

GEM STATE **Producer** Idaho Farm Bureau

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Here comes
OrBot



Room at the table



I don't know about you, but I can't wait for summer cookout season to start. My family loves to gather at the lake on our farm in Georgia and enjoy good food, fun and fellowship together.

With increased vaccine availability and restrictions lifting, I expect we'll all be able to enjoy more of the gatherings we have so keenly missed over the last year.

Food has a way of bringing us all together, and as we gather 'round, let's consider all that agriculture brings to the table.

Our family motto at gatherings is, "There's always room at the table." Those words ring true across agriculture and would be a fitting motto for Farm Bureau as well.

There is room at the table for variety and choice, and those choices should always come with a full helping of the farm facts. From sea to shining sea, and beyond, our members grow every type of crop you can think of.

Farmers know that our friends and neighbors near and far value choices in safe and sustainable

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

It's time for Mexico to allow fresh U.S. potatoes in



Enough is enough. It's time to open up all of Mexico to imports of fresh U.S. potatoes. Period.

No more stalling, no more lawsuits, no more imaginary phytosanitary issues created by Mexico's potato industry aimed at stopping consumers in all of Mexico from enjoying fresh potatoes produced in the United States.

To make a potentially very long story short, the fresh U.S. potato industry has long sought to gain access to the entire country of Mexico. And for a long time, Mexico's potato industry has

fought that goal.

For now, the U.S. can only export fresh potatoes within a 16-mile area along the U.S.-Mexico border. Despite that significant restriction, Mexico was the No. 2 market for U.S. potato exports in 2020.

Now imagine how significant a win it would be for the Idaho and U.S. potato industries if fresh potatoes from the U.S. were allowed in all of Mexico, a nation of 130 million people.

Idaho relies heavily on the export of potatoes.

See **SEARLE**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Initiatives bill gives all Idaho citizens a voice



One of the highlights of this past Idaho legislative session was the adoption of Senate Bill 1110, which requires a minimum of 6% of signatures to be collected in all of the state's 35 legislative districts before a ballot initiative can be accepted and placed before voters.

This was a slight change from previous law, which required 6% of signatures be collected from 18 districts to qualify for the ballot.

Idaho Farm Bureau was proud of its work to support this bill becoming law.

Requiring all districts to take part in the process

helps ensure that all of Idaho's citizens have a chance to participate and be aware of their fellow citizens' ideas.

Idaho and the United States both have a representative form of government, which means we elect fellow citizens to represent our needs and wishes. The ballot initiative process serves as an essential safety valve if the people's will is ignored by those who represent them.

Citizens should use ballot initiatives sparingly. A bone saw in an operating room may save a life, but very few hope it is the first tool a surgeon uses.

See **MILLER**, page 7

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COVER: Northwest Nazarene University engineering student Colton Burr demonstrates OrBot, a fruit harvesting robot prototype, for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation employees May 6. See story on page 4. (Photo by Sean Ellis)



Photo by Sean Ellis

Reed's Dairy owner Alan Reed pets triplets, all girls, that were born at the dairy on Feb. 23.

Idaho Falls dairy beats the odds with triplets, all girls

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

IDAHO FALLS — An Idaho Falls dairy more than beat the odds recently as it welcomed triplets — all three females — into its herd.

Typically, about 1-2 percent of cattle have twins and the chance of a dairy cow having triplets is about one in 100,000, according to Reed's Dairy owner Alan Reed.

The fact that all three calves were the same sex raises those odds to about one in 700,000, he added. That all three were born alive increases those odds even more.

"We have had triplets in the past but not all of them lived," Reed said. "The fact that all three were the same sex and all three lived is really, really unusual."

Idaho ranks third in the nation in milk production and has about 620,000 dairy cows.

The new triplets were born at Reed's Dairy in Idaho Falls on Feb. 23.

"All three calves are ... doing great," Reed said. "Occasionally we'll get twins but triples — and all female — that's really something special."

The calves will join the herd and provide milk for Reed's Dairy, which sells its products, including bottled milk, cheese and ice cream, locally and in the Treasure Valley area of southwestern Idaho.

The dairy, which has a herd of about 185 Holsteins, was founded in Idaho Falls in 1955 and has been selling milk and milk products to the public since 1962.

Reed's operates a home-delivery service in Idaho Falls and in the Treasure Valley and has four retail ice cream shops, in Idaho Falls, Ammon, Boise and Meridian. ■



Here comes OrBot

Idaho-developed bot could help orchardists with fruit harvest

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

NAMPA – A university professor in Nampa, with the help of his engineering students, is developing a fruit harvesting robot prototype for Idaho orchardists.

Duke Bulanon, an engineering professor at Northwest Nazarene University, received a \$132,000 specialty crop grant from the Idaho State Department of Agriculture for the project.

The goal of the project is to develop an orchard robot (OrBot) that can be programmed to assist with harvesting fruit.

Bulanon said one of the biggest challenges fruit growers, as well as other farmers in Idaho and around the U.S., face right now is a lack of available labor, especially during the narrow harvest season.

“The development of a robotic harvesting system could help meet this need,” he said.

He said OrBot is being developed with

the thought of supplementing rather than replacing human labor.

“This will help in terms of providing another labor source for our farmers,” he said.

The system will pick fruit slower than a human, “but it can run all day and throughout the night,” said Marina DeVlieg, an NNU engineering student assisting Bulanon on the project. “That can really help make up for the lack of labor because it doesn’t need a break and it can work on its own.”

OrBot will consist of a machine vision system, a robotic arm, a gripper and a control system. Bulanon and the engineering students helping him develop the orchard robot recently gave Idaho Farm Bureau Federation employees a demonstration of the robotic harvesting system.

During the May 6 demonstration in an NNU lab, OrBot picked plastic red apples from a plastic apple tree.

The platform uses a machine vision system with a unique combination of a color

camera and a depth sensor that is used to recognize and locate fruit on a tree. Once OrBot locates the fruit, a control system directs the robotic arm toward the fruit and the gripper picks the fruit from the tree and drops it in a box.

It keeps picking until there is no more fruit left on the tree.

After the robotic arm drops the apple in the box, “then it will come back to its home position and do it again,” said NNU engineering student Colton Burr. “Then, when there are no more apples, it stops running.”

Bulanon will test OrBot in a live situation during the 2021 harvest season at two of Idaho’s largest commercial orchards in the Sunny Slope area near Caldwell.

The robotic harvest system will be used to pick apples at Symms Fruit Ranch and to pick peaches at Williamson Orchards. Managers of both orchards said they are excited to see how it performs and they view it as a way to assist and not replace

hand labor crews.

“This could really help us during harvest time,” said Williamson Orchards Manager Michael Williamson. “I don’t see us getting away from needing folks to do hand labor but I do envision it as being a way to supplement our hand crews.”

Symms Fruit Ranch Manager Jamie Mertz also said the robotic picking platform would assist rather than replace human labor during harvest time.

“I look at it as a supplement,” he said. “Anything that would help out with our labor situation would be a benefit. It is an exciting project.”

The OrBot system is an extension of previous agricultural research projects that Bulanon has received ISDA specialty crop grants for.

Bulanon and his engineering students previously received a grant to use artificial intelligence to teach a deep learning algorithm how to recognize fruit and the results of that project are being incorporated into the OrBot system.

He also previously received a grant to develop a system called IdaBot, a simple utility robot that can navigate an orchard or vineyard autonomously. The IdaBot technology is what will be used to guide OrBot around an orchard.

The OrBot project is the fifth project that Bulanon and his team of engineering students has received specialty crop grant funding for.

“Idaho is an agricultural state and we have found a niche in agricultural engineering here in the valley,” Bulanon said.

He has also tested his previous research at commercial orchards and Williamson said he is always happy to have the potential new technology tested at his operation.

“We’ve always enjoyed participating with university researchers,” he said. “It’s exciting to learn about cutting edge technology that could be coming through so we can be ready to adopt it if and when it comes to fruition.” ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Northwest Nazarene University engineering student Colton Burr demonstrates OrBot, a fruit harvesting robot prototype, for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation employees May 6. LEFT: OrBot, a fruit harvesting robot prototype being developed by the Northwest Nazarene University engineering department, picks a plastic apple from a plastic tree May 6.

SEARLE

Continued from page 2

Idaho produces so many potatoes that without exports, every Idahoan would need to eat 41 pounds of potatoes every day to consume all the spuds produced within the state each year.

The National Potato Council estimates that if all of Mexico is opened to fresh U.S. potato imports, the market potential could be about \$200 million per year. That would be a significant benefit to Idaho, which produces a third of the U.S. potato supply, as well as every spud farmer in the United States.

But it's not just about "winning." It's about fairness.

Way back in 2002, the U.S. and Mexican governments agreed that the United States would expand market access for Mexican avocados while Mexico would open its entire country to U.S. fresh potatoes.

Mexico now exports about \$2 billion worth of avocados to the United States each year but that nation remains mostly closed to fresh potato exports from the U.S.

The reason is that for the past two decades, Mexico's potato industry has

thrown up one roadblock after another aimed at delaying the clock, which is a win for them because as long as the clock is stopped, they don't have to compete with U.S. growers.

That is a violation of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, formerly known as NAFTA. The U.S. potato industry has met all of the export requirements under NAFTA and USMCA and should be allowed to immediately begin shipping fresh potatoes into all of Mexico.

