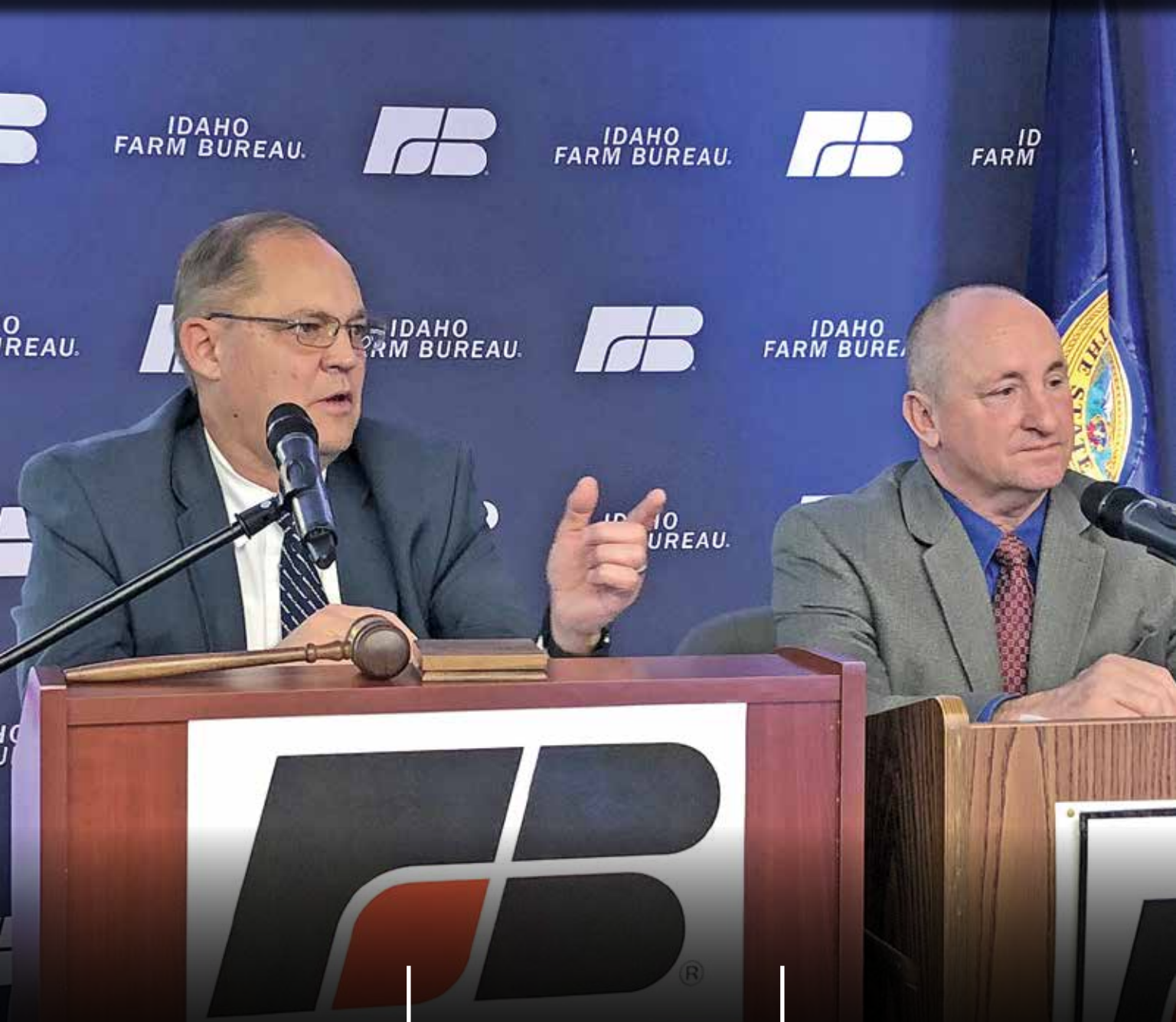


# GEM STATE **Producer** Idaho Farm Bureau.

January 2021 • Volume 25 Issue 1



**Idaho farm exports up, 3**

**IFBF annual meeting, 10**

**Safflower sales jump, 32**

## Farm Bureau's 2021 policy plate is full



**I**t's curtains for 2020, and what a year it has been! Now that we can put 2020 in the rear-view mirror, we also can look ahead to what's on our plate for 2021.

We started this year with hopes of achieving policy wins on ag labor, regulatory reform, expanding broadband, addressing mental health in rural America, and expanding trade.

While those goals have seemed, at times, to be overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic and all the crises it brought our way, I'm proud that we still brought home some big wins for farmers

and ranchers on our original goals.

While we need Congress to act on ag labor reform, we applauded the Administration's release of new H-2A guest worker rules. The Administration changed the calculation of wage rates and locked them in for two years, a move that will bring more predictability and stability to farmers who rely on those workers.

Trade is headed in the right direction, with USDA recently issuing a forecast that ag exports will increase to \$140.5 billion next year, with

See **DUVALL**, page 6

## The President's Desk

By **Bryan Searle**

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

## Farm Bureau is 'stronger together'



**I**daho Farm Bureau Federation's annual policy development meeting was held virtually this year and in one way, it had a very different feeling to it.

At the same time, it had a very familiar feeling to it.

The 2020 policy development meeting was held Dec. 2 in six different locations around the state and video technology allowed 61 voting delegates from 36 counties to communicate with each other simultaneously.

That was certainly different.

But one important thing that didn't change was that real farmers and ranchers, people who are actively involved in agriculture, discussed, debated and voted on a host of policies and proposed policies that seek to defend and benefit the state's important agricultural industry.

This is the true strength of Farm Bureau. The grassroots nature of the organization provides for a combined brain power that collectively thinks issues and proposals through before voting on them.

See **SEARLE**, page 7

## Inside Farm Bureau

By **Zak Miller**

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

## Remember to look up and catch sight of the bigger picture



**C**redit for straight farm rows today goes primarily to the marvel of modern Global Positioning System technology, which directs much of our farm equipment.

Before this technology became widely available, it was and for many still is, a point of pride for a farmer to make straight rows with nothing more than a steady eye. Making straight rows requires a constant commitment to staying straight.

Most tractors have a "sight" at the front of the machine to allow the operator to aim their machine and keep it straight, not much different from

aiming a gun. Aiming the machine involves picking a stationary object at the end of the field and not losing focus until the end of the row.

This type of attention is typical of agriculture; constant commitment to the task at hand is a precursor to efficiency and success.

However, if one does not look up from time to time, they may miss out on the world's beauty around them and maybe miss the bigger picture.

As a younger man, if I failed to look up, I could spend an entire day and forget the majesty of the

See **MILLER**, page 6

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Photo by Sean Ellis

The total value of Idaho ag exports through the first nine months of 2020 increased 4 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

# Idaho farm exports on the rise despite COVID

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The total value of Idaho agricultural exports increased 4 percent through the first nine months of the year.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data that became available in early November, \$704 million worth of Idaho farm products were sold to other countries through the third quarter of 2020, which ended Sept. 30.

That's up from \$678 million last year during the same period.

The Census Bureau data is released quarterly and is based on what state a commodity is exported from, so it doesn't capture all of Idaho's farm product exports. For example, it doesn't capture the wheat from Idaho that is exported out of Portland.

But it does show trends and from a percentage standpoint, matches closely with USDA data that is released annually. The USDA data captures more of the state's farm exports but it is not as timely as the Census Bureau data.

Both sets of data show that Idaho's agricultural exports are on the rise.

The most recent USDA ag export report for Idaho was released Oct. 26 and showed Idaho farm product exports increased 9 percent in 2019, to \$2.26 billion.

With the Census Bureau data showing Idaho ag export value up 4 percent so far this year, the state could be on pace to take a shot at

See EXPORTS, page 8

Photo by Joel Benson

**COVER: Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, left, and IFBF Vice President Richard Durrant speak with Farm Bureau members Dec. 2 during IFBF's 81st annual meeting. See page 10 for story.**



Photo courtesy of Wayne Hungate

Wayne Hungate of Caldwell poses with his herd and the Polaris Ranger he uses when he moves them to a new paddock. He practices management-intensive grazing.

# Ranching approach yielding more forage on less land

By John O'Connell  
*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

CALDWELL — Wayne Hungate's holistic ranching method has enabled him to graze a bigger herd on a much smaller acreage of pasture, and yet his forage al-

ways seems to grow back thicker and more verdant than before.

Hungate, of Caldwell, explained the system behind his remarkable productivity is called management-intensive grazing. It entails the daily moving of cattle that feed at a high density within small paddocks.

The approach ecologically mimics the cycle of life that evolved surrounding grazing herbivores that cling close together for protection from predators and move often to find fresh forage. Think of the historic bison herds of North America.

Packed tightly, cattle evenly mow the

range, picking off weeds that are often left behind in conventional pastures and helping a diversity of plants compete with the taller grasses.

The cattle aren't in a single paddock long enough to cause damage to the plants' root systems and the even distribution of their manure and urine lends fertility to the soil, helping the grasses and forbs regrow quickly and vigorously.

Management-intensive grazing — a term coined by May, Idaho, rancher and educator Jim Gerrish — has been slow to catch on, but proponents such as Hungate believes its time is coming, as range land becomes increasingly precious and production costs steadily rise.

"One of the things Jim Gerrish teaches is if you properly manage a piece of ground you should be able to double the carrying capacity, which makes (my land) the cheapest piece of ground I ever bought," said Hungate, who learned the ropes of the grazing philosophy from Gerrish. "... It is a different concept. It doesn't fit the cowboy range mentality of turning cattle out in the spring and going to get them in the fall."

In the mid-1980s, Hungate worked for Simplot Western Stockmen's and attended schools in holistic grazing management to implement the Simplot program.

"Out of that I've always had a love of taking care of the ground," said Hungate, who also sells insurance policies to ranchers as a Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho agent.

While with Simplot, Hungate had the opportunity to tour a ranch in Hawaii that was utilizing a version of management-intensive grazing. The ranch encompassed five different climate zones with annual rainfall varying widely.

"They had 6,000 head of mother cows. At any one time, 95% of the ranch was resting," Hungate said. "Yes, it can be done on a large scale. It's just a different mindset of moving cattle."

