



# Farming basics

Third-graders learn about agriculture at Rigby Ag Days

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## Meeting the challenge of rural stress and suicide



**M**ay 8, 2019 — Just a few weeks ago, a good friend of mine in Georgia, a long-time dairy farmer, took his own life. I don't really know what led him to such a dark and desperate place; it could have been several things that have happened in his life.

All I know is more and more of us in agriculture are dealing with the loss of a friend, loved one or colleague, or perhaps even dealing with an extreme and damaging level of emotional stress ourselves.

One story is one too many. And unfortunately,

the impact is growing.

About half of rural adults say they are experiencing more mental health challenges than a year ago, according to a new survey commissioned by Farm Bureau and recently released to kick off National Mental Health Month. The survey confirms what we already know: the continued downturn in the farm economy is taking a toll.

A strong majority of farmers and farmworkers think financial issues (91 percent), farm or business problems (88 percent) and fear of losing

See **DUVALL**, page 7

## The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

### Dam breaching should not be on the table



**C**alls for breaching Snake River dams to aid in salmon recovery are making headlines again, this time following an April 23 event on salmon recovery hosted by Boise State University.

During that event, a member of the Pacific Northwest congressional delegation possibly for the first time ever raised the prospect of breaching the lower four Snake River dams to improve salmon runs.

Breaching the dams, which are on the Columbia-Snake River system, would make the river

unnavigable for barges that move wheat, barley and other products to port for export.

Almost 10 percent of the nation's wheat exports, and 50 percent of Idaho's wheat exports, move through that river system. The Lewis-Clark Grain Terminal at the Port of Lewiston shipped 21 million bushels of wheat and barley to international markets last year.

Breaching the dams would remove an economical and environmentally friendly way for Idaho and U.S. farmers to move grain to foreign

See **SEARLE**, page 9

## Inside Farm Bureau

By Rick Keller

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

### Letter supports Columbia Snake River system



**I**daho Farm Bureau Federation has joined with 32 other agricultural groups in sending a letter about the importance of the Columbia Snake River system to Idaho's congressional delegation and governor. The letter specifically supports keeping the lower four dams on the Snake River.

Following is the contents of the May 17 letter, which Farm Bureau believes sums up nicely this organization's stance on the issue:

As members of the Coalition for Idaho Water, we write to express our strong support for the Columbia Snake River System, and specifically for the lower

four dams on the Snake River.

Each of our organizations are directly or indirectly impacted by the river system, and we all find tremendous value in the current operation of the river, including locks and dams, clean power generation, barging, navigation, water storage, or irrigation – all of which are critical to Idaho and the region.

Idahoans have a rich history of resolving complex water disputes. As you may recall, in 2004, the state, the Nez Perce Tribe and Idaho water users entered into the Snake River Water Rights Agreement,

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Photo by Sean Ellis  
Hay is baled on a farm near Inkom last August. Idaho ranked No. 1 among all states when it came to the percentage of farmers who used the Internet to fill out their 2017 Census of Agriculture surveys.

# Idaho No. 1 in use of internet to fill out Census of Ag surveys

By Sean Ellis  
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO — Idaho farmers used the internet to fill out 2017 Census of Agriculture surveys at a higher percentage than any state in the nation and at a much higher rate than the national average.

Of all the farmers and ranchers in Idaho who filled out the Census of Ag survey, 34.46 percent did so online, according to USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service. The national average was 23.73 percent.

By comparison, Washington producers’ online response rate was 31.14 percent and Oregon’s response rate was 30.91 percent.

According to a recent broadband study by Speedtest, Idaho had the fourth slowest internet speeds in the nation and broadband connectivity has long been thought to be a major problem in rural areas of the state.

But Idaho farmers apparently didn’t get that memo, or they at least found a way around the slow internet speeds to fill out their Census of Ag surveys.

“That surprises me; I wouldn’t have thought that,” University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor said about Idaho leading the nation in use of the internet to fill out the surveys. “I don’t know what to say about that one. Farmers are connecting, I guess, despite their communities having slow broadband.”

While the No. 1 ranking is surprising, “It’s a good sign: farmers in Idaho are connected,” he added.

Ben Eborn, also a U of I ag economist, said he was also surprised to learn Idaho ranked No. 1 in that category.

“I guess we’re more connected than we thought,” he said. “Even with broadband connectivity as limited as it apparently is, farmers are finding a way to connect.”

See CENSUS, page 9

Photo by Sean Ellis  
**ON THE COVER: Third-graders learn how drones and other technology is used by farmers and ranchers during a Rigby Ag Days event May 2. See story on page 4.**



Photo by Sean Ellis

Third-grade students learn the truth about genetically modified crops during the inaugural Rigby Ag Days event, which took place at the Rigby Fairgrounds May 2 and was attended by 600 third-grade students.

# Farming basics

## Third-graders learn about agriculture at Rigby Ag Days

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

RIGBY — Every third grade class in the city attended the inaugural Rigby Ag Days event May 2, where students were taught the basics and importance of agriculture.

The event was a partnership between Jefferson County Farm Bureau and the Rigby FFA chapter.

Farm Bureau paid for the busing and helped teach the students about farming through the organization's Moving Agriculture to the Classroom trailer.

Fifty Rigby FFA students helped organized the event and manned the various stations where about 600 third-graders from all the elementary schools in the city were introduced to farming and ranching.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Regional Manager Tyrel Bing-

ham said the whole event was designed around “allowing these third-graders to learn the importance of agriculture and how it applies to them in their lives.”

Casey Sanders, an agriculture teacher at Rigby High School, said it’s important to teach children “about agriculture now because in not too many years, these kids are going to be voting, they’re going to be making decisions and they are going to be deciding what careers they want to go into. Exposing them early to agriculture and the opportunities it provides them means we are going to have more informed constituents and policy makers in the future.”

Different stations were set up around the Rigby Fairgrounds where the students were taught about dairy, wheat and potato production, the use of drones and other technology in agriculture, irrigation, the truth about genetically modified crops and the importance of fertilizer.

The third-graders also learned about small and large animals, were introduced to veterinary science and were taught about tractor safety and how tractors are helping increase productivity for farmers.

“We’re just trying to teach the kids about a side of agriculture they might not have seen or known about before,” said Rigby FFA student Tad Nelson, the event’s lead organizer. “They may see tractors going around the field but they don’t usually see how things are working together in agriculture or understand why agriculture is so important.”

Lex Godfrey, an FFA advisor and ag teacher at Rigby High School, said the event provides a valuable opportunity to reach these youngsters with basic facts about agriculture and its importance to them and the community.

“In 1850, 50 percent of our population had a direct tie to agriculture. Today, that number is less than 2 percent,” he said. “We have an opportunity here to reach a growing generation, future leaders and decision makers, about the impact and importance of agriculture.”

He said the event is also provides a valuable teaching experience for FFA students, who get to put what they are learning to practice and pass that knowledge on.

“As part of our curriculum, each



Photos by Sean Ellis

**Third-grade students learn about tractors at Rigby Ag Days on May 2.**  
**TOP: Third-grade students milk a plastic cow and learn about dairy production during the inaugural Rigby Ag Days event, which took place at the Rigby Fairgrounds May 2 and was attended by 600 third-grade students.**

student is required to have a supervised agriculture experience, an FFA project,” Godfrey said. “The magic of today is that those students that have those projects are bringing them here and exposing third-graders to their future opportunities. It’s awesome.”

Rigby High School ag teacher Robert Hale said third-graders were chosen for the event because “they’re talking about community and ties to their community in their third grade curriculum and it’s also right when they get involved with 4-H a lot of times.” ■

resolving a contentious dispute over tribal water right claims in the Snake River Basin Adjudication.

That agreement was championed by then Idaho Gov. [Dirk] Kempthorne and the entire congressional delegation due, in large part, to the protections that it afforded Idaho's water users. One provision of the agreement calls for up to 487,000 acre-feet of Idaho's water to be used for flow augmentation for salmon and steelhead in the Lower Snake and Columbia Rivers.

This flow augmentation water is released from reservoirs throughout southern Idaho on a "willing buyer/seller" arrangement. Entities holding space within the reservoirs voluntarily make water available for rent to the Bureau of Reclamation for flow augmentation. The Agreement provides several benefits to Idaho's water users, including:

- The agreement protects Idaho's water users. The agreement included a 30-year Biological Opinion (BiOp) for operations on the Snake River (extending through 2034, with an option to renew for an additional 30 years). In doing so, the agreement ensured that Idaho's irrigated acres would not be dried up to satisfy the obligations of a BiOp. Considering the ongoing litigation around BiOps on the Columbia River, this is a significant benefit to Idaho.

- The agreement also provides economic benefits to Idaho's water users. Those who participate in the flow augmentation program are compensated by the Bureau of Reclamation for the use of their water. These funds are used to offset operation and maintenance charges – thereby lowering the cost of water to Idaho's farmers and ranchers.

- The agreement includes an "off ramp" if circumstances change. Under the agreement, Idaho's contribution to the flow augmentation program can be ended, if it is determined that the water is no longer required.

We feel strongly that flow augmentation included in the agreement is a tool that offers security to Idaho's water users throughout the state.

All our organizations find great value in the river system. The Columbia Snake River system is integral to the economy of the Pacific Northwest. Each of the four dams on the lower Columbia River and

four dams on the lower Snake River have a navigation lock that allows inland farmers access to international markets and supports a wide variety of commercial/recreational users.

In 2018, five cruise ship lines brought more than 18,000 tourists into the Lewis Clark Valley. Cruise ship passenger visits are expected to grow significantly in the future and provide long-term economic growth for the valley.

Snake River cargo has had remarkably stable tonnage levels over the past 10 years. Over a period of just nine months in 2017, more than 3.5 million tons of cargo were barged on the Snake River. It would have taken more than 35,140 rail cars to carry this cargo, or more than 135,000 semi-trucks.

In 2017, Lewis Clark Grain Terminal, located at the Port of Lewiston, Idaho's only seaport, shipped over 20.6 million bushels of wheat and barley to international markets.

Without an economical way to move wheat to foreign consumers, these bushels intended for export would instead glut the domestic market, thereby driving down prices. Such a result would devastate the 4,500 Idaho farm families that rely on the navigation system to get their crops to market, and cripple farming communities throughout the entire state.