Mexico's Supreme Court correctly ruled 5-0 April 28 to allow fresh potatoes from the United States into all of Mexico. But that nation's potato industry has put up another potential roadblock that could significantly affect that ruling.

(See story on page 8.)

It's unfortunate but not unexpected that Mexico's potato industry has once again attempted to arrange the table in its favor and avoid having to compete with U.S. potato growers.

Several years ago while on a Farm Bureau tour to Mexico, we had the opportunity to have some meetings with Mexican government officials and engaged in several conversations with them.

The one that stands out the most is when we discussed trade between the two nations. We heard multiple times how phytosanitary issues were Mexico's biggest concern in allowing fresh potatoes from the U.S. into Mexico.

From those conversations, it was very clear that this had nothing to do with phytosanitary issues. Instead, it was about protecting Mexico's proud potato industry.

But free trade isn't about pride, it's about fairness.

Free and fair trade works both ways and the U.S. potato industry has more than shown it is willing to play by the rules and meet all of the trade requirements spelled out in the USMCA.

Now it's time for Mexico's potato industry to stop dodging and ducking and play by the same rules.

No more stalling, no more games, no more delays. It's high time to open up all of Mexico to shipments of fresh U.S. potatoes.

Bryan Searle is president of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation and a potato grower from Shelley. ■

DUVALL

Continued from page 2

food. If it's on your plate, chances are there's a Farm Bureau member to thank.

We are raising everything from the beef for your burgers to the kale in your salad bowl. And consumers can rest assured that whether they are enjoying a juicy pork chop or a baked potato, the farms behind those products are committed to making sustainable choices as we build on our successes of reducing emissions.

All of U.S. agriculture makes up just 10% of overall greenhouse gas emissions, with livestock taking only 4% of that slice and dairy just under 2%.

We're not resting there either, but it will take all of us—and all industries—

doing our part to care for the land, air and water we all enjoy and depend on.

There is also room at the table for healthy discussion—and yes, even disagreement. We learn and grow from our differences. It is how we work through the differences that matters.

Some of our nation's greatest leaders chose former rivals as their advisors because they knew that differences make us stronger and lead to creative solutions.

Let's not shy away from or shout at those who disagree with us, but let's come to the table and work things out. This doesn't mean, however, that we don't strongly advocate on issues of great importance.

We must continue to stand up for what matters to our farms and families, but we

can also listen and learn along the way.

Finally, there's room at the table to include everyone. At Farm Bureau, we are at our best when we have everyone at the table to both develop our policy positions and to cultivate dynamic future leaders in agriculture.

The challenges facing agriculture will take innovation and energy, and we need creative and dedicated young people who are ready to join in our critical work of feeding our nation and our world.

Let's continue to be welcoming of all farmers and ranchers so that it is widely understood that our great organization is the place for all producers to grow and thrive.

Together, we can expand our reach to effectively fulfill our commitment to be the Voice of Agriculture. ■

Senate Bill 1110 ensures that when the ballot initiative process in Idaho is used, people from every part of Idaho have a chance to learn about the proposal and weigh in on it.

One of the many reasons that the ballot initiative process can be dangerous is the misleading marketing and narrow goals often attached to such efforts.

For example, in Colorado, people backing a proposal known as “Initiative 16” are collecting signatures to place the PAUSE act before voters in 2022. The PAUSE Act is an acronym for Protect Animals from Unnecessary Suffering and Exploitation (PAUSE).

Who in their right mind would not agree to support something that sounds like that as they walk out of a store on a given Saturday?

Unfortunately, the PAUSE Act serves as an example of why ballot initiatives can be so dangerous.

Whether we agree with them or not on specific issues, few of our representatives decide to support or reject a proposed bill based upon just the name of the legislation. Part of a legislator’s job is to read the fine print of a bill and understand the intent.

If a legislator did not invest the time to read the fine print of proposed bills, they probably would not have a long tenure as a people’s representative.

One of the concerns of ballot initiatives is, when presented a petition, few people study the issue before they choose to sign a petition. This opens the door to unknowingly support a purpose that is much different than the name may suggest.

Back to Initiative 16. Its only goal is to end production livestock in the state. This ballot initiative would create more suffering and make production livestock economically impossible in Colorado.

These are a few highlights of what the PAUSE Act would do:

- Require all animals to live one-fourth of their natural lifespan before harvest, meaning cattle could only be harvested at 5 years of age, chicken harvest would begin at 2 years, pig harvest at 3.75 years, and sheep harvest also at 3.75 years.
- Breeding soundness exams, pregnancy checks, artificial insemination, etc., would be illegal.
- It would remove accepted animal husbandry practices, which would criminalize many practices recommended and performed by veterinarians. It seems the activists backing the initiative think they are far more qualified to determine an animal’s health than a veterinarian.
- Rodeos, equine events, and even trail riding would most likely be a no-no in Colorado if this initiative passes.

By its name, Initiative 16 appears to protect livestock; however, the fine print shows its real goal is ending livestock production. It will take a pretty clever economist to find a financially sound future for livestock production under such constraints.

As scary as Initiative 16 may be, some may say that Colorado is just one state in 50 and the initiative and has not qualified yet for the ballot. That’s a fair argument except for the fact that activists in Oregon are collecting signatures for “IP 13,” which has everything Colorado’s Initiative 16 has and more.

For example, under IP 13, only after an animal dies of natural caus-

es can meat be harvested, and performing pregnancy exams, artificial insemination, breeding soundness exams, etc., would not only be illegal but a felony if done in the presence of a child.

In Idaho, dairy, beef, and hay, which is fed to cattle, account for \$5.3 billion annually in farm revenue. That doesn’t include all of the equipment, services, processing, etc., that these industries require.

Together, those industries account for a significant chunk of Idaho’s total gross state product. It would be a scary development if someone or some group ever tried to get an initiative on the ballot here similar to Initiative 16 in Colorado and IP 13 in Oregon.

If that did happen, however, thanks to Senate Bill 1110, those pushing that initiative would need to go into every legislative district in the state and seek the approval of citizens in every part of Idaho.

It is not hard to see that Idaho’s farmers and ranchers understand the value of healthy and safe animals. Only those who are long on agendas and short on knowledge of livestock think any steward of animals performs any act that is not for the animal’s best interest.

Let us all hope that the citizens of Colorado and Oregon are wise enough to reject Initiative 16 and IP 13. However, it is hard to have deep faith in the wisdom of the citizens of Denver and Portland and their ability to understand the tools that farmers and ranchers need to ensure the health and safety of their animals as well as the economic viability of their operations.

In a world where fine print can take up pages, it is impressive to realize the wisdom of our founders who created our representative form of government to provide us with legislators whose job is to read the fine print. ■

1961 2021

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Idaho Farm Bureau Federation graphic
The Mexican Supreme Court has unanimously ruled in favor of U.S. potato growers in a case that should result in all of Mexico being opened up to imports of fresh potatoes from the United States. The excitement following that ruling has been blunted somewhat, however, with news that Mexico's potato industry could be attempting to slow down or potentially stop the importation of fresh U.S. potatoes into all of Mexico.

U.S.-Mexico potato battle takes another turn

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The excitement that U.S. potato growers felt following an April 28 decision by the Mexican Supreme Court to open up that entire nation to fresh potato exports from the United States has been blunted somewhat.

According to leaders of the Idaho and U.S. potato industries, the group that represents Mexico's potato industry could be attempting to throw up a roadblock that could slow down or potentially stop the importation of fresh U.S. potatoes into all of Mexico.

Mexico's Supreme Court ruled 5-0 April 28 to overturn a 2017 lower court decision that prevented the Mexican federal government from implementing regulations to allow for

the importation of fresh U.S. potatoes throughout the entire country.

Fresh potatoes from the United States are currently only allowed within a 16-mile area along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Gaining access for fresh potatoes to all of Mexico, which has a population of 130 million, has been one of the U.S. potato industry's top priorities for more than two decades.

Idaho leads the nation in potato production and gaining access to all of Mexico would be a huge win for the state's fresh potato industry.

The court's ruling was a major development and potato growers in Idaho and around the nation celebrated it.

But they also expressed concern that Mexico's potato industry, which has fought for two decades to prevent fresh potato shipments from the United States from entering the country,

would find another way to slow the clock.

Shortly after the unanimous ruling by Mexico's Supreme Court, American Falls potato farmer Klaren Koompin said the news was exciting but he was also worried that Mexico's potato industry would find another way to delay opening up the country to fresh potato exports from the U.S.

"I'm not a worrier but this has been a struggle for the U.S. potato industry for 20 years," said Koompin, a member of the NPC's board of directors. "We're excited as heck with the ruling but it's a tempered enthusiasm."

Fears by Koompin and other U.S. potato growers that Mexico's spud industry would find another way to tilt the battle in their favor appear to have materialized or at least begun to.

During the Idaho Potato Commission's regular monthly meeting May 19, industry leaders announced that the National Confederation of Potato Growers of Mexico (CONPAPA) reached an agreement with the Mexican Supreme Court that will result in half of the samples taken from fresh U.S. potato shipments being sent to a laboratory selected by CONPAPA to be tested. The other half will go to a government-run lab.

That means CONPAPA, which competes against the U.S. potato industry, will have a direct hand in inspecting U.S. potato imports and that is deeply troubling to members of the United States' potato industry.

To have a competing domestic industry be involved by regulation in inspecting imported product is an unprecedented development, National Potato Council CEO Kam Quarles told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

"It's a pretty unique situation (and) it's incredibly concerning," he said.