Hungate bought his current ranch — 90 acres of irrigated pasture located about a mile from his home — in June 2018. The

previous owner grazed it continuously with 60 cow-calf pairs.

"By the end of summer, they were out of feed. They continually grazed it to where the grass wasn't growing," Hungate said.

At the urging of a University of Idaho Extension agent, Hungate attended a grazing workshop led by Gerrish. In the spring of 2019, following Gerrish's protocols, Hungate used a no-till drill to directly seed three types of clover and three grass species into pasture that had previously been a grass monoculture.

*"Once you accept that management of time is the most critical factor in grazing management, your whole view of the world changes and usually for the better."*

— Jim Gerrish, rancher and educator

That season, he grazed 80 cow-calf pairs, allowing 70 square yards of pasture for every animal unit day — a measure of the forage volume an adult cow consumes in a day.

He uses single-wire electric fencing to construct the temporary paddocks. Moving the cattle so frequently presents no challenge. Eager to access fresh grasses and forbs, the herd chases after him when he drives by in his Polaris Ranger.

When he opens a section of fence to allow them into the next paddock and shouts, "Come on!" the animals come running and he's quick to get out of their way.

This year, based on the improvement in the health of his range land, he increased his density to 110 pairs, allowing just 35 square yards per animal unit day.

"My goal is I'd like to get to 180 pairs on that 90 acres," Hungate said.

His methods have helped him cut back considerably on inputs. The "hoof action" breaks up the manure piles, so he doesn't need to use gas to distribute it mechanically.

The cattle graze so densely that they eat

all of the weeds, so he uses no broadleaf herbicide, which also allows his clovers to survive. The clovers, in turn, provide a preferred feed source and fix nitrogen: Hungate anticipates he'll need no artificial fertilizer next spring.

"It's healthier pasture all around," he said.

Hungate used to make a 200-mile round trip to summer his herd in the Council area, where he had 850 acres of private land to graze about 100 head of cows.

He's sold that land since starting management-intensive grazing and now has sufficient forage to keep 110 head on the 90 acres near his home through most of the year with no supplemental hay.

The sole time his cattle leave the pasture is for a few weeks during the fall when he pays neighboring farmers for access to their corn stubble.

Hungate saves on the time and fuel of transporting his cattle to Council, as well as the trips to repair fencing and deliver salt licks on that expansive range land.

The neighboring corn farmers also reap benefits when he practices his management-intensive grazing on their stubble, which they don't have to incorporate into the soil using heavy equipment, saving them about \$50 per acre.

Furthermore, they benefit from the nutrients in the cattle excrement.

Hungate and his three sons collaborate on a side business called Hungate Custom Hay. In his own operation, however, he leaves the "swathing" to the animals.

Hungate believes management-intensive grazing is a better fit for irrigated pastures than large public grazing allotments, with rigid regulations about grazing seasons and densities.

However, he believes the nation's food producers will increasingly look to raise pasture under their pivots in lieu of traditional row crops.

"I think we're on the verge of that," Hungate said. "Pasture ground is getting harder and harder to find."

See **GRAZING**, page 8

# DUVALL

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*Continued from page 2*

China leading the increase. In addition to the new U.S.-China Phase 1 Agreement that commits China to greater purchases from the U.S., the U.S.- Mexico-Canada Agreement took effect this summer, the U.S.-Japan agreement took effect last January, and negotiations are well under way with the United Kingdom.

Signed into law in March, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act allocated more than \$500 million to help rural communities connect to broadband internet.

Also in March, the Broadband DATA Act was signed into law, changing the way the government collects data on broadband access so that maps correctly show the areas that are lacking and need help.

On mental health, the House and Senate passed language in the defense authorization bill that would provide more training, improve awareness through public service announcements, and require federal agencies to work together to determine best practices in responding to rural mental health challenges.

On the regulatory front, we made progress on modernizing Endangered Species Act rules and, finally, delisting the gray wolf, which has seen population growth for years and now will be managed appro-

priately at the state level.

We also welcomed decisions from the Environmental Protection Agency that will preserve farmers' and ranchers' access to critical crop protection tools.

Through Farm Bureau's legal advocacy, we have defeated early efforts to block implementation of new rules that provide a reasonable definition of "navigable waters" and commonsense reforms of the process for environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act. The litigation is ongoing, and AFBF remains fully committed to defending these and other administrative wins of the past few years.

All of these achievements came as we worked for assistance to farmers and ranchers as markets were decimated by COVID-19 and as they struggled to provide adequate protection for their farm workers.

Farm Bureau membership always has been a great value for our members, but I believe we showed that value more than ever this year.

We will work with elected leaders to bring home more wins for farmers and ranchers. We have work to do on taxes—protecting the tax cuts enacted in 2017 and making agricultural estate tax relief permanent.

We must be engaged in the discussion on climate, ensuring that voluntary incen-

tives are part of the solution.

We must work to strengthen our food and agriculture system in light of what we've learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussions about the next farm bill will get under way, and we'll be hard at work to ensure that farmers and ranchers have adequate risk management tools and conservation programs.

We must maintain the hard-won regulatory reforms of the past few years, continue to work for a regulatory environment that allows farmers and ranchers to be productive, and implement renewable energy mandates.

Infrastructure improvements, broadband buildout and agricultural research are also on the plate.

We must continue to expand global markets, improve access to mental health services in rural America, and continue working for real, lasting reform of immigration and ag labor.

Clearly, we have our work cut out for us, and if 2020 has shown us anything it's that Farm Bureau, with our grassroots-developed policy and our army of engaged farmer and rancher member advocates across the nation, is up to any task.

We are stronger together.

I look forward to reporting on more policy wins in the days and weeks ahead. ■

# MILLER

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*Continued from page 2*

Teton Mountains to the east, and the beauty of the St. Anthony sand dunes and even the rugged Lost Rivers range to the west.

It is hard to beat the office views of a farmer or rancher, but they still need to take the time to admire their corner office.

The reality is that farmers and ranchers are not the only ones who run the risk of focusing on their tasks and missing the world's beauty and the people around them.

As we contemplate the road before us in a new year, many items need our focus

We have a lot to focus on. We are still in the middle of a pandemic that we must work to end. Luckily, medical science pro-

vides a solution to this plague.

However, we must still ensure our economy can come back, as well as our normal way of living. A silver lining in the midst of this pandemic chaos may be the realization of how much we need one another.

We also need to continue to make our voices heard, and this is the season of decisions. Our elections may be over, but now the work begins for those we choose to represent us.

These good men and women both in Boise and Washington need to hear your thoughts, as do those elected officials in your cities and counties.

Our nation and state have many groups that have enormous plans for our future,

and not all of them have the best of intentions for our way of life and our liberties.

Like farmers on their tractors, if we don't keep our eye on the prize, the rows will get crooked. That is also how our needs and liberties can be lost.

It is not easy or efficient, but as Winston Churchill said, "Democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others."

I encourage all of us to stay engaged and stay active in making our voice heard. Please, don't forget to look up and see the beauty all around you – nature, family, health, etc.

Sometimes, remembering what we have makes it easier to work to keep it. ■

Continued from page 2

Whether you have been actively involved in your county Farm Bureau or not, we always invite you to share your solutions, frustrations, or ideas with your county Farm Bureau board throughout the year.

Despite how an individual feels about a particular issue, once a final vote is taken, the entire Farm Bureau family comes together in support of that policy.

When a policy is adopted or a proposed policy rejected, you can rest assured a lot of thought has gone into the decision and the idea has been vigorously, and I mean vigorously, discussed and debated, sometimes to the extreme.

Every policy in the IFBF policy book began as an idea in an individual's head and that truly is the strength of this organization.

Real farmers and ranchers, people who make their living by producing food from the land, have and will continue to create the policies that give Idaho Farm Bureau Federation professional staff and volunteers their marching orders.

These producers are in tune with what is happening on the ground floor of the agricultural industry. An example is the three policies that were adopted during the 2020 annual meeting that seek to make it simpler for consumers to buy meat directly from ranchers.

Ranchers have seen first-hand how COVID-19 affected the nation's meat-inspection and supply system and Idaho producers voted to support policies that could allow states to think outside the box to try to find safe but simpler ways to get meat from ranchers to consumers.

This is just one example of how an IFBF policy came about directly as a result of producers being on the front lines of the nation's food-production system and reacting to an evolving issue in a thoughtful, common-sense manner.

This year's annual meeting was unprecedented and a lot of planning and re-planning went into making it happen because of the evolving state and local COVID-related restrictions.

Just when we thought we had a plan for the meeting nailed down, things evolved and it was back to the drawing board.

This is something that we as farmers and ranchers understand well: As we plan and move forward with that next crop, calf herd, or milk in the tank, it never really goes as planned. We then work to adapt the best we can.

Considering all of the adaptations that had to be made to pull it off, the meeting went off rather smoothly.

Kudos to all the people that helped make this year's meeting a success and special thanks to all of the voting delegates who took the time and effort necessary to arrive at their meeting locations prepared and ready to go.

As most of you already know, the development of Farm Bureau policy does not mean the work is done. In fact, it is just beginning in many ways.

Now we must remain vigilant and engaged to ensure those policies bear fruit, in much the same way we do as farmers and ranchers.

The policy is the seed planted; now we must work each day to nourish and protect it. The same is true with our policy. We must defend and advocate for it and build relationships with the decision-makers whose actions could determine whether those policies are successful or not.


The annual meeting of the Idaho Legislature – this year's session convenes Jan. 11 – is always a time when Farm Bureau is closely engaged to ensure any legislation that is proposed either supports agriculture or does not harm the industry.

You as experts in the agricultural industry may be called on to testify on specific legislation during the session.

If you are, rest assured IFBF's policy book has guidance that will support the position you take.

And also rest assured that that policy was developed by you and your fellow farmers and ranchers and is sound and well thought out.

You and producers like you are the backbone of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. Thank you for all you do to ensure IFBF remains the voice of Idaho agriculture. ■

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# EXPORTS

*Continued from page 3*

its record ag export value total of \$2.29 billion that was set in 2013.

The recently released Census Bureau data shows that despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, Idaho's agricultural industry is still finding a way to sell farm products, said Laura Johnson, manager of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's marketing division.

"Food is still important and the industry has been able to make some shifts and respond," she said. "In some areas, we've seen super-strong demand."