Without river barges, farm incomes will drop and transportation costs will go up as growers become captive to more expensive railroads.

Barging wheat from Idaho's only seaport is the most cost-effective and environmentally-friendly mode of transportation available. Barges keep a cap on railroad costs.

The four dams on the Snake River, which have become the most immediate target for removal by activists, move nearly 10% of the nation's wheat exports each year. Navigation of Idaho and regional agricultural products on the Columbia Snake River System has helped improve our nation's balance of trade.

Additionally, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) continues to provide the Pacific Northwest with a reliable source of power generation and transmission. This self-funded, independent federal agency helps meet the power needs of its patrons while also providing significant investment for fish and wildlife benefits.

BPA continues to invest in the maintenance and upkeep of its infrastructure to uphold its level of efficiency. The agency

has developed a strategic operating plan to ensure that it fulfills its mission to create and deliver the best value for its customers and constituents in the areas of power generation and transmission, while also mitigating impact on fish and wildlife.

In Idaho, more than 137,000 Idahoans receive 96% of their power from BPA. All across the state, 22 self-regulated and member-owned rural electric cooperatives and municipal power companies rely on our power contracts with BPA to provide low-cost, emission-free power, helping drive economic growth and job creation across the state.

Public power utilities in Idaho are committed to our partnership with BPA, helping them to remain competitive now and into the future.

BPA estimates that it would cost \$274 to \$372 million to replace the output of the lower four Snake River dams with natural gas and that it would not be feasible to replace the flexibility and capacity of the projects with renewables.

Replacing the dams with gas would add about 2 to 2.6 million tons of CO2 emissions per year. This conclusion is supported by the latest Draft Northwest Power and Conservation Council Resource Adequacy Assessment, which shows a deficit of 700 MW of peaking capacity in the region by 2024. Additionally, the loss of within-hour flexibility would significantly harm BPA's ability to integrate new renewables.

Since 1978 rate payers across the Pacific Northwest have spent nearly \$16 billion on BPA fish and wildlife programs throughout the Pacific Northwest. These programs have shown great success, despite recent lower return averages due to daunting ocean conditions, high levels of predation, and commercial harvest.

For example, in 1990, approximately 500 wild Snake River fall Chinook returned to the Columbia River Basin. In 2017, an estimated 16,965 Snake River fall Chinook returned. Returns of these Endangered Species Act-listed fish have been on a generally positive trajectory for the last 15 years and passage rates for juvenile migrating fish are at or above survival standards of 96%.

This is an important issue that affects all Idahoans. It is not a "western Idaho" or "north Idaho" issue. This issue cannot artificially divide our state north and south or east and west. The Coalition for Idaho Water, with membership throughout the state, stands ready to work with you and asks for your support of the Columbia Snake River System. ■

Continued from page 2

the farm (87 percent) impact the mental health of farmers and ranchers.

Those stresses are being worsened by the shortage of agricultural labor, which I believe was a big source of worry for my friend in Georgia, the market impacts of our ongoing trade war and, in some cases, continued regulatory pressures.

Farmers and ranchers are some of the most resilient people you will ever meet. It takes toughness to put seeds in the ground, invest tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in buying animals, equipment or fertilizer, and trust that those investments will pay off and keep a roof over your family's heads.

I don't have a survey to back this up, but I believe the pressure is even harder on someone who takes pride in carrying on a family tradition of farming and ranching. Farmers who take over an agricultural operation from their parents and grandparents see themselves as caretakers of their family heritage. That responsibility can be heavy.

We can't snap our fingers and turn this farm economy around. But we can be aware of how it, or other pressures, may be affecting our family, friends and neighbors. That's why Farm Bureau commissioned our survey: to increase awareness of the problem.

If more of us acknowledge it's a problem—and there is no shame in admitting it—then we can begin to help ourselves and each other. We can watch for the warning signs in those we talk with and see around town—things like extreme mood swings, preoccupation with death, getting rid of possessions or withdrawing from friends and family.

Tough-minded, independent farmers and ranchers are not used to admitting they need help or asking for it. It is up to all of us to check in with our friends and neighbors and see how they are doing.

Looking for the warning signs can save a life. Be ready to help by listening and steering someone to a doctor or even the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255 (TALK)).

If you're wrong, then the worst thing that has happened is you showed them that you care about their wellbeing. I would rather attempt to help my family, friends or neighbors and be wrong than to risk attending a service in their memory.

The good news is more people are aware of rural stress: our survey shows that 9 out of 10 rural adults say mental health is important to them and their family. And greater awareness can lead to more solutions.

Another survey we've done to find out about rural stress resources around the country shows that state Farm Bureaus, state departments of agriculture, Extension centers at land-grant universities, medical networks and farm safety experts are teaming up to provide education, counseling, debt mediation and other resources to benefit farmers, ranchers and rural Americans.

Farm Bureau also is urging Congress to fully fund a new Farm and Ranch Stress Network at the \$10 million level authorized in the 2018 farm bill. This new program would provide stress assistance programs that address the increasing financial and mental stress impacting farmers and ranchers.

At our meetings, we're hosting sessions to educate Farm Bureau members about looking for warning signs and providing resources for farmers and rural Americans to combat stress.

And we're looking for other ways we can help. If you know of a program or tool that is making a positive difference in your state or region, please tell us about it by emailing [ruralstress@fb.org](mailto:ruralstress@fb.org). If you know of a need that is not being met, please let us know about that, as well.

There is no challenge too great for America's tough, resilient farmers and ranchers. We are meeting this challenge head-on, and together we will overcome it. Let's pray for peace and healing for our friends, family and neighbors, and let's help those who are struggling carry on until better days arrive—and I know they will. ■

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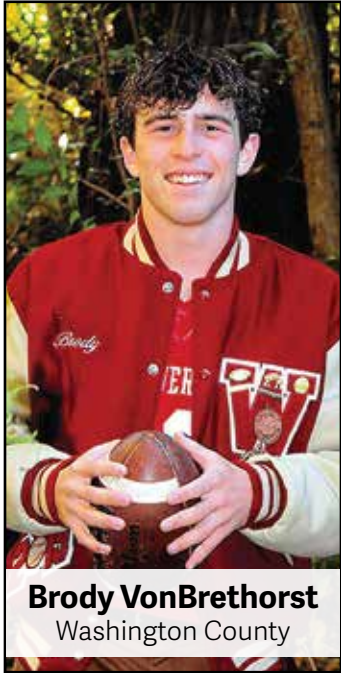
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# 2019 Idaho Farm Bureau scholarship winners

The following are the recipients of the 2019 Idaho Farm Bureau scholarship awards. The scholarships are provided by the IFBF Scholarship Fund, Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee, State Women's Committee and Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co.





# CENSUS

*Continued from page 3*

Gordon Gallup, who grows wheat, barley and alfalfa near Ririe, said Idaho leading the nation in online Census of Ag responses “is kind of surprising but in a way, it’s not because we have a lot of the younger generation that is starting to take over our farms. Even for us old guys, we realize everything is run by computer so we might as well embrace it.”

Taylor said Idaho’s No. 1 ranking could have something to do with the size of farms in Idaho being larger than the average farm nationwide. Idaho has a lot of big farming operations, he said, especially those producing major farm commodities such as milk and potatoes.

Farmers running those types of operations have to remain on top of issues dealing with markets, purchases and other ag-related news, he said.

“A lot of our farmers have big operations and they have to be connected to run their farms,” Taylor said. “I don’t think you can have a business like that without being connected.”

The Census of Ag is taken every five years and is a complete count of every farm and ranch in the United States that produces or would normally produce at least \$1,000 worth of products during the census year.

A significant amount of federal and state funds is allocated to the agriculture industry based on Census of Ag data and it also is used to help shape farm programs and policies.

It includes information on land use and ownership, production practices, income, expenditures and operator characteristics for every county in the nation.

According to Randy Welk, Idaho state statistician for NASS, 74.3 percent of Idaho’s farmers and ranchers responded to the survey, and Idaho ranked No. 12 in the nation in the percentage of farmers who returned a census survey.

The overall U.S. response rate was 71.8 percent.

USDA collected data for the 2017 Census of Agriculture in 2017 and the first half of 2018.

USDA had planned to release data from the 2017 Census of Ag on Feb. 21 but changed the date to April 11 due to the federal government shutdown. ■

# SEARLE

*Continued from page 2*

markets and those bushels would instead stay in the United States and drive down domestic market prices, causing financial stress on thousands of Idaho farm families.

“Breaching the dams would have an immediate and also sustained impact to the U.S. farming community and all the related industries,” says Kristin Meira, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.

In addition, almost 60 percent of the region’s low-cost electricity is produced by dams on the system, and in 2017, more than 3.5 million tons of cargo were barged on the Snake River.

If the dams were torn down, it would take 35,000 rail cars, or 135,000 semi-trucks, to carry that same cargo.

According to news reports, during the BSU event, Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, stopped short of calling for the dams to be breached but he did say the question, “what if” the dams are breached, needs to be asked.

That sounds awfully close to saying dam breaching is on the table.

For IFBF members and members of many other groups, including organizations that represent the state’s grain farmers, dairy operators, sugar beet farmers, water users, utilities and businesses, talk of breaching the dams is a non-starter.

Idaho Farm Bureau has joined these other groups in crafting a letter in support of the dams that has been sent to the state’s four-member congressional delegation as well as Gov. Brad Little.

Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Blaine Jacobson sent a letter to wheat commission members saying that Simpson’s raising the prospect of breaching the dams “is deeply troubling to all members of our wheat industry. Without an economical way to export wheat, those bushels would be redirected to the domestic market, depressing prices and farming communities statewide.”

In response to an inquiry from Idaho Farm Bureau regarding Simpson’s comments as reported by the media, the

congressman said he recognizes the four lower Snake River dams are very important to the Northwest.

“They support our farmers by allowing grain to be transported down the Snake River to world markets,” Simpson said in an email. “They support communities from the Tri-Cities to Lewiston and Clarkston who have come to depend on them.”

“What I am asking and trying to understand is what are all the interests affected in the salmon debate and what would the costs be to all affected interests if the dams were breached?” Simpson said. “If the conservation community insists that breaching the four dams is the only way to return healthy and viable populations of salmon and steelhead to their central Idaho spawning grounds, just what would it cost to make whole or put in a better place, the energy sector, the farmers, the communities and any and all other interests that would be affected?”