Quarles said the U.S. potato industry is very pleased with the Mexican Supreme Court's ruling but the recent development of CONPAPA being allowed to choose where half the samples are tested "just emphasizes the magnitude of the challenges we face with the political muscle of this Mexican domestic industry."

The U.S. fresh potato industry has long sought to gain access to all of Mexico for many years and, according to leaders of this nation's spud industry, the Mexican potato industry has fought that attempt every step of the way.

"This is just the most recent chapter in this very long saga," Quarles said about CONPAPA's latest attempt at impacting the importation of fresh U.S. potatoes into the entire country. "It's about those folks not wanting to compete with us."

According to the National Potato Council, Mexico is the third largest export market for U.S. potatoes and potato products and more than \$270 million worth of potatoes and potato products from the United States were sold there in 2020.

Despite the 16-mile border zone restriction, Mexico is the second largest market for fresh U.S. potato exports, accounting for 106,000 metric tons valued at \$60 million in 2020.

According to the NPC, the U.S. potato industry estimates

that if the United States is able to export fresh potatoes into the entire country, it would provide a market potential of \$200 million per year in five years.

Quarles said the U.S. fresh potato industry estimates having access to all of Mexico would increase U.S. fresh potato exports by about 15 percent.

"Expanding an export market by that much is a huge deal," he said.

The U.S. and Mexican governments in 2002 announced both sides would resolve two long-standing market access issues – the U.S. agreed to expand market access for Mexican avocados and Mexico agreed to open the entire country to U.S. fresh potatoes.

The U.S. now imports about \$2 billion worth of Mexican avocados each year while Mexico remains mostly closed to fresh potatoes from the United States.

The Mexican government in 2011 agreed to allow U.S. potatoes full access to that country beginning in 2014. However, CONPAPA sued its government to prevent that from happening and that case ended up before Mexico's Supreme Court.

CONPAPA claimed Mexican regulators have no authority to determine if agricultural imports can enter the country.

A justice of the Mexican Supreme Court released a draft ruling Feb. 17 that would overturn a lower court ruling preventing the Mexican federal government from implementing regulations to allow fresh U.S. potatoes to be imported throughout the country.

The case was scheduled to be decided by the full five-member court on Feb. 24 but the vote was postponed indefinitely. The court's April 28 decision was closely watched by members of the U.S. potato industry and news of the unanimous decision spread quickly among Idaho and other U.S. potato growers.

Now, members of the U.S. potato industry are hoping the court's decision sticks and fresh potatoes from the United States are soon flowing into Mexico.

"There's a lot of excitement about" the Mexican Supreme Court decision, NPC Chief Operating Officer Mike Wenkel told Idaho potato industry representatives during the Idaho Potato Commission's May meeting.

He said the NPC is optimistic that the court side of the issue in Mexico will be finalized by mid-June. The next step will be getting the regulations in place that will allow U.S. fresh potatoes to begin flowing into all of Mexico.

"The real question is, what will those regulations end up looking like?" Wenkel said.

Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, said in an NPC news release that the court decision is a positive step forward.

"I will not, however, consider the matter finished until Idaho's farmers are able to sell high-quality potatoes to every family in Mexico, as is their right under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement," he said. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Barley is harvested in a field near Soda Springs last year. The Idaho State Department of Agriculture has created a new program designed to provide resources that could help Idahoans remain on the farm or ranch or get into agriculture.

New Idaho Farm and Ranch Center program debuts website

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – A new state program designed to help Idahoans remain on the farm or ranch or get into agriculture went live with a new website in March.

Called Idaho Farm and Ranch Center, the Idaho State Department of Agricul-

ture program was created last year after Idaho lawmakers agreed to let the ISDA use existing funds to create it.

All of the services in the new program will be non-regulatory and aimed at helping families remain on the farm or assisting people who want to get into farming or ranching, according to ISDA officials.

The IFRC launched a website in early March that serves as a one-stop shop for farmer and rancher resources in Idaho and across the nation.

The website aggregates a plethora of resources in one place to make it easy for people to find them, said Anna Pratt Lickley, who manages the program out of an ISDA office on the College of South-

ern Idaho campus in Twin Falls.

“When someone has questions about succession planning or what services are available to veteran farmers, there’s really not a one-stop shop place for them to go to,” she said. “We wanted to aggregate all of those resources together and make them really accessible to people.”

The website – farm.idaho.gov – features such resources as financial management trainings, guidebooks and videos on succession planning, tools and tips for managing family business and a calendar of events. It also contains resources focused on beginning farmers, veteran farmers and disabled farmers.

“The ultimate goal of the website is to help farmers start, manage or transition farms and ranches in Idaho,” said Pratt Lickley, who was raised on a fifth-generation cattle operation in southeast Idaho.

Since starting as program manager of IFRC last June, she has been speaking with farmers and ranchers and others involved in the agricultural industry to get their feedback on how the website should function.

She said the website will continue to evolve as more producers provide additional feedback on how it should be formatted and what resources it should include and she welcomes comments and suggestions on how to improve it.

“We want to make sure we are doing work that is actually helping farmers and ranchers, so it’s really important that we know what they think of the website so far,” Pratt Lickley said.

The IFRC program is an idea ISDA officials have mulled over for years and, before launching it, the department formed an advisory committee to consider the idea.

The committee included member from the agriculture industry as well as representatives from the financial industry, Veterans Services, the Idaho Legislature and Idaho colleges.

Pratt Lickley said the committee gave a resounding “yes” to the idea.

“I think it’s going to be a great program,” said Stephen Parrott, who represented the ag lending industry on the advisory committee. “I’m excited about it because I think there is so much oppor-



Screenshot

This is the homepage of the new Idaho Farm and Ranch Center website at idaho.farm.gov.

tunity to provide resources and support to our agricultural community that is such an important part of our state’s economy.”

Robin Kelley Rausch, who owns Kelley’s Canyon Orchard outside Filer, said one of the biggest benefits of the program will be having a person dedicated to congregating all the resources valuable to new and existing farmers in one place.

There are a lot of these types of resources available now but they are spread

out over a wide area and difficult for people to locate, she said.

“Having a person dedicated to congregating all the information in one place, that is where the Idaho Farm and Ranch Center can play a vital role,” Kelley Rausch said.

The website is just the beginning of the IFRC, Pratt Lickley said, and the next phase will be working on projects that farmers and ranchers across the state have asked the ISDA to work on.

See IFRC, page 33



Idaho targets its first hemp growing season in 2022

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The growing, processing and transportation of industrial hemp in Idaho is expected to be legal in time for the 2022 growing season.

Idaho became the last state in the nation to legalize the production and processing of industrial hemp when Gov. Brad Little signed House Bill 126 into law April 16.

The bill passed in the Senate by a vote of 30-5 and in the House by a vote of 44-26 and became effective immediately when the governor signed it.

The bill directs the Idaho State Department of Agriculture to draft a state hemp program with input from any interested stakeholders.

But while the bill paves the way for industrial hemp to be legal in Idaho, at this point it is still illegal to grow, process or transport hemp in the state.

“Do not grow, process or transport hemp in Idaho until we get everything in place because there are several things that still need to happen before you can legally do that,” said Braden Jensen, deputy director of governmental affairs for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

The legislation is a narrow bill and only allows for people to grow and process industrial hemp if they obtain a license from the ISDA. People can also transport it on behalf of someone with a license.

“It is strictly a farmers-processors kind of bill,” Jensen said. “This does not legalize hemp for all Idahoans.”

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation has for

National Hemp Association photo
A bill passed during the 2021 legislative session will pave the way for Idahoans to legally grow and process hemp, likely starting in 2022.



Photo by Hempitecture

Mattie Mead, shown here, is owner and founder of Hempitecture, which is based in Ketchum and makes building materials products using hemp biomass. Mead believes a bill passed this year by the Idaho Legislature will pave the way for Idaho farmers to soon begin growing the industrial hemp used by Hempitecture.

more than two decades had policy created and approved by its members that supports legalizing industrial hemp in Idaho. House Bill 126 was authored by IFBF.

Hemp plants are the same species as marijuana but industrial hemp, by federal law, contains less than 0.3 percent of THC, the psychoactive compound that gets a user of marijuana high. It is virtually impossible to get high from industrial hemp.

Jensen said IFBF members understand the difference between industrial hemp and marijuana and the organization strongly opposes the legalization of marijuana in Idaho.

“We are and continue to be opposed to marijuana,” he said. “Industrial hemp is something that we in the agricultural industry understand really well and our members have supported it for decades.”

House Bill 126 directs the ISDA to begin formulating a state hemp plan through the state’s negotiated rulemaking process, which allows anyone interested in participating to do so.

The state ag department immediately began planning for that process after the governor signed the bill into law. To find out more information about how to participate in the hemp rulemaking process, visit the ISDA website – agri.idaho.gov/

main/ – and click on the hemp link on the left side of the page.

People interested in participating in or following the process can easily sign up to do that through that hemp webpage, said ISDA Deputy Director Chanel Tewalt.

“The website is going to be the easiest place for a person to see everything about the process and be updated as it moves forward,” she said. “The state’s rulemaking process is very transparent. It’s meant to be something the general public can easily participate in.”

The first rulemaking meeting is June 23 and the second is June 30. Details on how to participate can be found on the ISDA’s hemp webpage.

