgrade the Enterprize Canal Co. system.

Photo by Steve Stuebner

northern part of the system by an upper canal that is 6.5 miles long and unlined.

To serve the other users in the southern part of the canal system, the company uses a neighboring canal to wheel water to Willow Creek.

Since severe flooding in the 1930s washed out a flume that Enterprize used to serve the southern part of its system, the canal company has had to rely on a neighboring canal company for water delivery.

That agreement expires in 2024, “so the new pipeline will allow us to serve our water users in the southern part of our system for the long term,” Ker said in the fact sheet ... “This project is essential to sustain the family farms relying on us to deliver their water.”

The project includes building three aquifer recharge basins developed by Enterprize near the pipeline project. These recharge sites are designed to help the state in its efforts to recharge the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer.

The Idaho Water Resource Board provided \$5.1 million in funding to partner with Enterprize Canal Co. to develop these recharge basins.

Project engineer Hattie Zobott said a really important aspect of the project is that it is a “recharge coupled project. So we have a pipeline structure that helps improve efficiency of conveyance of water in the state of Idaho, and then it’s coupled with a recharge facility where recharge is happening.”

According to the fact sheet, the pipeline project and recharge basins will benefit the state by:

- Increasing water management flexibility.
- Improving water conservation.
- Enhancing water reliability.
- Providing the capability to recharge and store water.

When it comes to protecting the state’s water supply, “This project checks three different boxes: It improves water conservation, it enhances water reliability and it increase our ability to store and recharge water in drought years,” Little said during a Nov. 2 tour of the project.

Though the project will serve as a template for similar projects, the governor added.

“I’m excited for what we’re going to do here,” he said. “This is just one example of a lot of projects we’re going to do all over the state.”

Ker told tour participants that while the project was once just a pipe dream, through the governor’s support and the different funding opportunities, “this project is now a pipe reality.”

“Although this project means a great deal to us locally, we know that this project benefits and impacts more than just our small community,” Ker added. “What a privilege it is to support our beautiful state’s ... natural resources and to preserve those resources for future generations.”

Water board members at the tour talked about the important role projects such as this one will play in helping the state protect and efficiently use its water resources.

IWRB member Marc Gibbs, a former state legislator from Grace, said with the state’s population growing rapidly and the ESPA declining at the same time, “we obviously have to figure out a way to get that in balance. The water board will take every opportunity we can to figure out ways to ... enhance our water supply moving forward.”

IWRB member Brian Olmstead thanked the legislature and governor for financially supporting water projects across the state “because we’ve got so many of these projects that we want to do and it takes money.”

“But it benefits everybody,” added Olmstead, former general manager of the Twin Falls Canal Co. “It doesn’t matter if you’re a city, an industry, a farmer, or an owner of a domestic well. We’ve got to protect (our water supply).”

Little said it’s important that everyone is on the same page when it comes to protecting the state’s water supply.

“We will continue to dedicate more and more resources but it’s going to be a team effort,” he said. “Everybody’s going to have to get their shoulder to the wheel (and) move sustainability, move efficiency, move recharge forward into the future.” ■



DUVALL

Continued from page 2

One of the greatest honors of my role as American Farm Bureau president is getting to meet the brave men and women who have served our nation and have continued their service at home on the farm.

Last February, I met farmer and World War II veteran, Robert Luker. His family welcomed me to their multi-generational farm in Alabama, and I wished I could have just sat and spent hours chatting with this farmer veteran.

We can never thank Robert and his generation enough for their service to our country. Robert, and many like him, played a role in defeating evil, and then came home to pick back up on the farm, raising crops and raising a family.

It's a story of bravery and perseverance told over in every generation.

Did you know that 1 in every 6 farms has a producer who is currently serving or who has served in the military? Farm families, like mine, are proud of these heroes in our families.

As many of you know, my son Vince was an Army helicopter pilot and a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Like many veterans, he served with men and women who lost their lives serving this nation.

The stories of their sacrifice are a constant reminder that not every family gets to welcome their son or daughter back home, and our hearts go out to these families and to the service members who return with the scars of battle.

For many veterans, farming and ranching provides a way to restore their spirits as they put their skills to work in a new field growing the food that fills America's pantries and dinner tables.

I can think of no better place to heal and rebuild than rural America, as physical, mental and emotional trauma can follow our veterans for the rest of their lives.

As a nation, we must continue to make it a top priority to pro-

'I can think of no better place to heal and rebuild than rural America, as physical, mental and emotional trauma can follow our veterans for the rest of their lives.'

vide our veterans with the resources they need when they return home from serving our country.

For example, the farm bill plays a key role with programs for veteran farmers, including financial and risk management support to ease the transition for veterans returning to rural America to start or begin again in agriculture.

The American Farm Bureau is also proud to be a long-time supporter of the Farmer Veteran Coalition, an organization committed to connecting veterans to agriculture.

This coalition, the first of its kind, began when a small group of farmers met to discuss how they could create jobs for veterans on their farms.

In addition to the training and resources that the Farmer Veteran Coalition provides, they offer the public a way to support veterans through their Homegrown By Heroes label.

The HBH label certifies products grown and raised by American veterans so that all Americans can support these brave men and women.

To learn more about the label and the work of the Farmer Veteran Coalition, visit farmvetco.org.

I hope you'll join me all year long in giving thanks for our veterans, and in thanking them personally.

Their sacrifices make it possible for us to enjoy the freedoms we have in our country, and they should all know how much we value and appreciate them.

To our veterans, thank you for your service. ■

SEARLE

Continued from page 2

Finding ways to stem the rapid loss of farmland that is occurring in some parts of the state is one of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's highest priorities.

Two years ago this month, IFBF voting delegates, who are all farmers or ranchers, adopted a policy supporting state legislation to protect agricultural lands if it is voluntary and incentive based.

That led to the creation of a farmland preservation committee made up of farmers and ranchers from across Idaho that

was tasked with trying to find ways to help preserve ag land in the state.

That committee was divided into sub-committees and put a lot of effort into this issue.

In addition, IFBF staff and state board members have had, and continue to have, a lot of detailed discussions about farmland preservation with elected officials, including the governor, legislative leaders and county commissioners.

As a result of these discussions and recommendations by the farmland preservation committee, IFBF has created and is moving forward with a farmland preserva-

tion concept known as Idaho Agricultural Protection Areas.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation plans to introduce the concept as legislation during the 2024 Idaho Legislature, which convenes in early January.

An IAPA would be a voluntary land use designation that is requested by a landowner to their local unit of government. The landowner would receive certain non-monetary benefits or incentives, with the possibility of financial ones also at some point in the future.

An IAPA would include a minimum 5-acre parcel of land that is dedicated to

agricultural production and that has been actively farmed or ranched for the past three years.

The application would be reviewed by a locally created IAPA advisory board that would make a recommendation to the local governing body.

Once an IAPA is created, the designation would remain for 20 years, with an option for automatic renewal. A landowner could remove the designation after 10 years, but any financial or monetary benefit received for the unfulfilled portion of the contract would have to be repaid.

A landowner with an IAPA would receive the following benefits:

- No changes to applicable local ordinances or regulations that would restrict their farming practices.
- No changes to zoning classification within the IAPA without written approval by the landowner.
- Local ordinances and regulations would have to ensure a prohibition on public nuisance claims.
- The exercise of eminent domain powers to condemn land within an IAPA would be limited.

Local governments would receive these benefits:

- They would have clear communication from landowners of their intention to keep land in agricultural production.
- An IAPA would aid local governments in their long-term

planning processes to plan for production agriculture.

- The designation would maintain working lands, open spaces and local food production for local communities.

Again, IFBF has made this issue a very high priority for the past few years in an effort to protect what we have in the state right now while at the same time respecting a landowner's right to sell their land if they choose to.

Idaho Farm Bureau has always stood for protecting a private property owner's right to do what they want with their land. That's why this IAPA concept is voluntary.

If a farmer or rancher wants to sell their land, we support that right 100 percent.

At the same time, we would also support them if they wanted to place their farmland within an IAPA in order to achieve certain benefits, such as some more protection from the use of eminent domain.

This concept is not the silver bullet to solve this issue but we believe it is one piece of ammunition that could be effective in helping slow the loss of farmland in Idaho.

IFBF is still gathering input and feedback from people on this Idaho Agricultural Protection Area concept. If you would like to offer your thoughts and insights on the concept, contact Brody Miller or Braden Jensen in Farm Bureau's Boise office at (208) 342-2688. ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

The same is true with livestock. A good rancher is a caretaker, not a dominator. Animals under their watchful eye must be cared for as living beings.

Ensuring their well-being requires a gentle touch, an understanding of their needs, and commitment to their health. These are rules for profitability in livestock.

The tenderness with which livestock are raised reverberates through the final products, influencing the quality and sustainability of the food we put on our tables.

I find so many different parallels between farming and human interactions. Every action, like a seed planted in the soil, has consequences that ripple through our social fabric. Tenderness and respect become the nutrients that enrich the soil of our communities.

The tenderness cultivated in agriculture also extends to a profound respect for diversity.

I have never met a single-crop farmer. Various crops must coexist in a rotation to ensure the soil is healthy and vibrant.

This fact also highlights that all plants and animals are unique with different values and costs; what one takes from the earth, the other replaces.

Only by embracing the differences of crops can a farm flourish.

This lesson of tenderness taught to us through the raising of crops and livestock can also teach us humans a lesson when dealing with each other.

In our families and communities, tenderness and respect are the bedrock of diversity of thought and understanding.

A tender plant is very pliable and resilient but also vulnerable to shock. The same is true with our relationships. An attitude of tenderness and compassion can allow truth to be heard and differences to be overcome.

Contrary to tenderness, stiffness or rigidity can cause tender roots to shatter, as well as relationships, when one sees themselves as superior or more dignified than another.

A good farmer must get on their knees to tend to a tender plant, just as we must be willing to seek to understand one an-

other before we can believe we can change a mind or a direction with a friend or peer.

Tenderness in agriculture also teaches the value of stewardship. Farmers are stewards of the land, ensuring its health and sustainability for future generations.

This sense of responsibility toward our management of the land mirrors the need for stewardship in our human relationships. Tenderness and respect extend beyond personal interactions to a broader commitment to the community.

During this Christmas season, may we all consider that the tenderness required to raise livestock and cultivate crops is not just a skill but a philosophy that resonates far beyond the fields.

It's a reminder that our actions, whether in a field, pasture or in the streets of our communities, shape our world.

Tenderness and respect are the seeds we plant in our interactions. Just as the farmer tends to the land with care, may we tend to each other, fostering a world where our tender approach to crops and animals is the same as our treatment of our fellow man. ■

Idaho produces second biggest barley crop ever

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Idaho’s 2023 barley crop set a record for average yield this year and the state’s barley farmers produced their second biggest crop ever.

According to USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, Idaho farmers produced 60.5 million bushels of barley this year. That is second only to the 62.1 million bushels they produced in 2016.

“It’s a good crop. For me personally, we did have probably the best crop we’ve ever had,” said Blackfoot barley farmer Allen Young. “We’re probably 10 bushels an acre better than what we normally are.”

According to NASS, the average barley yield in Idaho this year was 112 bushels per acre, just nudging last year’s record of 111 bushels per acre.

That yield record includes both irrigated and dryland barley.

“There were some areas that did very well yield-wise,” said Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director Laura Wilder. “On irrigated ground, most farmers did quite a bit better than 112.”

The yield record was somewhat of a surprise given many farmers planted later than normal this year due to a longer-than-normal winter and late spring, Wilder said.