The Census Bureau data shows that that the total value of Idaho ag exports to the state's main foreign markets, Canada and Mexico, decreased during the first nine months of 2020.

Idaho exported \$195 million worth of farm products to Canada through the third quarter of 2020, down 1 percent from the same period in 2019, and the

total for Mexico was \$141 million, down 7 percent.

However, ag exports to other important markets for Idaho increased, sometimes substantially.

Idaho farm exports to China totaled \$52 million through the third quarter, a 37 percent increase over 2019.

Johnson said the easing of the trade war between the United States and China played a role in that increase.

"There's been a lot of progress on that front and it has definitely played a part in the increase of Idaho ag exports to China," she said.

Idaho farm product exports to South Korea through the third quarter totaled \$52 million, up 6 percent from 2019, and they totaled \$48 million to Japan, a 37 increase.

When it came to export value of Idaho farm products by category, the top four categories all experienced decreases compared with the same period in 2019.

But there were substantial increases in other categories.

Idaho exported \$139 million worth of dairy products through the first nine months of 2020, down 5 percent from 2019.

Exports of products included in the edible vegetables category totaled \$108 million in value, down slightly from \$109 million in 2019, and exports of products listed under the "milling, malt and starch" category totaled \$79 million, down 7 percent from last year.

The oilseeds category also decreased 6 percent to \$72 million.

But the "prepared vegetables, fruit and nuts" category increased 12 percent to \$58 million and the sale of live animals increased 21 percent to \$41 million.

The cereals category increased 192 percent to \$35 million. Wheat exports accounted for \$31 million of that total and most of that – \$26 million – went to Mexico. ■

# GRAZING

*Continued from page 5*

Though many in the cattle industry may view ranchers like Hungate as doing something new and different, Gerrish has been espousing such concepts since the late 1980s.

Back then, Gerrish worked in forage research for the University of Missouri. The principles he taught were encapsulated in the book "Intensive Grazing Management" by Burt Smith.

Allan Nation, who was the editor of Stockman Grass Farmer magazine, griped to Gerrish that too many in the industry misinterpreted intensive grazing management and viewed it as a license to overgraze. Gerrish noted to his friend that the method truly intensifies the management as opposed to the grazing, and the term "management-intensive grazing" was born.

"Once you accept that management of time is the most critical factor in grazing management, your whole view of the world changes and usually for the better," said Gerrish, who grew up as an Illinois crop farmer.

"... Almost all legumes require a recovery period after grazing. In this type of system, legumes flourish and pump nitrogen into the system."

Gerrish explained that ranchers who practice management-intensive grazing typically hone their eyes after 30 repetitions of single-day grazing events to accurately estimate the amount of forage their livestock require and can then consistently fence in the right-sized paddock.

"During the period when animals are on pasture, mostly negative things are happening to the plants and soil ... If on the other hand you make grazing a shorter period until you have it down to every day becomes a new grazing period, only on one day are negative things happening to a plant," Gerrish said.

He explained that leaves feed the sun's energy through the plants and into the soil biology through photosynthesis.

"When animals are repeatedly biting the leaves, they're reducing the soil biology. Plants are more susceptible to insects and

diseases," Gerrish said.

In addition to public speaking, Gerrish manages the herd at the Patterson Unit of Circle Pi Ranch in the Pahsimeroi Valley. He grazes a 600-animal-unit herd on pasture beneath a 300-acre pivot and a 150-acre pivot.

Though Gerrish sees untold potential in management-intensive grazing, he said national implementation has been dismally slow. According to the limited surveys that have been done, fewer than 15% of U.S. beef producers currently manage with an average grazing period of less than a week, he said.

Gerrish believes market forces would have expedited management-intensive grazing's popularity if not for government support programs and corn subsidies.

"Twenty years ago, I thought we'd be in the 30% to 40% range (of producers using management intensive grazing) by now because it just makes so much sense," Gerrish said.

Visit [americangrazinglands.com](http://americangrazinglands.com) for more information on management-intensive grazing. ■



# IFBF helps Owyhee rancher in 'land swap' proposal

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation is assisting an Owyhee County rancher who stands to lose a federal grazing preference and related water right if a land swap proposed between the Idaho Department of Lands and U.S. Bureau of Land Management is approved.

The rancher, Tim Lowry, has asked IDL to send a letter to other ranchers who could be impacted by the swap asking for their written consent and explaining to them clearly what the effects of such an exchange would be on their existing grazing rights so they can make an informed decision.

A land swap between BLM and IDL known as the Owyhee Land Exchange was proposed several years ago. BLM manages federal land in the affected area and IDL manages state endowment land in that area.

The proposed swap of land in Owyhee County includes 11 parcels of non-wilderness federal land managed by BLM totaling 31,000 acres that would be exchanged for 40 parcels of IDL-managed state endowment trust land totaling 24,000 acres.

According to IDL officials, the exchange is based on the appraised value of the lands, not the size or number of parcels.

In response to questions about this issue that Idaho Farm Bureau Federation sent to the Idaho Department of Lands, IDL Public Information Officer Sharla Arledge said that because Congress in 2009 designated more than 500,000 acres of public land in Owyhee County as wilderness, IDL now manages endowment trust lands in that area that do not match the agency's purposes.

She said the exchange would enable the department to acquire federal parcels adjacent to existing state endowment trust lands "better suited to our mission and objective for the endowment beneficiaries."

"The new IDL parcels create larger endowment land blocks and reduce the expense



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Idaho Farm Bureau Federation is assisting a rancher who stands to lose a federal grazing preference and related water right if a land swap proposed between the Idaho Department of Lands and U.S. Bureau of Land Management is approved.**

of managing scattered parcels," Arledge said. "The acquisition helps IDL to meet the Idaho constitutional mandate to maximize revenues for endowment beneficiaries, which is primarily public schools."

According to IDL, 17 grazing leases on state land and 18 grazing allotments on BLM land would be impacted by the proposed land swap.

IDL anticipates the Idaho land board, which provides direction to the department of lands, will consider the issue during its January meeting. The land board normally meets the third Tuesday of the month.

Arledge said that livestock grazing "is and will continue as the primary and dominant land use on the federal and (state-owned) endowment trust lands. Both agencies worked closely with livestock grazing permittees and lessees to establish a clear path of transition when ownership changes hands."

Lowry, however, points out that permittees

who have BLM grazing preference rights, as he does, will have those rights extinguished when the BLM land becomes state land under the exchange.

Currently, as long as Lowry complies with BLM's grazing regulations, his BLM grazing permits are renewed automatically, every 10 years. This is known as a grazing preference right, which was granted by Congress in the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934.

But that grazing permit renewal won't happen automatically if the land is managed by IDL because at the end of a state grazing lease, anyone can submit a bid to graze there. Whoever the highest bidder is takes over the lease.

That means Lowry could lose his ability to graze on land he used to have the right to graze on as well as the associated in-stream stock watering rights he was awarded by the Idaho Supreme Court in the Joyce Livestock

See *LAND*, page 28



Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, left, and IFBF Vice President Richard Durrant speak to voting delegates during IFBF's 81st annual meeting, which was held virtually this year. Sixty-one voting delegates from 36 counties participated in the meeting from six locations around the state.

# Idaho Farm Bureau Federation holds virtual annual meeting

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – For the first time in its 81-year-history, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's annual conference was held virtually this year, due to the gathering restrictions related to COVID-19.

Sixty-one voting delegates from 36

counties, all of them farmers or ranchers, participated in the Dec. 2 meeting from six different locations around the state.

But despite the wide geographic dispersion of voting delegates, the basic purpose and concept of the annual meeting was unchanged: voting delegates debated and voted on several changes to IFBF's policy book, which gives the

organization's professional and volunteer members their marching orders during the coming year.

IFBF President Bryan Searle told delegates that the organization's policy development process "is one of the most important things this organization does. It's the best process, I believe, of any organization, bar none, in the nation and

that's because it starts with the grassroots."

But he also said developing policy is just the beginning and Farm Bureau members need to work diligently throughout the year to ensure the group's policies become fruitful.

"Is our work done now? Absolutely not," said Searle, a farmer from Shelley. "We've only just planted our crop. We put the seed in the ground. Now we have to water it and ... harvest it."

Searle said Farm Bureau remains strong and effective but he encouraged members to strive to make the organization even better.

"We are the strongest voice of agriculture in the county, in the state and in the nation," he said. But, he added, "Good's not good enough if it can be better and better's not good enough if it can be best."

He said Farm Bureau is strongest when its members are united and he also said the organization needs everyone to play their part.

"We need everyone," Searle said. "We need the wisdom of an 80-year-old and we need the vision of a 20-year-old."

He said the strength of Farm Bureau is its grassroots.

"In order for things to happen, it happens in the counties," he said. "It starts there; it starts with our grassroots."

During the annual meeting, members supported three proposals that seek to make it easier for consumers to purchase meat directly from ranchers.

These proposals could simplify the pathway for cattle producers to sell directly to consumers, while maintaining a safe meat inspection process.

"The idea here is to think outside the box: How do we get safe, inspected beef to consumers in a different way?" said Lori Anne Lau, president of Caribou County Farm Bureau, which supported the proposals.

IFBF's annual meeting brings together voting delegates from each of the state's



Photo by Joel Benson

**Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 81st annual meeting was held virtually this year. Sixty-one voting delegates from 36 counties participated in the meeting from six locations around the state.**

county Farm Bureau groups to vote on policy that guides the organization through the coming year.

IFBF is Idaho's largest general farm organization and the group represents farmers and ranchers throughout the state.

Idaho Farm Bureau's annual policy

*"We are the strongest voice of agriculture in the county, in the state and in the nation."*

— IFBF President Bryan Searle

book contains guidance on a host of issues, including water, wolves, transportation, cloud seeding, open range, taxes, land use and education.

Helping ranchers have other options to get beef directly to consumers was a main topic of discussion during this year's meeting.

IFBF delegates unanimously adopted a policy that supports having one

statewide licensing program to allow for the sale of meat in bulk to individuals. To do that now, a producer is required to get a livestock dealer's license and a food establishment license in each health district where they want to sell.

There are seven health districts in Idaho and getting licenses in each one is time-consuming and expensive, said Kaytlin Abrahamson, president of Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau, which introduced that proposal.