After receiving public input, the ISDA will put together a state hemp plan that follows federal guidelines for industrial hemp. That plan needs to be approved by the governor and the director of the Idaho State Police.

Idaho’s hemp plan needs to be wrapped up and submitted to USDA by Sept. 1. The plan will also need to be approved by state lawmakers during the 2022 legislative session, which begins next January.

It’s a fairly quick timeline but ISDA will meet all the require-

ments, Tewalt said.

“The whole intent of the law is clear, that we’re ready for a growing season in 2022, and we’re going to get there,” she said.

Once the state plan is finalized, ISDA will oversee the growing and processing of hemp in Idaho.

Hemp products have always been sold, legally, in the United States but not until the 2018 farm bill was passed was it legal to grow and process hemp domestically. All of the hemp products sold in the U.S. previously came from other countries.

The 2018 farm bill made it legal for U.S. farmers to grow industrial hemp but it left it up to states to craft their own plans. Now, Idaho farmers will soon be able to join the fray.

During public testimony on proposed hemp bills that were introduced in the Idaho Legislature over the past three years, some people testified that farmers could make \$30,000 or more per acre growing industrial hemp.

As people know by now, that was a grossly inflated forecast and blatantly false. However, hemp is used in more than 20,000 products and Idaho farmers can now begin to figure out how and if industrial hemp can fit into their rotations.

Idaho farmers will soon be able to start figuring out for themselves whether hemp works for them, Tewalt said.

“If we know anything about Idaho agriculture it’s that it’s incredibly productive and it’s very innovative,” she said.

One of the keys to figuring out how hemp production could work in Idaho will be research by university scientists and that’s why House Bill 126 includes a strong emphasis on allowing that research to be conducted in Idaho, Jensen said.



Photo by Hempitecture

This is one of the building material products that Idaho-based Hempitecture creates using hemp biomass. The company believes a bill passed this year by the Idaho Legislature will pave the way for Idaho farmers to soon begin growing the industrial hemp used by Hempitecture.

“We really do want our state institutions to start homing in on what the potential for hemp is in Idaho,” he said. “We really do need to begin understanding things like, which varieties do well in Idaho’s growing conditions.”

“It’s going to be really important for ... growers to have that on-the-ground, Idaho-specific type of information that will be helpful to them,” Tewalt said.

While some growers and others involved in the state’s agricultural industry are keeping an eye on hemp to see where it goes, others are itching to begin growing it here.

One of them is Tim Cornie, owner of 1000 Springs Mill, a food company in Buhl that contracts will growers in the area to produce organic foods as beans, food barley, oatmeal and ancient grains.

See **HEMP**, page 17

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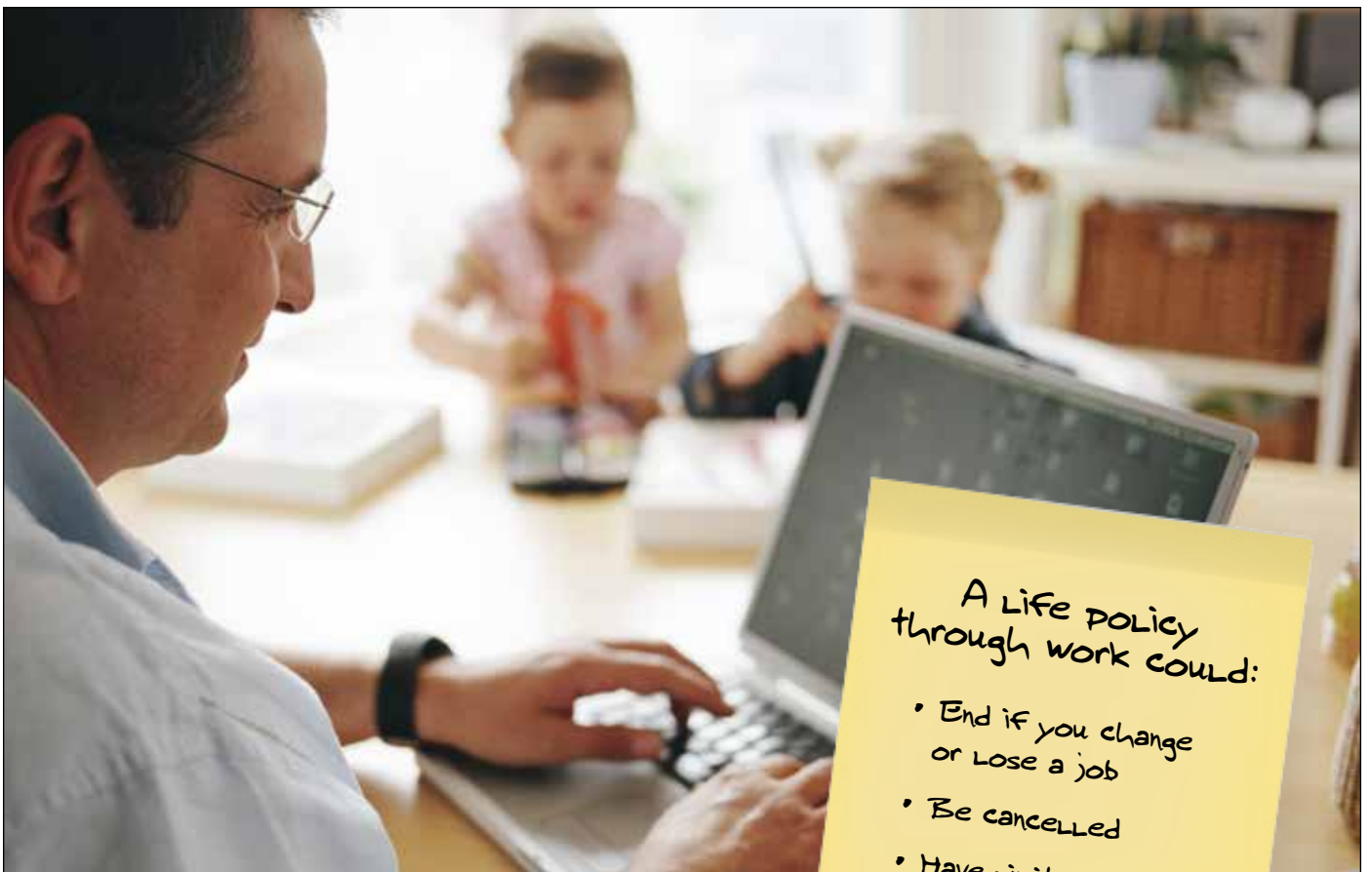
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Photo by Sean Ellis

Barley is harvested in a field near Soda Springs last year. An early season prospective plantings report estimates wheat and corn acres will be up slightly in Idaho this year while barley and dry bean acres be down somewhat.

USDA provides first glimpse of Idaho 2021 planting intentions

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO — A very early glimpse into farmers' 2021 planting intentions shows that Idaho producers plan to grow a little more wheat and corn this year and a little less barley and dry beans.

That's based on the National Agricultural Statistics Service's Prospective Plantings report, which USDA released March 31.

But farmers and industry leaders caution that the outlooks contained in the report are preliminary and subject to change somewhat.

Idaho Barley Commission Administrator Laura Wilder said the report is useful but NASS' June 30 Crop Acreage report is more

accurate because it is based on actual plantings while the prospective plantings report is based on growers' planting intentions.

While some crops had been planted already in Idaho, the majority of planting had yet to take place in this state when the survey for the prospective planting report was conducted.

"When the June 30 report comes out is when we'll have much more accurate data for planted acres," Wilder said. "I rely more on the June 30 report but the March prospective plantings report is an interesting early season report."

The annual prospective plantings report is the year's first initial glimpse of farmers' planting intentions for the upcoming season.

NASS surveyed growers on their 2021 crop planting intentions

nationwide from Feb. 27 through March 15.

More than 900 farmers in Idaho responded to the survey.

The report estimates that Idaho farmers plan to plant 510,000 acres of barley in 2021, down 4 percent from 530,000 acres in 2020.

But Wilder said that estimate could be a little low from what she has heard from barley farmers and processors. She expects Idaho's planted barley acres to be close to last year's total.

"I believe that estimate is a little low this year based on my conversations with folks in the industry," she said. "I believe we'll be fairly steady with 2020 and we could be up or down 1 or 2 percent, either way."

Idaho has been the nation's No. 1 producer of barley since 2013 and that doesn't look to change this year.

The report also estimates Idaho farmers will plant 1.27 million acres of wheat during the 2021 season, up slightly from 1.24 million acres last year.

Idaho usually ranks between No. 5 and No. 7 in total wheat production in the United States.

Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Casey Chumrau said the NASS estimate for wheat acres sounds about right but with wheat prices up significantly compared with this time last year, Idaho wheat acres could be up even more than that during 2021.

"We certainly hope there are some more acres out there but we'd be happy if the acres they quote in this report come to fruition," she said.

The prices that growers receive for dry beans are up significantly compared with where they were two years ago but NASS estimates dry bean acres in Idaho will decrease this year to 60,000, down from 68,000 in 2020.

With bean prices up significantly heading into 2020, Idaho dry bean acres jumped 45 percent last year to 68,000.

With consumers scooping up dry beans at a rapid rate during the pandemic, those higher prices are still holding but a lot of other crops grown in Idaho also look attractive this year from a price standpoint, said Monty Hamilton, who grows beans in the Magic Valley area.

"I believe it," he said of NASS' estimate for Idaho dry bean acres declining in 2021. "Beans were the best thing a farmer could grow last year. This year, hay, corn, wheat and some other crops all look

promising as well."

