

GEM STATE **Producer**

Idaho Farm Bureau

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Idaho woman wins national ag event



Barley yield sets record, 4

Farm Bureau opposes dam removal, 8

Wheat yields hit record, 30

Tax reform is top of mind for farmers



The 2021 legislative session is well under way for members of Congress, from considering the presidential nominations to settling into new committee and leadership positions.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are outlining their policy priorities and getting to work on making those priorities into law. Our team here in Washington, D.C., is tracking all these issues closely and working to ensure that priorities for U.S. agriculture remain front and center.

One policy that has already emerged as a hot

topic for the 117th Congress is tax reform. In fact, our policy experts expect several important pieces of tax reform legislation to be introduced very soon, and we'll keep everyone posted as there is more news.

Estate tax reform is a big one being discussed, as it threatens the economic sustainability of America's family farms.

Sustainability is one of the main conversations taking place in agriculture right now, and while it often refers to environmental sustainability,

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The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

IFBF continues commitment to youth development with PLAN



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation knows the need and value of investing in creating opportunities for our youth so that they will become strong, capable leaders who move agriculture and this organization forward into future success.

IFBF has always been committed to investing in our youth but the organization's board of directors, who are all farmers or ranchers, has recently agreed to provide the resources that will enable this organization to up its game in that arena.

Our youth – those young farmers and ranchers who are just beginning to forge their way in the state's amazing agricultural industry – are the ones who will help Farm Bureau and the ag industry weather tomorrow's storms and be successful into the future.

We as an organization need to help ensure they are well-equipped for that task.

IFBF's Young Farmers and Ranchers state committee has recently come up with a specific plan to help young producers grow and develop

See **SEARLE**, page 7

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Learning a lesson from 'Bull Sale' season



In the beef world, the winter months are sometimes referred to as Bull Sale season.

Bull Sale season is, for many, an exciting and optimistic time. Ranchers make plans regarding budgets for new animals, particular sales they plan to attend, and the genetic goals these new bulls and heifers should attain when placed in the herd.

Dairy operators make the very same decisions for their herds. The main difference is that most dairies can make new decisions every 21 days.

On the farming side of things, a good farmer

must consider the many varieties of each of the crops grown in this great state before purchasing any seed.

One cannot be a true farmer or rancher if they are not excited about the prospects of a new year and how this next year will be better than before. Farmers and ranchers who do not believe this are referred to as ex farmers and ranchers.

There are many terms used to help producers predict the changes they can expect from their

See **MILLER**, page 6

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COVER: Rexburg farmer Marquee Ricks, who won the national Discussion Meet, is shown here with her family: Husband Brett and, from left to right, children, Jorah, Jameson and Anna. See story on this page.



American Farm Bureau Federation photo producer Jan. 13 during the final of American Farm Bureau Federation's Discussion Meet event. Ricks won the national competition.

East Idaho farmer wins national Discussion Meet

POCATELLO – East Idaho farmer Marquee Ricks won the American Farm Bureau Federation Discussion Meet, an event that is meant to hone the public speaking and problem-solving skills of young farmers and ranchers.

The Discussion Meet is a national Farm Bureau event that is meant to simulate a committee meeting rather than a debate. When presented with a challenge in the form of a question, participants direct their discussions toward each other in an attempt to arrive at a solution.

Young farmers and ranchers across the nation compete in various Discussion Meets during the year and the state-level winners of these events compete against each other during AFBF's annual convention, which was held virtually Jan. 10-13 this year.

The winners of Discussion Meet events are not the ones who are the most dominating or smart but rather the ones who fostered good discussion and ideas among all the contestants.

The AFBF competition started off with 29 state winners and Ricks, who farms wheat, barley and mustard near Rexburg, competed against three other young producers Jan. 13 during the final.

She represented Idaho Farm Bureau Federation at the AFBF competition and won a new Ford truck.

“My greatest feeling of accomplishment is doing this for Idaho,” she said. “I have a lot of pride in Idaho.”

Ricks said the competition and pressure during the AFBF event was fierce and she was extremely nervous. But, she added, that pushed her and brought out her best.

See RICKS, page 5



Photo by Sean Ellis

Barley is harvested in a field near Soda Springs last year. Idaho barley farmers set a record for average yield per acre in 2020.

Idaho sets record for average barley yield

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Idaho barley farmers set a record for average yield per acre in 2020.

The average yield per acre for barley grown in Idaho was 110 bushels, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. That beat the previous state record of 107 bushels per acre set in 2016.

"In 2020, we had the perfect combination of good weather and growing conditions to grow exceptional barley," said Idaho Barley Commission Administrator Laura Wilder.

Those favorable conditions resulted in good quality as well, she added.

"Quality was excellent; we had very few problems around the state," Wilder said.

"The malt houses that received the barley

were pleased, the growers were pleased and it was an exceptional year for Idaho barley."

There are about 4,000 barley farmers in Idaho and Idaho ranks No. 1 in the nation in total barley production. About 70 percent of the barley produced here is malt barley, which is used in the beer-brewing process.

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BARLEY

Continued from page 4

The rest is grown for human food or animal feed.

According to NASS, Idaho farmers produced 55 million bushels of barley off of 500,000 harvested acres last year, which was 33 percent of the nation's total barley crop.

University of Idaho agricultural economists estimate Idaho barley farmers brought in \$274 million in farm-cash receipts last year, ranking barley as Idaho's No. 5 crop in that category.

Barley farmers around the state reported extremely favorable growing conditions in 2020.

"For barley, we had good soil moisture and the weather was just perfect," said Gordon Gallup, who farms near Ririe. "It was a good year for ... barley and we had good quality and good yields."

"In 2020, we had the perfect combination of good weather and growing conditions to grow exceptional barley."

— Laura Wilder, Idaho Barley Commission administrator

Rupert barley farmer Mike Wilkins said spring started out a little rough with cold and windy conditions but it didn't get super hot during the summer in his area, which was a big benefit for barley yields and quality, and harvest conditions were also great.

"Our yields were really good ... and our quality was really good also," he said. "We had a really good year."

"We had bumper yields last year," said Soda Springs barley farmer Scott Brown. "They weren't record yields but they were up there among the top several crops

we have ever had. We had good growing conditions and just the right amount of moisture. The crop did well all summer long."

The average yield during 2020 was for irrigated and dryland barley combined and yields in some areas were significantly higher than normal.

Blackfoot farmer Allen Young said yields in his barley fields last year were about 143 bushels per acre, which is about 2 bushels an acre better than they were in 2019, and he had a neighbor who hit 160-180 bushels in some fields. ■

RICKS

Continued from page 3

"This is the first time since high school that I have been this invested in something that I really wanted to win," she said. "That pressure just brought out my best this week."

The Discussion Meet is part of Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers program, which is open to producers between the ages of 18 and 35.

Ricks said her focus during the competition was on being personable rather than just sharing facts and figures.

"I appreciate facts and figures; they make people look very educated. But facts and figures alone are not very memorable," she said. "For me, I think it's also equally important to be memorable. People tend to remember stories and things you make personal. That's what I tried for."

IFBF President Bryan Searle, a farm-

er from Shelley, said Ricks represented the state well and her victory "brings an energy and excitement to Idaho Farm Bureau that will have lasting effects on

"My greatest feeling of accomplishment is doing this for Idaho. I have a lot of pride in Idaho."

— Marquee Ricks, East Idaho farmer

our organization in the many years to come."

Like many other Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members, Searle followed Ricks virtually during the competition.

"I watched all four rounds and she was professional, knowledgeable and most importantly, very considerate and full of ideas and solutions in every one of them," he said.

Farm Bureau's Discussion Meets have proven to be more than just a competition but a training ground for future leaders in developing skills that are needed to analyze problems and formulate action, said Brody Miller, an IFBF regional manager in southwest Idaho who oversees Idaho's Young Farmers and Ranchers program.

Those who participate in the events learn skills that make them better equipped to go back to their communities and lead, he said.