The delegates also voted to support a state meat inspection program in Idaho that would allow for the commercial sale of meat within the state.

That policy, which was introduced by Valley-Adams County Farm Bureau, also supports having more processing facilities in rural areas of the state, as well as allowing large animal veterinarians and other interested individuals in rural areas to become certified meat inspectors under a state meat inspection program.

"It's very hard to get federal inspection in central Idaho so we're losing a lot of

sales,” said Valley-Adams Farm Bureau President Dean Dryden.

Lau explained that Idaho could keep the existing USDA meat inspection program while offering these state-inspection options to ranchers as well.

Caribou County Farm Bureau feels that “producers need more options, not less,” she said.

The delegates also voted in favor of a policy that supports allowing states to create a standard of meat inspection for meat sold within the states that is different than the federal program but equally protective.

This policy would allow states the option to begin exploring that idea and any state-inspected program would supplement the existing federal program, not replace it, Lau said.

“This would allow states the option to investigate opportunities to create new and inventive ways to inspect meat that would only be sold within the state,” she said. “Right now, they are not even allowed to think about it.”

The voting delegates also tackled an array of other ag-related issues, including water rights, hemp, livestock fencing, wolves and private property rights.

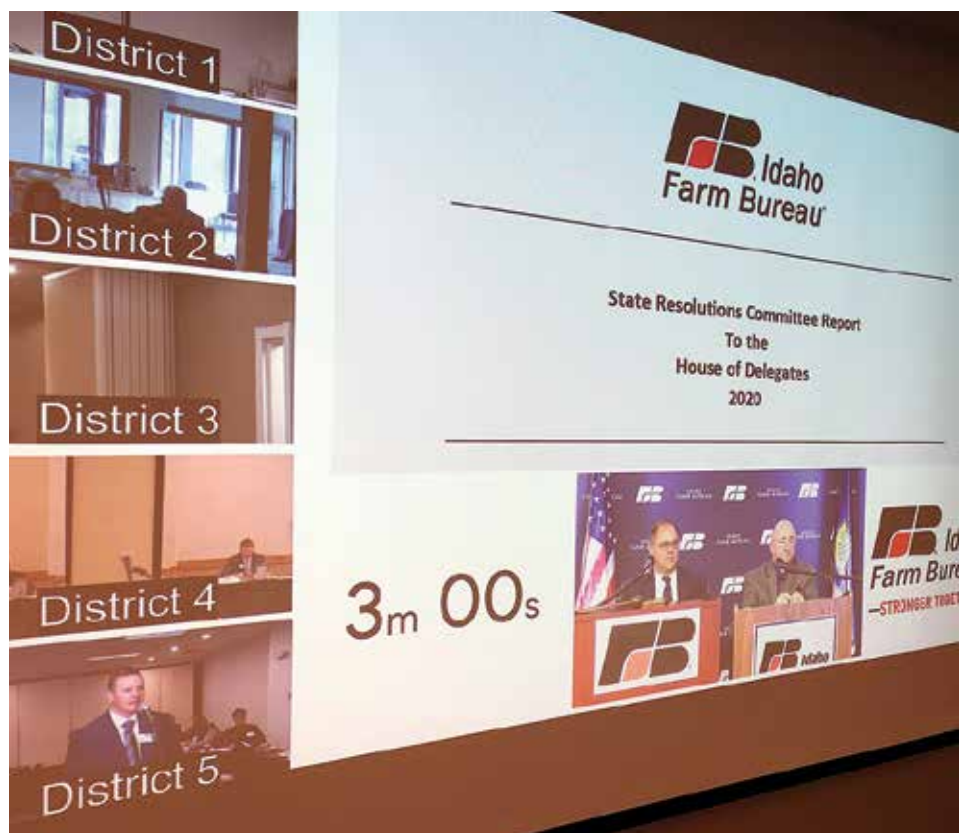
IFBF CEO Zak Miller pointed out the results of a recent annual Gallup poll that found Americans this year rated farming and agriculture as the industry they feel most positive about. It was the first time in the poll’s 20-year history agriculture ranked No. 1.

“Right now, the farmer has never been more respected,” he said.

Early during the pandemic, when some food items became hard to find at grocery stores because of temporary supply disruptions, some people were concerned about whether enough food would be available, Miller said.

Those fears were put to rest when it became apparent the nation’s farmers and ranchers were plowing ahead with their normal food-production plans and there would be no food shortages, and many people gained a new appreciation of agriculture because of that, he added.

“They now realize what they should have always known, that this is an honorable profession and that you do



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s 81st annual meeting was held virtually this year. Sixty-one voting delegates from 36 counties participated in the meeting from six locations around the state.

Photo by Sean Ellis

honorable work,” Miller said.

The challenge now, he added, is to make sure that “those who are appreciating so much what you do don’t tell you how to do that. And that’s why you are here today: to give all of us direction as to how to continue to be profitable and sustainable ... without those who love you so much literally loving you to death through over-burdensome regulations or unrealistic expectations.”

IFBF Vice President Richard Durrant, a farmer from Meridian, thanked the voting delegates for making the effort to participate in the policy development process.

“Agriculture is something we’re very passionate about,” he said. “Thank each of you for taking the time and energy to be here today and to make this organization succeed.”

Searle said that while 2020 has been a challenging year due to the COVID-related issues, it has brought Idaho Farm Bureau Federation and other agricultural groups closer together and strengthened

their relationships.

“As difficult as it’s been, we’ve developed stronger relationships with all of the other ag organizations in this state and nation,” said Searle. “It doesn’t mean we agree on everything but we’re stronger together because a world pandemic has brought us together to say, What can we do?”

He applauded the work of IFBF’s Young Farmers and Ranchers group, which is open to any farmer or rancher between the ages of 18 and 35.

The YF&R group “is investing in our future,” Searle said. “Our Young Farmers and Ranchers program continues to surface strong leaders. They are phenomenal. They are the future.”

Searle said he is ecstatic about the potential of IFBF’s new Promotion and Education Committee, which will seek to bridge the gap between consumers and producers by sharing agriculture’s story.

“Our P&E Committee is going to be able to reach every area of agriculture, to promote and educate others,” he said. ■



Photo by Joel Benson

Marquee Ricks, along with two of her children, Jameson and Anna, is shown in a Honda Pioneer 700 that she received for winning the 2020 Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Discussion Meet, which helps young farmers and ranchers hone their public speaking and problem-solving skills.

# Young producers sharpen skills during Discussion Meet

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Similar to how iron sharpens iron, young farmers and ranchers help their fellow producers hone their public speaking and problem-solving skills during Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's annual Discussion Meet.

Like many other events during 2020, this year's Discussion Meet was held virtually.

The event hosted by IFBF's Young Farmers and Ranchers program is meant to

simulate a committee meeting rather than a debate.

When presented with a challenge in the form of a question, participants, who are between the ages of 18 and 35, direct their discussions toward each other in an attempt to arrive at a solution.

About 40 people competed in the Discussion Meet this year during two preliminary rounds at the district level. Ten people competed in the final rounds, which were held virtually Dec. 1.

"Everyone who participated in that

Discussion Meet was amazing; I'm in awe," Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle said Dec. 2 during IFBF's annual meeting.

Marquee Ricks, who farms in Madison County, won the final, which included three other participants: Chandler Rounds, who farms in Jefferson County, Shalani Wilcox, a student at College of Southern Idaho who was raised on a ranch in Madison County, and Azdyn Bartschi, who works on a ranch in Bear Lake County.

Ricks won a Honda Pioneer 700 donated



Photo by Joel Benson

**Clockwise from top, Chandler Rounds, Azdyn Bartschi, Shalani Wilcox and Marquee Ricks compete in the final round of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Discussion Meet, which was held virtually Dec. 1.**

by Valley Wide Coop and will represent Idaho in the national Discussion Meet, which will be held during American Farm Bureau Federation's annual meeting in January.

Bartschi finished in second place and won \$600, Rounds was third and won \$300 and Wilcox finished fourth and won \$100.

Wilcox suffered major technical difficulties several times during the final round when her internet connection froze and her participation in that discussion was limited as a result.

Ricks also suffered a few minor internet-related issues and she said during the competition that the internet issues "helped highlight the importance of broadband access in our rural communities."

The question for the final round was: "The decline in rural populations has been accelerated by a poor farm economy. What solutions would enhance the vibrancy and economic sustainability of agriculture in rural communities?"

Bartschi said one of the big opportunities open to producers right now that is a result of the coronavirus outbreak is that consumers, who have a high demand for transparency in agricultural production, are

wanting more than ever to connect directly with producers.

"Once we can establish those relationships and bring them the quality they are looking for, without paying the middleman, you are going to see a lot of consumers maintain that relationship and hopefully that is something that will revitalize rural economies," he said. "There is a really big opportunity for growth in that area because of this scenario we're in."

Many rural communities have plenty of assets that could be used to help revitalize them, Ricks said.

"We need to property assess and appreciate the assets that these rural communities have to offer," she said. "We could really capitalize on that and help them become more robust communities ... Rather than just specifically focusing on their issues and problems, (we can also highlight), look what this community has to offer."

Wilcox said a lot of young people that leave their rural communities for education or other reasons are not coming back and more can be done to show the younger generation the career opportunities that are available in rural communities.

As the voice of agriculture, Farm Bureau

can be a big advocate for that, she said.

"Something Farm Bureau can always do is advocate," Wilcox said. "Advocate for the rural communities, advocate for going back to the rural communities, advocate for the businesses that are in those rural communities."

Rounds, a banker, said farmers could benefit by becoming more financially literate about their industry and treating their operations more like a business.

"It's not as simple as going out and planting a seed and harvesting anymore," he said. "It's a business and I think a lot of us in agriculture need to begin to treat it more seriously as a business and not just as driving a tractor or seeding a field."

In her closing statement, Ricks said it's not the strongest or most intelligent species that survive, but the ones that are most responsive to change.

"Rural communities sometimes are the most traditional; they are the ones that would most like to dig in their heels and not change one bit," she said. "But I believe we need to be open to the ideas of change so that we as communities can become more vibrant and move forward in the future." ■



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photo  
Jefferson County farmer and rancher Adam Clark, shown here with his wife, Kylee, and their children, Adee, Kambri and Taysom, received IFBF's 2020 Excellence in Agriculture Award.