Besides planting being pushed back later than normal, there were also some issues



Idaho farmers set a record for average barley yield in 2023 and also produced the state’s second largest barley crop ever. Photo by Sean Ellis

with early-season hail damage, she said.

“But overall, once things got warm, the crops really came on,” Wilder said.

“What made the year so good is that once the weather got done being so cold and miserable, June was just perfect,” Young said. “June was just perfect: 70s and low 80s, some light rainstorms. It was just perfect weather to develop that early kernel. And then July finished the crop up real nice.”

While there were some issues with sprout damage due to late-season rains, the overall quality of this year’s barley crop was good, industry leaders said.

“The quality of this year’s crop was better than last year,” said Brett Wilken, who oversees Scouler Co.’s Barley MVP program. “Mother Nature was pretty good to us.”

Idaho farmers harvested 540,000 acres of barley in 2023, the same amount as 2022, according to NASS.

The state again led the nation in total barley production, mainly because of its much higher yields per acre compared to the nation’s other major barley-producing states of Montana and North Dakota.

Idaho produced 32.7 percent of the nation’s total barley supply in 2023.

Montana ranked No. 2 with 49.7 million bushels produced off of 1.02 million acres

“The quality of this year’s crop was better than last year. Mother Nature was pretty good to us.”

- Brett Wilken, Scouler Co.

and an average yield of 41 bushels per acre. Montana produced 26.9 percent of the nation’s total barley supply this year.

North Dakota was the nation’s No. 3 barley state in 2023 with 40.5 million bushels produced off of 570,000 harvested acres and an average yield of 73 bushels per acre. North Dakota produced 21.9 percent of the United States’ total 2023 barley crop.

Idaho has ranked No. 1 in barley production in the U.S. nine of the past 10 years, with the lone exception being 2015, when the state ranked second.

About 70 percent of Idaho’s barley is malt barley, which is used in the beer-brewing process. The rest is grown for human food or animal feed. ■



Photo by John O'Connell

Albert Adjesiwor, a University of Idaho Extension weed specialist, stands next to a new thermogradient table that will inform development of predictive models to help growers pinpoint when weeds are likely to emerge to time the application of herbicides.

Special table helps U of I study weed emergence

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

MOSCOW – Scientists with the University of Idaho Kimberly Research and Extension Center have a new machine for studying how temperature affects weed emergence.

Results of testing using the new thermogradient table will inform development of predictive models to help growers pinpoint when weeds are likely to emerge to time the application of herbicides.

Researchers have been collecting weed seeds from throughout Idaho to grow within the stainless-steel table.

Weed seeds will be germinated either on specialized growing paper or in containers filled with sterilized soil, and the researchers will test how quickly weeds emerge when the table is set at various temperatures ranging from 35 degrees to 110 degrees.

The table will also let the researchers test how different levels of soil moisture affect weed seed emergence and the activation of soil-applied herbicides.

The model developed from the data will be posted on the Pacific Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative website, which is currently under development, where growers will input local temperature to determine how soon they'll likely encounter emergence of various weed species and the percentage of weed seeds that will likely emerge at each temperature threshold.

"Because of herbicide resistance, small grain growers are increasingly relying on soil-applied (preemergence) herbicides to control grassy weeds. Weeds that emerge before preemergence herbicides are applied won't die," said Albert Adjesiwor, a UI Extension weed specialist. "Being able to predict the best time to

apply these herbicides will be very helpful to growers to maximize weed control."

Research using the table began in October. Adjesiwor's doctoral student, Chandra Maki, will lead the study for her dissertation in weed science.

"We know there are substantial differences in temperature ... and moisture across the PNW," Maki said. "We expect specific weeds from different conditions to behave a bit differently and this project would help us assess and map these differences."

Maki is curious to see how regional differences may lead weed seeds from various parts of the state to emerge at different rates under the same conditions.

For the purpose of the model, emergence dates of weeds from throughout the state will be averaged together, recognizing equipment from one part of Idaho may be used for field work in another area of the state, introducing outside weeds.

The thermogradient table will also help researchers understand how the soil temperature and moisture may affect herbicide activation. For example, when soil temperature is too high, certain herbicides may volatilize quickly and be rendered ineffective.

The table was funded with roughly \$24,000 from the Pacific Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative, a cooperative project under USDA's Agricultural Research Service involving researchers in Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

Partners involved in weed research under the project in the three states have been sharing ideas and collaborating on various projects to maximize the benefit of this initiative to stakeholders and also to avoid duplication of effort.

The Idaho Wheat Commission, Idaho Barley Commission and Idaho Grain Producers Association have supported this initiative. ■

Continued from page 3

USDA's Economic Research Service expects farm revenue to fall by 8 percent this year. ERS also forecasts farm and ranch production expenses to rise by 3 percent in 2023.

Prices for most ag commodities have declined this year, some considerably. For example, the farm-level price for milk, the state's top ag commodity in terms of total revenue, is way down this year compared with last year.

Farm-level milk prices for Idaho's dairy operations spent a lot of time hovering around \$25 per hundredweight last year. That means dairies on average were getting paid \$25 for every hundred pounds of milk they produced.

This year, that average price has spent a lot of time in the mid to upper teens, said Rick Naerebout, executive director of the Idaho Dairymen's Association, which represents the state's 360 dairies.

At the same time, feed costs, the highest expense for a dairy, have not declined much, he added.

"It's been a big difference for our dairymen this year compared with 2022," Naerebout said. "And feed prices have not come down anywhere near the level that we have seen milk prices come down."

The total value of milk production for Idaho dairies in 2022 was pegged at a record \$4.3 billion by NASS. That is 40 percent higher than the 2021 value of \$3 billion and 34 percent higher than the previous record of \$3.2 billion set in 2014.

Cattle and calves, the state's No. 2 ag commodity in terms of total revenue, also set a record for total value of production in 2022. According to NASS, that sector had a total production value of \$1.75 billion last year, 2 percent higher than the previous record of \$1.71 billion set in 2014.

Potatoes, the state's top crop and No. 3 ag commodity, had a total production value of \$1.5 billion in 2022, which was a record and 36 percent higher than the previous high of \$1.1 billion set in 2021.

"It's been a big difference for our dairymen this year compared with 2022. And feed prices have not come down anywhere near the level that we have seen milk prices come down."

- Rick Naerebout, executive director, Idaho Dairymen's Association

Hay ranked as the state's No. 4 commodity in 2022 with a record \$1.4 billion worth of production, up 27 percent from the previous record of \$1.1 billion set in 2008.

Wheat came in at No. 5 with \$748 million worth of production value in 2022, 43 percent higher than the 2021 total of \$525 million.

Those five commodities had a combined production value in Idaho of \$9.7 billion in 2022, which was 83 percent of the state's total production value for all ag commodities.

Barley passed sugar beets to take over the No. 6 spot in the state last year with a record \$450 million worth of production, which was 88 percent higher than the previous year and 22 percent more than the previous record of \$370 million set in 2013.

The total value of sugar beet production in Idaho last year was pegged at \$403 million, down less than half a percent from 2021 (\$405 million).

Corn for grain remained Idaho's No. 8 ag commodity with \$171 million worth of production value in 2022, up 12 percent from the previous year's total of \$152 million.

Onions ranked No. 9 with \$123 million worth of production in 2022, down 10 percent from 2021 (\$136 million), and hops ranked No. 10 with \$98 million worth of production value last year, down 7 percent from 2021 (\$105 million).

The value of Idaho hop production

declined last year following nine straight years of increases.

Idaho ag commodities outside of the top 10 that increased in production value last year included: trout (up 29 percent from 2021 to \$43 million, which represented 42 percent of total U.S. sales in 2022), dry edible peas (up 27 percent to \$7.6 million), and honey (up 4 percent from 2022 to \$7.3 million).

Notable Idaho ag commodities outside the top 10 that decreased in total production value last year included: peppermint oil (down 22 percent to \$25 million) and lentils (down 12 percent to \$3 million).

The total value of livestock production in Idaho last year was a record \$6.8 billion, up 35 percent from 2021, and the total value of crop production was a record \$4.9 billion, up 38 percent from 2021.

According to the NASS report, Idaho ranked No. 1 in the United States in five ag commodities last year (potatoes, barley, peppermint oil, alfalfa hay and food trout), No. 2 in hops, No. 3 in sugar beets, milk and cheese production, No. 4 in five commodities (dry onions, winter wheat, all hay, dry edible peas and lentils), and No. 5 in all wheat and dry edible beans.

According to the report, Idaho ranked among the top 10 states in 22 ag commodities last year. The state also ranked No. 11 in cattle and calves and No. 14 in honey. ■

Trent Van Leuven wins Idaho Teacher of the Year for his innovations, relevant lessons outside classroom

By Dianna Troyer
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

From 69 nominees statewide, Trent Van Leuven, agriscience instructor and FFA advisor at Mackay Junior/Senior High School, was named 2024 CapEd Credit Union Idaho Teacher of the Year.

“He teaches the 4th R – reality – and prepares students for whatever career path they choose,” said Linda Clark, president of the Idaho State Board of Education, during a public presentation Oct. 4 in the school auditorium. “We have no teachers who do it better than you.”

Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield said, “Your classes provide skill development and support local businesses. We want to let you know that we value and support what you do.”

They presented Van Leuven with a \$10,000 check and commemorative plaque. Next year, he will serve as spokesperson and representative for Idaho educators at state and local events.

Gov. Brad Little congratulated Van Leuven via a video.

“He embodies all the qualities that make an outstanding teacher and mentor. Trent is making a real difference in the lives of our students,” Little said.

Van Leuven, who has taught at Mackay since 2014, said his goals are to teach students to be lifelong learners, collaborate, and have empathy for others. He thanked local volunteers for their continual support.

“It takes a community to make things happen,” Van Leuven said. “Whenever I need help, someone is there. Thanks so much.”

Local residents worked four years with students at the Mackay school to build a 1,400-square-foot state-of-the-art aquaculture lab that opened in October 2022.

They also help plant seedlings at the greenhouse, purchase metal signs from students who fabricate them in the welding program, and buy plants and vegetables grown at the greenhouse.

In a video, local colleagues, students, and Mackay Principal Stephanie Green described Van Leuven as energetic, dedicated, innovative, and persistent.

“He provides all kinds of opportunities to be involved in projects and keeps us informed about scholarships and new programs,” said high school senior Austyn Wasylyow. “Because of my experiences here, I’m planning to become a vo-ag teacher.”

Bart Gamett, a local U.S. Forest Service fisheries biologist, has worked with Van Leuven on a variety of projects.

“He’s a dedicated teacher who has had a tremendous impact on students and the community,” he said. “He connects science to real-world issues.”

Van Leuven said he has always considered the world to be his classroom and strives to make lessons relevant outside school.

Through his innovative lessons, students ...

- became certified to do artificial insemination in cattle



Photo by Dianna Troyer

Trent Van Leuven waters flowers at the Mackay Junior/Senior High School greenhouse, where students raise and sell plants, herbs, flowers, vegetables, and fruit.

through the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

- assisted biologists trapping mule deer to study population trends.
- established a golden trout fishery in Lower Cedar Creek near town.
- grew tropical fruits in their greenhouse including passion-fruit, papaya, figs, and sugar cane.
- earned college credit during high school when Van Leuven taught dual enrollment classes through the College of Southern Idaho.