"Our communities need our young farmers and ranchers to show up and be involved," Miller said. "The Young Farmers and Ranchers program is the ideal training ground for our future leaders." ■

DUVALL

Continued from page 2

it is important we don't overlook economic sustainability. For America's farms and ranches to continue their important role in absorbing carbon and conserving green space, they must first be able to stay in business.

AFBF economists crunched the numbers and farm business revenue does not keep up with increasing land values. Nearly half of all farmland in America is at risk of increased liquidation pressure caused by overwhelming tax burdens.

As a result, it's difficult for farmers to pass their family business down to the next generation who desire to follow in the footsteps of their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

As it is, less than 2% of our population is directly engaged in growing the agricultural products that feed, clothe and power not just the United States but the world.

At a time when farm bankruptcies are

the third-highest they've been in a decade, we should all do what we can to reduce barriers for those just starting out, or wanting to get started, in agriculture.

Great strides have been made in recent years toward helping our farmers and ranchers find relief in the tax code, including the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which

'At a time when farm bankruptcies are the third-highest they've been in a decade, we should all do what we can to reduce barriers for those just starting out, or wanting to get started, in agriculture.'

AFBF supported.

But Congress needs to build on that momentum to make long-lasting, real change to our tax code in order to provide both relief and stability.

Even making some temporary pro-

visions from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act permanent would be a great first step, as many of the important provisions in that legislation will expire after 2025.

Other steps toward meaningful tax reform that would give farmers a fairer shake include reducing the capital gains tax, which impacts farmers at a disproportionate rate, and making permanent several temporary tax credit provisions for biodiesel and other renewable energy sources.

Every dollar counts on the farm, and farmers and ranchers need to plan their finances carefully to make it from one season to the next.

Not knowing what their tax burden will be adds to the uncertainty which is all too familiar in farming.

From unpredictable weather patterns and changing political climates to the COVID-19 pandemic, farmers and ranchers never know what is around the bend.

It is beyond time to ensure they find certainty and stability in the tax code. ■

MILLER

Continued from page

new animals or seed and each sector of the ag industry has its terminology and methodology for predicting change.

The term I would like to write about comes from the beef industry. EPDs – Expected Progeny Differences – help a rancher identify what benefits a particular animal has to offer and how a rancher can expect his or her herd to change due to a specific animal.

EPDs, which refer to the differences one can expect from parent to offspring, are special tools. They quite literally help predict the future that an animal can bring to a herd by using genetic data sets.

Of course, no human or geneticist can predict the exact future, and that is why it

is called EXPECTED progeny difference.

As excellent and correct as genetics can be, it is never an exact outcome right down to actual DNA. Nature has too many variables to ever allow us to believe we can precisely predict the future.

Every farmer and rancher who has calved in a snowstorm, had their crops hailed on, experienced a hard freeze or any other challenges mother nature throws at us, knows too well the term "expected" is not a given.

This is one of the many reasons farmers and ranchers earn science degrees, not art degrees, to pursue their careers.

There are too many people in our society who will tell us the future is inevitable. They look at a piece of data and extrapolate what that will mean for our community, state, nation, or even the

world's future.

I believe this is where bull buying season can be a great reminder and lesson to each of us. When we purchase a bull, we are buying potential. It is up to us and the grace of mother nature as to whether our future will be better or worse from that purchase.

I hope that all of us will be willing to apply the same lesson with our futures and work to support actions we agree with and oppose ideas we do not.

Not every bull purchased lives up to its EPDs, and not every proposal by a leader deserves to succeed. Ultimately, how we care for our stock and our beliefs determines the differences.

May we all nurture the differences in outcomes that we want and be stubborn enough to see them come to pass. ■

Continued from page 2

into tomorrow's leaders. This goal is known as PLAN, which stands for Personal growth, Leadership development, Advocacy and Networking.

In a nutshell, the idea is to provide plenty of opportunities for today's young farmers and ranchers to grow and develop into tomorrow's leaders for Farm Bureau, for agriculture and for their communities.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers and Ranchers program is a committee of the state board of directors. The committee is organized with a state chair and it represents IFBF's five organized districts around the state.

Each county Farm Bureau also has a YF&R chair and committee. We invite anyone who is interested in this program to reach out to their county Farm Bureau and get involved.

In the past, IFBF's Young Farmers and Ranchers program, which is for producers between the ages of 18 and 35, has done a good job of providing fun opportunities for young producers that allow them to network with others.

YF&R members had a fun time and built relationships but perhaps the program hasn't always provided those farmers and ranchers with the opportunities that allow them to develop professionally and gain the public speaking, budgeting, planning and other skills they need to become solid, capable leaders.

We have recently seen many more of these strong leaders get involved in Farm Bureau's entire policy development process. This provides ideas, vision, and views from all ages to our organization.

I recall not long ago a young farmer being in a group of us who visited one of our national elected officials. Though being very nervous, he asked the congressman a question. Later that day, he said, "I appreciate Farm Bureau so much. I'm so shy that I would have never asked a question without being provided this opportunity through Farm Bureau."

The main goal of PLAN is to provide young producers professional and personal development opportunities and the IFBF board is committed to provide the YF&R program the resources to accomplish that.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's YF&R organization now has a road map to accomplish the goals of PLAN.

One of the main goals of this plan is to involve our young members in every aspect of the organization, at the county, state and national level, and allow them to flourish, innovate and lead.

The YF&R program has been engaged in working with FFA students and recently hosted discussion meets in high schools around the state.

In 10 or 15 years, we will have an organization that is much stronger because our youth have had opportunities to grow, lead and develop professionally.

The future leaders of Farm Bureau will come to their leader-

ship positions with a solid understanding of the organization.

We have an amazing crop of young farmers and ranchers all over Idaho with unlimited potential and a solid understanding of agriculture.

We have seen many recent successes among our young producers and will see many more moving into the future.

One of the very recent successes was witnessing our state discussion meet winner, Marquee Ricks, represent us on a national level and earn first place in the nation in that event during the American Farm Bureau Federation convention in January.

That only has happened twice in Idaho Farm Bureau history.

Other recent successes: Our current state YF&R chair, Melissa Durrant, and her husband Neil, served this past year on the national YF&R committee, and Jessica and Kyle Wade will be serving on the national YF&R committee this coming year.

The potential and abilities of Idaho's young farmers and ranchers are unlimited and the YF&R program provides an opportunity for all of them to grow in so many different areas.

It is our duty as an organization to equip them with the professional skills they will need to tackle tomorrow's challenges and lead our agricultural industry into an uncertain future. ■

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Dam debate



Farm Bureau strongly opposes dam removal plan

POCATELLO – Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, the state’s largest farm organization, is strongly opposed to a proposal that would result in the removal of four lower Snake River dams that provide amazing benefits to Idaho and the entire Pacific Northwest region.

Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, has floated a \$33.5 billion plan that he believes could help endangered salmon populations. The highlight of Simpson’s proposal calls for the removal of the four lower Snake River dams.

This marks the first time a member of the PNW congressional delegation has formally raised the prospect of breaching dams.

The lower four dams on the Snake River produce a significant amount of cheap and environmentally friendly hydroelectric power to the region and are a critical part of a system on the Columbia and Snake rivers that allows wheat farmers, as well as producers of many other commodities, to export their product to the world.

Removing the dams would make the Columbia-Snake River system unnavigable for barges that move wheat, barley and other products to Portland for export.

Barging is the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly way of getting wheat from Idaho and other states to market and the Columbia-Snake system is the third largest grain export gateway in the world.

“These dams are the lifeblood of agriculture in Idaho, Washington, Montana and Oregon,” said IFBF Vice President Richard Durrant, a farmer from Meridian.

The river, combined with its system of dams and locks, provides for the environmentally friendly ability to transport wheat, pulse and other crops to Portland



Photo by Bryan Searle

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation strongly opposes a proposal by Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, that would result in the removal of four hydroelectric dams on the lower Snake River, including Lower Granite Dam, pictured here and page 10.

so they can be shipped across the world, he said.