“I know it would be a very high price in the many billions, but if the conservation community insists that dam breaching must be on the table as part of any salmon discussion, then we must know what the costs would be to energy, transport, agriculture and our communities,” he added.

News stories also quoted Idaho’s governor as saying during the BSU event that he is “in favor of breaching the status quo.”

Little’s director of policy and legal counsel, Sam Eaton, said that comment was meant as a joke and Eaton clarified that breaching of the dams is not on the table as far as the governor is concerned.

We appreciate our congressman’s and governor’s clarifications on their comments and look forward to working with them and other stakeholders on this issue moving forward.

We look forward to finding real solutions to aid in recovery of endangered salmon but breaching the dams that bring so much benefit to all Idahoans and the entire Pacific Northwest is not one of them. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

A field near Homedale is prepared for spring planting in March. Data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture shows that Idaho's biggest farms are farm more important to the state's economy than the smaller ones even though there are a lot more small farms in the state than big ones.

# Big business

## Census of Ag data shows value of Idaho's big farms

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO — The 2017 Census of Agriculture shows that Idaho's biggest farms contribute far more to the state's economy than the smallest size farms even though those hobby farms far outnumber the larger ones.

The data, which was released April 11, showed that Idaho had 24,996 farms in 2017, 180 or 0.7 percent more than it had in 2012.

During that same period, the total number of farms nationwide declined by 3 percent, from 2.1 million to 2.042 million.

While Idaho bucked the national trend and added farms from 2012-2017, most of those new farms were

very small farms, from 1 to 9 acres in size, and the census data showed that the state's biggest farms continue to generate the vast majority of Idaho's farming revenue.

"We have a lot more operations in the 1- to 9-acre category," said Randy Welk, Idaho state statistician for USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

But, he added, "The large farms are the ones that are contributing the most to Idaho's economy, agriculturally. Your big farms, by far, have the biggest impact on Idaho's economy. Your small farms have almost no impact on the economy."

According to the Census of Ag data, there were 6,670 Idaho farms from 1 to 9 acres in size in 2017 and another 7,340 in the 10-49 acre category. There were 1,270 farms in the 2,000 acre-plus category and 1,160 in the 1,000-1,999 acre category.

The largest farm category, the 2,000 acres and above category, produced 58.6 percent of total farm product sales in Idaho in 2017 while the smallest category, 1-9 acres, produced only .01 percent of farm sales.

"There are a lot more farms in Idaho in the 1-49 acre category but they are not giving a lot to the economy," Welk said. "What's impacting the economy is coming from the larger farms."

University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor said the very small farms are basically hobby farms and have very little collective impact on the state's economy.

"Those type of farms are a lifestyle, not a business," he said. "We will certainly not feed the world, or Idaho, with that kind of farming."

### **Technologically savvy**

The 2017 census data revealed an unexpected but welcome surprise. Idaho ranked No. 1 in the United States when it came to the percentage of farmers in a state who used the Internet to return their census survey.

According to NASS, of all the farmers in Idaho that returned a survey, 34.46 percent did so online. The national average was 23.73 percent.

Welk said that No. 1 ranking was somewhat surprising given there are some areas of the state with little or no Internet access. However, he added, the ranking shows that "Idaho farmers are technologically savvy. They are modern."

Idaho ranked No. 12 when it came to farms that have access to the Internet and according to a recent national broadband study, Idaho has the fourth slowest Internet speeds in the nation.

"That was pretty shocking," U of I Agricultural Economist Ben Eborn said about Idaho's No. 1 online survey response ranking. "Somehow, Idaho farmers are finding out how to stay connected."

The census of ag is conducted by USDA every five years and is an attempt to count every farm and ranch in the United States that produces or would normally produce at least \$1,000 worth of farm products during the census year. It contains a host of data down to the county level and is the only source of

this type of information in the country.

Idaho ranked No. 12 in the nation when it came to the percentage of farms and ranches in a state that returned a 2017 survey. Idaho had a 74.3 percent response rate, which was ahead of the overall U.S. response rate of 71.8 percent.

### **Less farmland**

The 2017 Census of Ag data shows that Idaho had a total of 11.7 million acres of land in agriculture in 2017, down 0.8 percent from 11.8 million acres in 2012.

Total land in agricultural production nationwide fell by 14.3 million acres, or 1.6 percent, to 900 million acres.

Of those 11.7 million acres of land in agricultural production in Idaho in 2017, 5.9 million were in cropland, 4.9 million were in permanent pasture, 500,000 were woodland and 400,000 were classified as "other."

While the average sized farm in the United States rose 1.6 percent between 2012 and 2017, from 434 acres to 441 acres, the average size of a farm in Idaho declined 1.3 percent to 468 acres, down from 474 in 2012, as a result of Idaho adding more farms in the smallest size category, 1-9 acres.

The number of Idaho farms from 1 to 9 acres in size increased from 4,861 in 2012 to 6,673 in 2017 and the number of farms in the 10-49 acre category rose from 7,031 to 7,337. The number of farms in the biggest category, 2,000 acres or more, also increased, from 1,210 to 1,273.

### **Fewer mid-sized farms**

However, the number of farms in the middle categories – 50-179 acres, 180-499 acres, 500 to 999 acres and 1,000 to 1,999 acres – all decreased.

The number of mid-sized farms nationwide also shrunk.

"This hollowing out of mid-sized farms has been the trend for several years," Eborn said.

The census data showed a significant increase in the number of women farmers and ranchers as well as young producers but that was largely a result of a change in how USDA collected data in 2017.

Whereas USDA reported one principal operator of a farm or ranch in the past, in 2017 the department expanded its reporting to include up to four primary decision makers on a farm. For example, if a couple was operating a farm in the past, USDA would count only one of them as the operator, but in 2017 they could count them both.

This means there cannot be an apples-to-apples comparison to past census data when it comes to the number of women and young operators. However, the increased numbers do provide a clearer picture of the role that women and young producers play in agriculture.

The census did show that the average age of principal farm operators increased from 58.3 years to 59.4 years.

That was no shocker, Taylor said. "It's been going up every census. Farmers are getting older."

### **More organic operations**

The 2017 census showed a significant increase in both total organic operations and acres as well as total revenue produced by organic operations, both in Idaho and nationally.

The big jump in organic acreage is no big surprise, Taylor said, and the revenue increase is a result of big organic farms entering the mix.

“What you’re seeing is big ag getting into the organic market and they will devastate the price for small organic producers,” he said. “That’s not what the small, sustainable organic farmers want to see. It’s a game-changer for them and they are going to face increasingly intensive price competition.”

According to the census data, the number of organic farms and ranches in Idaho increased from 211 in 2012 to 260 in 2017 and total organic sales in the state increased from \$56 million to \$129 million.

Nationwide, the number of organic operations increased from 14,326 to 18,166 and total organic sales rose from \$3.1 billion to \$7.3 billion.

The total market value of all agricultural products sold in Idaho decreased from \$7.8 billion in 2012 to \$7.57 billion in 2017, the result of lower overall farm commodity prices.

During that same time, total farm expenses in Idaho basically remained unchanged, from \$6.64 billion in 2012 to \$6.65 billion in 2017.

As a result, total net farm income in Idaho decreased from \$1.47 billion in 2012 to \$1.3 billion in 2017.

### **Farm income down**

Given that farm revenue has fallen during that period while expenses have remained steady, “That’s no shocker,” Taylor said.

The data showed that average net income per farm in Idaho was \$52,503 in 2017, down 12 percent from \$59,534 in 2012.

Nationwide, the total market value of all farm products sold in 2017 was \$389 billion, down from \$395 billion in 2012. U.S. farm production expenses totaled \$326 billion in 2017, down slightly from \$329 billion in 2012.

Nationally, total net farm income was \$87.9 billion in 2017, down 5 percent from \$92.3 billion in 2012.

In Idaho, many farm expenses decreased from 2012 to 2017, including purchased and leased livestock and poultry (from \$633 million to \$616 million), purchased feed (\$1.9 billion to \$1.8 billion), fertilizer (\$593 million to \$507 million) and fuel (\$313 million to \$248 million).

However, the total cost of hired labor increased 24 percent, from \$592 million to \$736 million, and also increasing were interest expenses (\$234 million to \$254 million) and the cost of chemicals (\$268 million to \$287 million).

Canyon County had the most farms in Idaho in 2017 with 2,289, followed by Ada County (1,304), Bonner County (1,213), Twin Falls County (1,211), Bingham County (1,177), Bonneville County (1,109), Kootenai County (1,073), Latah County (1,041), Gem County (860) and

Franklin County (787).

When it came to the market value of ag products sold in Idaho by county in 2017, Cassia County led with \$927 million and was followed by Gooding County (\$783 million), Twin Falls County (\$680 million), Jerome County (\$640 million), Canyon County (\$575 million), Bingham County (\$453 million), Elmore County (\$430 million), Minidoka County (\$354 million), Jefferson County (\$295 million) and Owyhee County (\$273 million).

### **Livestock vs. crops**

Fifty-eight percent of the total market value of all Idaho ag products sold in 2017 came from the state’s dairy sector and 42 percent from crops. In 1997, that ratio favored crops 54 to 46 percent but it flipped in 2002 in favor of livestock at 54-46 percent.

“Over time, the importance of livestock in Idaho is growing and the importance of crops is diminishing, as far as sales go,” Welk said.

The census data shows that Idaho is not super diverse when it comes to the ethnicity of farm producers.

According to the data, 43,673 ag producers in Idaho classified themselves as white in 2017, 1,258 were Hispanic, 241 were American Indian, 106 were of Asian descent, 27 were native Hawaiians or Pacific islanders and 11 were black.

The 2017 census showed there were 44,355 agricultural producers in Idaho, up 12 percent from 39,747 in 2012 but that increase was a result of the USDA counting more decision makers on farms.

The data showed 27,125 of those producers were male and 17,230 were female.

USDA counted the number of farm producers with military service for the first time in 2017 and found that 4,613, or 10.4 percent, of Idaho’s producers have served in the military. Nationwide, that number was 11 percent.