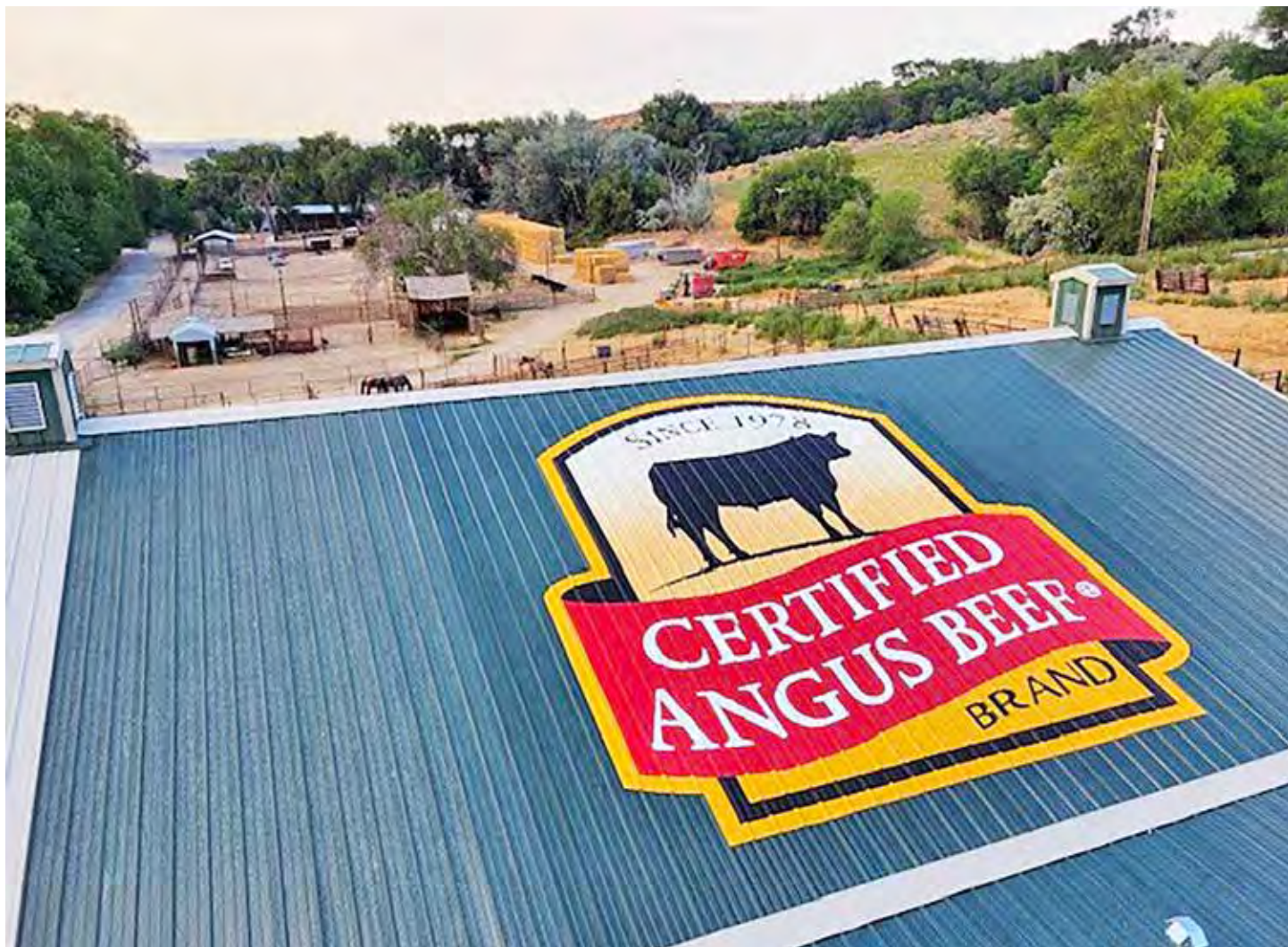
Van Leuven has earned previous honors for his teaching. In 2016, he was one of six educators nationwide who received the National Agri-science Teacher of the Year Award from the National Association of Agricultural Educators. He represented Region 1, an area encompassing nine western states.

In 2012, the association honored him with an Ideas Unlimited Award for using a mobile cow skeleton he made to teach anatomy and cuts of meat.

He also volunteers as president of the Mackay Education Association, chairman of the State and Federal Lands Committee of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, and was secretary for the Idaho Agriculture Teachers Association.

Mackay School District Superintendent Susan Buescher and parent Lindsey Hofine nominated him for the CapEd award. A Rigby native, Van Leuven graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in agriculture education. ■

A video of Van Leuven and his students is at <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7115497717530861568/>.



Submitted photo

The Spring Cove Ranch in Bliss is the first ranch in Idaho to receive the Certified Angus Beef Brand barn logo. A 22 foot-tall CAB logo was recently painted on the roof of a barn, shown here.

An Idaho ranch stamped with the certified Angus beef logo

By Kathy Corgatelli Neville
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

The Spring Cove Ranch in Bliss is the first ranch in Idaho to receive the Certified Angus Beef Brand barn logo.

A 22 foot-tall CAB logo was recently painted on the roof of a barn for all to see.

The family celebrated the designation during their annual fall female sale held the first Monday after Thanksgiving on Nov. 27th.

Art and Stacy Butler have continued the 104-year family legacy of Spring Cove Ranch begun by Art's grandparents, Arthur H. Butler and Effie Marie Carrico Butler.

"We are so excited and thrilled to have this honor," said Stacy Butler.

"We are honored to display the CAB logo on our barn," Art

Butler said. "My grandfather bought his first Angus cattle in 1919 and Angus cattle have been raised at Spring Cove Ranch for 104 consecutive years. The CAB logo is a tribute to our heritage in the breed."

According to Jessica Wharton Travis, assistant director of public relations at Certified Angus Beef, 70 barn roofs have been painted so far with the logo across the United States and Canada.

The family farmer- and rancher-owned CAB organization is based in Wooster, Ohio.

Painting of the CAB logo on barns began in 2018 as a tip of the hat to farmers and ranchers who created the beef brand 40 years ago and still lead it today, according to a CAB press release.

"Each barn has a unique story, much like the CAB brand and the family farmers and ranchers who raise Angus cattle, and the Butlers are representative of this heritage," Travis said. "The

Butlers have been raising registered Angus cattle for 104 years. In fact, they run the oldest registered Angus cattle ranch west of the Rocky Mountains and are longtime quality-focused leaders in the Angus business.”

The Butler family homesteaded in the area and carved out a ranch and a living on the sagebrush-covered Snake River Plain along a section of the Oregon Trail.

The ranch was named Spring Cove by Effie Butler after a natural spring that emerges from a cove above the ranch.

“They broke the land out of sagebrush and planted grass and trees. It’s truly a pioneer story and an Angus story,” Stacy Butler said.

Differentiating the ranch from others is that Spring Cove Ranch cattle spend months on the vast rangelands near Bliss.

“Our cattle graze on western rangeland in a 100-mile radius. Very few registered herds run in commercial herd conditions,” Stacy Butler said.

Spring Cove Ranch stock is known for calving ease, maternal traits and marbling, just to name a few of the herd’s attributes. DNA testing verifies each calf’s parents.

“We take a DNA sample of every calf born, which gives us a genomic profile on each calf,” Stacy said.

During their sales in March and November, buyers can bid in person or online. Last March, they sold 200 head of Angus bulls at the bull and female sale. The averaged bull price was \$6,900, Stacy said. They also sell semen from their herd sires and some are national Artificial Insemination studs, Stacy said.

While a special celebration of the CAB Logo took place at the ranch this fall, the main event was the marketing of their elite registered females and frozen genetics.

The Butlers also sold about 300 artificially inseminated bred commercial heifers with proven calving ease and marbling for their commercial bull customers.

“We are providing a venue for our bull customers to sell their commercial bred heifers,” Stacy said.

This is the second time the ranch has been recognized. In 2017 they received the Certified Angus Beef Seedstock Commitment to Excellence award.

“The 2017 award was a tremendous honor so this honor is the icing on the cake,” Stacy said.

Spring Cove Ranch is truly a family affair, which ensures it will continue in the future.

The Butler’s son and wife, Josh and Denise Mavencamp, and children Wyatt, Will and Harvey, along with their daughter and husband, Chad and Sarah Helmick and children Helen, Isabelle and Seth, are all involved in the operation of the ranch.

“All are involved and today corrals are being built and the grandkids help with the cow work and the sales,” Stacy said.

For more information about the Butler family legacy and history, cattle, videos and contact information, visit their webpage at springcoveranch.com. They also have a Facebook page and an Instagram account. For more information about CAB, visit certifiedangusbeef.com. ■

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The latest numbers on foreign investment in U.S. ag land

By Daniel Munch

American Farm Bureau Federation economist

Foreign investment in U.S. agricultural land is a hot topic, largely spurred by media reports raising concerns about bad actors from adversarial nations purchasing land for potentially hostile purposes.

Several questions arise when considering this issue.

First and foremost, how much agricultural land in the U.S. is owned by foreign investors and from what countries do those investors hail?

Second, what kind of land do these foreign entities own? Productive cropland? Forestland? Or perhaps open space for energy production or other purposes?

Additionally, how have these numbers changed in recent years?

While data exists to answer many of these questions, the quality of these data points has often been questioned, complicating our true understanding of how much U.S. ag land is owned by foreign investors and who they are. This article summarizes the latest available data with some critiques of its quality.

As noted in a January Congressional Research Service report, the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978 (AFIDA) established a nationwide system for collecting information pertaining to foreign ownership of U.S. ag land (defined as land used for forestry production, farming, ranching or timber production).

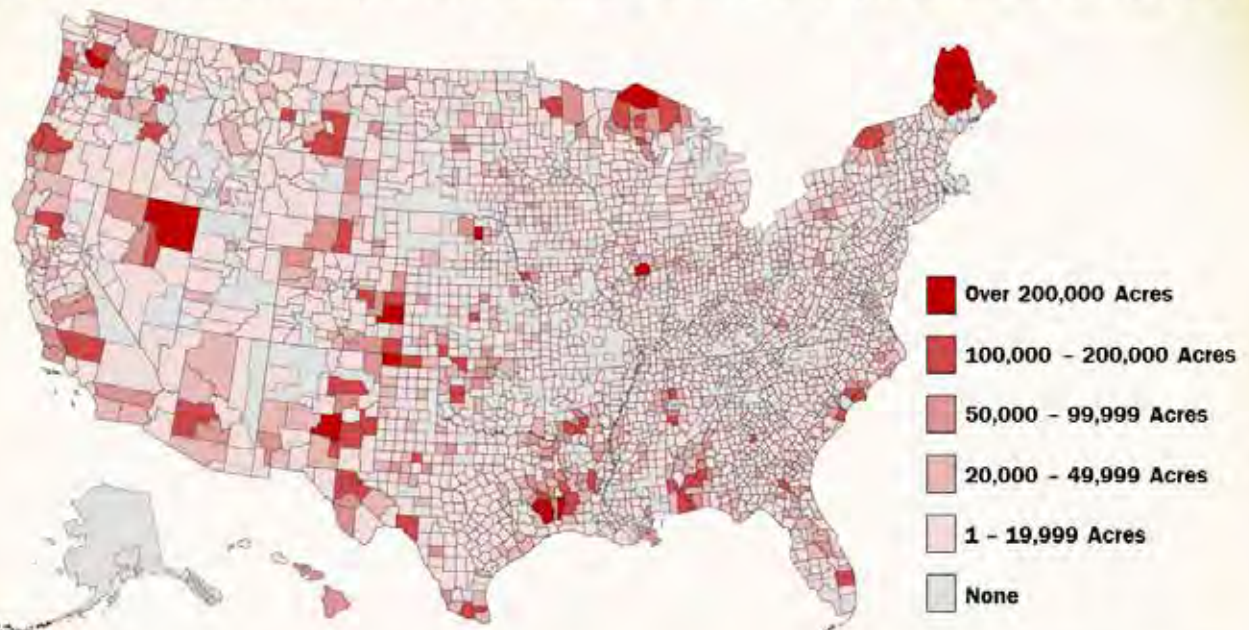
AFIDA defines a foreign person to include “any individual, corporation, company, association, partnership, society, joint stock company, trust, estate, or any other legal entity” (including “any foreign government”) under the laws of a foreign government or with a principal place of business outside the United States.