The system also provides for the efficient transportation of fuel, fertilizer and machinery back up the river, which reduces freight costs to businesses and residents in the region.

“As a producer and marketer of Idaho agriculture products, I find it very disheartening to hear that an Idaho congressman would consider breaching the four lower Snake River dams,” Durrant said.

On July 31, three federal agencies – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration – reaffirmed their opposition to breaching of the four dams in a final

environmental impact statement.

A federal judge ordered the agencies that operate the Columbia-Snake River system to review all reasonable options for operating it in order to minimize the impact on endangered salmon.

Breaching of those dams has long been supported by some environmental groups and that idea has also been long opposed by farm and other groups.

IFBF policy, which was developed by its members at the grassroots level, supports “the continued existence and current usage of all dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers” and opposes “any efforts to destroy or decrease production of those dams.”

IFBF President Bryan Searle, a farmer



from Shelley, said the proposal attempts to put a price tag on the region's way of life.

Searle said Farm Bureau applauds the congressman for attempting to find a solution that would assist salmon populations but IFBF believes this particular plan would cause significant harm to the PNW economy and way of life.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, which represents 80,000 member-families across the state, including at least 11,000 people actively involved in agriculture, stands in opposition to the congressman's proposal, Searle said.

"Despite what supporters of the plan claim, make no mistake, this is a drastic measure that would forever alter our way of life in the Pacific Northwest, and not for good," he said. "Idaho Farm Bureau members are adamantly opposed to this proposal."

While most news stories about Simpson's proposal were positive toward the idea, the reality is that removal of those dams is opposed by a significant number of organizations and individuals in Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

In response to the proposal, the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, a non-profit group that represents a diverse coalition of 135 members in Idaho, Washington and Oregon, released a statement saying that "funding for salmon recovery and new energy technologies should not be tied to an extreme measure like breaching the Snake River dams, which provide over 95% effective fish passage and are a critical part of the region's energy portfolio."

According to PNWA, about 14 million metric tons of wheat destined for export move through the Columbia-Snake system each year, as well as 8 million metric tons of soybeans, 3 million tons of wood products and 9 million tons of corn.

The proposal was also opposed by a group that represents the thousands of farms in Idaho that grow wheat and barley.

As word about the proposal spreads across the region, "the Idaho Grain Producers Association voices their concerns about such drastic measures," IGPA leaders stated in a press release.

That release said the river system's importance to Idaho's grain growers cannot be overstated.

Wheat is grown in 42 of Idaho's 44 coun-

ties and wheat farmers in Idaho brought in an estimated \$525 million in farm-gate revenue in 2020, making wheat the state's No. 2 crop in that category.

Almost half of Idaho's wheat is moved by barge down the Columbia-Snake River system to Portland to be exported to foreign customers.

"Barging wheat is the most environmentally friendly mode of transportation available," the IGPA release states.

Barley ranked as Idaho's No. 5 crop last year with \$274 million in farm-cash receipts and Idaho is the nation's No. 1 barley producer.

Besides being grown in most parts of the state, wheat and barley are also important parts of many farmers' crop rotations and both commodities would be severely impacted by removal of the dams.

In the IGPA release, Idaho Grain Producers Association President Jamie Kress, a southeast Idaho farmer, said the 4,500 farm families who grow Idaho wheat and barley rely on the river system to get their crop to market "and it is counter-productive to consider removing dams that produce clean hydropower at a time when our country needs more clean energy production."

Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, said that while the issue of helping salmon populations is incredibly complex and he is reviewing Simpson's proposal and listening to Idahoans from every background on the topic, "my opposition to dam breaching remains unchanged and my commitment to Idaho's farmers, businesses, sportsmen and recreational users who depend on the existing system holds firm."

During the 2020 Idaho legislative session, lawmakers overwhelmingly passed a joint memorial that affirms their support for the entire Columbia-Snake River system.

The memorial, which passed 61-3 in the House and by a voice vote in the Senate, states that Idaho opposes the removal of dams on the system.

Simpson's plan would create a \$33.5 billion "Columbia Basin Fund" to help transition economies and sectors negatively impacted by dam removal.

The congressman's plan calls for barging on the Snake River to be replaced



Photo by Bryan Searle

This is a picture of the Snake River near Lower Granite Dam. Idaho Farm Bureau Federation strongly opposes a proposal by Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, that would result in the removal of this and three other dams on the lower Snake River.

with additional rail and truck traffic that, according to a study, would result in a significant increase in carbon emissions.

Removing the dams would also have a significant negative impact on power rates in the Pacific Northwest, which currently enjoys some of the very lowest power rates in the nation. The Columbia-Snake River system provides low-cost and clean hydropower to Idaho and the PNW.

According to a statement released by Simpson's office, the plan includes a "framework for reimagining the Northwest energy landscape...."

"Farm Bureau doesn't believe that reimagining an energy landscape that provides some of the cheapest energy prices in the nation is a good idea," Searle said.

While there is no guarantee the plan would provide any real help to salmon populations, it would certainly be bad for agriculture and power rates.

"This plan would remove highly functional run-of-river dams with world-class fish passage that provide fundamental benefits like clean energy and efficient commerce to our region, and put the region on track for higher carbon emissions and an increase in climate change," PNWA Executive Director Kristin Meira said in a statement. "It is not a responsible use of taxpayer dollars and ultimately is a

disservice to our region's fish."

A study commissioned by the PNWA and released last January found that dam breaching would increase diesel fuel consumption by almost 5 million gallons per year because barges would be replaced by less efficient truck-to-rail shipments.

It also found that dam breaching would result in an additional 24 million miles of travel per year on county, state and federal roads, and increase grain transportation and storage expenses by 50-100 percent.

The study found that shifting transportation of commodities from barges to truck and rail would increase carbon and other harmful emissions by more than 1.3 million tons per year, which is the equivalent of adding 181,889 passenger cars or 90,365 homes.

According to PNWA, it would take about 35,000 rail cars or 135,000 semi-trucks to move all the cargo that is barged on the Snake River.

Searle said Idaho Farm Bureau Federation supports efforts to recover salmon populations but he said that any federal dollars available for that "should not be used to create new problems for farmers, businesses and others in the PNW who depend on the Columbia-Snake River system." ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Wine grapes are harvested in a vineyard near Caldwell. Proposed legislation would move about \$140,000 in annual funding from the Idaho Wine Commission to the Idaho Hop Commission.

Proposal would move \$140,000 from wine to hop commission

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO — Legislation could be introduced during the 2021 Idaho legislative session that would take about \$140,000 in existing annual funding from the Idaho Wine Commission and redirect it to the Idaho Hop Commission.

The money, which comes from a state excise tax on strong beer, would be used

to promote beer that is produced using Idaho hops.

The wine commission for the past three decades has been receiving about \$140,000 each year from the excise tax on strong beer.

When Idaho began allowing, and taxing, beer above 5 percent alcohol in 1988, the money was directed to the wine commission because there was no significant craft brewing industry in Idaho.

But now there are more than 60 breweries in Idaho and Idaho also ranks No. 2 in the nation in the production of hops, one of the main ingredients used in beer making. A lot of the hops produced here end up in craft beers.

“We would like to redirect those funds to the Idaho Hop Commission to be able to promote beer that uses Idaho hops,” said Sheila Francis, executive director of Idaho Brewers United, which represents craft

brewers in the state.

Francis said her group has no animosity toward the wine commission and no one faults that commission for using the funds to promote the state's wine industry. But now that Idaho has a solid and growing beer industry, the time has come to use those funds to promote Idaho hops and the state's beer industry, she added.

She said IBU has been working closely with the hop commission on the goal of redirecting the beer tax money to the IHC and the plan is to introduce legislation this year to accomplish that.

"We are just trying to do the best thing for our industry," Francis said. "We would be thrilled to be able to partner with the hop commission and promote Idaho beer made with Idaho hops."

Wine industry leaders said they understand why groups representing the beer and hop industries want to use the money to promote their industry.