# Young producers win Idaho Farm Bureau Federation awards

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Bannock County ranchers Kyle and Jessica Wade were presented Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 2020 Achiever in Agriculture Award.

The award recognizes young farmers or ranchers who have excelled in their farming or ranching operation and honed their leadership abilities.

Jefferson County farmer and rancher Adam Clark received IFBF's 2020 Excellence in Agriculture Award, which spotlights young Farm Bureau members who are agricultural enthusiasts but have not earned a majority of their income from an

See **AWARDS**, page 19



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photo  
Bannock County ranchers Kyle and Jessica Wade, shown here with their son, Porter, were presented Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 2020 Achiever in Agriculture Award.

# New IFBF board members, county presidents named

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Darren Taber and Melissa Durrant are the newest members of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's board of directors.

IFBF is Idaho's largest general farm organization and represents thousands of people involved with agriculture around the state.

During IFBF's annual meeting Dec. 2, Taber, who farms in the Shoshone area, was selected to represent Idaho Farm Bureau members in District 3, which includes

counties in Southcentral Idaho.

Durrant, who farms in Meridian, was selected as the chairwoman of IFBF's Young Farmers and Ranchers program. In that one-year term, she becomes a member of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 18-member board of directors for 2021.

Re-elected to a three-year term on the board were: Dan Garner of Clifton (District 1, Southeast Idaho), Travis McAfee of Howe (District 2, East Idaho), Galen Lee of New Plymouth (District 4, Southwestern Idaho) and Marjorie French of Princeton (District 5, North Idaho).

In recent months, several county Farm

Bureau presidents have also been selected or re-elected.

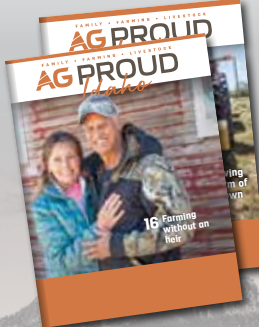
Kaytlin Abrahamson has been named president of Gooding-Lincoln County Farm Bureau and Larry Johnson has been named president of Minidoka County Farm Bureau.

Jeff Bloomsburg is the new president of Benewah County Farm Bureau, Dan Elliott is the new president of Bonner County Farm Bureau, Paul Marchant is the new president of Cassia County Farm Bureau, Alan Clark is the new president of Jefferson County Farm Bureau and Zane Garner is the new president of Latah County Farm Bureau. ■

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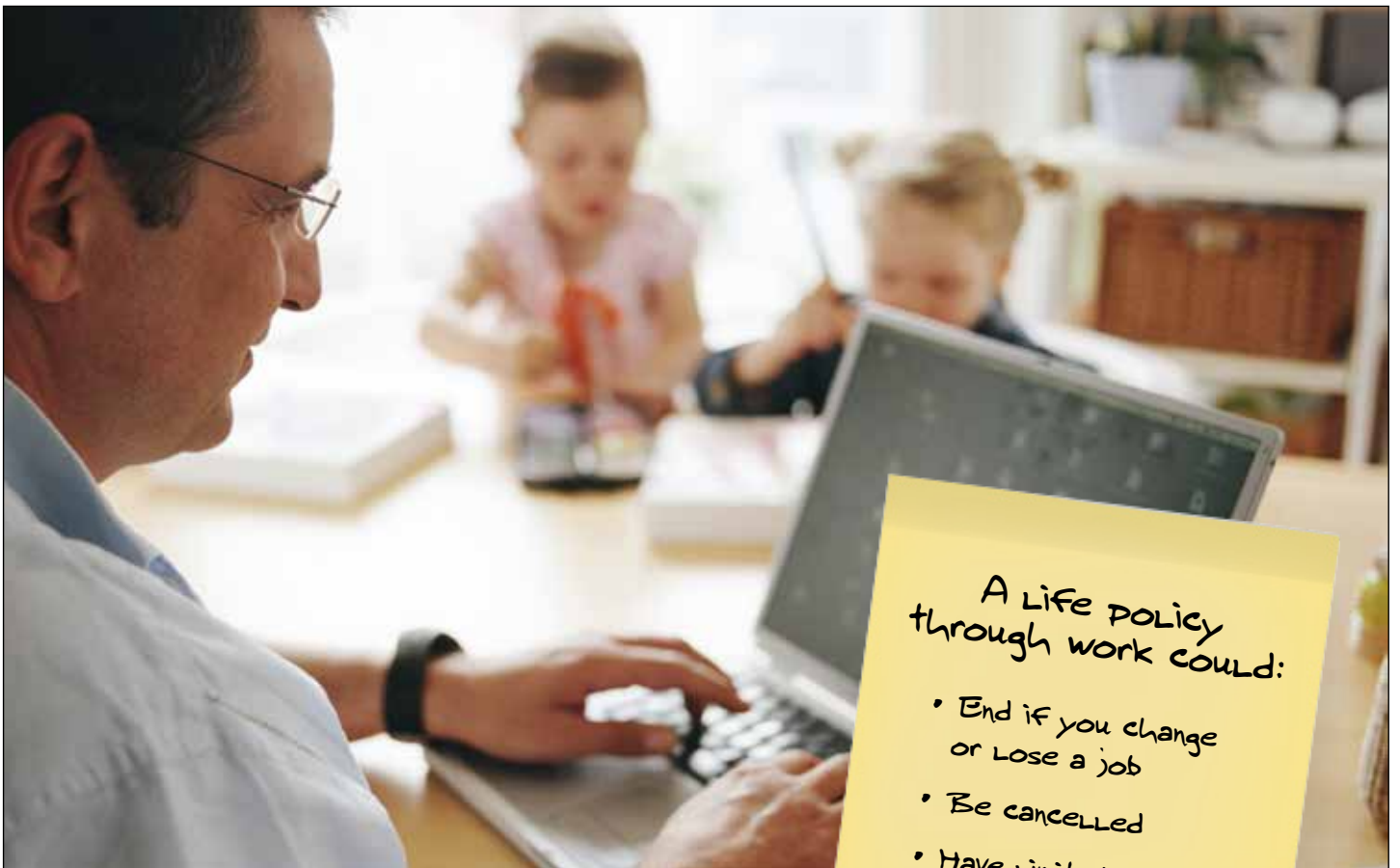
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Photo by Sean Ellis

Two new mid-size meatpacking facilities, one in Idaho Falls and one in Jerome, could significantly reduce costs for Idaho's cattle industry.

# Meatpacking plants could reduce costs for Idaho ranchers

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Two new meat processing plants are coming to Idaho and that could significantly reduce transportation costs for many ranchers who

currently have to ship their cattle to other states.

Intermountain Packing announced in August it will build a 50,000-square-foot meatpacking plant in Idaho Falls. The \$20 million facility should be operational in January 2022.

That announcement came shortly after Idaho-based Agri Beef Co. announced in July it would build a regional beef processing facility in Jerome that will be able to process up to 500 head a day.

That project, known as True West Beef, is a partnership between Agri Beef

and livestock producers and feeders in Idaho and throughout the West, who will be equity owners in the venture. It is slated to begin operating by late 2021 or early 2022.

Together, the facilities should mean lower transportation costs for Idaho's cattle industry, said Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President Cameron Mulrony.

"Having more ability to process cattle in Idaho will be a benefit to the state's cattle industry," he said. "Putting wheels under cattle is a huge expense. If you can eliminate that expense, it will provide some benefit to producers."

Intermountain Packing General Manager Bob Stirling said the Idaho Falls facility will have the capacity to process up to 500 head of cattle per day.

The U.S. meat industry is dominated by large packing plants in the Midwest that can process 2,000 to 5,000 head per day, he said. Then there a lot of very small meatpacking plants that can process between 20 and 40 head per day.

"There really isn't much in-between," Stirling said. "We want to build a mid-size meat processing facility."

Early during the COVID-19 pandemic, some shutdowns of major meatpacking plants caused a huge problem in the industry and left ripple effects that were felt for many weeks and months, he said.

Because of Intermountain Packing's

smaller size, it will be able to change directions and adapt quicker to disruptions in the industry than a much larger facility, Stirling said.

The company's owners and investors were already working on the project before the coronavirus outbreak hit, "But seeing what happened during the pandemic helped us move forward a lot faster than we were expecting," he said.

Stirling said the facility would likely

*"Having more ability to process cattle in Idaho will be a benefit to the state's cattle industry. Putting wheels under cattle is a huge expense. If you can eliminate that expense, it will provide some benefit to producers."*

— Cameron Mulrony, Idaho Cattle Association Executive Vice President

process more cattle than bison.

Scott Steele, who owns a cattle feeding operation in Bonneville County, said ranchers in his area mainly send cattle to Hyrum, Utah, to be processed and the Idaho Falls plant should cut down on transportation costs.

A moderate-size feedlot in the area with 20,000 cattle marketings a year will spend about \$400,000 annually in transportation costs getting their cattle to Hyrum, he said.

Steele stopped finishing cattle and

sending them to Utah because of the transportation costs.

"This is going to be a great thing for the cattle industry," said Steele, a member of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's board of directors. "This will be great for providing some competition for producers in this area."

Some members of the Roger Ball family, which owns Intermountain Bison, are involved in Intermountain Packing but the company is mainly owned by investors who have been in the meat industry for many years and the facility will custom process for different meat companies, Stirling said.

The new Agri Beef facility will process cattle for itself, Stirling said, so he does not see the two plants as competitors.

"That Jerome facility is quite a ways from us and we concentrate on a different market," he said. "I definitely don't see any problem with competition from

them and we wish them well."

The Idaho Falls facility is expected to employ about 200 people.

Intermountain Packing chose Idaho Falls because it's on the Interstate 15 corridor and "it's right in the center of great ranching country and cattle feeding country," Stirling said. "We are very excited to bring the plant to southeast Idaho. It will be a great benefit not only to ranchers in the region but also to the economy of Idaho Falls and the surrounding area." ■

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## AWARDS

*Continued from page 15*

owned production agriculture enterprise in the past three years.

The Achiever and Excellence awards are both part of IFBF's Young Farmers and Ranchers program, which is open to Farm Bureau members between the ages of 18 and 35.

Achiever award contestants are evaluat-

ed on a combination of their farming operation's grown and financial progress and their leadership both within Farm Bureau and outside of the organization.