U.S. citizens and green card holders are explicitly excluded from AFIDA requirements. The regulations require foreign persons who buy, sell or gain interest in U.S. agricultural land to disclose their holdings and transactions to USDA directly or to the Farm Service Agency office where the land is located.

Failure to disclose this information may result in penalties and fines through USDA investigative action.

Maximum civil penalties of up to 25% of the fair market value of the interest held in land can be levied for those who fail to com-

FIGURE 3: CONCENTRATION OF FOREIGN-OWNED U.S. AG LAND BY COUNTY
2021

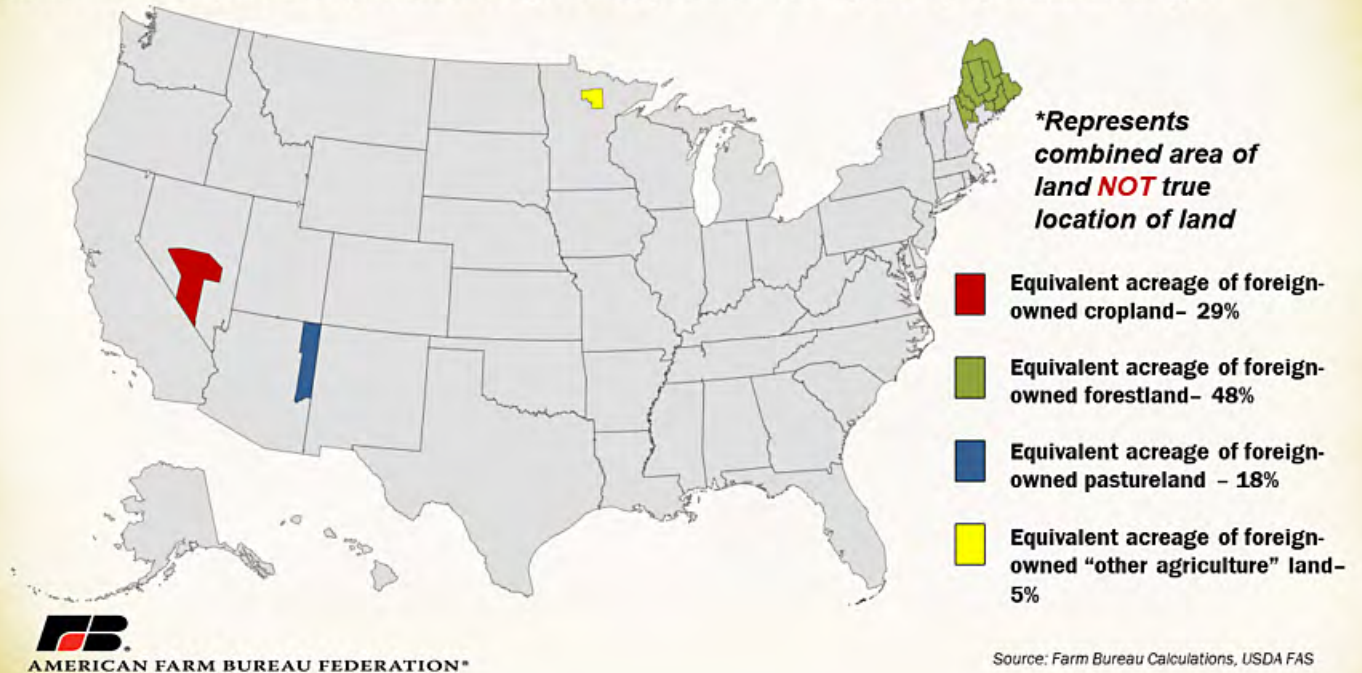


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Source: Farm Bureau Calculations, USDA FAS

FIGURE 5: VISUALIZING EQUIVALENTS OF FOREIGN-INVESTOR-HELD U.S. AG LAND

Shaded counties symbolize equivalent acreage of foreign owned U.S. ag land by agricultural land type



ply. The accuracy of disclosed data relies on voluntary compliance and self-reporting by the foreign entities.

Summary of USDA AFIDA data

According to USDA’s latest AFIDA report, which is based on 2021 data, over 40 million acres of U.S. agricultural land are owned by foreign investors and companies.

This corresponds to 3.1% of all privately held agricultural land and 1.8% of all land in the United States.

Canadian investors own the largest portion of foreign-held U.S. agricultural land with 31% (12.8 million acres) of the total and 0.97% of all U.S. agricultural land.

Following Canada, investors from the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany own 0.37% (4.9 million acres), 0.21% (2.7 million acres), 0.19% (2.5 million acres) and 0.17% (2.3 million acres) of U.S. agricultural land, respectively.

Over 52% of the reported acreage was listed under the category that includes limited liability companies (LLCs), 32% was corporations (most of which were formed in the United States), 12% was partnerships, 2.3% was individuals and the remainder was split between trusts, estates, institutions and associations.

County, state and land use data

Figure 3 displays the concentration of reported foreign-investor-held agricultural land by county. Of the 3,142 counties and parishes in the U.S., 2,494, or 79%, have at least one foreign investor present.

In 2,041 counties, or 65% of counties, foreign investors own between 1 and 19,999 acres of land. Only 18 counties, or 0.01% of all counties, have over 200,000 acres of agricultural land held

by foreign investors, the top four of which are in northern Maine with Canada-based investors.

A little over 20% of Maine’s privately held agricultural land is held by foreign investors, which makes up 9% of total foreign-held ag land. Hawaii has the second-largest percentage of foreign-held U.S. agricultural land, which is 9.2% of the privately held agricultural land in the state.

In 2021, 48% (19.2 million acres) of reported foreign-held agricultural land was forestland, 29% (11.8 million acres) was cropland, 18% (7.3 million acres) was pastureland and 5% (1.8 million acres) was other agricultural land and non-ag land, which accounts for factors like owner or worker housing and rural roads.

These proportions vary widely depending on the state. Forestland, for instance, makes up 99%, 98%, 86% and 85% of foreign-held agricultural land in Maine, Alabama, Louisiana and Michigan, respectively.

In states with significant timber industries, this land is primarily held by investors from Canada and the Netherlands.

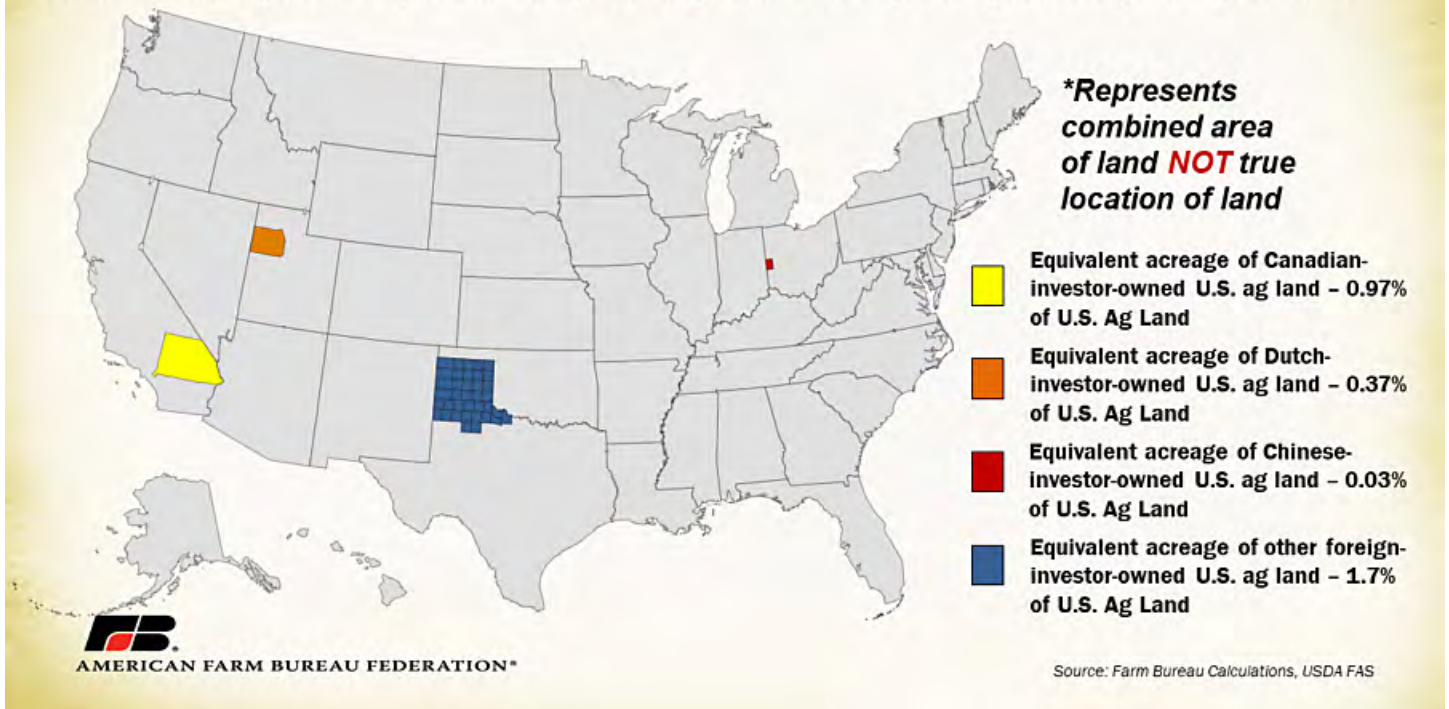
Of the top eight states with the highest concentrations of foreign-investor-held land, only two (Colorado and Oklahoma) have cropland as their largest foreign-held land category, with investors primarily from Canada, Italy and Germany.

Visualizing the area of foreign-investor-held acreage can be difficult in standard county-level heat distribution maps. Figure 5 displays county equivalents of foreign-investor-held agricultural land by category if all separately owned parcels of land were combined and placed in the same geographic location.

Counties shaded green reflect the total acreage equivalent of

FIGURE 7: VISUALIZING EQUIVALENTS OF FOREIGN-INVESTOR-HELD U.S. AG LAND

Shaded counties symbolize equivalent acreage of foreign owned U.S. ag land by nationality of foreign investor.



foreign-investor-held forestland combined from across the country.

Counties shaded red reflect the comparable total acreage of foreign-investor-held cropland combined from across the country.

Counties in blue and yellow reflect the total acreage equivalent of foreign-investor-held pastureland and other agricultural land combined from across the country, respectively.

Combined, this acreage reflects an area 3 million acres shy of the combined acreage of Ohio and West Virginia, most of which is forestland.

Analyzing the quantity of reported foreign-investor-held U.S. agricultural land overtime reveals a 27-million-acre increase (214%) in the four decades since AFIDA reports were made available.

This reflects an increase from 1% of total privately held agricultural land in the U.S. to 3.1%.

Between 2010 and 2021, foreign-investor-held agricultural land increased 15.8 million acres, with cropland increasing at the highest percent (182%) with an additional 7.5 million acres, forestland increasing the highest numerically at 8.6 million acres (80%) and other ag land declining 3% or 240,000 acres.