### **New, young farmers**

According to the census data, there were 13,033 new and beginning farmers – producers who have been farming 10 years or less – in Idaho in 2017 and their average age was 45.7, less than the average age of 56.4 for all of Idaho’s producers.

The data shows there were 4,386 young farmers and ranchers age 35 or younger in Idaho in 2017 and their average age was 29.7 years.

Nationwide, the data showed that a little more than half of all U.S. farms lost money in 2017 and the average loss per farm was almost \$21,000.

In a Market Intel article written for American Farm Bureau Federation, AFBF Agricultural Economist Veronica Nigh said the 71.8 percent national response rate to the 2017 Census of Agriculture “is clearly impressive ... With over 6.4 million data points, the Census of Agriculture is a rich source of data, which we will be combing through and analyzing for years to come.” ■



# 2019 Idaho legislative session a mixed bag for ag

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BOISE — Idaho's 2019 legislative session, which adjourned in April, was a mixed bag when it came to legislation involving agriculture.

Several bills supported by Idaho's agriculture industry passed and will provide protection and support to the state's farming and ranching sector.

But some other pieces of legislation that could have helped Idaho's agricultural industry failed and a few of those appeared to fall victim to acrimony between the House and Senate.

An example was hemp and two bills dealing with that crop died very public and contentious deaths.

The hemp bills "fell prey to gamesmanship in the legislature," said Sen. Mark Harris, a Republican rancher from Soda Springs.

Hemp was one of the hot-topic issues of the 2019 Idaho Legislature. The 2018 farm bill for the first time classified industrial hemp as a regular agricultural crop, which means U.S. farmers can now legally grow, process and sell it.

But the farm bill left it up to states to decide whether and how to deal with hemp, which contains less than 0.3 percent THC, the psychoactive compound that gets marijuana users high. It is not possible to become high from hemp, which is used in more than 20,000 products that have been sold legally in the United States for decades.

Until the 2018 farm bill was passed, it was not legal to grow and process hemp in the U.S. except for research purposes or for pilot projects.

Opposition to legalizing hemp production in Idaho from law enforcement resulted in no legislation being passed this year on the issue.

House Bill 122, which would have legalized hemp production in Idaho, overwhelmingly passed the House but was heavily amended in the Senate to address several concerns by law enforcement. The House did not agree with the changes, resulting in the bill's demise.

"It turned from an agricultural bill to a law enforcement bill," said Rep. Judy Boyle, a Republican rancher from Midvale and chairwoman of the House Agricultural Affairs Committee.



Photos by Sean Ellis

Hemp products that currently can be purchased in Idaho are shown following a public hearing in the House Agricultural Affairs Committee on a bill that would have made it legal for farmers grow, process and possess hemp in Idaho. The bill failed and it remains illegal to grow or possess hemp in Idaho.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Idaho's 2019 legislative session, which adjourned in April, was a mixed bag for agriculture.

A separate bill, House Bill 300, attempted to at least deal with the issue of interstate commerce and the transport of hemp through Idaho. However, that bill was also amended in the Senate but the House decided not to accept those changes and the bill died.

Boyle said the disagreement over the two hemp bills and a House resolution dealing with the issue turned into a complete wreck.

"It just kept getting worse and worse and worse," she said.

There is still hope, however, that Idaho farmers could be allowed to produce hemp in 2020 but for now it is illegal to grow, process or possess hemp in Idaho.

The most likely scenario for hemp to become legal to grow in 2020, Boyle said, is for Idaho to adopt the USDA's plan for hemp, which will be written this fall. USDA left it up to states

to write their own plan or adopt the federal one.

### **Inmate labor bill**

A bill that would have helped agriculture deal with a shortage of workers inexplicably died in a House committee after unanimously passing the Senate.

Senate Bill 1045 would have allowed all segments of agriculture to use state inmate labor in the event of a worker shortage.

The legislation struck the words "perishable" and "food" from a law passed in 2014 that allows agricultural businesses to use inmate labor in emergency situations when they face a worker shortage. Striking those two words would have paved the way for other ag sectors, such as nurseries and tree farms, to use the program.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Patti Anne Lodge, a Republican

agribusiness owner from Huston, also unanimously passed the Senate in 2018 but was heavily amended in the House and died when the Senate refused to accept those changes.

Before the bill died this year, Lodge told Farm Bureau she decided to bring the original legislation in 2014 that created the inmate labor program for ag businesses after seeing a lot of fruit go unpicked because of a worker shortage.

“It was November and all the pears and apples were just hanging frozen on the trees,” she said. “I thought that was so sad and it was because they couldn’t get the labor to process them.”

“Unfortunately, emotion got in the way of some proposals during the 2019 legislative session that would have helped agriculture,” said Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, a Shelley farmer.

But lawmakers did pass several other pieces of legislation, and appropriated money, that could prove beneficial to the state’s farm and ranch industry.

### Annexation of ag land

That includes House Bill 25, which prohibits cities from forcefully annexing agricultural land of five or more acres without the written consent of the landowner.

Since it is the city that has grown and encroached upon the farm, not the other way around, the bill ensures farms are not forced out of business prematurely by forced annexation and increased taxes, said Russ Hendricks, IFBF’s director of governmental affairs.

“This is a common-sense approach to ensure farmers are not saddled with additional city taxes as long as they are still farming the land,” he said.

The first bill introduced during the 2019 legislative session was House Bill 1, which paves the way to resolve a long-running court battle between the state and Treasure Valley water users over how flood control releases from the Boise River system reservoirs should be accounted for.

The water users say the way the state accounts for flood control releases from the Boise reservoir could potentially result in a catastrophic loss of water for irrigators during the summer months, a claim the state dismisses.

The bill sets the stage for ending a lengthy and costly legal battle between the state and water users in Water District 63, which spans from Boise to Parma in the Treasure Valley of southwestern Idaho.

After it passed the legislature by a combined vote of 102-0, Gov. Brad Little, a Republican rancher from Emmett, signed it into law Feb. 13, surrounded by people from both sides of the issue.

“Today is a big day for all Idahoans, particularly for those who live in the Treasure Valley and especially for people whose livelihood depends upon water,” he said.

### Wolf control board

Lawmakers also passed a bill that ensures the state’s Wolf Depredation Control Board will continue to operate. Authorized

in 2014, the board had been due to sunset on June 30, 2020. Senate Bill 1039 removed that sunset clause and permanently authorizes the board.

The board manages money that is used to pay federal and state agencies to lethally remove problem wolves in Idaho that cause significant damage to livestock and wildlife.

“I think getting that sunset clause removed was essential to moving the program forward so it can continue with protecting livestock and the citizens of Idaho,” said Dubois rancher Richard Savage, a member of the five-member Wolf Depredation Control Board.

The WDCB has received \$400,000 a year in state money, as well as \$110,000 from livestock producers and \$110,000 from sportsmen annually, since it was created.

But at the recommendation of Little, lawmakers approved only \$200,000 in state money for the board for this next fiscal year because the board had a fund balance.

Savage pointed out that wolf livestock kills hit a record level last year and are on pace to exceed that total this year.

“If we continue on the trend we are on now with depredations through the rest of this year, we’re going to spend most of the money we have on hand now,” he said. “We thank the people who have supported the board. Moving forward, the ask would be that people express to their representative the importance of the board and ask them to support the board with the money it needs.”



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Photo by Sean Ellis

**Rep. Scott Bedke, center, a Republican rancher and Speaker of Idaho's House of Representatives, talks with representatives of southwestern Idaho's water user community after introducing a bill that paves the way to resolve a long-running court battle between Treasure Valley water users and the state over how to account for flood control releases from Boise River reservoirs.**

### **Crop residue burning**

Senate Bill 1024, which deals with the timing of when farmers pay fees for burning crop residue, passed by a combined vote of 104-0. The state's current crop residue burning program requires farmers to pay a fee of \$2 per acre burned prior to burning. This requires them to estimate how much acreage they plan to burn.

S1024 changes the fee payment timing and now farmers will receive an annual invoice at the end of the burn season for how many acres they actually burned.

"This common-sense change will ensure farmers do not risk paying for acres they do not burn and ... it will streamline the agency's administrative processes," said Braden Jensen, IFBF's deputy director of governmental affairs.

The state's legislative body also approved House Bill 87, which clarifies the personal property tax exemption on farm

equipment and machinery.

Most farm equipment in Idaho has been exempt from paying personal property tax since 2001. However, some county assessors continued to assess some property used in the production of hops, mint, honey and milk.

"The bill clarifies the law and ensures all agricultural equipment is properly exempted from the personal property tax, as the legislature originally intended," Hendricks said.

House Bill 80 expanded an Idaho Department of Fish and Game program that compensates farmers and ranchers for damage to growing or mature crops caused by wildlife. This piece of legislation also allows IDFG to compensate producers for wildlife damage to irrigation equipment and prepared seedbed ground.

A separate bill, Senate Bill 1151, caps deprecation claims at 10 percent of fish and game's annual Expendable Big Game Depre-



ation Trust Account. The appropriation for the account in 2019 is \$1.1 million so the cap for this year's claims would be \$110,000.

The piece of legislation was a result of a \$1 million claim the department received this year for damage to an organic potato crop.

That was by far the largest claim the account has ever received and it surpassed the total of the other 43 claims combined. S1151 seeks to prevent a single claim from exhausting the entire account fund and resulting in severe prorating of the other claims.

"We don't have an unlimited amount of money for that program," said Harris. "We have to cap it to make sure everybody gets something. It protects the little guy is what it does."

Another bill that didn't pass ended up accomplishing its stated purpose. House Bill 121 sought to establish a negotiation period for processed potatoes and protect the interests of raw potato suppliers of the frozen fry industry.

The bill was a result of a Canadian food company in 2017 circumventing the Southern Idaho Potato Cooperative, which represents Idaho spud growers in negotiations with potato processors, and approaching individual SIPCO growers with individual agreements

The bill defined a time period during which negotiations shall take place and, according to a fact sheet prepared by Potato Growers of Idaho, provided an opportunity for Idaho potato growers to participate in the negotiations with the goal of providing a more even playing field in free-market negotiations.

Boyle said the bill brought that food manufacturer that circumvented SIPCO to the table in a hurry and the company's CEO flew to Idaho to meet with lawmakers.