That said, they also point out that losing \$140,000 would have a large negative impact on the wine commission's ongoing efforts to promote Idaho wine and educate people about the state's thriving wine industry.

"I think that beer tax should go to promote beer. I think there's no argument with that," said IWC Executive Director Moya Shatz-Dolsby. But she added, "It would impact us greatly."

The wine commission has an annual budget of just over \$400,000. The commission also receives and administers about \$300,000 worth of specialty crop grant funds annually that are used to promote the state's wine industry within and outside of Idaho.

The IWC is funded by a combination of excise wine tax money, grower assessments and money raised during major wine-related events such as Savor Idaho, which is held in June and is the Idaho wine industry's premier fundraising and promotion event.

The IWC lost about \$100,000 in funding this year because of the cancellation of wine events such as Savor Idaho due to COVID-19.

The commission has already had to cut one of its four employees because of that loss of funding and it has also reduced staff



Photo by Sean Ellis

Wine grapes are harvested in a vineyard near Caldwell. Proposed legislation would move about \$140,000 in annual funding from the Idaho Wine Commission to the Idaho Hop Commission.

hours, Shatz-Dolsby said.

If the commission loses another \$140,000 on top of that, it would have a major impact on the IWC's ability to promote Idaho's fast-growing wine industry, said Williamson Orchards and Vineyards Manager Mike Williamson, a member of the IWC's board of directors.

"It would be a pretty deep hit for us," he said. "There is the potential for it to be pretty bad."

The Idaho wine industry has grown from 10 wineries in 1997 to 52 now and a recent economic impact study commissioned by the IWC showed the wine industry had a \$210 million economic impact on the state in 2017.

The promotion and education efforts undertaken by the commission over the years have resulted in Idaho's wine industry gaining a lot of notice and momentum in the state and around the nation, Williamson said.

The COVID outbreak has already created significant challenges for Idaho's wine industry and losing another \$140,000 "would be pretty devastating and is not what our industry needs at this time," he said. "It would be such a waste to lose all the momentum our

industry has gathered over the years."

In response to the coming legislation that seeks to move the wine excise tax funds from the wine commission to the hop commission, the IWC has been working on a few options, Shatz-Dolsby said.

One of the more promising ones is to increase the share of the state's wine excise tax money that goes to the IWC. Idaho's wine excise tax is 45 cents a gallon and 2 cents of that goes to the wine commission. The IWC might propose legislation this year that seeks to accomplish that.

Williamson said he would like to see the state's wine and beer industries seek a solution together that works for both sides.

"We are both growth sectors for Idaho agriculture and I'd like to see both of us continue to grow," he said.

Legislation was proposed during the 2020 Idaho legislative session that would have taken the wine excise tax funds from the IWC and directed them toward the state's general fund.

But lawmakers rejected that idea because they didn't like the idea of starting a precedent of taking money from an agricultural commission and putting it into the general fund. ■



Idaho Bean Commission photo

Beans are sorted at a processing facility in Idaho in this file photo. Jan. 6 was National Bean Day and Idaho farmers play a critical role in the U.S. dry bean industry by supplying most of the seed to grow those beans.

Idaho the major player in bean seed industry

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Jan. 6 was National Bean Day and while it may be one of the more obscure holidays, maybe it shouldn't be given how dry beans flew off grocery shelves earlier on during the COVID outbreak.

American consumers seem to know, at least intuitively, that dry beans have been one of the world's staple crops for a long time for a good reason.

Not only do beans provide a significant source of protein and fiber, they are low in fat and high in complex carbohydrates and iron.

And they can be stored for a long time.

In other words, they are a good food source to have on your shelves at any time but particularly during uncertain times. Consumers recognized that early during the pandemic and dry beans flew off shelves rapidly in many areas.

“Now even more than ever, beans have

proven how much of a valuable, affordable, shelf-stable and nutritious food source they are,” said Idaho Bean Commission Administrator Andi Woolf-Weibye.

The United States is a global leader in dry bean production and it all starts in Idaho.

Idaho ranks fifth among the states in dry bean production but is the top bean seed producer and provides roughly 90 percent of all bean seed in the United States, according to Don Tolmie, production manager for Treasure Valley Seed Co., one of many bean seed companies located in the Gem State.

“Idaho is the key to successful bean production in the United States,” he said.

“We’re far and away the No. 1 seed producer of dry beans and garden beans in the United States,” says Magic Valley farmer Carl Montgomery, president of Jerome County Farm Bureau.

U.S. farmers plant between 1.5 and 1.7 million acres of edible dry beans each year and the vast majority of the seed needed to grow those beans mostly comes from Idaho farmers.

As Woolf-Weibye puts it, “It all starts with the seed. No dry bean seed, no dry beans.”

Because of a rigorous testing and certification program, Idaho bean seed is certified 100 percent disease-free.

“That certification process is a real important part of the dry bean industry here in Idaho,” Montgomery said.

Most of Idaho’s dry beans are grown in the Treasure Valley in southwestern Idaho and the Magic Valley in the southcentral part of the state.

The climate in these areas is ideal for growing dry bean seed because the dry weather and low humidity results in low disease pressure, Montgomery said.

There is also ample irrigation in southern Idaho because of the reservoir systems, he added.

“Because of these factors, we can produce high-quality seed here,” he said.

Because of the certification process and ideal climatic conditions, “Our yields and quality are unmatched in the United States,” Tolmie said.

Dry beans have been an important part of Idaho farmers’ rotations for many decades and while they are not necessarily one of the state’s top cash crops on an annual basis, they play an important role in Idaho’s over-



Fun Fact

According to the U.S. Dry Bean Council, Americans consume about 7.5 pounds of beans per capital each year. The most popular beans are pintos, followed by navy beans, great northern beans, red kidney beans and black beans.

all agricultural industry, Tolmie said.

“I think the bean industry is not the shiny Corvette; it’s the ’68 Chevy pickup with a few dents in it but it serves its purpose,” he said. “It provides a nice rotation crop and it’s a good solid crop for the state. For the producers who take the time to do it right, it can be a very profitable crop.”

According to USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, Idaho farmers planted 65,000 acres of dry beans in 2020. That’s up 38 percent over what was planted in the state in 2019.

A challenging bean production season during 2019 in Canada and some of the United States’ main bean-producing states resulted in a significant reduction in the supply of dry beans, according to indus-

try leaders.

As a result, dry bean prices heading into the 2020 planting season were up 25-40 percent, depending on variety, over the same period in 2019.

That made them a nice alternative to many other crops and Idaho and U.S. dry bean acreage shot up as a result. U.S. acreage increased 23 percent this year, to 1.58 million acres.

Tolmie said Idaho bean yields and quality were good this year and prices were acceptable.

“For the first year in my memory, we didn’t have any significant weather interruptions this year,” he said.

“It was a good year for bean producers,” Montgomery said. ■

Idaho Beef Council invests \$250,000 in industry's future

Idaho Beef Council news release

MOSCOW – The Idaho Beef Council on Jan. 12 announced a \$250,000 gift to the University of Idaho to expand research aimed at strengthening consumer trust in beef production.

The investment of state beef checkoff dollars will establish the IBC Graduate Fellowship Endowment in the U of I's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and provide scholarship support to graduate students conducting research in topics ranging from beef safety and nutrition attributes to quality, consistency and marketability and new product development.

“We believe that supporting students in this way will advance the skills and knowledge of the next generation of beef industry experts, drive sustainable solutions and strengthen the Idaho beef industry's position in the marketplace,” said Idaho Beef Council Chairman Jeff Johnson.

The Idaho Beef Council is funded through an assessment paid by Idaho cattle ranchers.

“The support of Idaho cattle producers, through the Idaho Beef Council's investment, ensures the university will continue



Idaho Beef Council photo

Idaho Beef Council Chairman Jeff Johnson holds a check for \$250,000 that will establish a beef research endowment at the University of Idaho. The IBC, which is funded by Idaho cattle ranchers, announced the gift Jan. 12.

to expand the unique and transformative educational, research and outreach opportunities available to our students that, in turn, benefit Idaho's beef industry for generations to come,” said CALS Dean Michael Parrella.