As noted in the latest AFIDA report, states showing the highest increases in foreign-investor-held agricultural acres between 2020 and 2021 were Texas, with an increase of nearly 549,000 acres; Arkansas with an increase of nearly 250,000 acres; and North Carolina, with an increase of nearly 247,000 acres.

Forty-three percent of the overall increase in acreage between 2020 and 2021 is attributed to these three states.

Hawaii, Iowa and Utah are the only states showing a decrease in foreign-held agricultural acres; the over 52,000-acre decline reflects long-term leaseholds that were terminated and the sale of various types of agricultural land.

The top 10 entities reporting foreign-investor-held agricultural land, in terms of acreage, hold 7.22 million acres of U.S. agricultural land, which corresponds to 0.6% of all U.S. agricultural land and 18% of foreign-held agricultural land.

Only a limited few involve land used in crop production and the vast majority correspond to nations considered very friendly to U.S. interests.

Seven of these top 10 entities are timber or timber-adjacent industry participants. This includes two Canada-based timber companies which own 1.11 million acres and 963,600 acres in northern Maine, respectively; a Netherlands-based timber company which holds over 748,000 acres across South Carolina, Arkansas and Louisiana; an Ireland-based corrugated packaging company that holds 617,000 acres across Florida, Alabama and Georgia; a third Canada-based timber company which holds 352,000 acres in Texas; a Sweden-based timber company which holds 300,000 acres in Texas; and a fourth Canada-based timber company which holds an additional 297,000 acres in Maine.

The largest single landowning foreign entity is a multinational power generation development company that holds 1.709 million acres of land across 25 states (the largest concentration of which – 473,000 acres – is in Colorado). Though the energy company is a U.S.-based entity, in 2013 Quebec's public pension fund manager invested heavily in the company's portfolio of wind farms, making

Canada the prominent investor for the nearly 2 million acres of corresponding wind energy generation land.

Similarly, a wind energy company holds 391,000 acres across Oklahoma for a proposed renewable energy generation facility. The company is based in the panhandle of Oklahoma, with significant Canadian investments for the reported acreage.

The only entity not explicitly related to timber or energy production in the top 10 is an insurance company, which manages a wide portfolio of assets including 1.296 million acres of agricultural land across 18 states. (The largest concentration of which – 180,000 acres – is in Oregon.)

The New England-based company was acquired by a Canadian life insurer in 2004. The bulk of AFIDA reports mimic the distribution of these top 10 land-holding entities with major land holdings primarily by energy production and timberland investors.

The national security factor

Many of the current concerns about foreign ownership of U.S. ag land have focused on China. According to the latest AFIDA data, China is ranked 18th in the ownership of U.S. ag land with 383,000 acres, less than 1% of total foreign-owned U.S. ag land, or just three hundredths of one percent of all agricultural land in the U.S.

This reflects a total area about one third of the size of Rhode Island or that of an average sized county in Ohio. Figure 7 allows us to visualize this more clearly.

Shaded counties reflect county equivalents of foreign-investor-held agricultural land by nationality of investor or company if

all separately owned parcels of land were combined and placed in the same geographic location.

Counties shaded yellow reflect comparable total acreage of Canadian-investor-held ag land combined from across the country. Counties shaded orange reflect the geographic equivalent of the total acreage of Dutch-investor-held ag land combined from across the country. Counties shaded blue reflect the comparable total acreage of all other foreign-investor-held ag land combined from across the country and the county shaded red reflects the total equivalent acreage of Chinese-investor-held ag land combined from across the country.

Combined, Canadian-investor-owned acreage is 2.5 million acres shy of the size of West Virginia, while Dutch investors own acreage about 600,000 acres shy of the size of New Jersey and investors from other nations own acreage about the size of the Texas panhandle.

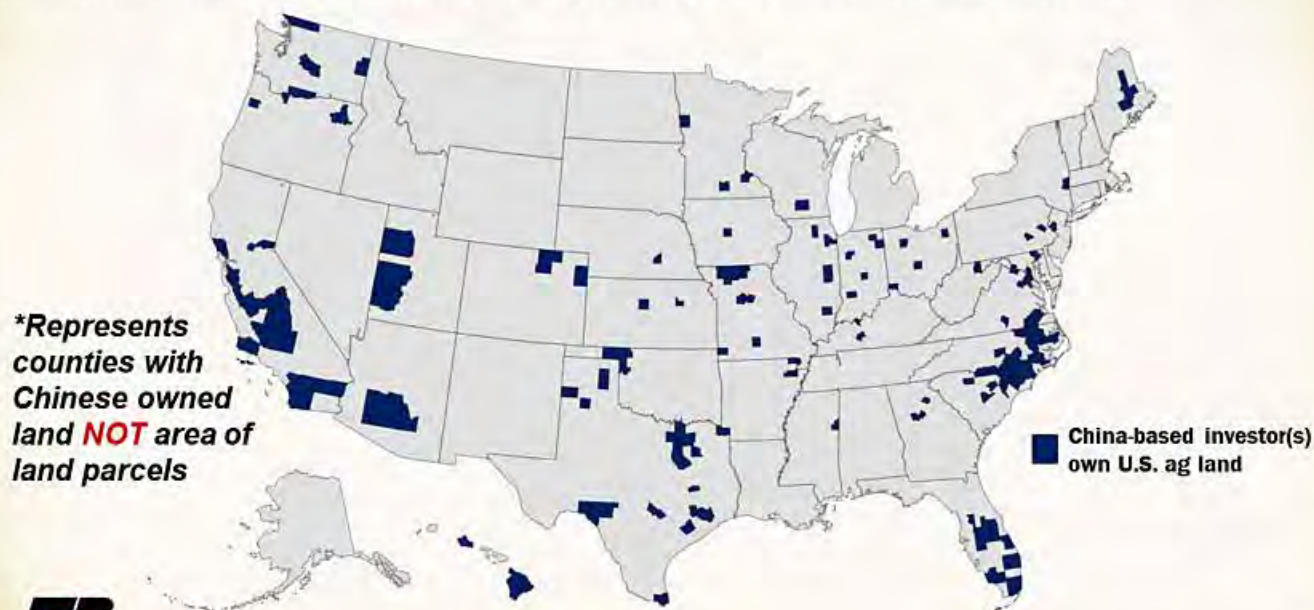
Figure 8 displays counties where Chinese investors and companies have a stake in U.S. agricultural land. By acreage, about 192,000 acres (50%) of Chinese-investor-held U.S. agricultural land are located in Texas, 49,000 acres (13%) are located in North Carolina, 43,000 acres (11%) are located in Missouri, 34,000 acres (9%) are located in Utah and the remaining 17%, or 66,000 acres, is scattered across 24 other states.

According to AFIDA data, about 131,000 acres located in Texas represent the largest single parcel owned by a Chinese-based billionaire investor.

Previous news coverage states the individual purchased the land

FIGURE 8: COUNTIES WITH CHINA-BASED INVESTOR(S) IN U.S. AGRICULTURE

China-based investors own 0.03% of privately held agricultural land in the United States



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Source: Farm Bureau Calculations, USDA FAS

for a wind farm, with an additional 30,000-acre parcel in the same county. The cited article reports that the project was ultimately halted by a state law designed to stop foreigners from accessing the Texas electricity grid.

Second to these Chinese-owned Texas properties, which make up over 40% of Chinese-investor-owned U.S. ag land, are the properties of a Virginia-based U.S. pork processing company that was acquired by a Chinese-owned firm in 2013.

These properties account for over 146,000 acres of U.S. agricultural land spread across nine different states. Nearly 49,000 acres owned by this pork processor are located in North Carolina, 33,500 acres are located in Utah and 13,300 acres are located in Virginia.

Third, a land asset management and global real estate investment company headquartered in Scottsdale, Ariz., and includes Chinese investors, owns over 30,000 acres spread across seven states but primarily in Texas (16,300 acres) and Arizona (9,500 acres).

Additionally, a global seed and pesticide company acquired by a Chinese-owned firm in 2017 holds close to 6,000 acres of land across 16 states primarily used to conduct research to develop and deliver seed and crop protection products for farmers around the globe.

The list of current adversarial nations as defined by the U.S. Department of State includes the Republic of Cuba, Islamic Republic of Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), the Russian Federation and Venezuela under the Maduro Regime.

Combined, investors from these additional nations hold about 95,000 acres of agricultural land in the United States, which corresponds to 0.007%.

Venezuelan investors make up nearly 95% of this total with about 90,000 acres across 17 states. Florida holds the largest area of Venezuelan-investor-owned land with 43,500 acres, not surprising considering the history of Latin American influence in the region.

One sugar company is the largest of these Florida-based Venezuelan parcels with over 14,000 acres. A land holding company owns nearly 21,000 acres in

southern Montana – the largest Venezuelan-investor-owned parcel in the nation.

Iran-based investors follow Venezuela distantly with 4,324 acres of U.S. agricultural land across 13 states. Additionally, Cuba-based investors hold 858 acres in three states and Puerto Rico, Russia-based investors hold 73 acres in four states and no land was reported under North Korea.

Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States

Historically, the U.S. has reviewed national security concerns with foreign investments in U.S. companies and assets via the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS).

Investigations into mergers and acquisitions that could result in foreign control of a U.S. business, targeted investments into critical technologies, infrastructure, or personal data and real estate transactions have fallen under the jurisdiction of CFIUS.

CFIUS investigated, and approved, the Chinese-firm acquisitions of the pork processor and seed company mentioned above. An interagency committee, CFIUS is chaired by the secretary of the Treasury with eight other members including the secretaries of State, Homeland Security, Commerce and Energy; attorney general, U.S. trade representative; and director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Additionally, the secretary of Labor and director of National Intelligence hold positions as ex-officio members. Five White House offices are observers in CFIUS, often including the National Security Council.

The president can appoint other officials to serve on a case-by-case basis. Notably, the secretary of Agriculture has not played an active role in CFIUS, a possible oversight given the link between domestically secure agricultural production and national security and the growing focus on foreign purchases in ag land.

Data limitations

Notably, one clear challenge of existing AFIDA data is the lack of enforcement. Between 1998 and 2021 USDA penalties were assessed 494 times on 395 different investors, though all fees assessed were for late filing rather than avoiding filing.

All penalties have been less than 1% of the market value of interest held in the land compared to the maximum penalty of 25%. And no penalties were assessed between 2015-2018 and 2020 due to staffing shortages at USDA.

Ownership transparency is also limited because USDA lacks the authority to require disclosure beyond a third tier of ownership, which means they cannot always identify the “identity of the ultimate beneficial owner” or their corresponding true location.

The lack of resources at USDA to enforce AFIDA has resulted in practical limits to policing the high volume of annual real estate transactions, with nearly half of all transactions not disclosing a price.

There are over 3.2 million acres, or 8%, of foreign-investor-held agricultural land that is uncategorized, either because the submission had “no foreign investor listed” or “no predominant country code listed.”

It is also important to note USDA assigns a country based on the investor with the largest share, even if that share is minimal and not a controlling interest.

Overall, the presented numbers need to be viewed with these data limitations and concerns in mind and demonstrate that improvements should be made in the AFIDA data.

Policy considerations

Regardless of the interpretation of the above statistics, actions at both the state and federal level have signaled a desire by some to either restrict foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land or improve data collection and disclosure enforcement.

The National Agricultural Law Center has compiled a list of state-by-state statutes regulating ownership of agricultural land, which can be accessed online at <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/state-compilations/aglandownership/>

A July 2023 Congressional Research Service report also provides a good overview of these laws as well as current congressional considerations.