Idaho leads the nation in dry bean acres grown for seed and the crop is grown in the Magic Valley of southcentral Idaho and the Treasure Valley of southwestern Idaho.

Darren Krzesnik, production manager of Treasure Valley Seed Co. in southwestern Idaho, agreed with Hamilton and said his company is struggling to contract for all of the bean acres it would like to this year.

"We do have some competition from more commodities this year," he said. "It does make sense to me that Idaho bean acres will down somewhat this year."

The NASS report projects planted Idaho chickpea acres will total 79,000 this year, up 29 percent over 61,100 last year, but the manager of a chickpea processor in North Idaho, where that crop is grown in Idaho, thinks that is unlikely.

Grower prices for chickpeas, also known as garbanzo beans, are up because of shortfalls in two of the world's largest garb-producing countries, Mexico and India, said Dirk Hammond, manager of George F. Brocke and Sons, which processes garbanzo beans, peas and lentils in Kendrick.

But wheat and canola prices are also up and Hammond expects acres for those crops to increase in North Idaho this year at the expense of chickpea acres.

NASS shows Idaho pea and lentil acres being down slightly this year and chickpea acres increasing but Hammond believes acres for all three crops will be down in 2021.

Because canola and wheat are attractive crops for growers in North Idaho this year, "as a result, pea and lentil and garb acres are going to be down in our area this year," Hammond said.

The NASS report expects Idaho's "all hay" acres to remain unchanged in 2021 at 1.3 million and it also estimates Idaho corn acres at 400,000, up 3 percent over 2020.

Idaho's planted sugar beet acres are estimated at 173,000 this year, up slightly over 172,000 last year.

NASS does not estimate potato acres until the June 30 report. The Idaho potato industry will also conduct a separate acreage report that will be release shortly before the NASS potato acreage report. ■

HEMP

Continued from page 14

Cornie said the company plans to begin selling hemp seeds for human food as soon as it's legal to do that in Idaho. That will provide more opportunities for Idaho farmers, as well as 1000 Springs Mill.

"Hemp grain is a super food," he said. "In Germany, they make high-end chocolates from it and it has as much protein as soybeans. There are so many things you can do with it. This will be another product for our company."

Mattie Mead is the owner and founder of Hempitecture, a company based

in Ketchum that specializes in building materials derived from hemp biomass.

The company in May received a \$207,000 Idaho Global Entrepreneurial Mission grant from the state to partner with University of Idaho on research and development of a natural fiber insulation product Hempitecture produces for the building industry.

For now, Hempitecture uses hemp imported from other areas but Mead looks forward to the day Idaho farmers can produce hemp for the company's manufacturing plant in Idaho.

"What really excites me about the pas-

sage of (House Bill 126) is the possibility of growing this in Idaho and supporting Idaho farmers," he said. "It's definitely a new and emerging industry and Idaho can now be well-suited to capitalize on this industry."

Jensen said Farm Bureau members are excited to see this opportunity to grow hemp in Idaho if they choose to.

"It's not something for everybody and I think we'll continue to see this industry develop," he said. "It will develop slowly and with time but it certainly is an option for some people as they become a little more familiar with it." ■

Idaho Farm Bureau

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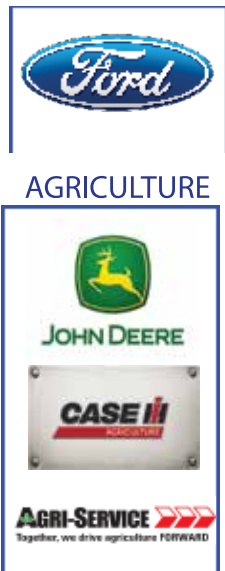
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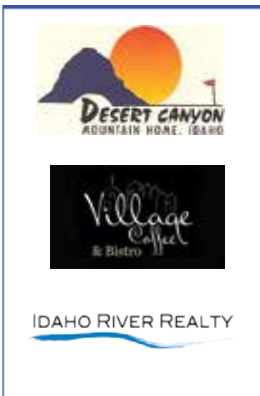
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What's inside a forester's toolbox?

By Randy Brooks
University of Idaho

Have you ever wondered what a day at the office is like for a forester? I'm blessed to live that out, and like many of you, my days can be spent outside, only in the woods.

What do I actually do when I'm in the woods besides eat my lunch and watch for critters? Well, it depends on my goals for the day, but one of the main tasks a forester does is put in plots to determine volume, or how many board feet is in the forest.

Last spring, I wrote about determining log volume (see: <https://www.idahofb.org/uploads/NR-SpringQuarterly2020.pdf>). Most timber is sold based on volume, while some is sold as ton wood.

Foresters rely on a variety of basic instruments and equipment to measure individual trees and forests. Without these tools, they would not be able to determine tree diameters and heights, determine stem counts and stocking levels, or map tree distributions.

With some exceptions, these are simple instruments that foresters have been using for many years.

Measuring a tree's diameter is fundamental to managing, buying, and selling standing timber. A Diameter tape, or D-tape, is used primarily to measure a

Photos by Randy Brooks
A D-tape allows for diameter conversion. This tree cookie has a diameter of 9.7 inches.



tree's diameter, at breast height or 4.5 feet off the ground.

This is the most common measurement foresters make. This tape (see photo) has regular length measurements (inches and feet) on one side and diameter conversions on the other.

It is small and easily fits in a forester's cruiser vest or attaches to a belt loop. A logger's D-tape is a self-retracting reel tape primarily used to measure diameter or make land measurements of felled timber. The tape is generally built to withstand rough treatment.

The only other measurement that is as important as a tree's diameter is its total and merchantable height. A clinometer (see photo) is a basic forest inventory tool for determining merchantable and total tree heights.

A clinometer can also be used to measure slope, which helps in laying out road grades, measuring tree heights on a slope, measuring topographic relief, and in preliminary surveying measurements.

A clinometer usually measures height either in percentages or topographic scales. To use this tool, you look into the clinometer with one eye while using the other eye to line up the instrument reference line with the tree reference points (butt, logs, total height).

I teach my forestry students here at the University of Idaho to walk out 100 feet from the tree (which is where a 100 ft tape comes in handy or to pace it out) and then read the percent side of the clinometer.

First, read the angle looking down where the tree bottom intersects with the ground, then add that number to the angle you read when looking at the very tip top of the tree.

The Scribner volume tables are typically used in Idaho. Tables were developed with diameter and height on the tables and volume in board feet can be determined.

The compass is an essential part of every forester's toolkit. It is not only used to run and maintain property boundary lines but also to safely orient oneself in unfamiliar forests and wildlands.

A hand-held compass is adequate for most compass work and is compact and easy to carry. When more accuracy is needed, a staff compass can be useful.

When putting in circular plots, I teach my students to start north, and measure all



A wedge prism on the left, and angle gauge on the right, are forestry tools that determine basal area in variable plot sampling.

TOP: A increment borer extracts small cores from the tree to help determine age and growth rates.

the trees in the circular plot in a clockwise fashion.

Foresters use tree borers to extract core samples from trees to determine age, growth

rate, and tree soundness. Borer bit length normally ranges from 4 to 28 inches, and diameter normally ranges from 4.3 mm to 12 mm.

An increment borer (see photo with tree core extracted) is the least invasive way to count tree rings. It works by extracting a very small (0.2 inch in diameter) straw-like sample that runs from the bark to the pith of the tree.

Though this hole is small, it can still introduce decay in the trunk. To prevent this, trees are limited to one bore every six years, and the extracted core is reinserted into the core hole after it has been examined.

The “Biltmore stick,” or cruiser stick (see photo), is an ingenious device used to measure trees and logs. It was developed around the turn of the century and was based on the principle of similar triangles.

The stick is still very much a part of every forester’s toolkit and can be purchased at any forestry supply center. You can even make your own. These “woodland sticks” come in a variety of designs and are made of fiberglass or wood.

They can be used to determine tree diameters and board foot volume. Some are designed to serve as walking sticks as well.

The cross-section area of the tree is generally expressed as square units per unit of the area it is growing on. This volumetric description is a ratio of the tree’s cross-sectional area at diameter at breast height (DBH) to the total area and called basal area or BA.

For trees: the cross-section area of a tree stem in square feet commonly measured at breast height (4.5’ above ground) and inclusive of bark, usually computed by using DBH or tallied through the use of basal area factor angle gauge or a factored prism.

An angle gauge is used to select or tally trees in what is called variable area plot sampling. The gauge allows foresters to quickly determine which trees fall inside or outside of the plot.

Gauges come in several shapes and serve the same purpose as a cruising prism.

A prism is an ingenious, wedge-shaped piece of glass that will deflect the tree trunk image when viewed. Like an angle gauge, this optical device is used to tally trees in variable area plot sampling.

Prisms are available in a range of dimensions to best fit the size of the trees you are sampling. Prisms are not used to tally dense sapling regeneration.

Measuring trees and plots and determining volume is all in a day’s work for foresters. The University of Idaho Extension Forestry team offers field days on, among other topics, how to put in plots and measure trees.

Check out our calendar of events at <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry>, and click on programs and events.

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



Photos by Randy Brooks

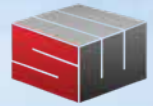
TOP: A clinometer can be used to measure total tree height and slope.
RIGHT: A Biltmore stick can be used to determine tree diameters and board foot volume.
LEFT: A compass is used to run and maintain property boundary lines but also to safely orient oneself.