Contestants give a presentation to a panel of judges, who ask them questions.

The Wades received a Honda Pioneer 700 "side by side" utility vehicle that was provided by Northwest Farm Credit Services.

Competitors for the Excellence award

are judged based on their understanding of ag issues as well as their leadership experiences and achievements.

Clark received a Honda Pioneer 700 "side by side" provided by IFBF.

"These competitions provide an opportunity for self-reflection, both personally and professionally," said Brody Miller, the IFBF regional manager in Southwest Idaho and YF&R committee coordinator. ■

# Idaho Farm Bureau

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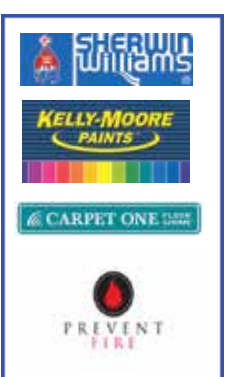
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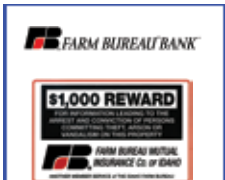
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Photo by Chris Schnepf

Drivable dips are an excellent low-maintenance approach to quickly draining runoff from forest roads.

# Forest hydrology, infrastructure and climate

By Chris Schnepf  
*University of Idaho*

Precipitation has a large influence on forests, both on the types of forests we have (e.g., a cedar and grand fir-dominated forest, mid-slope in northern Idaho versus a ponderosa pine-dominated forest at a lower elevation in central Idaho) and on how they usually function (e.g., mixed-severity fire regimes with the former and low-intensity surface fire regimes with the latter).

Forests and how they are managed or disturbed also have huge effects on streams that flow from them and all related stream benefits,

from fisheries to irrigated agriculture.

Forests draining to arid regions of the west may become even more important in how they are managed to store and release water.

For example, in a fully stocked forest, a lot of snow evaporates from the tops of trees before it ever reaches the ground. Forests can be thinned in a way to let more snow reach the ground while providing sufficient cover to shade snow, so it lasts longer into the summer.

Because high water quality (low temperatures, low amounts of sediment) is a very important value of forest streams, extra care is taken in forest management to maintain forest water quality.





Photo by Chris Schnepf

### Open-bottom culverts and bridges make for easier fish passage.

People often presume that timber harvesting in and of itself is the greatest threat to water quality, mentally envisioning sediments eroding from harvested slopes. But generally, you do not get much erosion from the soil surface of a harvested area, unless the soils are intrinsically prone to slumping. Those soils may slump regardless of harvesting.

Even after a harvest, the tree root systems remain, and soils are further bound to the site by understory vegetation and high levels of organic matter.

The biggest threat to water quality is less the harvested surface than it is the surface of roads and skid trails used to access that timber. Most sediment from those areas comes during peak storm-flow events, such as a rain-on-snow event.

Therefore, the primary focus to maintain forest quarter quality (in addition to buffer zones adjacent to streams with sufficient trees to provide shade and other stream benefits) is on forest infrastructure – the roads and skid trails used not only for timber harvest, but

also for stand management efforts such as planting or thinning, firefighting, and for outdoor recreation.

So how do you minimize sediment from forest roads and skid trails? One part of the solution is to limit roads and skid trails to only those necessary to manage forests and fires.

But other techniques involve making roads and skid trails more prepared for peak watershed events. If a road or stream crossing fails during these events, large amounts of sediment can be sent to streams.

For example, roads and trails must be designed and built to quickly drain water off a road and back into the forest (e.g., by the layout of the road but also by road drainage devices such as drivable dips and water bars).

Roads can be closed during wet seasons to reduce the chances of failure. Stream crossings must be built to handle the largest stream flows. The Idaho Forest Practices Act sets mandatory best management practices to make sure forest infrastructure is up to these tasks

(for more information, see <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/idahoforestrybmps/quick/rules>).

But much of American forestry, and by extension, forest practice rulemaking, is based on how forests have functioned in the past. The past may not be a sufficient predictor for the future when factoring in climate change.

Many of the current infrastructure guidelines are based on historic weather events (e.g., “the 50-year flood”). But what if future events exceed what we have experienced in the past?

Many climate scientists project more extreme storm events and more rain-on-snow events than we had historically. Such events would be exacerbated by major fires projected by climate models and steadily increasing fuel loads on many forests.

Extreme fire behavior leaves fewer trees in buffer zones and can cause more damage to soils. The combination of more extreme weather and fire can produce runoff and sediment loads that could overwhelm forest infrastructure.



Photo by Chris Schnepf

**Severe fires and larger storms can send massive amounts of sediment to streams, overwhelming forest infrastructure.**

Therefore, some groups in western North America are taking a second look at their guidelines for stream crossings, looking more closely at things like larger or open-bottom culverts (see publications below) or better yet, bridges.

Some of these approaches may also help fish pass more easily through these structures, which allows their free movement to colder water refuges during periods of higher stream temperatures.

So, what does this mean for an Idaho forest owner? Most of our current road drainage installed in the last few decades should hold up fairly well in the future if it was well designed and is regularly maintained (e.g., cleaning out road drainage culverts).

But if you are doing a timber sale that involves a stream crossing, you might want to err on the side of a larger culvert

or a bridge in some locations to prepare for future events.

Larger devices cost more but consider the cost of rebuilding a road that has blown out in a large storm. The sedimentation from such a blow-out can also be considerable.

At least if you upgrade a bit while you are logging you are already paying for most of the installation cost.

If you are thinking about this, it also makes sense to interact with your local Idaho Department of Lands Forest Practice Advisor at your site. Some streams and soils are more vulnerable to peak events than others, and they can provide some on-site guidance on this.

*Chris Schnepf is an area extension educator in forestry for the University of Idaho in Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and*

*Benewah counties. He can be reached at [cchnepf@uidaho.edu](mailto:cchnepf@uidaho.edu).*

*For more information on forest infrastructure, see:*

*Idaho Forestry Best Management Practices Field Guide: Using BMPs to Protect Water Quality. Available at <https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/BUL/BUL891.pdf>*

*Adapting Resource Road Infrastructure to Climate Change (Technical report no. 61) Available at [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/resource-roads/climate-change-adaptation/fpi\\_tr2017n61.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/resource-roads/climate-change-adaptation/fpi_tr2017n61.pdf)*

*Effects of Climate Change on Infrastructure (in USDA Forest Service RMRS-GTR-375): Available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/pubs/56121> ■*



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Rick Forestier, the winner of our second quarter Refer A Friend, Get A Gift \$500 drawing, with his agent Jolene Zollinger.



Photo by Sean Ellis

Onions are sorted in a processing facility in southwest Idaho in this file photo. USDA is forecasting that total U.S. net farm income will increase by 43 percent in 2020 compared with 2019.

# U.S. net farm income forecast to rise 43 percent

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Total net farm income in the United States during 2020 is forecast to increase a whopping 43 percent over 2019. But a huge chunk of that will

come in the form of direct government farm payments meant to help producers get through the coronavirus-related shutdowns.

USDA's December Farm Income Forecast, released Dec. 2, estimates net farm income in the U.S. will total \$120 billion

this year, up \$36 billion over 2019. Net farm income is a broad measure of farm profits.

Many people were stunned by the estimated 43 percent increase but agricultural economists say it makes sense when you consider the impact of the

farm relief payments USDA provided to producers this year through the ag department's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program to help offset losses due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

"Government payments were a major source of revenue and income for ... farmers and ranchers this past year," said Doug Robison, Idaho president of Northwest Farm Credit Services.

He said payments from the two rounds of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's CFAP program provided almost \$462 million in financial support to Idaho farmers and ranchers this year.

According to USDA, direct government farm payments are expected to total \$47 billion in 2020, an increase of 107 percent over 2019. Almost all of that increase is due to supplemental and ad hoc disaster assistance for COVID-19 relief.

University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor said the increase in net farm income this year is certainly welcome in farm country, especially coming on the heels of several years of depressed commodity prices.

But he also said it's probably not a slope U.S. agriculture wants to continue to go down because "if you live by the government payment, you can also die by government payment."

"So much of that (net farm income) total are those government payments," he said.

Of the \$120 billion in net farm income that USDA is forecasting for 2020, 39 percent – \$46.5 billion – comes from government payments.

American Farm Bureau Federation Economist John Newton called the 2020 net farm income forecast a "false positive" because cash receipts from crop and livestock sales are actually forecast to decline 1 percent, or \$3 billion, to \$367 billion this year.

USDA expects total crop receipts to increase \$7 billion, or 3 percent, this year, while it expects livestock and an-

imal product receipts to decline by \$10 billion, or 6 percent.

Total farm production expenses are expected to decrease by 2 percent, or \$5 billion.

But total government payments to producers are expected to reach a record level, far surpassing any previous year. USDA forecasts that will push total net farm income in the U.S. to \$120 billion in 2020, which would make this year the second-highest ever for net farm income in the United States.

The record for U.S. net farm income is \$124 billion, in 2013.

UI Agricultural Economist Ben Eborn said it appears likely that Idaho will set

*"We were not looking good in April. We were looking at an absolute disaster. The turnaround we've seen is nothing short of historic because we were looking at a really bad situation in April."*

— Garth Taylor, University of Idaho Agricultural Economist

a record for total net farm income this year. According to USDA, Idaho's record for total net farm income is \$2.66 billion, set last year.

"It looks like our cash receipts will be pretty good, maybe not a record, but government payments are going to push it over the (previous record) for sure," Eborn said.

The massive increase in government payments will make 2020 a year to remember as far as total net farm income, Taylor said. But even without them, he added, the U.S. agricultural sector would still have a decent year.

Minus government payments, U.S. producers are estimated to bring in a total of \$73 billion in net farm income in 2020 from crop and livestock sales, an increase of \$12 billion over last year. That would be the highest level since 2014, when U.S. producers brought in

\$82 billion in net farm income not including government payments.

"Without the government payments, we're still doing pretty good this year," Taylor said. "But with those farm payments, we're close to the record year of 2013."

USDA normally estimates farm income three times a year and in September the department forecast U.S. net farm income in 2020 would increase by 23 percent.

But the impact of the second round of CFAP payments, which were announced Sept. 17, had not been fully included in that forecast. Now that they are, the agriculture department is forecasting net farm income will soar by 43 percent this year.