The bill was never passed but it accomplished the same goal by bringing that company to the table, she said.

"We used it as a hammer," Boyle said. "In the end, (the company) changed how it deals with growers."

### **Raising of Anderson Ranch dam**

Lawmakers approved House Bill 285, which appropriates \$20 million to address the fiscal impact of House Joint Memorial 4, which designates the raising of Anderson Ranch Dam on the Boise River system as one of the state's priorities "in the interest of promoting additional water security."

Raising the dam several feet would provide an additional 29,000

acre-feet of water storage on the Boise River.

"That is a significant piece of legislation," Sen. Steve Bair, a retired farmer from Blackfoot, said about HB 285.

Lawmakers also approved \$8 million for a new Idaho State Department of Agriculture animal, dairy and plant pathology lab.

The lab, which was built in 1965 and has been refurbished numerous times over the years, conducts a significant amount of testing for the state's farming and ranching industry and demand for testing services has skyrocketed in recent years.

IFBF and other ag organizations also helped beat back some proposals that could have been harmful to farmers and ranchers.

That includes Senate Bill 1089, which had the stated purpose of ensuring public access to public lands by prohibiting private landowners from "physically blocking access."

To accomplish this, the legislation included a mechanism that would have allowed people to sue landowners who "block, obstruct or otherwise interfere" with a person's attempt to enter public land.

Hendricks said that while that may sound like a noble cause, the text of the bill went far beyond its stated purpose and would have set up landowners who own land adjacent to public land for endless lawsuits.

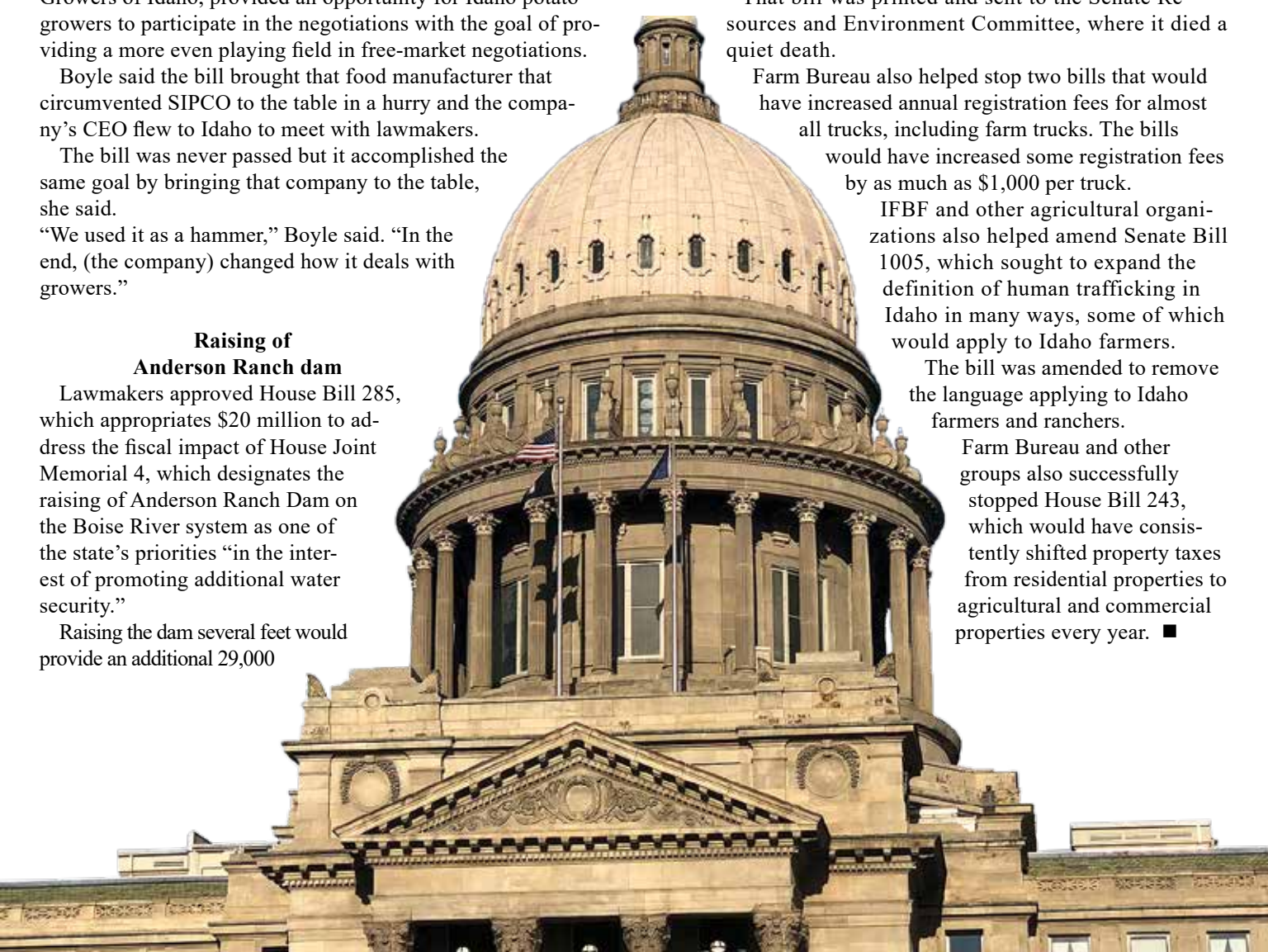
That bill was printed and sent to the Senate Resources and Environment Committee, where it died a quiet death.

Farm Bureau also helped stop two bills that would have increased annual registration fees for almost all trucks, including farm trucks. The bills would have increased some registration fees by as much as \$1,000 per truck.

IFBF and other agricultural organizations also helped amend Senate Bill 1005, which sought to expand the definition of human trafficking in Idaho in many ways, some of which would apply to Idaho farmers.

The bill was amended to remove the language applying to Idaho farmers and ranchers.

Farm Bureau and other groups also successfully stopped House Bill 243, which would have consistently shifted property taxes from residential properties to agricultural and commercial properties every year. ■



## 'You need to be a hedger'

After witnessing just what can happen in the futures markets over the past few months, is there any doubt in anyone's mind that we should all be hedgers.

Since the middle of December, the Chicago July futures were trading \$1.25 per bushel lower as of the second week in May. This same contract is down \$1.06 since the third week in January.

How many of us would like to contract our new crop wheat a dollar per bushel higher than the current new crop bid? Not just like to contract but would we contract our new crop wheat if the market was a dollar per bushel higher than the current bid?

It is important that we not only study the market but we learn just what we can do to hedge ourselves in that market in an effort to protect our commodity prices. Late last winter as we visited the buyers for some of the large flour mills in the country, the question was asked, what can I as a producer do to help me remain in business over the next 10 years?

The answer from this wheat buyer was, "You will need to be a hedger." Speculators assume risk while hedgers manage their risk and use the tools available to manage that risk.

In the last article we visited about the different strategies that we could use to protect ourselves. Since none of them are perfect it could be wise to use a combination of all or at least some of the options available to you.

This month we need to visit about "basis." As we talk to producers we realize that very few producers actually know just what basis is telling them, even those that enter into basis contracts with the local elevator.

Your local basis needs to be studied and understood.



How the basis moves in your region is possibly the best indicator of your local supply/demand. Since basis can be either a positive or a negative number, the movement is related to as either the basis is strengthening or weakening.

We will now attempt to answer just a few of the questions that are presented to us. First, does the local basis for my commodities have seasonal trends?

The answer is yes. Your local basis will trade historical trends which include the historical low and high. The amount of movement does vary from year to year but it is wise to watch the trend itself.

Second, what can we do to take advantage of a higher basis level? The only way to take advantage of high basis is to sell your commodities. You can do this by either simply contracting your commodity or entering into a basis contract where you set the basis half of the contract and then wait to set the futures part of the price equation.

When the basis strengthens, it is telling us that someone wants to buy and usually after they have bought in their needs the basis either weakens or the buyer could very well simply leave the market as we have witnessed over the past couple of years.

Trading the basis is not an exact science; however, it is and should be a very important part of your study habit as it pertains to your marketing program.

We often are asked, "Where online can I find the basis history for my region?" The answer is that as far as I know you can't find it online. However, you can receive this information through the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

Let IFBF assist you in your marketing program. To receive personal assistance, contact your local federation representative or contact the federation office in Pocatello at (208) 239-4341.

*Clark Johnston is a grain marketing specialist and owner of JC Management Co. of Ogden, Utah. He can be reached at [clark@jcmanagement.net](mailto:clark@jcmanagement.net).*



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Photo by Oscar Dooling, USDA Forest Service

Dwarf mistletoes are scrubby parasitic plants.

# Beware mistletoe

## Holiday tradition is actually a parasitic plant

By **Yvonne C. Barkley**  
*University of Idaho*

Everyone has heard of mistletoe — that waxy, broadleaf greenery that hangs in wait for the unsuspecting and charges a kiss for safe passage.

The tradition of bringing a bit of mistletoe into the house began with the ancient Druids, who believed it possessed mystical powers that brought good luck to households and warded off evil spirits. It is also a sign

of love and friendship in Norse mythology, which is where some believe the kissing custom comes from.

It all sounds very romantic until you learn that both true mistletoes, and their cousin the dwarf mistletoes, are parasitic plants. The shrubby or dwarfed photosynthetic plants live on the stems of their woody tree hosts, which provide a place to live as well as water and nutrients.

The mistletoe collected and marketed at Christmas is a true mistletoe. There are



12 species of true mistletoes in the United States, which are limited in range by winter temperatures that happen to coincide with the 45° N parallel. In the West, true mistletoes attack both deciduous and coniferous plants and produce most of their nutrients from photosynthesis. Because they need to obtain little from their hosts, economic damage is considered light.

Dwarf mistletoes are small, leafless plants that cause more damage to forests than any other group of pathogens in western North America. Sixteen species of dwarf mistletoe occur in the United States in every region except the pine forests of the southeast. Five of these species infect 11 native conifers in Idaho (see Table 1).

### Life cycle

Dwarf mistletoe plants are either male or female. Both can damage trees, but only the female plants produce seed. Seeds are borne in berries from mid-summer to late-autumn, depending on the species. Pressure builds up in the berries as they ripen, causing seeds to explode from fruit at initial speeds of 60 feet per second, often traveling distances of 20 to 30 feet.