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Summer Morgan, the winner of our fourth quarter Refer A Friend, Get A Gift \$500 drawing, with agent Trudy Crawford.

Country Chuckles

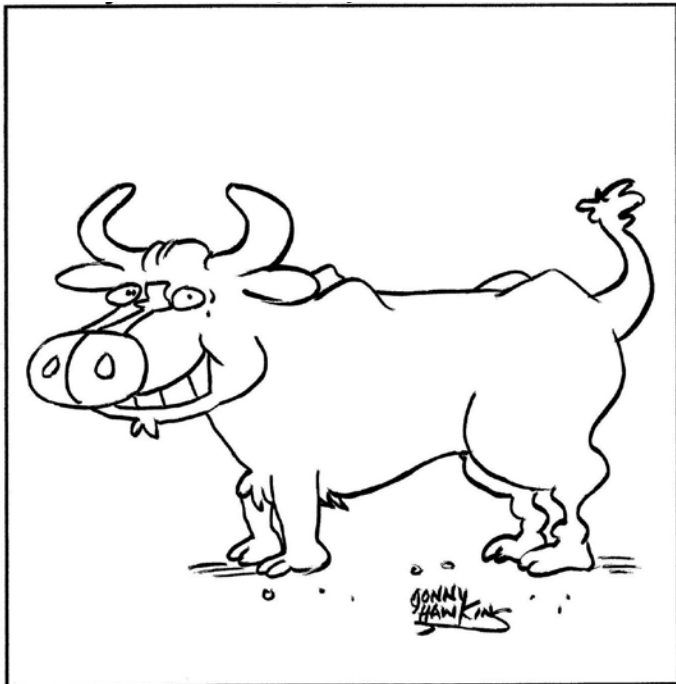
By Jonny Hawkins



Dances With Wool



Goat Yoga Ranch



Random Ox of Kindness



2021 Idaho Farm Bureau scholarship winners

The following are recipients of the 2021 Idaho Farm Bureau Scholarships. The scholarships are provided by the IFBF Scholarship Fund, Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee, and Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company.

Ag winners will receive \$1,500:



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





Photos by Joel Benson

A four-wheeler rides through a hay field in Butte County in 2019. The county has a lot of bare land and few people but there is still plenty of agricultural production happening there. **BOTTOM:** Cattle are one of the top agricultural commodities in Butte County.

There is still plenty of farming going on in Butte County

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

There is a lot of bare land in Butte County and not too many humans but a lot of people might be surprised to find out there's still plenty of farming going on in this sparsely populated area.

"There is a lot of bare land but there is still a lot of agriculture in this county," says Travis McAfee, who farms and ranches in Butte County, which is 2,200 square miles in size but has fewer than 3,000 people.

The county is known for its buttes and disappearing rivers but it also should be known for agriculture.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 189 farms in Butte County in 2017, down 12 percent from the 2012 Census of Agriculture. However, the average size of farm in the county increased 18 percent during that time, to 690 acres. That's significantly higher the statewide average of 468 acres.

"We used to have more farmers and ranchers but a lot of the operations got consolidated," says McAfee,



who serves on the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's board of directors.

But those remaining farms in the county produce a lot of crops and livestock.

According to the 2017 Census of Ag, there were 130,366 acres in farms in the county in 2017, with 60 percent of that being in cropland and 33 percent in pastureland.

When it comes to farm-gate receipts, cattle and calves, hay and grains are some of the top agricultural commodities in the county.

According to the census, there was 47,224 acres of hay produced in Butte County in 2017, 11,726 acres of barley, 9,060 acres of wheat and 1,068 acres of potatoes.

There were 9,138 cattle and calves in Butte County in 2017, as well as 848 sheep and lambs, 212 goats, 108 hogs and pigs and 465 horses and ponies.

McAfee, who farms 900 acres of hay, 200 acres of malt barley and runs 200 head of cattle, said the number of wheat acres in the county is on the rise.

"There is getting to be quite a few wheat growers here," he says.

While outsiders driving through the county could be expected to not realize how much agricultural production there still is in the area, a lot of county residents also don't realize that, McAfee says.

"I think a lot of people in Butte County even forget that there are still a lot of farmers and ranchers that support the local economy," he says.

That's why reaching kids in school and teaching them about agriculture and it's importance to the local economy and tax base is an important mission of Lost Rivers Farm Bureau, says Kelsey Broadie, who farms and ranches in Moore and serves as president of LRFB, which encompasses all of Butte County and part of Custer County.

She says LRFB has strong relationships with local schools and Farm Bureau members go into classrooms every year to teach students about farming and ranching and inform them, their teachers and parents that a good portion of the county's economy and tax base is supported by agriculture.

"It's important that they realize how critical the agriculture industry is to this area," Broadie says. "Even if they are not involved in agriculture, the industry is helping to support them and it's important they know that. Without farmers and ranchers, the whole community would suffer."

The county Farm Bureau organization also



Photo by Kelsey Broadie
Despite having a lot of bare land,
Butte County is still home to plenty of
agricultural production.



Photos by Kelsey Broadie

Butte County has a lot of bare land and not so many people but there is still plenty of farming and ranching going on there. BELOW: Hay is harvested in a field in Butte County. The county has a lot of bare land and few people but it still has plenty of farming and ranching activity.

sponsors an annual Ag Bowl for high school students in the area. It's a fast-paced trivia game about agriculture where grades compete against each other.

"That's a pretty cool competition," says Trent Van Leuven, a LRFB member and high school ag teacher who helps coordinate the Ag Bowl event.

Lost Rivers Farm Bureau also donated \$8,000 toward a new fish lab being built for the agricultural science program at Mackay High School.

The Lost Rivers Farm Bureau gets its name from the Big and Little Lost Rivers, which both, as their names suggest, disappear into the Snake River plain aquifer.

According to the 2017 Census of Ag, farmers and ranchers in the county brought in \$42 million in farm-gate receipts in 2017, which, after operating expenses, translated into \$15 million in total net cash farm income.

The county has a good mix of big, medium and small farms.

According to the ag census, there were 51 farms of 1,000 acres or more in Butte County in 2017 and 14 from 500-999 acres in size.

There were also 16 farms less than 10 acres in size, 30 from 10-49 acres in size, 41 from 50-179 acres and 37 from 180-499 acres. ■



Idaho specialty crop grant program receives more funding this year

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The Idaho State Department of Agriculture will receive an additional \$2.8 million this year for its annual specialty crop block grant program.

That's in addition to the \$2 million it normally receives annually from USDA for the program, which provides grant funding for projects designed to benefit the state's specialty crop growers.

The program is designed to solely benefit specialty crops, which include vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, dried fruits, nursery and horticulture crops.

The grant money, which is provided through USDA's national specialty block grant program, is used to promote, market and conduct research for the state's specialty crop industries.

USDA was authorized through the farm bill to provide \$73 million through the program to states this year.

The ag department announced April 13 that it would provide an additional \$97 million for the program in 2021. That additional money is available through a recent COVID-19 stimulus package.

The deadline to submit applications to ISDA for this year's block of grant money ended recently. The Idaho ag department received 24 applications in 2021 and expects to be able to officially announce this year's grant recipients in September.

ISDA Director of Operations Chanel Tewalt said the additional \$2.8 million the department will receive from USDA this year for Idaho's specialty crop block grant program has somewhat different eligibility requirements than the normal program and how that additional funding will be distributed has yet to be determined.

"The deadline for the new funding is different than the deadline for the farm bill funding," Tewalt told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. "So, that gives us time to look



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation photo

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture will receive an additional \$2.8 million this year for its annual specialty crop block grant program. That's in addition to the \$2 million it normally receives annually from USDA for the program, which provides grant funding for projects designed to benefit the state's specialty crop growers.

at the new requirements and determine our next steps."

The Idaho ag department funded 13 total projects last year through its specialty crop grant program with the \$2 million it received from USDA.

Since the program was created in 2009, ISDA has awarded a total of \$14.7 million to 150 projects designed to benefit specialty crop farmers in Idaho.

"ISDA's past awards for specialty crop projects have benefited Idaho agriculture with advancements in research, promotion and innovation," said ISDA Director Celia Gould. "We are grateful to be able to utilize USDA specialty crop block grant funding once again to provide opportunities for Idaho's producers."

The grants have helped some of the state's specialty crop industries, such as Idaho's dry bean industry, to fund a lot of promotion, marketing and research projects that they otherwise could not afford to do.

"This program has been incredibly important to Idaho's dry bean industry,"

said Idaho Bean Commission Administrator Andi Woolf-Weiby. "Being a smaller commission with a small budget, those grants have been integral in helping us fund some research projects that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to afford to do."

Like the state's dry bean industry, Idaho's wine grape industry has received several specialty crop grants over the years. A lot of that grant money went toward helping the Idaho Wine Commission promote Idaho wines regionally and nationally, said IWC Operations and Finance Manager Brenna Smith.

The marketing and promotion efforts the grants have helped fund have allowed the commission to let people around the nation know that Idaho produces quality wines, she said.

"Most of our marketing dollars come from those grants," Smith said. "The ISDA grants have been almost essential to us over the years in gaining the type of recognition Idaho's wine industry has received." ■



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Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



“He can’t come to the phone right now. He’s busy raising pigs.”