Strong arguments for and against further restricting ag land purchases have been made. Concerns about the federal government having a larger role in restricting

See INVESTMENT, page 39



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Utilizing the forest for more than just trees

By Audra Cochran
University of Idaho

Perhaps one of the most quintessential holiday season traditions is bundling up to trek through the snow with loved ones in pursuit of a perfectly conical Christmas tree.

Or maybe your family is more like that from the movie “Christmas Vacation.” You end up trudging through waist-deep snow, only to realize the tree you selected is actually much larger than perceived from a distance.

Either way, the tradition of “chopping down a tree” to don in your home for the holiday season is likely a core childhood memory for many of us.

Idaho is known for its abundance of forest land. Nearly 40 percent – 21.6 million acres – of the state is covered in trees. While most people look to forest lands for timber or recreational purposes, many forget that our forests are full of value beyond trees.

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are any products or services that provide personal or commercial value, aside from merchantable timber. They can provide supplemental income or simply bring pleasure to those who seek them.

Common examples of NTFPs are mushrooms, berries, fruits, cones, firewood, boughs for holiday wreaths, and of course, Christmas trees.

Non-timber forest products can be a byproduct of forest stewardship activities such as pruning trees or clearing land, intentionally cultivated, or growing naturally in the wild.

Tourism is also considered a NTFP.

While each season hosts its own NTFP opportunities, the winter brings us some traditional choices that are sure to get you in the holiday spirit.



Idaho's
Private
Forest

Non-timber forest products can be found all around us in area forests. Each season brings new NTFPs for us to explore.

Photos by Audra Cochran

Harvesting a Christmas tree

Christmas trees are a staple in many households during the holiday season. Originally adorned with dried fruits, nuts, and other natural products, today we see a variety of decorating styles, from simple to elaborate.

While many households are choosing to use artificial trees for their ease of up-keep or longevity throughout the season, live trees are still favored.

According to new data released by Nielsen Research, approximately 21.6 million live trees and 12.9 million artificial trees will be purchased this holiday season.

However, households will spend \$1.01 billion purchasing artificial trees, while live tree purchases pale in comparison at \$984 million.

Whichever you prefer, selecting a live Christmas tree in the forest, at a tree farm, or from a tree lot can be a fun activity that keeps close to the forest.

Tree species in our region that are often used for Christmas trees are fir (*Abies*) and spruce (*Picea*) cultivars.

When cutting your tree, you will want to cut below the lowest live limb and try to leave the stump no higher than six inches. It is best not to top larger trees, as this can stall the growth of the remaining portion of the tree.

Once home, keep your tree in a cool space (37 F) until you are ready to set it up. When ready, trim the end of the trunk before placing it in the tree stand.

This opens the pores and promotes water transport to the top. Trees require a significant amount of water, especially in warmer, drier locations.

When harvesting a tree, be sure to acquire the appropriate permits and permissions from public land agencies and private landowners. Permits range from free to a nominal fee of \$10.

Some land agencies have a tree limit as well. To acquire a permit, you can visit the agency website (U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, etc.) or call the local office.

Turning trees into wreaths

Evergreen boughs have been used for centuries to create holiday wreaths. Wreaths have traditionally been made



Holiday wreath making can be a great activity for all generations. It can also help individuals learn to identify the different species of trees that grow in the region.

from branch trimmings after shaping Christmas trees.

Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Grand fir (*Abies grandis*) are popular tree species for making wreaths, as the foliage on their boughs lay relatively flat and provide good structure to the wreath.

Western pine species (*Pinus*), Western (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*), and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) also add nice variety for a decorative flare.

When cutting boughs, be mindful of where you cut them. Boughs should be cut 3-4 feet from the end of the branch above the node.

It is best to harvest boughs after the first frost of the season. The tree will be in a dormant state, causing less stress to the tree and promoting regeneration of the branches. It also helps the needles stay attached to the branches when assembling your wreath.

Once harvested, keep your boughs in a cool place until using. If you will not be using boughs within a week of harvesting, you may want to lightly mist them with water periodically until use to ensure freshness.

Once you've created your wreath, it will stay freshest if kept in a cooler location and will benefit from a light misting.

Much like with trees, you will again want to ensure you have the proper permissions from the appropriate landowners before collecting boughs. Permits are available and range from free to a small fee.

To acquire these permits, it is best to reach out to your local agency office for information.

If you're interested in learning more about making wreaths, University of Idaho Extension offers several wreath classes every fall. Check the university's Forest Stewardship calendar for dates and locations or call your local Extension office.

I hope that you will go out this winter to experience and enjoy all the non-timber forest products that the forest has to offer. They are a cheery way to help ring in the holiday. Happy holidays from the UI Extension team. ■

Audra Cochran is a University of Idaho Extension educator in Lewis County. She can be reached at audrac@uidaho.edu.

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AGVENTURE IDAHO WINTER WONDERS DIRECTORY

This holiday season, Idaho Preferred is excited to launch the **Idaho Winter Wonders Agventure Directory**, showcasing agritourism producers throughout the Gem State to aid in driving consumer awareness and traffic. In the spirit of "fa-la-la local," this statewide guide invites consumers to experience Idaho agriculture by connecting them with local winter ag-tivities, scenic sleigh rides, charming reindeer experiences and u-pick Christmas trees. Agritourism plays a vital role in fostering community bonds and supporting local economies, making Idahoans' holiday celebrations and local farming traditions even more meaningful.

<https://idahopreferred.com/winter-agventures/>

NORTHERN LATITUDE FOODS

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www.idahopreferred.com/members/northern-latitude-foods/

Meet the Dixon family of Northern Latitude Foods, based in Coeur d'Alene. Nestled within the scenic and marshy terrain of Heyburn State Park, they proudly operate a 100-acre wild rice farm.

IDAHO FARM-RAISED MEAT GUIDE

We've curated a list of Idaho Preferred farmers and ranchers who provide direct purchase options for Idahoans to find locally raised meat options. Idahoans can conveniently purchase cuts or shares of turkey, lamb, bison, pork, beef, and more directly from the producers' websites or market stands.

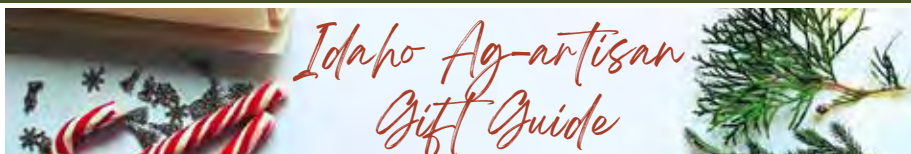
Producers interested in being added to the guide are encouraged to reach out to the Idaho Preferred Team today.

www.idahopreferred.com/farmraisedmeatguide



From Pasture to Feast

IDAHO PREFERRED COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Check out the 2023 **Idaho Preferred Holiday Gift Guide** that puts the spotlight on the outstanding offerings of hardworking Idaho farmers, ranchers, and food crafters. Find unique, farm-crafted gifts from local Idaho producers.

<https://idahopreferred.com/idaho-ag-artisan-2023-holiday-gift-guide/>

Idaho State Department of Agriculture

WEED OF THE MONTH



CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:

Today's seeds are next year's weeds. Do your part in preventing the spread of noxious weeds and make sure to thoroughly clean animals, vehicles, and personal equipment before leaving an area known to have knapweed or a potential infestation. Encourage the growth of native or preferred plant species to proactively deter and restrict the occurrence of initial knapweed infestations. For more information on preventing the spread of unwanted invaders, make sure to visit the IWAC Facebook page.

KNAPWEEDS

Knapweeds, including meadow, diffuse, Russian, spotted, and squarrose knapweeds, are perennials, native to Europe. If left uncontrolled, they can rapidly and aggressively overrun an area with their growth. In general, Knapweed grows up to 3 feet tall and resembles small thistle growing at the end of clustered branches. They are yellow, white, pink, and purple.

Knapweeds have the potential to negatively impact wildlife habitats, reduce plant diversity, and contribute to soil erosion. Additionally, they can lead to crop damage, diminish available forage, detract from the attractiveness of recreational areas, and present risks to wildlife. Specifically, diffuse knapweed possesses spines capable of harming the mouths and digestive systems of livestock, thus significantly limiting their access to forage resources.



What can you do? Beware of the weeds that are being seen in your region of the state and do your research! County Weed Department websites and the Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign's website are great places to start: <http://idahoweedawareness.org>

Caterpillars forecasting harsh start to winter in southeast Idaho

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

MORELAND – One of the highlights of the year for Moreland Elementary School students is the annual visit by the local “Caterpillar Lady.”

Natalie Bergevin uses woolly bear caterpillars and their alleged ability to forecast the upcoming winter to get the students excited about nature.

Bergevin is famous around the Moreland area for bringing the caterpillars into the school each fall and teaching students about their legend of forecasting the coming winter.

The annual visits by Bergevin, with woolly bears in tow, are one of the most anticipated events of the students’ year, said Becky Remsburg, who teaches kindergarten at Moreland Elementary School.

“It’s so fascinating and the kids are just absolutely enthralled to see them and listen to her talk about them,” she said. “I think it’s a great way to get our kids excited about nature....”

Kindergarten teacher Lisa Warren said the school never knows for sure when Bergevin will visit. That depends on when the woolly bears are ready with their forecast.

“She just comes to our door and we stop whatever we’re doing and we gather around her and she talks about them,” she said. “The kids are just so excited and they’re all focused and listening. They just love it.”

People in southeast Idaho could be in for a harsh, snowy start to winter if this year’s “forecast” by woolly bear caterpillars is correct.

The caterpillars are predicting a very cold start to winter with plenty of snow, according to Bergevin, who collects them each year in Moreland, which is in Bingham County.

The caterpillars, which are a mix of black and rusty brown, have a reputation for being able to predict the severity of the upcoming winter.

The caterpillars are black on both ends and a rusty brown in the middle.

The caterpillars, which are the larva of the Isabella tiger moth, have distinct segments of either black or rusty brown.

The more black they have, the harsher the winter snowfall will be, according to legend. The wider the brown sections, the more moderate the winter will be.

Bergevin, who has been collecting the caterpillars for 15 years, says this year they have more black near the head and less near their end. According to their reputation, this means the winter will begin harsh, with lots of snow, then become milder before finishing up harsh.

“This year there’s a lot of black in the front; every one of them



Photo by Kristy Lindauer

These locally collected woolly bear caterpillars are forecasting a cold, snowy start to winter in southeast Idaho. Moreland resident Natalie Bergevin uses the caterpillars to get Moreland Elementary School students excited about nature.

show the most black on the front end this year,” she told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Nov. 1.

Bergevin says the caterpillars will have spines that stick up above them if the winter is going to be really cold but she did not see that this fall.

This year’s colors mean the insects are forecasting more snowfall at the beginning and end of this winter, with normal temperatures, Bergevin says.

The caterpillars last fall were almost completely black and snowpack in southeast Idaho reached record levels in some areas.

According to several internet sites dealing with the woolly bear caterpillar legend, there is no scientific proof supporting the claim the caterpillars can predict the upcoming winter. But there is also no scientific evidence disproving the legend.

“I think they’re pretty accurate, actually,” Bergevin said. “People all over watch them.”

She said she enjoys using the caterpillars to teach kids a little about nature and get them excited about it. She goes back in the spring to talk to the students about how the caterpillar’s fall forecast worked out.

“It’s a fun way to make children think about nature,” she said. “The woolly bears have turned into a really fun way to make the kids look at things and see stuff.”

Brenda Patten, who teaches kindergarten at Moreland Elementary, said a student who missed Bergevin’s visit one year was left in tears.

“She knew the caterpillars were here but she missed it and she just started bawling,” Patten said. “She wanted to see it so bad.”