Taylor said one of the big takeaways from the USDA income forecast for 2020 is that U.S. agriculture has made a remarkable turnaround from what farmers and ranchers were fearing in April during the height of the COVID-related shutdowns.

When foodservice channels shut down, a huge market for many farm commodities such as milk and potatoes, which are produced in large quantities in Idaho, closed suddenly and farm prices tanked as a result.

But the CFAP payments did what they were intended to do – help farmers survive that bleak period – and farm-gate prices increased during the latter part of 2020.

"We were not looking good in April. We were looking at an absolute disaster," Taylor said. "The turnaround we've seen is nothing short of historic because we were looking at a really bad situation in April."

The CFAP programs were authorized by Congress well before a late-season rally in many farm commodity prices.

"The government payments were a much-needed source of relief for producers who were impacted by market volatility during the first half of the year, though most ag-related commodity markets experienced some level of improvement after the initial COVID-related sell-off in March and early April," Robison said. ■



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# LAND

Continued from page 9

decision, which ruled that the federal government couldn't hold those rights because it doesn't own cattle.

In a letter that Lowry sent to then-IDL Director Tom Schultz in 2015, he said he believes the land swap makes sense.

"However," he added, "we have long maintained and stated at meetings, that when BLM grazing land is exchanged for state (land), the existing valid and vested rights must be recognized and acknowledged, otherwise a 'takings' of private property will occur."

Under IDL's plan, Lowry would not be compensated for the loss of his grazing preference and water rights. These preference rights and water rights have a monetary value that is recognized by banks and are recognized as property rights in Idaho law.

Lowry has met with IDL officials to try and come to a resolution, but no mutually agreeable solution has been reached.

"If it becomes state land and somebody else outbids him, he no longer has access to his water right and the state's refusing to compensate him for that," said Russ Hendricks, director of governmental affairs for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, which is assisting Lowry on this issue.

IDL has known for five years that the loss of grazing preference without compensation that would occur as a result of the land swap is an issue, Hendricks added.

"It should be no surprise to them that it is still an issue and it must be fully resolved before the exchange can move forward," he said.

Hendricks said it's unknown how many other ranchers oppose the land swap because of the grazing preference and compensation issue but it's still an important issue even if only one rancher objects.

"Whether it's one person or 30 people, wrong is wrong," he said. "They are essentially extinguishing Tim's vested rights that have a monetary value. We would expect that of a government in Russia or China, but not in Idaho."

Hendricks said IFBF will oppose the exchange moving forward "unless they're willing to equitably compensate Tim for his property rights. The whole purpose of government is to protect people's rights, not take them away."

BLM needs to get the approval of the state land board to move forward with the land exchange. That process would include an environmental assessment and comment period.

Arledge told IFBF that the department must follow the constitutional and statutory process for leasing endowment lands. One of those obligations is that when a grazing lease's term ends, IDL must put the lease out to bid during a public auction.

IDL understands Lowry's position that he is entitled to compensation for loss of his federal grazing preference, Arledge officials said. "However," she added, "neither state nor federal law provides for such compensation."

Hendricks said, "neither does the law prohibit it, which would be the moral thing to do." ■

## Study marketing for a few minutes every day

Well, it's the beginning of a new calendar year. Even though we did have some challenges last year, I feel that overall it was a pretty good year.

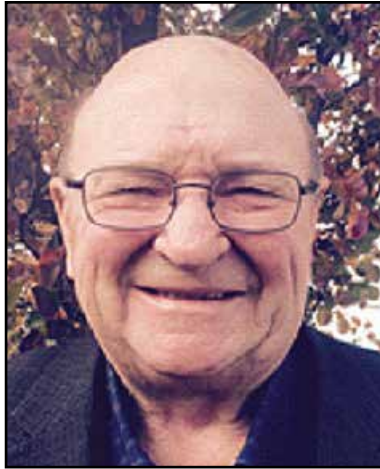
Prices for our commodities took a huge hit but did rebound nicely through the third and fourth quarters. I feel that we had a lot to be grateful for throughout the year.

As we now look forward into 2021, I think it is important for us to not necessarily make resolutions but rather set goals both for our operations as well as personally.

My wife and I started doing this a while back and even though we may not accomplish everything we set out to do during the year, we do meet and exceed many of our goals. We also do this as a company, with the same results.

When doing this it is important to set goals that we do have some control over. Goals could be along the lines of, I will study and learn how trading basis can enhance my bottom line. The same could be said for studying the futures market so I understand just how the futures will affect the local bids as well as the opportunities these markets offer me.

People will say that goals are nothing more than dreams. Well, maybe so but we all need to start somewhere. If goals are nothing but dreams than



remember this, "If your dreams don't scare you, then they aren't big enough."

Now let's get down to business. It really doesn't matter what commodity you grow or raise; what matters is whether or not you are continually marketing that commodity.

Marketing doesn't mean always selling but rather, are you always studying? If not, how do you know the time or the price level that is good for you to contract?

I know that on your operation there are a hundred different things for you to do every day but take just a few minutes each morning and look at and study your market and look at not only this crop year but your next crop year also.

Are there opportunities in the market for you to contract at levels that give you the opportunity to be profitable? What is the basis looking like? Should I contract at this level or wait? What about the futures? Could I separate the futures and the basis, trade them separately and do better than flat pricing?

As you can see, I have given you more questions than answers but these are questions that do need to be answered and the answer could and will be different for each operation. Your answers will definitely be different

than those of your neighbors.

The big challenge for most of you in marketing is that it isn't as exciting as producing and that is OK. However, it still needs your undivided attention for a few minutes every day. I'm not talking hours but rather a few minutes per day. As little as 15 minutes per day will benefit you many times over.

Let's look at your 2021 crop right now. Chicago Dec. 21 wheat futures are trading at some of the highest levels over the past 12 months. Does selling futures contracts or entering into a hedge to arrive contract with an elevator or flour mill at these levels benefit you?

For you cow calf operators, at the time I wrote this we were seeing Oct. 21 feeder cattle futures pushing \$150. In your industry it is difficult to contract our calves that far out but you can sell the futures side of your pricing equation, thus managing that side of your price risk.

What we have talked about isn't anything new. We have visited about this for months if not years. Now is a good time of the year to set your goals, including a goal to study and learn how to use the different tools that are available to you in marketing.

Contact your Idaho Farm Bureau Federation regional manager for your opportunity to receive personalized assistance in your marketing for the upcoming year.

*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). ■*



# Uptick in U-pick

## Idaho fruit farmers seeing strong coronavirus-related demand

By John O'Connell  
*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

Chan and Cathy Cabalo have a bumper crop of apples at their 6-acre orchard in Kuna this season, and they've never seen such a steady flow of customers coming to pick their own fruit.

Cabalo's Orchard and Gardens is one of several Idaho fruit farms benefiting from unprecedented U-pick demand, largely from families seeking safe, outdoor activities amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The state's fruit farm owners say they're also selling out of lower-grade fruit marketed for canning, thanks to a recent trend of people concerned about potential food supply-chain disruptions working to become more self-sufficient.

"A lot of people showing up here, it's the first time they've ever been to a U-pick operation," Chan Cabalo said. "Most people, they're wanting to get out of the house. That's the biggest thing."

The Cabalos planted more produce than normal this spring in their vegetable garden, seeing signs that local food would be in especially high demand due to COVID-19. Cathy Cabalo admits she's been exhausted lately trying to keep up with the extra business.

"Twice as many people are coming through," she said. "A lot of people are wanting to process this and that and some of them are just wanting to get out of the house."

Customers have told her that lids and jars for canning have become a scarce commodity.

Fruit production is cyclical, and Shannon Anderson, with Anderson Apple Ranch in Emmett, had a banner harvest last fall. This season, however, production at her 5-acre apple orchard is down a bit, though she said the fruit is beautiful.

She opened her orchard to U-pick customers on Aug. 26.

"My traffic on my website and my Facebook page is going through the roof. People are calling all the time and saying, 'Can we come out?'" Anderson said.

One of the perks of buying U-pick fruit from her

orchard is that Anderson allows her guests to sample her crop while they fill their baskets.

"If you go and pick an apple off a tree and eat it you can't beat it. It's so good," Anderson said.

Isom's Fruit Farm in Blackfoot started harvest on Sept. 10 but waits until October to accept U-pick customers, who tend to be hard on trees. They try to make apple picking a fun family event, offering free apple cider.

"Back East, U-pick is huge, and it's fun to see it take off here because our kids don't know where their food comes from," Jeanne Isom said.

The family offers cases of No. 2 canning-quality apples, which have been on back order recently. Isom said one customer requested 19 cases of canning apples.

"There's kind of a sentiment out there kind of like it used to be years ago when people used to be self-sufficient," Isom said.

Isom said her orchard has enjoyed both outstanding yield and quality this season, despite some weather challenges.

"This year will be near a bumper crop," she said.

It's been a hot growing season, and the family's predominant apple variety, honey crisp, thrives in temperatures under 90 degrees. Isom said her family also avoided catastrophe when recent strong winds swept through the region.

They had planted rows of large poplar and spruce trees as wind breaks to protect their fruit trees; the strategy paid off during the recent wind storm.

"I thought they were more for decoration," Isom joked about the trees in her wind breaks. "It was about 26 hours of just blowing. They worked really well."

Michael Williamson, with Williamson Orchards and Vineyards in Caldwell, said April frost reduced yields of his white-fleshed peaches, wine grapes and sweet cherries by 20% to 30%.

Because he had a light crop, he sold all of his cherries via U-pick, rather than hiring labor to harvest them. He drew an unexpectedly large crowd and was sold out of cherries after two days of U-pick harvesting at the end of June.

"It was an incredible turnout," Williamson said. "Everybody was looking for a reason to get out." ■

# Safflower market BLOOMS

## American Falls birdseed supplier sees massive growth in market due to COVID-19

By John O'Connell  
*Intermountain Farm and Ranch*

AMERICAN FALLS — Regional farmers would generally agree commodity markets have been for the birds throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, it appears the coronavirus outbreak has helped sales of safflower, a popular rotation crop raised on dry land throughout East Idaho, take flight lately.

American Falls-based Mountain States Oilseeds is the nation's No. 1 supplier of safflower seed used in birdseed mixes. The business's safflower sales have risen by nearly 40 percent since the pandemic started, said owner Bill Meadows.