You need to know how the futures markets work

As in the past when we get to this time of the year, there are usually more questions than there are answers. By this time the trade generally has a pretty good idea as to the demand for this crop year.

The big looming question is the supply and that is a big question to say the least. What is the weather going to do for us or to us and just not in our region or the U.S. but in the world?

At this time, the trade is looking at some of the tightest stocks-to-use ratios in at least the past 10 to 12 years. The trade is basing their production estimates on good growing conditions and trend-line yields.

If we experience any glitches in the weather, we then will definitely have the potential to squeeze the ending stocks even more. Only time will tell.

We are just now in the beginning of a volatile market pattern that could very well continue over the next year or two.

December corn, for example, traded a range of \$1.84 higher and then 93 cents lower between the end of March and the middle of May. We are now seeing the potential for a large crop of corn in the U.S. this year but it is still a long time until harvest.

Producers should keep a close eye



on this market. With the volatility still in the market, it is a good time for producers to open a futures account to help manage their price risk.

The stocks-to-use ratio for wheat isn't quite as tight but the potential for wide swings in the market is still present.

As we experience the feed grains moving higher, more and more wheat will move into the feed market. This is good for the producers that have the potential to sell their wheat for feed.

We are currently also seeing producers that have small feed lots talking about feeding their wheat production this year rather than selling wheat and then turning around and buying corn. This could be good for the producers in the southern and southeast regions of the state.

We are currently experiencing dry to very dry conditions over a large portion of the state. USDA is projecting wheat production to be less than the previous year, which could help strengthen the local basis into the fall and winter months.

With the futures trending lower, we have seen the basis for soft white in the Portland market strengthen for both nearby and new crop. The basis for hard red winter and dark north-

ern spring has been steady to slightly lower.

The October feeder cattle futures are back to trading where we were the first week in March. This is about \$10 off of the high but it is also \$7 up from the recent low.

The cattle markets could come under pressure with the dry range conditions in the United States and Canada. We could see producers liquidate a portion of their herds rather than buy feed. This would be a short-term negative to the market and a positive in the longer term.

To say the least, all of the commodities will have the potential to be very volatile over this next year. Now is the time to learn how to use the different programs that are available to you to manage your risk in these markets.

All of you are busy in the heat of the battle from now through the fall and at times you feel as though you don't have the time to look at your different alternatives. But with markets like this, a day or two spent doing that could make a huge difference in your profitability.

Times change and the way you produce your crops and your calves has changed over the years and so has the way you market.

I'm not saying that you need to be trading in the futures markets in order to be successful but what I am saying is that you need to know and understand just how the futures markets work and how they affect your local cash prices and what you can do to protect your price risk in the market. ■



Idaho Wheat Commission photo

University of Idaho researcher Jianli Chen stands in a field planted to UI Cookie, a new soft white spring wheat variety that has performed well in Idaho trials. Chen developed the new variety at the UI Research and Extension wheat breeding center in Aberdeen with financial support from the Idaho Wheat Commission, which will manage the commercial release of UI Cookie.

Idaho wheat industry has high hopes for new variety

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Idaho wheat industry leaders believe a new wheat variety called “UI Cookie” could have significant potential for a lot of the state’s grain farmers.

The new variety was developed at the University of Idaho Research and Extension wheat breeding center in Aberdeen by researcher Jianli Chen and it has been licensed by the Idaho Wheat Commission.

UI Cookie was released by the university last April and the wheat commission will start and manage the commercializa-

tion process for the new variety this year.

“We do have high hopes for UI Cookie,” said “Genesee” Joe Anderson, a North Idaho farmer and IWC commissioner. “We’re happy to be able to provide value to the grower with this new variety.”

He said the variety was developed for irrigated land “but it performed well in both irrigated and dryland trials.”

According to Cathy Wilson, director of research collaboration for the commission, UI Cookie has boasted exceptional yields in trials, comparable to UI Stone, and it has topped the yields of cereal grains in Idaho the past two years.

She said the new variety also has improved resistance to

stripe rust and good tolerance to Fusarium head blight.

IWC Executive Director Casey Chumrau said UI Cookie also stands out with easy threshing ability and exceptional end-use quality, particularly, as the name suggests, in cookies.

UI Cookie is a soft white spring wheat variety. About 65 percent of the wheat grown in Idaho last year was soft white.

“I think it really could benefit a lot of our growers,” Chumrau said.

Wheat is the state’s No. 2 crop in terms of farm-gate receipts and the grain is an important part of many Idaho farmers’ crop rotations. It is grown in 42 of Idaho’s 44 counties.

The IWC is funded by grower dollars and the commission spends about 30 percent of its annual research budget on wheat breeding programs that develop new varieties that grow well in Idaho.

U of I’s Aberdeen wheat breeding program is primarily funded through IWC dollars and through a research agreement between the two entities, the commission has always had the first right to negotiate an exclusive license for new varieties released by the program.

However, the wheat commission has not exercised that right before because the IWC is not in the seed business.

But with UI Cookie, the commission has decided to try a different approach and license the new variety, Chumrau said. In doing so, the commission can set the parameters and protections around the new variety and act as a bridge between the breeding program and commercial seed dealers.

The IWC decided to make UI Cookie a true public release, which means growers will be able to hold back seed from the variety for their own planting use the next year. Growers will also not be charged royalties for the variety as they would with other releases.

That will reduce the cost of seed for growers who purchase UI Cookie while hopefully at the same time providing them a new variety that performs well agronomically, Chumrau said.

“IWC took advantage of a unique circumstance to obtain

the rights for UI Cookie and release it as a public release for farmers across the state without royalties or plant-back restrictions,” said IWC Commissioner Cory Kress, a wheat farmer from Rockland. “UI Cookie is a (soft white spring wheat) variety developed from grower funds and is being given back to the growers unrestricted.”

To help farmers see how the variety performs for themselves, the commission will manage three 30-acre seed trials this year. These trials will also expand the amount of registered seed for farmers who want to plant UI Cookie commercially.

Chumrau said it will take about two years to produce enough registered seed for farmers to begin planting UI Cookie on a commercial basis.

The trials will help anchor the new variety in the market, Wilson said. “Then from there, the market will take it however it will take it.”

“The idea right now is to start increasing that seed production and create buzz around UI Cookie and hopefully show growers what this variety will do for them and how it will perform in their fields,” Chumrau said. “Then when it becomes commercially available in the next year or two, growers can plant it if they are interested in doing that.”

She said that with this novel approach to UI Cookie, the commission is trying to give back to growers who have invested so much money into variety development programs over the years.

“Our mission is to improve the profitability of wheat growers and if we can help in any way to improve their operations and reduce their input costs, we’re going to do that,” Chumrau said. “We don’t know if this is going to be a success but we’re thinking outside the box and we want to do something different that hopefully has great potential for the growers.”

She said the commission has seed samples available for farmers who want to do their own strip trials this year. Anyone interested in doing that can contact Wilson at (208) 334-2353 or by email at cathy.wilson@idahowheat.org. ■

IFRC

Continued from page 11

One of those could include a type of Idaho farmland link program that lines up farmland seekers with farmland owners. That project could help people who want to get involved in agriculture but have difficulty finding people who are willing to sell their land, Pratt Lickley said.

“That’s one project that we’ve heard a lot of feedback on that people want us to work on,” she said.

Pratt Lickley said ISDA has also received a lot feedback from people about

creating an internship program on farms and ranches to help increase the amount of new farmers and ranchers.

“We know that farmers and ranchers across the state have a ton of experience and knowledge and wisdom that they could share with people looking to get into production agriculture,” she said.

“We have wanted this program for years,” said ISDA Director Celia Gould. “There is such a strong need for resources to help Idaho’s farms and ranches with planning, transitions and more.”

She said ISDA officials have heard from people across the state about their

ideas, challenges and needs and some of the common elements are clear:

“Keeping Idaho’s farms and ranches in operation is complex and there is no one solution to the challenge. We are really glad to be delivering some of the first elements of the IFRC program, like our statewide website, but we know this is just a start. This is going to be a constantly-evolving program, and we will be learning from and responding to the agriculture industry along the way.”

For more information about the IFRC program, contact Pratt Lickley by email at anna.pratt@isda.idaho.gov. ■

Wheat prices are on a rally

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Wheat prices for farmers have flirted with \$8 a bushel recently and are substantially higher than they were this time last year.

In fact, they are higher than they have been in a long time.

“Wheat prices are higher than they have been in quite a few years,” said Soda Springs wheat and barley farmer Scott Brown.

Wheat prices were in the upper \$7 a bushel range last week. That’s about \$2.50 per bushel higher than they were this time last year.

“That’s a pretty good price,” said Ririe wheat farmer Gordon Gallup. “Wheat prices are pretty bullish right now.”

The last time wheat prices were this high was in January 2013, according to grain marketing specialist Clark Johnston, owner of JC Management Co., a consulting and grain merchandising company.

The last really big wheat rally was in July 2012, when wheat prices were pushing \$9 a bushel, Johnston said.

By comparison, the low wheat price over the past 10 years was \$3.60 per bushel in August 2016.

Idaho and U.S. wheat farmers suffered through depressed wheat prices for several years following the 2012 and 2013 wheat rallies but that’s not the case right now.

Johnston said several factors are behind the current wheat price rally, including the fact that corn prices are up significantly. When corn prices rise, so do wheat prices because when corn prices rise, people start feeding their livestock more wheat.

Wheat export markets for U.S. farmers are also good right now because of favorable exchange rates, he said, and wheat crops in some major wheat-growing states could be down this year.