Bergevin heard about the incident and made a follow-up visit to the school so the student could be included in that year’s woolly bear lesson. ■



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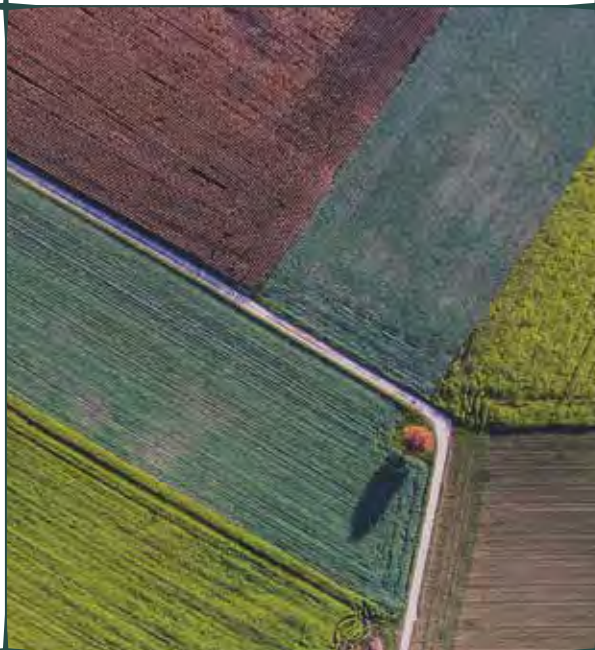
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Photos by Sean Ellis

Corn is harvested in a Canyon County field in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. One of Idaho's smaller counties, Canyon County is one of the state's powerhouses when it comes to total agricultural production.

Canyon County has the most farms in Idaho

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Canyon County has the distinction of having the most farms of any of the state's 44 counties. However, the average size of a farm in the county – 120 acres – is much smaller than the statewide average of 468 acres.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 2,289 farms in Canyon County during the 2017 census year and 274,952 total acres of land in farms.

Many of the county's farms are small in size because a lot of high-value crops are produced here and those crops don't require large acreages, said Matt Dorsey, who ranches and farms west of Caldwell in the Sunny Slope area.

A lot of the farms are also vertically integrated and add value to their commodities before they are shipped off to consumers, he added.

“We grow a lot of high-value crops here and we also add value to those crops,” said Dorsey. “But we’re not just growing commodities. We’re also adding value to them here in the county.”

While the county is one of the state’s smaller counties in size, it is a powerhouse when it comes to total agricultural production.

Canyon County ranked No. 5 among the state’s counties during the 2017 census year when it came to total farm-gate revenue.

Farmers and ranchers here brought in \$575 million in farm revenue that year, a total that is likely to be significantly higher when the new ag census data is released in February.

Canyon County is a major global seed producing area and many of the high-value seed crops grown here don’t need large acreages, Dorsey said.

According to the ag census, 1,779 of the county’s farms are between 1 and 49 acres in size.

Canyon County farmers grow about 60 different types of vegetable seed, including for major crops like onions, sweet corn, dry beans and carrots.

That seed is exported around the nation

‘While the county is one of the state’s smaller counties in size, it is a powerhouse when it comes to total agricultural production.’

and globe and makes the county a major player when it comes to feeding the world.

“We grow a lot of seed crops here. We probably grow more seed here than almost any other area of the country,” said Tony Weitz, who grows mint, onions, wheat, field corn and alfalfa seed near Caldwell.

Because of the climate – dry, hot summers that reduce the types of plant diseases that can survive here, and cold winters that limit insects’ ability to thrive – and ample irrigation water, “we are able to grow seed crops here better than other areas can,” Weitz said.

Besides seed crops, a lot of hay (49,359 acres, according to the 2017 ag census), wheat (31,647 acres) and corn (41,305 acres) are also grown in the county.

A sizable portion of the county’s farm revenue comes from the livestock side. According to the ag census, \$180 million in revenue from milk production and \$66

million from the cattle and calves sector was generated in the county in 2017.

There were 137,348 cattle and calves in Canyon County in 2017, according to the Census of Agriculture.

According to the census, 98 percent of the county’s ag operations are family farms.

Dorsey, who serves on the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation board of directors, said the Canyon County Farm Bureau spends a lot of its resources on helping the county’s youth, through scholarships, speech contests and other avenues.

The local Farm Bureau organization also focuses a lot on developing relationships with local elected officials.

“Everything we do, we do so we can be able to create a relationship with our community,” Dorsey said. ■



Dry beans are harvested in a Canyon County field in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. Canyon County is a major global seed producing area.

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8 weaving looms, from 2-10 harnesses, from 28 inches-46 inches weaving width. Several have a bench. 208-452-4407 leave a message. Fruitland, ID

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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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500 attend Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – About 500 people attended the 11th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans Nov. 10.

Farm Bureau leaders who spoke during the two-hour event made sure the veterans who participated understood the salute was about them and not Farm Bureau.

“It’s a privilege for Farm Bureau to welcome you. Many of you thanked us but it’s our privilege for us here at Farm Bureau to say, thank you,” said Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, a potato farmer from Shelley. “Thank you for your service. We love and appreciate you.”

The Salute to Idaho Veterans, which honors the service of U.S. military veterans, was held at the Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho building in Pocatello.

The event is held the Friday before Veteran’s Day to not interfere with the events held on that day by veterans’ organizations.

The Salute to Idaho Veterans includes a flag ceremony, a guest speaker, a free veteran group photo and individual photos for each veteran, and a complimentary Salute to Idaho Veterans commemorative coin.

“As you came through and received your coins this morning, I looked straight into your eyes and I tried to imagine what you sacrificed, what your spouse, family and friends sacrificed, for you to serve so that I and others can enjoy those freedoms we have in this great country,” Searle said. “So I say, thank you. Thank you for your service. Thank you for what you have done for this country.”

The Salute to Idaho Veterans is a special event for everyone at Farm Bureau and employees organize it, said Todd Argall, chief executive officer of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho.

“This is a really important event for all of us here at Farm Bureau,” he said. “For the Farm Bureau family, this is the highlight of their year. We respect and honor our veterans and everything you’ve given to our country.”

LEFT: About 500 people attended the 11th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans Nov. 10. Photos by Deloy Stuart



“They stepped in when no one else would. I salute the courageous soldiers who have lived and died on the battlefield and given up their lives to save others ... These patriots are the foundation of the United States and our lives. My hope is to live a life that is worth their sacrifice.”

- Dakota Hutchings, Rupert tenth-grader

The guest speaker of the event was former Green Beret Nate Boyer, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan during his 10-year Army career.

After his military career, Boyer in 2015, at the age of 34, became the oldest rookie ever in the National Football League.

He gave an enthralling account of his military days and subsequent unlikely football career as a long snapper for the NFL's Seattle Seahawks to back up his belief that “anything is possible.”

Despite never playing a down of organized football prior to his time in the military, Boyer began playing college football for the Texas Longhorns at the age of 29.

He attributed his success as a long snapper to the discipline and various principles he learned during his time in the military.

“I'm always proud to be here with those who have served,” Boyer said at the end of his presentation. “I'm proud to be here with you guys.”

The three winners of Farm Bureau's Veterans Day essay contest for students read their winning entries during the event.

“My dad's military service means sacrifice. It means we have to sacrifice and give up our dad to go on deployment to protect our country,” wrote Lydia Brown, a third grader from Mountain Home Air Force base, who won the 1st-6th grade category in the essay contest.

“Sometimes I wonder why he has to be away, even though I already know the answer,” Brown wrote. “Military service is a sacrifice of time.”

Tenth-grader Dakota Hutchings of Rupert, who won the 10th-12th grade category of the essay contest, wrote about his grandfather's service during the Vietnam War.

He saluted his grandfather and the other men and women who have fought on the battlefield.

“They stepped in when no one else would,” he wrote. “I salute the courageous soldiers who have lived and died on the battlefield and given up their lives to save others ... These patriots are the



TOP: Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, left, greeted veterans as they arrived for the 11th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho. ABOVE: The 11th Annual Farm Bureau Salute to Idaho Veterans included a flag ceremony.

foundation of the United States and our lives. My hope is to live a life that is worth their sacrifice.”

Joy Hibbert, an eighth grader from Pocatello who won the 7th-9th grade category, has had many family members, including her father and grandfather, serve in the military.

From her family's military service, “I have learned that freedom is not free and that many people give their lives for our country's freedom,” she wrote ... “Freedom is not free. It comes at a great price.” ■

Researcher brings global perspective to Idaho potatoes

By Bill Schaefer

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Farhrettin Goktepe couldn't pass on the opportunity to develop and build a potato breeding program from the ground up for SunRain Potato Varieties.

So in 2010 Goktepe, his wife Zuhail and their three sons moved from Hermiston, Ore., to Idaho Falls to begin Potato Seed Solutions (PSS), the research and development arm for SunRain.

At the time he had been working as a potato breeder at Oregon State University's Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

Goktepe said the PSS model is different from the public breeding programs at universities and the USDA in that the emphasis is on a return on investment and not on research and traits.

He said PSS more closely resembles the commercial model of potato variety development found in Europe or at private enterprises in the U.S. such as Frito-Lay and the J.R. Simplot Co.

"We want to put it in a market and it will make money," he said.

PSS also is in a cooperative venture with Europlant, a seed developer based in Germany, and shares variety germplasm with it.

"With this business model, they convinced me to move into Idaho so I started in 2010-2011 and we didn't have any facilities but the European side, they already have private breeding programs for generations," he said.

During PSS's first three years, Goktepe didn't have any brick and mortar facilities on site in Idaho Falls.

"We were renting some greenhouses in Jerome, we didn't have this facility until 2013," he said of the greenhouses and culture labs now located west of Idaho Falls in



Submitted photos

Farhrettin Goktepe holds a tray of seedlings and is surrounded by first generation plants in a greenhouse this spring.

an area surrounded by commercial fields of potatoes and barley.

"SunRain is basically the seed side of the business, they have exclusivity on the varieties," Goktepe said, describing the relationship between PSS and SunRain.

Goktepe said that throughout the development of new varieties he works with Brit White, the general manager of SunRain, in determining what new varieties will be in demand by the industry and consumers. This process can take up to 10 years or even longer to reach an acceptable variety.

"SunRain is heavily involved in that selection and moving potatoes to the variety levels," he said. "Anything that comes out of the breeding program, they have to see it at least two or three times."

"We give him the direction of what markets or segments we think need opportunity," White said of his interactions with Goktepe. "He's very open to input

"He's really good at his craft. He's doing an exorbitant amount with a very small team."

- Brit White, general manager, SunRain

and ideas. Then down the track we have an agronomy team at SunRain that will start qualifying the later stage because after about seven years he hands material back to us and we trial it across the country in multiple sites."

Then SunRain will conduct product development trials from Idaho and the Columbian Basin, to Texas, Wisconsin,

Michigan, Florida and North Dakota.

“He’s really good at his craft,” White said of Goktepe. “He’s doing an exorbitant amount with a very small team. It has to be lean and efficient in order to drive return.”

Goktepe said he separates variety development into two categories: consumer traits and agronomic traits.

“For agronomic traits, yield is the number one trait. Yield, yield, yield. It has to yield; it has to produce,” Goktepe said. “And then also disease resistance, quality, how easy it is to grow for seed multiplication, for commercial production.”

He said they also try to use the lowest amount of inputs when growing new varieties.

“We are trying to select under the lowest fertilizer application to get the low inputs and also to make it more sustainable for the growers because fertilizer prices are high and we are trying to select with low fertilizer application,” he said.

Goktepe said consumer traits that he emphasizes during research and development include taste and flavor as well as eye appeal, uniformity and size.