Seeds are covered with a gooey substance that helps them stick where they land. Seeds landing on conifer needles slide down to twigs, where they germinate. Germinating seeds begin to photosynthesize and sustain young plants until they can parasitize host plants. Swelling usually appears two to five years after infection and can remain in this stage indefinitely if the host lacks vigor.

One to two years later, aerial shoots begin to produce minute flowers on both male and female plants, which are pollinated by wind and insects. The fruit matures, on average, 12 months later.



Photo by Thomas E. Hinds, USDA Forest Service  
**Dwarf mistletoe shoot sticky berries up to 30 feet away from the host tree.**

### Damage

Damage occurs in several ways. The transpiration rate of dwarf mistletoes can be many times greater than their hosts, with plants able to draw water from host trees even if the host is severely water stressed. Carbon is also taken from host

**Table 1. Susceptibility of hosts to Idaho's important dwarf mistletoes.**

Type	Primary host	Secondary host	Insignificant hosts	Immune
Larch dwarf mistletoe	Western larch	Subalpine fir, lodgepole pine, mountain hemlock	Ponderosa pine, grand fir, western white pine	Douglas-fir, western hemlock
Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe	Douglas-fir	None	Grand fir, Engelmann spruce	Western larch, pines
Ponderosa pine dwarf mistletoe	Ponderosa pine	None	Lodgepole pine	True first, Douglas-fir, western larch, western hemlock
Lodgepole pine dwarf mistletoe	Lodgepole pine	None	Ponderosa pine	True firs, Douglas-fir, western larch, western hemlock

trees, which greatly decreases growth, health, and vigor. Secondary pathogens or insects, such as bark beetles, often become established in weakened trees, hastening death.

Most dwarf mistletoe species induce witches' brooms. If the tree supports multiple infections, non-infected branches begin to thin out and decline, making the contrast between the dense, dark green mistletoe brooms and the remainder of the faded crown dramatic.

Mistletoe also suppresses height growth and reduces tree seed quality and quantity. Infected wood and abnormally large knots are also common, further reducing wood quality. With large proportions of dead foliage and branches, trees infected by dwarf mistletoe are also very flammable, making them serious fire hazards.

### Control

Resistance to dwarf mistletoe infection is present in some native populations of trees. Where present, dwarf mistletoe can be managed to minimize damage and new infections. Practical control of these parasites depends upon cutting practices that remove severely diseased trees and favors even-aged management.

Managers use the Dwarf Mistletoe Rating System (see Table 2 on page 25) to rate dwarf mistletoe infections throughout western North America.

Clearcutting or removing an overstory of heavily infected trees can help sanitize an area. After removing the infected trees, dominant or co-dominant understory trees with no visible infection should be retained.

In mixed-species stands, keep less susceptible species when possible (see Table 1). Young larch seedlings commonly have main stem infections and should be removed during sanitation cuts. If you want to leave seed trees they should have a DMR rating of <3 whenever possible.

Pruning can be effective in controlling light infections of dwarf mistletoe. Remove branches up to and including the highest infected branch, making sure



Photo by Oscar Dooling, USDA Forest Service

**LEFT: Dwarf mistletoe witches' brooms are obvious in dying trees.**

to remove the entire branch. If possible, remove branches two feet up from the last infected branch to eliminate young infections that are not easily detected.

Do not leave isolated branches below the infected ones, even if they seem to be infection-free. This type of control is most effective in scattered trees with infections low in the crown.

Know the condition of your forested land. If you find problems and identify them early, you will have greater success in maintaining and controlling problems.

*Yvonne Barkley is an associate extension forester for the University of Idaho. She can be reached at [yvonnec@uidaho.edu](mailto:yvonnec@uidaho.edu)* ■



## Table 2. Dwarf Mistletoe Rating (DMR) System.

**Step 1:** Divide live crown horizontally into thirds.

**Step 2:** Rate each third separately. Each third should be given a rating of 0,1, or 2 as described below:

0 - No visible infections.

1 - Light infection ( $\frac{1}{2}$  or less of total number of branches are infected).

2 - Heavy infection (more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of total number of branches are infected).

**Step 3:** Add ratings of thirds to obtain total rating for tree (total rating scale is 0-6).

**Step 4:** Average stand rating can be obtained by averaging individual tree ratings (all live trees).

Infection intensity for individual trees is usually characterized as follows:

1 - 2 = light

3 - 4 = moderate

5 - 6 = heavy

Significant growth reduction begins to occur in DMR class 3-4, increasing in classes 5-6 with mortality beginning to occur as trees reach class 6. In contrast to the infection rankings for individual trees, infections ratings for stands are as follows:

• 0.1 - 1.0 = light

• 1.1 - 2.0 = moderate

• >2.0 = heavy

In stands with an average of 2.0, over 80% of the trees are often infected.

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An old combine harvests wheat in a field near Moscow.

Idaho Wheat Commission photo

# Diamond jubilee

## Idaho Wheat Commission celebrates 60 years

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO — Idaho's first known wheat crop was planted in 1838 near Lapwai by Presbyterian missionary Henry Spaulding.

Since then, wheat has become one of the pillars of Idaho agriculture and the grain is now grown in 42 of Idaho's 44 counties and is the state's second biggest crop, behind potatoes, in terms of farm cash receipts.

The state's wheat growers voted to form the Idaho Wheat Commission in 1959 as a way to pool their money and resources and propel the industry forward.

Idaho typically ranks among the top six or seven states in total wheat production each year and leads the nation in yields per acre.

The state's wheat farmers say much of the success that Idaho farmers have had in growing wheat can be linked to the tens

of millions of dollars spent by the wheat commission over the decades on research and market development.

Over the past 12 years alone, the commission, which is funded by grower money, has spent \$13 million on research with the University of Idaho.

The IWC is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year and wheat farmers spoken to for this story said it's important to remember that a lot of the increase in yields and advancements in agronomic practices are a direct result of the millions of dollars spent by the commission since 1959.

The commission's annual budget of \$3 million is funded by a grower assessment of 3.5 cents for every bushel of wheat sold in the state.

The IWC's five commissioners, who are growers themselves, vote to spend that money on a variety of programs and projects, including research to develop new wheat varieties or improve growing practices.

The money is also spent to develop new markets as well as inform and educate growers.

A little more than half of the commission's annual budget is spent on research.

"Research is critical to our industry and the commission funds a lot of it," said current IWC Commissioner Clark Hamilton, an East Idaho farmer. "I think the checkoff dollars farmers are paying to the commission are a good investment. It's money well spent and the return on investment is very good."

"When you look back at the changes we've had as far as new varieties and types of fertility, those are some of the products of the commission's research efforts," said "Genesee Joe" Anderson, an IWC commissioner and North Idaho grower.

Research has always been the major focus of the commission, said former IWC Commissioner Boyd Schweider, who served on the commission from 1995-2005

and farms in the Ammon area.

“One of the major things that the commission funds is research; it always has been,” said Schweider. “A lot of the yield increases that we have seen over the decades are due to the research that the commission has funded.”

Blaine Jacobson, who has served as executive direct of the IWC since 2002, said the benefit of the commission is that “Idaho wheat growers can advance their industry faster as they pool their money to research new varieties, develop export markets and fight off regulatory pressures and environmental activists.”

In 1959, when the commission was formed, the average wheat yield in Idaho was about 35 bushels per acre. In 2018, wheat yields in Idaho averaged 91.9 bushels per acre, which led the nation among states that produced at least 10 million bushels of wheat.

Idaho’s 4,500 wheat growers collectively produced 104 million bushels of wheat last year, which ranked Idaho No. 5 in the United States. That 104 million bushel total was also 160 percent more than the 40 million bushels the state’s wheat farmers produced in 1959.

Idaho growers plant an average of 1.2 million acres of wheat each year.

Roughly 60 percent of that wheat is soft white wheat, which is preferred by domestic and export customers for its soft bite, and Idaho is one of the premier regions for growing soft white wheat in the world.

Idaho has also gained a global reputation for producing a high-quality, consistent wheat crop annually. According to IWC officials and wheat growers, the reason Idaho farmers can accomplish that is because nearly two-thirds of the state’s wheat crop is grown under irrigation, which allows farmers to manage their crop to the customer’s specifications.

The portion of Idaho’s wheat crop that is not grown under irrigation, mostly in North Idaho, benefits from ideal rainfall patterns.

“One of the big advantages we have is irrigation in the southern part of the state and really favorable rainfall and soil conditions up in the northern part,” said Anderson.

Southern Idaho’s dry, hot conditions means Idaho wheat growers don’t deal with a lot of disease issues that other regions face, Hamilton said.

“The drier climate makes for good, consistent harvests,” he said.

Those dry, low-humidity conditions “are really good conditions for harvesting and

storing crops,” Anderson said.

As a result of these ideal growing conditions, Idaho is one of the very few regions in the world that produces five of the six classes of wheat.

Also as a result of those conditions, Idaho also leads the nation in wheat yield per acre.

While that is something to be proud of, it’s more important to be famous for producing a high-quality crop every year, said North Idaho farmer Bill Flory, who has served on the wheat commission since 2010.

“Quantity is one thing,” he said. “Maintaining the quality while being successful on the quantity side is a really impressive feat on the part of our growers.”

Hamilton said that with increasing competition globally, quality and consistency are critical to the state’s wheat industry.

“Our customers want consistent, quality wheat and I think that’s more important than it has ever been,” he said.

A lot has changed since the commission was formed in 1959. Back then, wheat sold for about \$1.50 per bushel and yields were a third of what they are today.

But the biggest changes in the wheat industry over the past six decades have been the enormous improvements in agronomic

See **WHEAT**, page 37



A steam tractor is shown in an Idaho wheat field.

Idaho Wheat Commission photo



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Photo by Sean Ellis

Crickets are shown in one of the many "Cricket Condos" at EcoBalance Farms, which produces crickets for human food products in a greenhouse facility near Buhl.

# Old MacDonald had ... *some crickets?*

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BUHL — In a greenhouse outside of Buhl, slices of Idaho's most famous crop — potatoes — are being used to help produce what could be the state's most unusual crop: crickets.