In addition, wheat stocks are tight.

“It’s like a perfect storm of factors pushing wheat prices higher right now,”



Photo by Sean Ellis

Wheat prices are at their highest level since 2013.

Johnston said. “It’s not just one thing. It’s kind of everything together.”

“I think there are a lot of factors behind the current wheat prices and higher corn prices is one of them,” said Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Casey Chumrau. “There is quite a bit of wheat being fed (to livestock) around the country right now.”

Wheat farmers said it should be noted that while wheat prices are up substantially, input costs have risen significantly this year as well.

“There has been a pretty substantial increase in input costs,” said Meridian farmer Richard Durrant. “I would say that input costs, across the board, have probably gone up 20-25 percent.”

A year ago, wheat farmers needed to make about \$4.50 to \$4.70 per bushel just to break even; this year that break-even point is closer to \$6 per bushel, Johnston said.

“Wheat farmers have to make six bucks (per bushel) to keep their nose above

water,” he said.

If the current wheat prices hold, it could be a big year in Idaho for the state’s wheat farmers. Idaho wheat farmers brought in a record \$841 million in farm cash receipts during the big wheat price rally in 2012.

Wheat is the state’s No. 2 crop in terms of total farm cash receipts, behind potatoes, and the crop is grown in 42 of Idaho’s 44 counties and is a part of many Idaho farmers’ rotations.

If 2021 does turn into another major year for wheat revenue in Idaho, it would help numerous communities across the state where wheat is an important crop, Brown said. When wheat farmers make more money, that helps out farm implement dealers, chemical and fertilizer dealers and all segments of the farm economy, he said.

“Higher crop prices help out everybody,” Brown said. “It results in more dollars in growers’ pockets and that ends up helping everybody in these local communities.” ■

Meet the 2021-2022 Idaho FFA State Officer Team!

Congratulations to the following individuals on their election as the 2021-2022 Idaho FFA State Officer Team! For the next year, they will represent Idaho on the state and national level, working one-on-one with members, teachers, and businesses and industry partners sharing the message of FFA and agriculture.



KAYDEN DRIGGS

President
Teton FFA

"I am excited to serve the members of Idaho with this team!"



KATIE HEBDON

Vice President
Nampa FFA

"I am eager to connect with our members and business and industry partners!"



CLAIRE SHELTON

Secretary
Meridian FFA

"I am looking forward to helping members find their pathway in FFA!"



CASSIE MOODY

Treasurer
Middleton FFA

"I'm looking forward to intentionally investing and connecting with Idaho FFA members!"



KENNEDY FARDEN

Reporter
New Plymouth FFA

"I am looking forward to bonding and connecting with my team!"



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daggers, flags, scopes, optical equipment, uniforms, helmets, machine guns (ATF rules apply) medals, flags, etc. 208-405-9338.

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Idaho Wool Growers Ram Sale celebrates 100 years

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

GOODING – The Idaho Wool Growers Ram Sale will celebrate its 100th anniversary this year.

Though the state's sheep industry has been around for longer than that, this year's sale will be an opportunity to commemorate more than "a century of sheep production in the state of Idaho and honor the legacy and lasting impact the industry has made on the state," said Liz Wilder, executive director of the Idaho Wool Growers Association.

The event, which will be held July 9-10 this year, is the highlight of Idaho's sheep industry.

"Producers from across Idaho, and other western states, will come together to sell and purchase some of the best breeding stock Idaho has to offer," Wilder said.

The annual ram sale has traditionally been held in Twin Falls but the venue for the event has now been moved to the Gooding County Fairgrounds.

"The Gooding area has been the nucleus of the state's sheep industry for years and years," said ram sale chairman Jack Blattner, a sheep producer from the Kuna area. "It's a good fit for the event."

While Idaho sheep producers will be celebrating more than a century of sheep production in the state, for many it will also be a chance to celebrate still being in business given the difficulties the government-ordered shutdowns related to the COVID-19 outbreak caused the industry.

Wilder said the COVID shutdowns "had an immediate and catastrophic effect as holiday dinners, restaurants and cruise ships were shut down overnight."

This initial drop in demand came during the height of the U.S. lamb industry's biggest time of the year, she added, and the American Lamb Board estimated the American



sheep industry lost 50 percent of sales almost immediately.

Complicating matters, Mountain States Rosen, the nation's second largest lamb processing plant, filed for bankruptcy on March 19 last year.

"Overnight, this created an excess supply and left many sheep producers feeling stranded with few options left," Wilder said.

"It was the perfect storm," said Blattner, who added that during last year's ram sale, "we could hardly give them away."

But since that time, markets have bounced back, processors are wanting lamb again and life for sheep producers is much better than

it was this time a year ago, Blattner said. The coronavirus-related assistance USDA provided to farmers and ranchers last year helped significantly, he added.

"It's definitely more rosy now," he said.

Prices for American lamb are at a multi-year high right now, Wilder said.

"Even with all of the uncertainty last year, we are still here and we are celebrating," she said.

All of the activities planned for this year's ram sale are free and open to everyone.

Events include a lamb barbecue, arts and craft festival, sheep wagon show, dog trials and the ram sale itself. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

People involved in Boise's Spaulding Ranch farm project stand in front of an old barn at the site of a historical but inactive farmstead. The city of Boise plans to revive Spaulding Ranch as a city park that is also a farm. From left to right: Allen Taggert (Ada County 4-H), Ariel Agenbroad (University of Idaho Extension) and Sara Arkle (city of Boise).

Boise will revive Spaulding Ranch as a city park

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Spaulding Ranch, a historical but long inactive farmstead in the middle of Boise, will rise again, this time as a monument to the region's rich agricultural history.

The city of Boise is creating a park at the property that is also a farm.

The project is being built on 20 acres at the site of the historical Spaulding Ranch, a farmstead with a grand barn that has been preserved but not used for agricultural purposes for a quarter century.

The property is surrounded by subdivisions and is located off of North Cole Road, a busy transportation corridor.

Though the Settler's Canal still runs through the property, its heyday as a farmstead is long over. The city of Boise, with assistance from University of Idaho Extension employees who understand farming, plans to revive Spaulding Ranch.

Ada County has the second most farms in Idaho, behind Canyon County, although most of those farms are much smaller than the state's average-size farm of 468 acres.

But agriculture's presence within Boise, Idaho's largest city, is virtually non-existent.

"We want to restore this site so urban agriculture can still happen in Boise," said Lisa Duplessie, the project manager for the Spaulding Ranch project for Boise.

The revived Spaulding Ranch will be a nod to the area's agricultural history and a reminder to Boise residents that agriculture is still a major player in the state's economy and way of life.

Boise Parks and Recreation staff will oversee the project and staff from University of Idaho Extension, given their farming expertise, will manage the agricultural operations at Spaulding Ranch.

"The University of Idaho is a perfect and

logical fit for us, given all the agricultural research they do," Duplessie said.

The city acquired the historical farmstead in 2016 as part of a land swap and citizens helped formulate a master plan for the property.

The master plan calls for the possibility of several agricultural-related features, including a six-acre demonstration farm, an orchard that includes apple, peach and pear trees, a small animal farm, pollinator gardens, farm-themed play equipment and a meadow maze.

The project could also include meeting and event space in a rebuilt barn, a community kitchen and farmers market.

The property will also include historical and current information about Idaho's agricultural industry, which is responsible for one in every eight jobs in the state and 13 percent of Idaho's gross state product, according to a recent U of I study.

"What it will ultimately look like is still up in the air because there are so many possibilities," said Ariel Agenbroad, a University of Idaho Extension educator in Ada County.

The park-farm has already started to take form with the planting of 100 fruit trees in March. The idea is to begin planting crops in 2023.

"It was super exciting to finally see stuff starting to happen," Duplessie said. "This is a one-of-a-kind project. It's honestly a dream project."

The city worked with the community over the past three years to come up with a master plan of what the property could become, said Sara Arkle, the open space superintendent for Boise Parks and Recreation.

"What we've heard pretty loud and clear is that people want to see urban agriculture done on this site," she said. "They want to see orchards, they want to see veggie plots,

they want to see agricultural education."

Boise was once a major part of Idaho's agricultural community but it's now by far the state's biggest population center and farming and ranching haven't existed within the city in any significant way in a long time.

"As we become more of an urban area, it's so much more important that we're teaching our children where our food comes from and how it's grown," Arkle said.

Besides being used to teach people about farming, a myriad of research and demonstration projects could take place on the six-acre demonstration farm site, Agenbroad said.

"We could have a lot of really neat things happen there," she said. "It will be a combination of research plots and actually engaging the public in farm training programs."

The city also plans to partner with 4-H programs to provide students a hands-on learning experience.

"I am very, very excited about this project and it's something that will be valuable to all youth in Idaho," said Allen Taggart, a 4-H Extension educator in Ada County. "A property like this could really afford hands-on learning opportunities where kids can get their hands dirty and really understand what is going on in the world of agriculture."

While Boise residents obviously will get to enjoy the park-farm, the revived Spaulding Ranch property will be a real destination site for every Idahoan, Duplessie said.

"There's nothing else like this in the state," she said. "It's within the city of Boise and a city project but it's really for everyone in the state to come and enjoy."

There is also almost unlimited potential for the project to develop, Duplessie added.

"While there's a master plan for the project, the sky's the limit," she said. ■

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PAGES 20 & 21

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