“It should be a nice, beautiful type potato,” he said. “We break it down to three different cooking types: firm, fairly firm and baking. We look at cooking quality and we look also at shelf life.”

Goktepe said that these days he is currently focused on specialty varieties like yellow flesh potatoes, red skin potatoes and mini tubers.

Potatoes are a global vegetable and PSS and SunRain are focused on increasing their share of that global market. ■



Farhrettin Goktepe inspects red skin potatoes during the 2023 harvest.

INVESTMENT

Continued from page 18

the freedom of individuals to sell private property have often been expressed.

Others have targeted restrictions to only adversarial nations, though nuances in how adversaries should be defined or how to react when a country should be added or removed have complicated discussions.

Only restricting land purchases near sensitive military sites or vital energy infrastructure has also been considered.

In addition, there are worries that excess regulation could hinder the flexibility of farm transitions.

Family operators whose children do not want to continue working on the farm have reported wanting to pass the land onto immigrant workers who have shown an interest in managing operations.

In these situations, or others that

concern immigrants having an interest in farming, regulations that concern an individual’s nationality and citizenship could be a hurdle to the farm’s future.

Furthermore, several farm groups and lawmakers are calling for the United States Secretary of Agriculture to be a permanent member of CFIUS.

Conclusion

The data made available from AFIDA reports provide a limited yet detailed window into foreign-investor-held agricultural land dynamics in the United States.

Reported foreign-investor-held agricultural land as a percent of total U.S. agricultural land remains small but has increased from 1% to 3.1% since AFIDA’s inception.

The vast majority of this land is owned by investors from nations considered friendly to the U.S., though data reporting

limitations prevent us from accessing a precise breakdown.

Additionally, forestry and energy production are the main interests for these parcels.

Adversarial nations’ investments remain a very small portion of foreign-investor-held agricultural land, though, again, data and reporting challenges prevent our complete knowledge of these dynamics.

Improvements to collection and enforcement would appear to be a meaningful way for consumers, farmers and policymakers alike to better understand this issue.

Furthermore, understanding the sensitivities of each individual investor situation, their history, and the implications for agriculture regionally are all likely to be considerations for legislative or policy actions. ■



University of Idaho photo

Veterans involved in Armed to Farm training at the University of Idaho's Sandpoint Organic Agricultural Center help build a temporary high tunnel.

UI Extension program provides resources to military veteran farmers

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

Ron Kern's Back Forty Farms in Nampa has carved a popular and profitable value-added niche, shipping freeze-dried vegetables and eggs directly to customers throughout the country.

Despite the early success he's enjoyed since becoming a farmer in 2018, Kern was surprised at how much he still had to learn when he participated in a recent sustainable agriculture training program for military veterans, hosted at University of Idaho's Sandpoint Organic Agriculture Center.

UI Extension welcomed a group of 30 veterans and some of their

spouses this spring for the state's first Armed to Farm program. The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) which is a Butte, Mont., nonprofit organization, launched Armed to Farm in cooperation with USDA-Rural Development in 2013.

Nationwide, about 1,000 veterans from 45 states pursuing careers in agriculture have participated in the free, hands-on training. Training tracks are offered for beginning rural, urban and advanced farmers.

More than 80% of alumni are still farming, and a third reported increasing production to supply new

markets following their participation in Armed to Farm.

Kern, who was a U.S. Navy sonar technician, plans to make big changes to his farming practices based on lessons he learned through UI Extension's delivery of Armed to Farm.

For example, he intends to dispense with annual tillage to allow his garden's soil structure to remain intact. He's also learned how to use Google Earth maps to facilitate decision-making.

"I had expectations I would learn quite a bit, but I had no comprehension of the volume — the powerful material, the unbelievable speakers, the expertise — that was brought to this," Kern said. "It would be fair to say I feel like I got a year-long, high-level college course in that week."

NCAT approached UI Extension about collaborating on the event, funded through NCAT's USDA Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Program grant, in 2020, but the program was postponed due to COVID-19.

NCAT also awarded UI Extension a \$5,000 stipend to offset some travel and staff time. Additional funding from another nonprofit, Ranchin' Vets, helped cover travel and lodging costs of participants, who came from throughout Idaho and parts of Oregon, Washington and Montana.

Idaho has a strong agricultural sector and is home to many veterans, and NCAT saw an opportunity to build upon existing U of I programs.

UI Extension's Cultivating Success program provides resources for small-scale and beginning farmers, and its Harvest Heroes was the state's first farming and gardening program catering to veterans.

Area Extension educators Ariel Agenbroad and Colette DePHELPS, Cultivating Success program coordinator Mackenzie Lawrence and Harvest Heroes program manager Connie May worked closely with NCAT staff for several months developing content, planning field trips to witness course principles in action at local farms, and organizing hands-on activities.

"The extensive planning paid off as one of the most seamless and interesting Armed to Farm programs I have organized," said Tammy Howard, NCAT agriculture specialist and Mountain Plains and Pacific Northwest Armed to Farm coordinator. "Local partners are essential to the success of an impactful program for Armed to Farm participants."

UI Extension has offered agricultural training and education to veterans and their families through Harvest Heroes for the past four years.

AGENBROAD, a regional Extension educator based in Boise, created Harvest Heroes with veteran Connie May in southern Idaho, where participants have typically been beginning, small-scale farmers, often focused on providing food for their own families.

In northern Idaho, where UI Extension educator Iris Mayes, Latah County, oversees the program, participants have mostly been experienced, with larger acreages.

AGENBROAD has offered participants classroom instruction, followed by a year-long hands-on learning experience working in a community garden. Mayes has used webinars and workshops in teaching the northern Idaho program.

In AGENBROAD's view, the best aspect of Armed to Farm was that

it helped veterans entering farming make connections with peers. Based on the experience, she hopes to prioritize helping veterans network with one another in future Extension programs.

"I want to think about ways to build in networking opportunities for veterans," AGENBROAD said. "I think providing that kind of connection is going to be really key as we engage our veteran audiences in the future."

Extension and NCAT staff collaborated on teaching classroom lessons, assisted by experts from entities including USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and AgWest Farm Credit.

The Spokane, Wash., Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored a dinner celebrating women veteran farmers. Participants also spent time learning about the Sandpoint Organic Agriculture Center's soil, heritage orchard, pastured poultry operation and assisted in assembling a season-extending high tunnel.

Kern has been in steady communication with program participants who live in his area since the event and has offered them advice to improve their operations based on his own experience, including about using social media for marketing.

Kern ran one of the nation's largest private investigation firms, growing it from an upstart based out of his parents' basement to a company with 50 workers. He also started and sold a host of other successful companies before becoming a farmer.

"The suicide rate is so high among veterans, and not too far behind that is farmers," Kern said. "I think the value of having people meet who already have a sense of community, that just makes the program go." ■

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

To all policyholders: The 2024 annual meeting for policyholders of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho will be held on Friday, February 2, 2024, at 10AM at the company's home office, 275 Tierra Vista Drive in Pocatello, ID. You are invited to attend.

Tom Lyons- Secretary

Notice of Stockholders Meetings

The following annual stockholders meetings will take place, Friday, February 2, 2024, at the company's home office, 275 Tierra Vista Drive in Pocatello, ID. The board of directors for each company will be elected at these meetings.

10:45AM- Farm Bureau Marketing Association of Idaho
11:00AM- FB Development Corporation of Idaho

Zak Miller- Executive Vice President, CEO

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*You're automatically entered into our \$500 drawing when you refer a friend, even if they don't purchase a policy. Visit: www.idahofarmbureauinsurance.com/about-us/refer-a-friend/ for complete rules and restrictions. Above left: Carmen Izaguirre from Gannett, Idaho, the winner of our 3rd quarter 2023 Refer A Friend, Get A Gift \$500 drawing.



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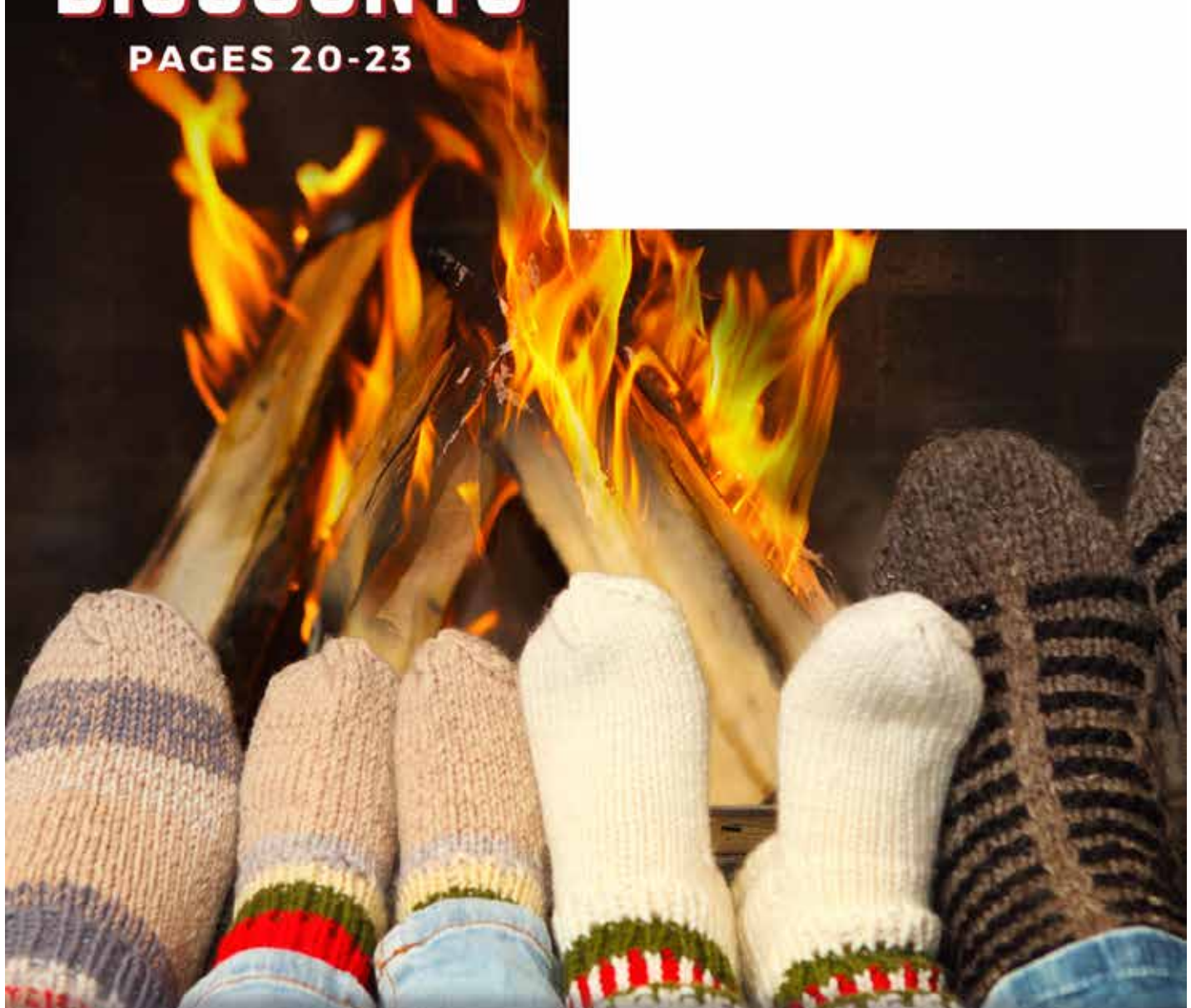
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