Idaho is ranked in the top 15 in the nation for beef cattle production. As protein choices continue to expand worldwide, the IBC is committed to funding beef quality, safety and nutrition research to ensure consumers have confidence in their purchasing decisions.

Beginning on July 1, IBC Graduate Fellowship Endowment scholarships will be awarded to graduate students who have applied, been accepted and enrolled full time in a meat science graduate program at the U of I. Recipients will be selected by the U of I's Student Financial Aid General Scholarship Committee.

To qualify for support from the endowment, graduate student projects must align with the requirements of the Federal Beef Promotion Act and Order and seek to strengthen the beef industry's position in the marketplace, to maintain and expand domestic and foreign markets, and to identify new product opportunities. ■

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Photo by Sean Ellis

Potatoes are harvested in a field near Shelley in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. According to a report by University of Idaho farm economists, net farm income in Idaho increased 38 percent in 2020, to a record \$3.53 billion.

Idaho net farm income set record in 2020

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Total net farm income in Idaho reached a record level of \$3.53 billion in 2020, according to estimates by University of Idaho agricultural economists.

If realized, that would be a 38 percent increase over the \$2.55 billion level reached in 2019, which was also a record year in Idaho for net farm income, which is revenues minus costs and is the farmer's bottom line.

The main reason for the big increase in net farm income last year was the

financial assistance provided to agricultural producers across the country through the USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

The money was approved by Congress to assist farmers and ranchers that were impacted financially by the government-ordered shutdowns due to the

COVID-19 outbreak. Billions of dollars in CFAP payments were made to producers around the United States.

Idaho farmers and ranchers received an estimated \$490 million in CFAP payments in 2020, UI Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor told lawmakers Jan. 7 during a presentation highlighting the state of Idaho's agricultural economy.

During his presentation, Taylor outlined major points contained in UI's annual Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report. The 2020 version was unveiled during a meeting of the Idaho Legislature's Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee.

One of the main points Taylor made to lawmakers is that Idaho would have set a record for net farm income even without the CFAP payments.

"Idaho, even without (those) payments, would have reported a record high in net farm income" last year, he said. "That's a sign of health in Idaho agriculture."

According to projections contained in the 2020 Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report, farm cash receipts – this is the revenue farmers and ranchers receive for their commodity – totaled \$8.5 billion in Idaho last year, up 6 percent over 2019 and the second highest level ever, behind only the \$8.8 billion total reached in 2014.

Total Idaho farm revenues, including cash receipts, inventory changes, the estimated value of home consumption, government payments and machine hire and custom work, increased 10 percent to \$9.6 billion last year.

Total expenses are projected to have decreased 2 percent last year, putting total Idaho net farm income at \$3.53 billion in 2020, which is \$978 million higher than last year's record.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, a farmer from Shelley, said the big increase in net farm income in Idaho is certainly welcome news. But he also cautioned that not every producer received CFAP payments and many farmers and ranchers face challenging economic times.

"Not every producer received those CFAP payments and there are still a lot of

economic challenges on the farm," he said.

UI Agricultural Economist Ben Eborn, one of the report's co-authors, echoed those sentiments.

"On the whole, Idaho agriculture did great last year," he said. "But there are still plenty of individual farmers and ranchers that are struggling."

USDA forecasts that net farm income across the United States increased 43 percent to \$120 billion in 2020. As was the case in Idaho, the main reason for the big increase in U.S. net farm income is due to the CFAP payments.

Taylor told lawmakers that farm income is extremely volatile and he showed them a chart demonstrating the wild swings in farm income recorded in Idaho from quarter to quarter over the past 15 years.

In six of the past 10 years, Idaho has experienced double-digit swings in net farm income.

But, he added, the good news is that agriculture acts as a stabilizing force in local communities and in the state's overall economy because farmers and ranchers spend about the same amount of money on labor and other input costs regardless of whether they had a good financial year or not.

"It doesn't matter if (farm-level) milk prices are at \$12 a hundredweight or \$22, you still have to use the same amount of labor to milk a cow and the same amount of feed as well," Taylor said. "Agriculture is a very stabilizing force in your economy."

According to a report by UI ag economists released last year, agriculture directly and indirectly accounts for one of every eight jobs in the state, 13 percent of the state's total gross domestic product and 18 percent of total sales in Idaho.

Idaho's farming GDP has grown by 210 percent since 1997 in inflation-adjusted terms, Taylor said, while the state's overall GDP has grown 100 percent during that time.

"Agriculture is really a bright spot in Idaho," he said.

According to the Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report, milk remained the No. 1 farm commodity in Idaho in 2020 in terms of cash receipts.

The state's dairy operations brought in \$2.9 billion in farm cash receipts last year, up 2 percent over 2019.

Farm-level milk prices in Idaho averaged 2 percent lower in 2020 but production was up 4 percent and Idaho ranked No. 3 in the nation in total milk output.

Farm cash receipts from cattle and calves in Idaho are projected at \$1.6 billion in 2020, down 6 percent from 2019. According to the report, "disruption in the supply chain, packing plants and export markets caused by COVID-19 put downward pressure on cattle prices most of the year."

Potatoes remained Idaho's No. 1 crop in total revenue and the state's spud farmers brought in an estimated \$1.1 billion in farm cash receipts last year, a 13 percent increase over 2019.

Idaho potato production was up an estimated 7 percent last year and the average price for Idaho spuds was estimated to be up 6 percent, to \$8.80 per hundredweight.

Total farm cash receipts for wheat in Idaho were projected at \$525 million in 2020, up 17 percent.

Production was up 14 percent while the average price was down 3 percent.

Cash receipts for Idaho hay are projected to be down 9 percent in 2020 to \$427 million. Total hay production in the state was down 0.5 percent and the average price of \$153 per ton was down \$6 from 2019.

The total value of hay production in Idaho is estimated at \$777 million in 2020 but 45 percent of the hay produced in Idaho is used on the farm where it was produced. That hay used on the farm does not show up as cash receipts.

Total farm cash receipts for sugar beets produced in Idaho in 2020 are projected to be \$366 million, up 29 percent over 2019. Production is estimated to be 7 percent higher than in 2019 and the average beet price of \$53 a ton is 9 percent higher.

Farm cash receipts from Idaho barley are projected at \$274 million in 2020, up 10 percent from 2019. Idaho barley production last year was nearly equal to 2019 and the average barley price is estimated to be 3 percent lower. ■

Idaho Farm Bureau

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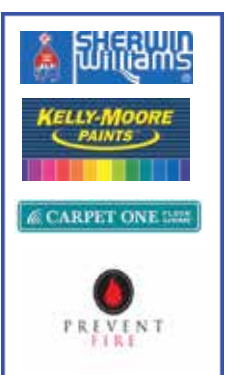
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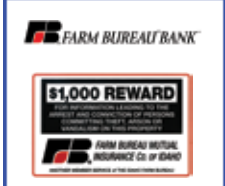
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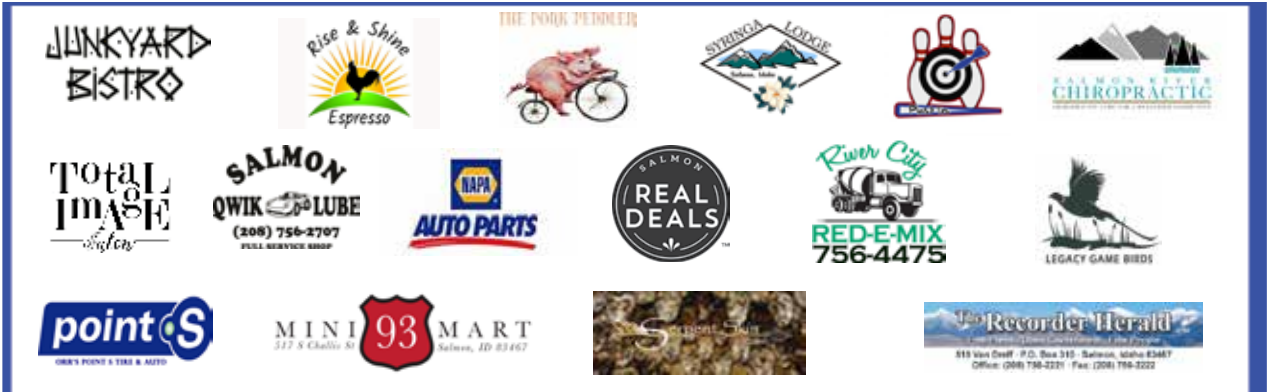
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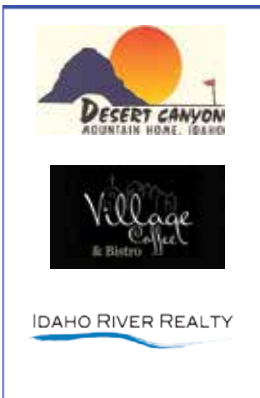
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Cultural methods to stimulate conifer seed production