"The big news is the bird food market," Meadows said. "I'm not exactly sure why, but I have my ideas. With the COVID virus, more people are staying home and they're purchasing more bird food mixes from the stores."

Barb North, president of the Portneuf Valley Audubon Society, concurs with Meadows about the increasing popularity of home bird feeders amid the pandemic.

North believes more people are discovering that the family activity offers a chance to observe birds up close and to witness the personality quirks individual birds possess.





“I think people are watching more birds out there,” North said. “It seems like everybody has a little place where they can set something out for birds.”

Safflower prices have increased by 10 to 12 percent in recent months. The current price paid to growers for safflower seed is about 21 cents per pound.

Meadows contracts his safflower production from about 80 growers, who plant anywhere from 100 acres to 1,200 acres of the bristly orange flower.

They supply him from Power, Bannock, Oneida, Franklin and Bonneville counties in Idaho and in Cache and Box Elder counties in Utah.

Their combined production is about 750,000 bushels of safflower seed.

To meet the increasing demand, Meadows is seeking to add new safflower growers throughout his production area.

Meadows said he beat his all-time records for shipping safflower by 20 loads per month from September through early November.

“I feel fortunate

amidst the COVID-19 virus. It’s a bright spot, our business is increasing and Idaho agriculture and the growers have been benefiting from it,” Meadows said.

Meadows purchased safflower for oil during the 1970s and switched to the bird food market during the early 1980s. During the fall of 2019, most of the nation’s safflower crops were poor, but Meadows said the growers in his network enjoyed big yields and top quality.

Prices were strong.

“Supplies going into the pandemic were low to begin with ... We were able to supply enough safflower to the bird

food market that they didn’t run out of it, but it was very close,” Meadows said.

Meadows’ safflower growers reported record yields following the recent 2020 harvest. Meadows explained they benefited from timely rain during June and a long fall harvest window.

“I’ve been in the safflower business over 40 years and this is the highest average production growers ever had,” Meadows said.

As we watched the crop progress during the 2020 growing season, Meadows admits he worried he’d have to cope with overproduction. He’s relieved that hasn’t been the case.

“Mountain States Oilseeds actually harvested 40 percent more volume than we have ever harvested,” Meadows said. “Most of that is sold already and the season is just beginning.”

Meadows said his growers plant his oilseeds mostly to diversify their crop rotations and grow better subsequent wheat and barley crops.

Cory Kress, who farms on dry land in the Rockland Valley, said he raises safflower regardless of the price because it’s a broad-leaf crop, which breaks cycles of diseases and weeds affecting wheat.

Kress consistently plants about 3,000 acres of safflower.

“It turned out to be a pretty good year,” Kress said.

“It was a pretty rough start but there was some mid-summer rain and the yield turned out decent.”

Meadows said safflower also has a deep taproot, which helps with water infiltration and retention on dry land farms.

He also contracts for mustard and flax seed. His flax market has held steady, but mustard demand dropped about 20 percent through August.

Meadows said his mustard business has recovered to about normal since then. ■



# Learning To Do, Doing To Learn

Peyton Stoddard is a member of the Shelley FFA Chapter where she serves as the Shelley FFA Vice President and the South Upper Snake River District Treasurer. Her Supervised Agricultural Experience is Agriculture Placement in vegetable and flower production where she works on her family's farm and at the Idaho Falls Farmer's Market in the summer alongside her parents selling fresh produce and flowers to her local community. At Bloomin' Acres, the Stoddard's grow zucchini, cucumbers, peppers, carrots, raspberries, and an assortment of flowers to sell during the summer, as well as pumpkins and winter squash to sell during the fall months on their 2-acre farm. Her family has been selling fresh produce at the farmer's market for 17 years.

*"I started working at the Farmer's Market when I was 10 years old," said Peyton, "My favorite part of being at the market is that it gives me an opportunity to share my love of agriculture with my community."*

## INNOVATION DRIVES GROWTH

At the start of Bloomin' Acres the focus was on fresh cut flowers, but through the years, attention shifted away from flowers and to produce, which quickly became the sole emphasis of the business. This year, Peyton decided to bring the flowers back to the family farm and sell them at the farmers market alongside their produce.

"I wanted to bring the flowers back because flowers are so fun and bring so much color to the area they're growing in, as well as our booth at the farmer's market," said Peyton, "It was fun to see people's faces light up as they came to buy flowers."

Peyton took the initiative and restarted the fresh cut flower business, spending countless hours managing and upkeeping her gladiolus, zinnias, sunflowers, and dahlias. Her hard work quickly paid off. In just six weeks at the farmer's market, she sold over a thousand flowers, including flowers for a wedding. Through this endeavor, Peyton has gained many

skills, expanded her horizons, and also overcame many challenges.

"One of the most difficult parts of being in charge of the flowers was that I had to be very organized and possess a lot of self-discipline in order to make the flowers grow successfully—which is not always easy," said Peyton, "I have learned a ton of from my SAE project about agriculture and business but the most important lesson I feel like I have learned is how to work hard and have self-discipline. Those skills will help me in whatever field or direction I take in life."

## SERVING HER COMMUNITY

In addition to providing delicious produce and beautiful flowers, Peyton is also teaching her local community members about the importance of agriculture and the role it plays in everyone's lives.

*"A lot of people don't completely understand how agriculture works and being able to share that with the community is so awesome," said Peyton, "My SAE project helps my community because the people are able to come and get fresh food from people that they know and they can feel confident that their food is healthy and they know what's gone into growing that food. I hope people can learn something from me and my family's farm, other people's farms, and agriculture."*



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# A look at Washington County's agricultural profile

*Editor's note: This is the first in a series of agricultural profiles on different Idaho counties and county Farm Bureau organizations that Idaho Farm Bureau Federation will feature in its monthly and quarterly magazines.*

**By Sean Ellis**

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

**WEISER** – In agricultural terms, Washington County is extremely diverse, from soil types and terrain to crops and irrigation and even animal husbandry styles.

A wide range of crops are grown in the county, from sweet corn seed to dry bean seed, onions, wheat, corn, carrot seed, alfalfa, feed crops and even niche crops such as teff.

The county's farmers in the past few years have even started growing the state's most well-known crop, potatoes, again.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 31,305 cattle and calves in Washington County in 2017, as well as 7,452 sheep and lambs, 2,028 goats, 1,625 broilers and other types of meat chickens, and 883 horses and ponies.

"We're pretty diversified around here," says Washington County Farm Bureau President Tristan Winegar, who farms in Weiser. "We grow a lot of fun stuff in this county."

Along with the diversity in crops grown here, he adds, comes numerous opinions as to how each crop should be grown, as well as methods and 'trade secrets' to do so, "all adapted

**Agricultural Profile**

Washington County



We grow  
a lot of  
fun stuff  
in this  
county'



Photos by Tristan Winegar

Page 37: Cutting teff hay in Washington County.

Page 38: Harvesting onions in Washington County.

Page 39, Clockwise from top: Injecting drip irrigation tape. Calves in Washington County. Raking alfalfa. The valley in Washington County.

for the area in which the farmer utilizes his natural resources. I would say none of them are more right or wrong than the others. The competition brings out the best in all of us and we have thrived because of it.”

The county also includes lots of range ground and grazing land.

“With alfalfa, corn and forage crops being some of the main things grown here, it is easy to see why there are feedlots and cattle operations in abundance,” Winegar says.

Elevation in the county ranges from 2,077 feet to 7,867 feet.

“Because of the big range in elevation, it makes our county very unique when it comes to farming, grazing livestock

and timber production,” says Weiser area rancher Cody Chandler, a member of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s board of directors.

According to the Census of Agriculture, Washington County has 535 farms and 468,000 acres of agricultural land. About 17 percent of that is cropland, 78 percent is pastureland and 2 percent woodland.

The county’s farmers brought in \$50 million in farm cash receipts in 2017, about 42 percent of that from crops and the rest from livestock and poultry products.

Washington County has 38,800 acres of irrigated land, according to the ag census, and some of the oldest water rights in the state are located there.

An intricate system of reservoirs keeps

the canal systems supplied during the hottest parts of summer.

“We utilize every style of irrigation, from flood irrigation in corrugates to sprinklers and pivots to drip irrigation and even dry-land and ‘sub-irrigation,’” Winegar says.

According to the ag census, 98 percent of the farms in Washington County are family-owned and 81 percent of them have internet service. Of the county’s 917 total agricultural producers, 558 are male and 359 female.

Of the 917 total producers, 57 are under the age of 35, 522 are between the ages of 35 and 64, and 338 are 65 and older.

Fifteen percent of the farms in the county (80) are large farms of 1,000 or more acres, while 50 percent (265) are

small farms between 1-49 acres in size. That means 35 percent of the county's farms are mid-sized operations between 50-999 acres in size.

Winegar says soil types in the county range from a red soil to a dark, almost black loam, to a light, almost white flour type, to a heavy clay that most people cannot even imagine.

"Our farmers have made the absolute best of whatever soil 'cards' they have been dealt and produce an absolutely amazing and diverse conglomerate of crops," he says.

Members of the Washington County Farm Bureau board of directors have been working hard to promote agriculture and educate people about the industry in the local communities, Winegar says.

Not only are board members educated and experienced, he says, "but they all know where they stand, how important the work they do is and they are not afraid to speak for it."

During 2020, Winegar says, county Farm Bureau board members helped promote and pass several county code changes, including revamping the county's consolidated animal feeding operation ordinance "to encourage and promote more animal feeding in our county."

Washington County Farm Bureau board members also started developing working relationships with the Weiser River Cattle Association and other ag groups and coalitions within and outside the state.

"In the past year especially, we have come together and worked hard to promote agriculture and educate people in our communities, protect the laws and rights of everyone in our county, especially those involved in agriculture, and create sound policy for the state and American Farm Bureau," Winegar says. ■



# MEMBER DISCOUNTS

PAGES 20 & 21

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## **New benefits added quarterly**

Companies such as hotel, rental cars, movie theaters, and theme parks offer discounts and packages to Idaho Farm Bureau members. In recent years, more small town businesses have also started offering discounts. See pages 20-21

Details also available at [idahofbstore.com](http://idahofbstore.com)

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