When they are grown, the insects are ground into powder before being added to energy bars, pastas, brownies, cakes, breads, cookies, spices and an assortment of other human food products.

EcoBalance Farms owner Starla Barnes began growing crickets for human consumption in October and started with 20,000 of the insects. One month later, her operation had 1 million crickets and two months later it had three million.

The farm had about 20 million crickets

as of mid-April, according to Dean Moreno, Barnes' business partner.

Barnes, who grew up on a dairy and has also worked in the aquaculture industry, got the idea of raising crickets for the human food market while working on her Ph.D. in animal nutrition.

"One of the high-performing animal proteins was crickets," she said. "Then I noticed that humans can benefit from the crickets as well. So, I started looking into what it would take to enter the cricket market for human consumption."

It took her about two years to develop a plan and that started with approaching Moreno, whose background is in business, with the idea.

His first reaction? "I was like, 'What? Ew.'"

But then he decided to give Barnes' idea

a serious vetting.

"I was just flabbergasted as far as what the market was for it," Moreno said. "I went back to her and said, 'Believe it or not, this actually is a viable business.'"

According to a Forbes article, the worldwide market for crickets was about \$33 million in 2015 and the U.S. market alone is expected to exceed \$50 million by 2023. According to that article, cricket protein powders and other products with crickets in them are already being sold in grocery stores in the United States.

Barnes said the global market for crickets is forecast to reach \$7 billion by 2025.

The human food products with crickets being sold in the U.S. are clearly labeled and people that purchase them aren't accidentally consuming crickets, Moreno said. "They're buying them on purpose."



Photo by Sean Ellis

EcoBalance Farms owner Starla Barnes and Dean Moreno, her business partner, explain how they raise crickets for human consumption in a greenhouse facility near Buhl.

Most of the cricket products being sold now are being consumed in other nations but Barnes said it's not difficult to get Americans over the "ick" factor once they try a product with crickets.

"It's just a matter of introducing people to them, letting them try it and seeing that there is no real ick factor in it," she said. "You don't realize that it's even in there. It tastes like an almond or sunflower or pumpkin seed when they're cooked. It doesn't have a bad taste to it."

Laura Johnson, who manages the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's market development division, recently ate a chocolate chip cookie made with cricket powder during a consumer food event in Twin Falls.

"It tasted like a normal chocolate chip cookie," she said. "You couldn't tell it was made with crickets at all."

The cookies were given away at an Idaho Preferred booth set up at the event.

"They went like hotcakes," Johnson said. "They were amazingly popular."

Barnes and Moreno aren't the only people in the U.S. who are trying their hand at raising crickets for human food but they have one of the largest operations. Barnes said EcoBalance Farms is probably the second largest cricket farm in the nation.

The greenhouses where the crickets are raised are filled with large bean totes teeming with hordes of crickets, who appear to have no desire to try to escape their "cricket condos," which are stocked with a powdered high-protein food source for the insects.

Most of the cricket farms in the U.S. are comparatively small.

Moreno said one of the reasons there aren't a lot of big cricket farms is that the

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insects are difficult to grow, so he and Barnes decided to do their due diligence and focus on trying to master the production side of the equation to ensure they were able to raise a large number of crickets as efficiently as possible.

Using the geothermal water available in the area is a big plus and allows the farm to avoid a heating bill and grow the crickets year-round, a luxury most other cricket farms don't have.

"We did a lot of homework," Moreno said. "It took us a lot of time to actually get the final idea and it's still evolving."

The cricket poop, called frass, is sold as fertilizer.

"It's like raising any other type of animal, basically," Barnes said. "You're feeding them every day, you're watering them, we handle the hatching of the babies every day."

The Buhl farm currently has the capacity to produce six tons of cricket powder per week and it sells for about \$40 a pound.

The operation is using only 12,000 of the 100,000 square feet of greenhouse



Photo by Sean Ellis

Crickets are shown in one of the many "Cricket Condos" at EcoBalance Farms, which produces crickets for human food products in a greenhouse facility near Buhl.

space available on the property and Moreno and Barnes plan to soon significantly ratchet up their operation.

"We're feeling the growing pains in this (12,000-square-foot) space in just (several) months," Moreno said. ■

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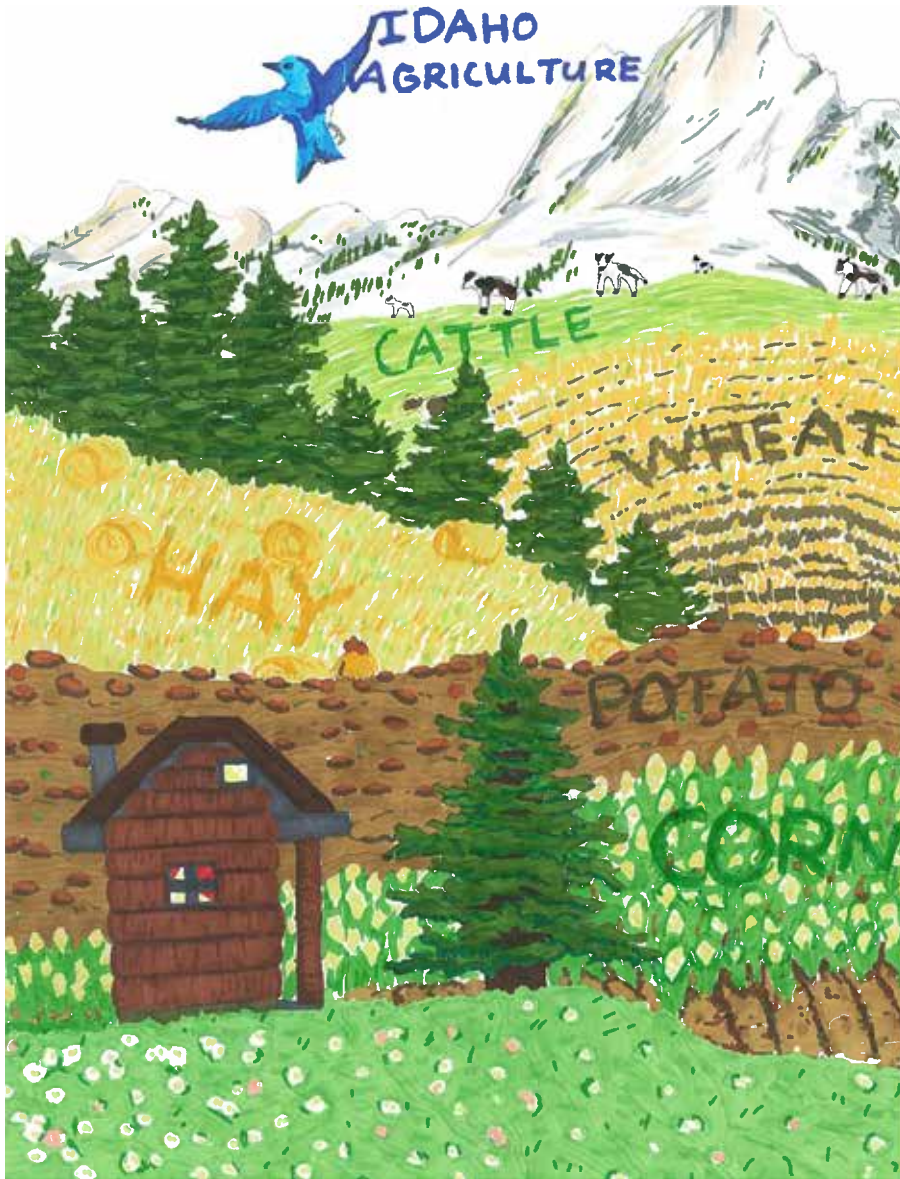
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# Art Contest Winners 2019