By Randy Brooks
University of Idaho

If you're interested in collecting conifer seed to have your own "home-grown" product, it might seem like going out and collecting cones from the ground is the simple solution to this.

However, did you know that by the time most cones have fallen to the ground, the seeds have already been released or dispersed?

Cones need to be collected before they fully open, which will likely involve ladders or climbing. Once done, the "fruits" of your labor can be rewarding. If you're interested, read on because there are practices that can increase cone production and help ensure a good cone crop to harvest.

First, identify superior trees based on phenotype (observable characteristics). These trees can be cultured in several different ways to help stimulate seed cone production.

Cultural methods are typically practices that will improve tree growth or stimulate flowering and subsequent growth of flowers and fruits/cones. Cultural methods can be very effective for promoting seed cone production, but there are many external and internal factors that can affect results.

Some external factors include climate and pests. Internal factors can include seed cone cycles (one good crop every few years) and genetics (how a tree will respond to cultural practices).

Forest owners can use plant growth regulators, fertilizers, root raking, pruning and/or thinning, irrigation and/or moisture stress, girdling, or some combination of the above methods to improve conifer seed production.

Plant growth regulators

Plant growth regulators are hormone-like substances that have a chemical-like control over plant growth processes.

Gibberellins are naturally occurring

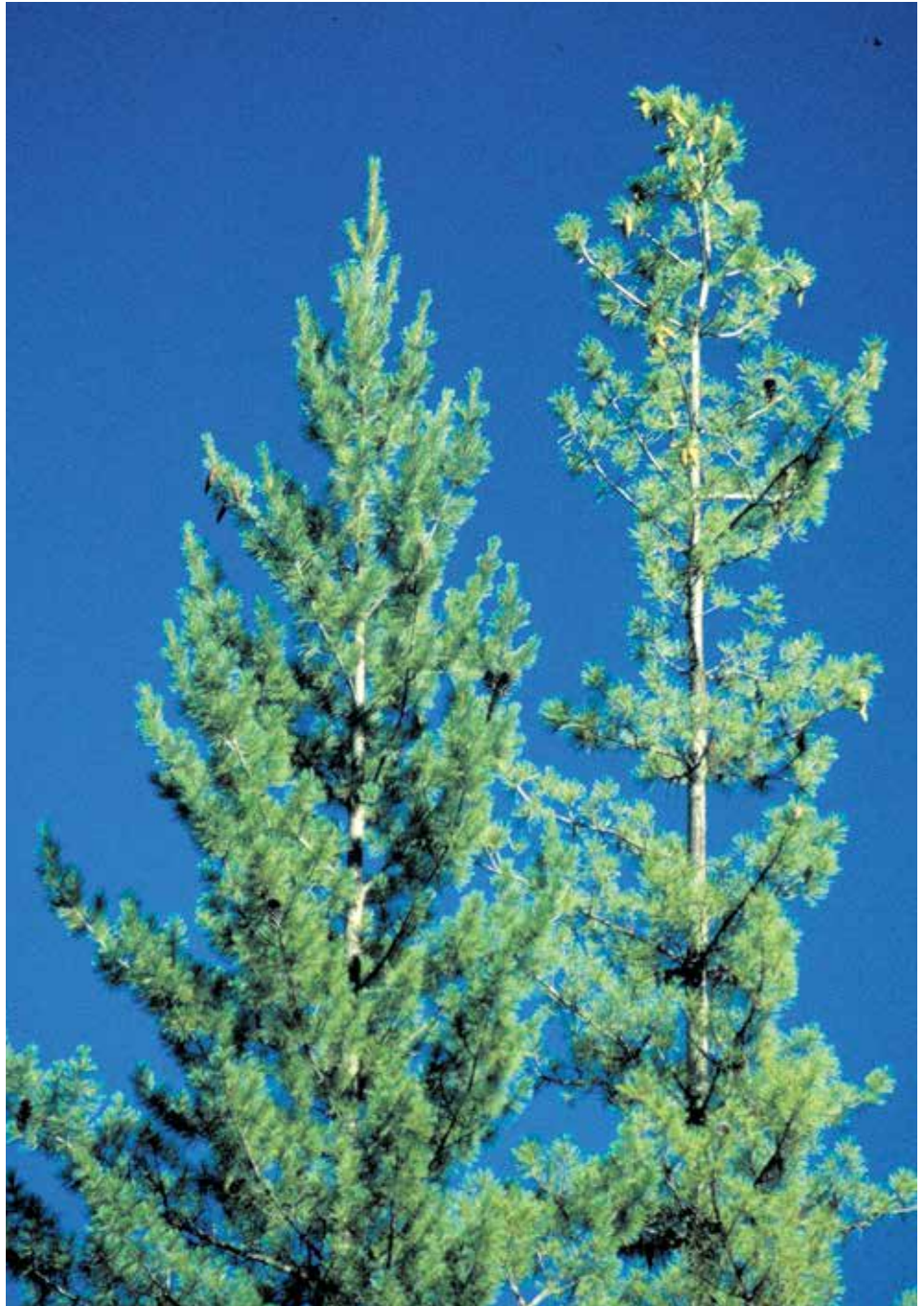


Photo by Chris Schnepf

Select cones from superior, healthy looking trees like the one on the left. LEFT: The developing seed can be seen inside the cone, and cones must be collected before they open. (Photo by Rich Schaeffer)

hormones that affect cell enlargement and cell division. Gibberellic acid has been used successfully to promote flowering and seed production in conifers, specifically larch.

Gibberellic acid is mixed in a 95% solution of ethanol (ethyl alcohol) and then injected into the tree when lateral shoot elongation reaches about 70%, but before bud differentiation begins. Read the label directions for use.

A hole can be drilled about ¼ inch into the tree and the mixture poured into the hole, or the mixture can be applied with a hypo-hatchet.

Fertilizers

Nutrient requirements of reproductive tissues are high. Limited amounts can effect conifer seed cone production. Nitrogen (N) and phosphorous (P) promote flowering in conifers. Specifically, N produces vegetative growth while P produces flower buds, fruit, and root development.

Potassium (K) helps build strong healthy plants. Fertilizer application timing is critical. It must be applied before initiation of floral buds if immediate increased flowering is to result.

For pines that require two years for cones to mature, spring application influences flowering in the subsequent year, and cones in the second year. Application rates vary, but the average is about 100 pounds actual N per acre (typically ammonium nitrate), and about 250 pounds P (as P₂O₅) and 100 pounds per acre K (as K₂O).

Fertilization can keep trees healthy while maximizing growth and vigor. However, it is recommended that a soil test be taken first to assess nutrient levels and perhaps take foliar samples as well to assess tree nutritional status.

If adequate nutrient levels exist, the money spent on fertilizers may be wasted. Fertilizer applications can be difficult, depending on terrain and accessibility. If you are only interested in seed production, consider choosing a few superior trees and fertilize those trees.