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

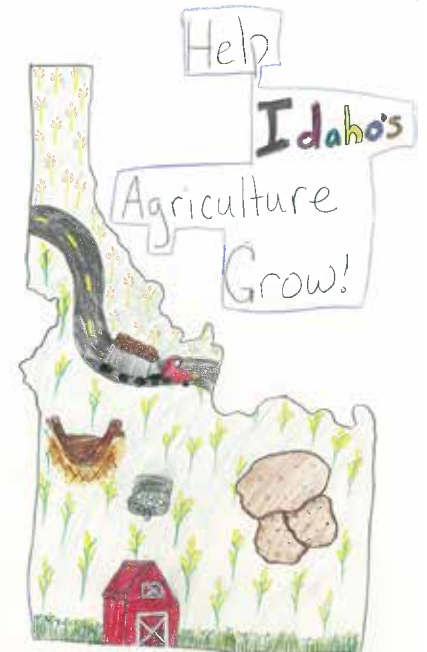
## Poster Contest



**Kye Ellsworth, 1st, Jefferson**



**Mya Anderson, 2nd, Bannock**



**Kamailee Singh, 3rd, Bannock**



# Coloring Contest K-1



**Emma Saiz, 1st, Jefferson**

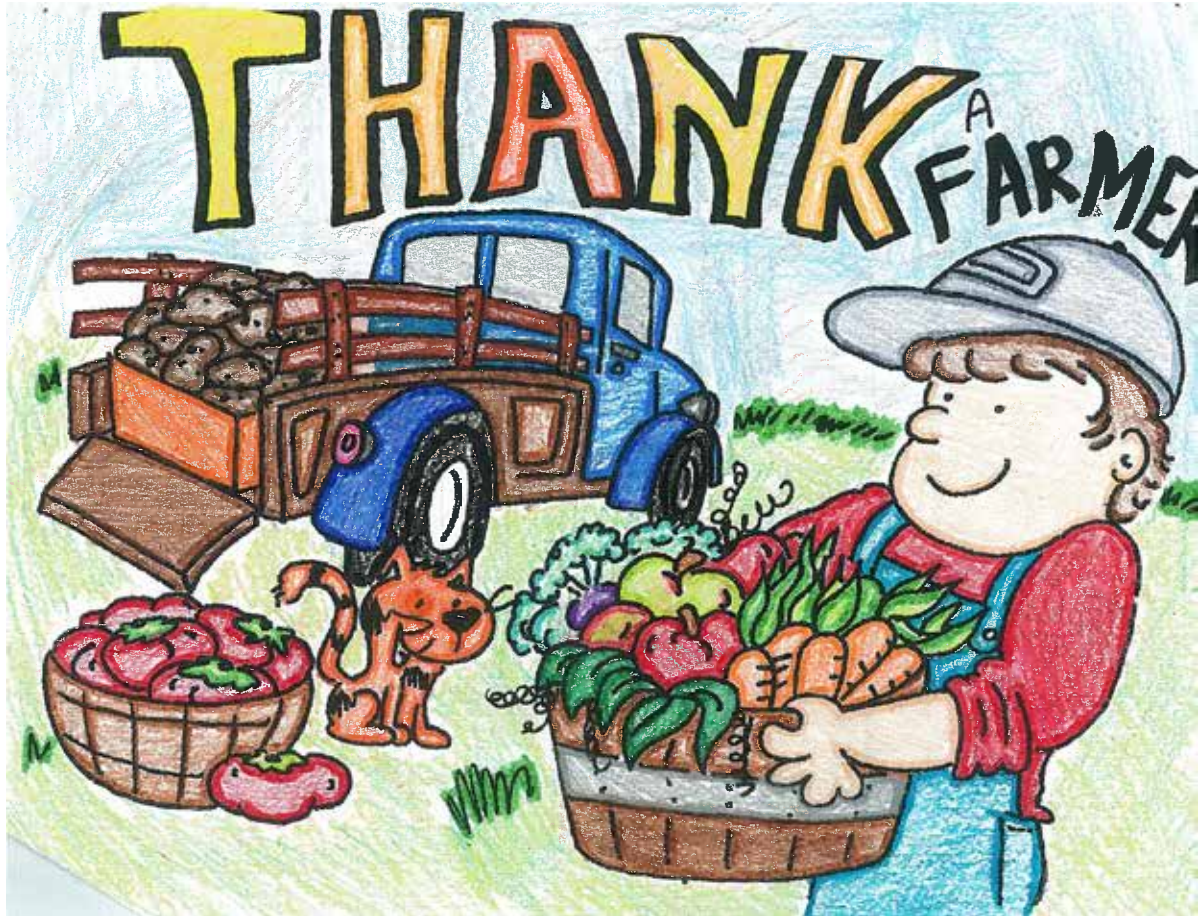


**Peyton Runnels, 2nd, Custer**

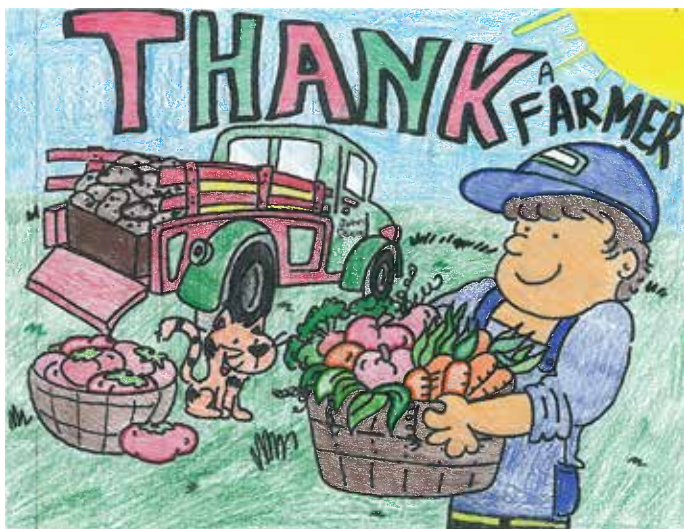


**Mason Wengerd, 3rd, Bonner**

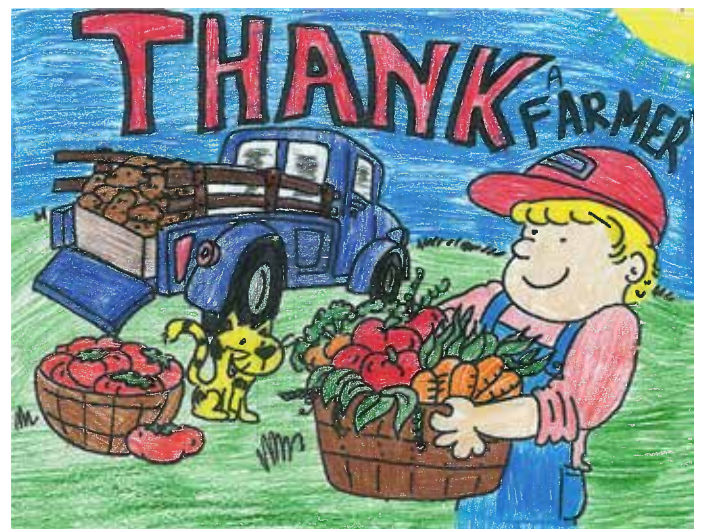
# Coloring Contest 2-3



**Vincent Grainger, 1st, Bannock**



**Kennedi Hall, 2nd, Jefferson**



**Kristin Miller, 3rd, Jefferson**

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Wheat is harvested in Cassia County, Idaho.

Idaho Wheat Commission photo

## WHEAT

*Continued from page 27*

practices and the way technology has changed farming, according to members of Idaho's wheat industry.

Anderson said the agronomic practices and systems of fertility wheat farmers are using now are light years ahead of where they were in 1959.

"We're using products and methods that weren't even thought of back then," he said. "We're quite a ways ahead of where we were then."

"Our production methods are much more refined and much more specific," Flory said. "It's really an exciting time in production agriculture."

The way technology has changed agriculture in the past several decades is almost mind-boggling, he added.

"I sat in a sprayer yesterday and I marvel at what it does and the information it provides me compared to the way it used to be," Flory said. "The information that we're gathering from sprayers and combines today is pretty phenomenal.

"They are gathering information and data that can be used toward more efficiency, better consistency and higher-value crops."

East Idaho farmer Gordon Gallup, who served on the commission from 2005-2015, said another big change is the close relationship that Idaho wheat farmers have with their foreign and domestic customers.

"We're better in touch with them than we have ever been," he said.

Flory said that's no accident and cultivating a close relationship with foreign as well as domestic customers has been a major focus of the state's wheat industry, which typically hosts several foreign trade teams each year.

"I think the emphasis on understanding our customers has elevated the past five years," he said. "Part of the reason for this is the high level of competition we have internationally. Knowing and understanding our customers' needs, both domestically and internationally, is a heightened level of importance in the industry. That has always been there but it's certainly heightened in the past several years."

Flory said Idaho's wheat industry works hard to be available to and educate its customers.

"Idaho is rather unique in its interaction with its customers," he said.

One thing that hasn't changed much is the family nature of farming in Idaho, Anderson said.

According to the IWC, 97 percent of the state's wheat harvest comes from family farms.

"Agriculture has consolidated and there are some pretty large farms out there but for the most part, they're still family run," Anderson said.

Given how far agriculture has come in the past several decades, Idaho's wheat farmers said they can only imagine what farming in the United States will look like in the future.

Looking toward the near future, the dawn of autonomous farm equipment is not far off and that will radically change agriculture, Flory said.

"Autonomous equipment will change production agriculture in ways we haven't even thought of," he said. "It will make us much more efficient and allow for a higher level of management."

Flory said he expects to own an autonomous tractor within two years.

"I'm dead serious: I expect an autonomous tractor on my place in two years," he said. ■

# MARKET REPORTS HAVE MOVED TO

The image displays four sample market reports from Idaho Farm Bureau. From left to right: 
 

- 3 Year Livestock Comparison:** A table comparing livestock prices (cattle, hogs, sheep) over three years.
- Cattle on Feed:** A report detailing the number of cattle on feed in Idaho and the United States, along with feed prices.
- Farm Bureau Commodity Report:** A comprehensive report on various commodities including grains, oilseeds, and livestock.
- Idaho Hay Report:** A report on hay production and prices in Idaho, comparing it to other states.



[www.idahofb.org](http://www.idahofb.org)

The image shows a screenshot of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation website. The navigation menu includes: Home, About Us, News Room, Events Calendar, **Commodities**, Member Benefits, Legislative, YFSR, Women's Leadership, and County Info. The main content area features a large circular graphic with the text "Commodities Market Reports Commodity Events". Below this, the "Commodities" menu item is highlighted with a red box, and its sub-items "Market Reports" and "Commodity Events" are also visible.

# Classifieds

## FARM EQUIPMENT

4 Tractors 1944 Oliver 60, A/C WD-45, 1940 Farmall \$1400.00 each and 1949 John Deere B \$1000.00. 3 point hitch off of JD A no center link \$100.00. Ladies early 70's John Deere bicycle \$200.00. tncarp53@yahoo.com can email pictures. Pine, Id. 208-590-4314.

Allen 8827 Rake, S/N 880863 double w/hydraulics. Good shape. \$9,800. Also wheel line with all new motor and parts. 32 sections \$4,500. Dietrich, Id 208-420-6524.

Aluminum main line with risers and clamps. 15 of 12 inch by 50 foot and 1 of 12 inch by 25 foot. Good condition. \$1.50 per foot. Twin Falls, Id 208-308-3220.

Chose from JD-2 cyls, Fords and IHC's before 1955. Many unusual options, Wheatlands Hi Crops & Orchard models. Nampa, Id. 208-488-8186.

Old John Deere for collectors. Wire tie baler, 4 cyl engine, not stuck. Looks like new for age. Bales come out the side, \$350 OBO. Parma, ID 208-674-2107.

Semi truck tires total 8: 4 Bridgestone drive 285/75R24.5 7-10/32. 2 Bridgestone drive 285/75R24.5 15-16/32. 2 Michelin steer 275/75R24.5 7-9/32. Price \$125-225. Call for details. Jerome, Id. Great for farm trucks and local. 208-410-9547.

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obo; 1959 Willeys Jeep truck \$3,500; 1972 Triumph Spitfire \$1,000; 2 EA electric fencers \$60 each; 1930's wood burning stove brown porcelain \$500. Preston, ID 208-427-6237.

Fisher wood stove, new bricks, takes 8 inch pipe \$350. Eagle cap fireplace doors with glass windows for fairly large fireplace. \$250. Nampa, Id. 208-401-5123.

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**\$47.00**

Regular Child/Senior \$30.00

**FARM BUREAU ONLINE  
DISCOUNT PRICE**

**\$27.00**