Fertilization can have other benefits such as increased tree health, growth, and vigor. When used with a combination of crown release or irrigation, the results are often better than when fertilizers are used alone.

Root raking

Traumatic stress often induces heavier flowering and cone production. Increased flowering of woody plants has been stimulated by root raking (or root pruning). This is accomplished by dragging sharp tines through the soil and cutting/severing the roots.

This process can be accomplished on one or two sides of the tree, not necessarily all the way around a tree. The drawbacks are that heavy equipment is needed, and terrain may be limiting.

Root raking can also kill smaller trees if damage is severe enough.

Another drawback is that soil disturbance can lead to other problems such as soil erosion. The Idaho Forest Practices Act says that sediment must be kept out of streams.

Thinning and pruning

Vigorous, dominant trees produce more seed than intermediate or suppressed trees, and when competition is severe, suppressed trees fail to produce any seed. Residual trees left after thinning generally show increased flower and seed crops.

Reasons for the increase are thought to be from more exposure to sunlight and less competition for resources such as moisture and nutrients.

Suppressed basal branches with only a few leaves or needles often consume more carbohydrates in respiration than they produce in photosynthesis for stem or fruit growth.

Research has shown that within a tree crown, the vigor of individual branches also influences fruit and cone development. Larger cones containing more seed tend to be produced on branches in the upper one-third of a tree.

When used in conjunction with each other, thinning and pruning select trees should be a cultural practice that is practical for any landowner looking to produce more seed.

Girdling

Girdling involves removing, excising, or cutting a small, thin strip of bark containing the cambium and phloem from the around the stem, branch, limb, or scaffold of a tree.

Doing so often stimulates reproductive growth because it impedes the translocation of carbohydrates and growth regulators in the phloem. Phloem transports materials

down, while the xylem transports materials upwards.

When downward transport of carbohydrates is blocked, they tend to diffuse back into the xylem and are translocated back up to, and concentrate in the leaves and tissues involved in reproduction.

Girdling trees in years when cone production is high does not increase overall numbers of cones. Girdling can increase cone production on individually treated branches. However, one must gain access to the upper third of the tree and this is often times difficult to do.

Girdling can be accomplished with a variety of tools, ranging from chainsaws, pruning saws, handsaws, or knives. Larger saws make it more difficult to control the cut, and care must be exercised in order to avoid cutting into the xylem, which would disrupt the flow of water upward, thus killing the tree.

Special girdling knives are available that allow cutting between the bark and the xylem. Smaller wounds heal much faster than larger wounds.

Girdle the tree at breast height as the needles emerge. Only girdle about 60% around the tree, and on the opposite side as high as the diameter is wide.

In other words, you will have two girdles on each side of the tree, one higher than the other and barely overlapping. Do not girdle around the entire bole or the tree will be killed. This method is probably not well suited for the inexperienced.

Summary

There are a number of effects of different cultural practices to stimulate conifer reproductive growth. Some measures are more destructive than others, and may be better served on trees that are intended for harvest.

A combination of practices may work better than an individual practice. Economics – cost/benefit ratio – must be examined, as well as damage to the tree.

Once the cones are collected, you can extract the seed from them fairly easily by putting them in a sack to dry. Once dried, shake the seeds out and plant them in desired locations.

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

Bingham County is potatoes and a whole lot more

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BLACKFOOT – More potatoes are produced in Bingham County than any other county in Idaho and the United States and when it comes to spuds, Bingham is the center of the potato universe.

But Bingham County is not a one-trick pony when it comes to agriculture and the county ranks near the top for many other farm commodities produced in Idaho.

“There is a lot of agriculture in Bingham County,” says Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, a potato farmer in the county. “It’s definitely the largest potato producing area in the U.S. and there is a lot of pride in the potatoes that are grown here, but the county is also very diverse when it comes to agriculture.”

According to the Idaho Potato Commission, farmers in Bingham County produced 57,110 acres of potatoes last year, almost twice as much as the state’s No. 2 spud-producing county, Power, which produced a total of 30,424 acres of potatoes in 2020.

But Bingham County last year also ranked high in the state among several other farm commodities, including wheat, sugar beets, barley, hay and beef cattle.

“Some counties rank high in just one or two commodities,” says Bingham County Farm Bureau President Ralph Dalley, a rancher from Blackfoot. “Bingham County is definitely potatoes but we also rank pretty high in a lot of com-





Photos by Ralph Dalley

Students practice roping “horses” during Moreland Adventure Days, an annual event supported by Bingham County Farm Bureau. The main focus of BCFB is educating the county’s youth about agriculture.
PREVIOUS PAGE: Students at Moreland Elementary School “milk” a plastic cow during Moreland Adventure Days, an annual event supported by Bingham County Farm Bureau. The main focus of BCFB is educating the county’s youth about agriculture.

modities. We’re a pretty diverse county as far as agriculture goes.”

Bingham County ranks No. 1 in Idaho in total farm-gate revenue from crops. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the county’s farmers brought in \$352 million in farm-gate revenue from crops in 2017.

That placed Bingham as the state’s most important county when it comes to revenue from crops, ahead of No. 2 Canyon County, which produced \$314 million in farm-gate revenue from crops in 2017.

Add in farm-gate revenue from live-

stock and Bingham County ranked No. 6 in Idaho in total farm-gate revenue in Idaho in 2017 (\$453 million).

The only counties ahead of them, with the exception of Canyon, were heavily tilted toward revenue from dairy.

Agriculture is big in Bingham County and so are the farms.

According to the Census of Ag, there were 1,177 farms in Bingham County in 2017 and the average sized-farm in the county was 793 acres, far more than the statewide average of 468 acres.

But while the county is heavily agricultural, a large and growing part of the

population there is disconnected from agriculture and has no real idea what farming and ranching are about and how important the industry is to the county’s and state’s economy, Dalley says.

That’s why the main focus of the Bingham County Farm Bureau organization is on education, starting with the county’s youth, he adds.

“The main focus of our county Farm Bureau is the youth,” Dalley says. “We spend a lot of money on the youth in Bingham County.”

“We want to make sure people keep knowing where their food really comes

from and get people involved in agriculture,” he adds. “We want people to know and understand that we’re out there producing food and it’s not an easy task to put food on the table.”

Bingham County Farm Bureau provides \$20,000 a year in scholarship money to county residents. The organization also provides another \$10,000 in agricultural mini grants to all teachers and agricultural and FFA programs to be used in the classroom.

BCFB also provides \$6,000 to place farm-related books in school libraries. A sticker in each book lets kids know they were provided by the local Farm Bureau organization.

The county Farm Bureau financially supports kids who participate in the annual 4-H live animal sales.

The county Farm Bureau also heavily

supports the annual Moreland Adventure Days event at Moreland Elementary School. Included in the all-day event are activities that teach children about farming and ranching.

board member who helps coordinate the farm-related activities.

“It’s an eye-opening experience for those parents and they learn so much,” she said.

“There is a lot of agriculture in Bingham County. It’s definitely the largest potato producing area in the U.S. and there is a lot of pride in the potatoes that are grown here, but the county is also very diverse when it comes to agriculture.”

— Bryan Searle, Bingham County potato farmer and Idaho Farm Bureau Federation president

BCFB also teams up with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation and other county Farm Bureau organizations to run a booth at the Eastern Idaho State Fair in Blackfoot, which attracts upward of 250,000 people each year.

As people, even in Bingham County, get further removed from agriculture, “We feel it’s

Among other things, BCFB volunteers help teach the kids how to make butter, grind wheat and milk a plastic cow.

One of the added benefits of this event is that the parents who attend it also learn about agriculture, says Sara Erb, a Bingham County Farm Bureau

important to continue to remind them about how vital agriculture is and where their food really comes from,” Ralph Dalley says. “That’s why we focus on the many things that we do to keep reminding people, ‘We’re still out there raising your food.’” ■

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



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185 S WOODRUFF AVE

570 PANCHERI DR

1546 W BROADWAY ST

MERIDIAN

360 E FAIRVIEW AVE

1645 S SPRINGVALLEY LANE

MOSCOW

326 TROY ROAD

NAMPA

1130 CALDWELL BLVD

824 12th AVE RD

POCATELLO

588 YELLOWSTONE AVE

POST FALLS

1650 EAST SELTICE WAY

TWIN FALLS

947 BLUE LAKES BLVD N

2362 ADDISON AVE E

142 WASHINGTON ST N



Photo by Sean Ellis

Wheat is harvested in a field near Nampa in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. The average wheat yield in Idaho was 96.7 bushels per acre in 2020, which was a record for the state's wheat farmers.

Idaho set a record for average wheat yield in 2020

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Extremely favorable growing conditions resulted in Idaho wheat farmers setting a record for average yield per acre last year.

According to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the average wheat yield in Idaho during 2020 was 96.7 bushels per acre.

Teton farmer Dwight Little said weath-

er conditions were near ideal in his area for wheat and barley.

"We just had ideal growing and harvest conditions for grains this year," he said.

Little said in his area, grain farmers usually have to stop for two or three days at least twice during harvest season for a rain or wind event. That didn't happen in 2020.

"We never did have a rain or other weather event that stopped the com-

bins," he said. "I can't remember a better harvest season."

Last year's record average yield of 96.7 bushels per acre was up significantly from the average yield of 87.8 in 2019 and 5 percent more than the previous record of 91.9 bushels set in 2018.

"Genesee" Joe Anderson, who farms in North Idaho, said his winter wheat yields last year were about 20 percent above normal.

See **WHEAT**, page 33

Government farm payments jumped in 2020 due to COVID

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Because of the federal Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, total government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers, as well as producers across the country, skyrocketed in 2020.

According to estimates by University of Idaho economists, direct federal government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers totaled \$646 million in 2020, a 291 percent increase over the \$165,000 total in 2019.

Of that total, \$490 million was in the form of the CFAP payments, which were designed to help producers who were economically impacted by the government-ordered restrictions related to COVID-19.

Those projections are contained in the 2020 version of the university's annual "Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture" report, which was released Jan. 7.

Despite the large increase in federal government payments, Idaho farmers and ranchers still received a lot less of their income from government payments in 2020 compared to the average producer across the nation.

According to the 2020 Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report, government payments contributed 18 percent to Idaho total net farm income last year, up from 6 percent in 2019.

But direct government payments are forecast to be 39 percent of total U.S. net farm income in 2020.

Idaho agriculture received 1.4 percent of total government payments to U.S. agriculture in 2020.

Idaho farmers and ranchers normally receive a much smaller percentage of their income from federal government payments than U.S. agriculture as a whole.

The large increase in government payments to Idaho farmers and ranchers



Photo by Sean Ellis

Onions are sorted at a processing facility in southwestern Idaho in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. Federal government payments to farmers jumped significantly in 2020 due mainly to coronavirus-related assistance to help farmers negatively impacted by COVID-19.

last year contributed to the state setting an all-time net farm income record of \$3.53 billion in 2020. That was 38 percent higher than the previous record of \$2.55 billion, which was set in 2019.

USDA estimates that net farm income in the United States increased 43 percent to \$120 billion in 2020. As was the case in Idaho, the main reason for the big increase in U.S. net farm income is the CFAP payments.

While the CFAP payments certainly pushed Idaho's net farm income record to a very high level, it should be noted that the state would have set a net farm income record last year even without any government payments, said UI Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor, one of the authors of the Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture report.

"We would have done just fine in Idaho even without government payments," he

said. "That's a real sign of health in Idaho agriculture."

"We would have surpassed the previous net farm income record anyway, but with those CFAP payments, they blew the previous record out of the water," said report co-author Ben Eborn.

In addition to the CFAP payments, Idaho agricultural producers received an estimated \$26 million in Market Facilitation Program payments in 2020, according to the UI report. Those are payments USDA made to farmers and ranchers who were harmed by what the department termed "unjustified foreign retaliatory tariffs" that resulted in the loss of traditional export markets.

Idaho producers received an estimated \$95 million in grain commodity program payments last year, \$28 million from federal conservation programs and \$7 million from disaster programs. ■

Agriculture sustainability in 2021 and beyond

The new presidential administration will usher in a new administration with decidedly different objectives than those of his predecessor.

The newly appointed Secretary of Agriculture, EPA administrator and other cabinet members will carry out the direction of the Biden administration with profound impacts on agriculture.

As the transition of power falls into place, farmers and ranchers need to adapt to one of the biggest topics bound to affect agriculture in this new administration: sustainability.

“Sustainability” is a buzzword frequently thrown around policy circles in Washington, D.C, and often heard in advertising. But what does it truly mean?

Sustainability can be defined as production methods that increase efficiency and environmental benefits. Another part of the definition includes the economic benefits brought to a community.

The jobs that farming and ranching generate are often the lifeblood of the rural communities in which they operate and must be part of the definition of sustainability.

In politics, much of the discussion centers around efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. The issue is becoming more bipartisan as voters become engaged, making it relevant for members of Congress and prompting the introduction of legislation.

Top priorities for some in the House and Senate agriculture committees are issues related to pesticide use, carbon sequestration in the soil, carbon diox-



ide emissions, and genetically engineered seeds.

You can bet environmental issues will continue to be a major topic the next four years and in the drafting of the 2023 farm bill.

Consumers are also increasingly interested in where

their food comes from, how it is produced, and its environmental impact. A quality product is no longer enough to win a consumer's favor as people increasingly seek brands that align with their personal values.

According to a 2019 Hotwire survey, 47 percent of shoppers want to do business with companies they perceive as environmentally conscious. Some consumers are willing to pay a premium price for food they believe is produced in an environmentally superior way.

Corporate America has taken notice, with many companies making sustainability pledges and advertising products that are sustainable or environmentally friendly.

While sustainability has moved into the spotlight, consumers are increasingly migrating to urban areas and away from where food is produced and the people that grow it. Farmers and ranchers make up only 1.3 percent of the American workforce compared to 70 percent in 1840.

Consumers can no longer talk to farmers or ranchers about what they do, because they don't know any. They formulate ideas about food production by what they read on the Internet or view in a documentary.

People are genuinely curious about where their food comes from and

they're looking for answers. As each generation becomes further removed from the land, it's no wonder that people question how their food is produced and are unaware of the major advances made in the industry.

Farmers and ranchers are already in a great position to engage in these conversations because sustainability is ingrained in everything you do.

Odds are your family has been in farming or ranching for generations. You make decisions with the hope of passing the land on to the next generation. You're constantly thinking about how to improve efficiency, save water, reduce inputs, and improve the land.

You may never have used the word “sustainable” to describe your operation but it's vital to start talking about how you've positively impacted the environment and generated jobs to align with current consumer demand and policy discussions.

Leading those conversations from your farms and ranches is the best method to demonstrate your sustainable practices.

In the sugar beet industry, we've been working hard to tell a number of success stories. The debut of the Roundup Ready sugar beet in 2008 led to huge gains in sustainable farming practices.

Better production practices have become available to growers that have helped improve the environment. In fact, our industry has identified over 25 environmental benefits achieved since the adoption of bioengineered seeds 12 years ago.

Some of these include:

- The use of fewer and less-toxic herbicides.
- Fewer herbicide applications and fewer trips across the field.
- Less herbicide runoff into groundwater.

See **GRIF**, page 33

GRIFF

Continued from page 32

- Reduction of labor.
- No-till and strip-till conservation methods to reduce soil erosion from wind and water.
- Increased air quality due to less fuel use.

These are just a few of the sustainability achievements the sugar beet industry has made since 2008, and we've been busy sharing them with decision-makers in Congress.

Whether it's dairy, wheat, potatoes or cattle, every commodity has a success story to tell.

You're already equipped to tell those

stories because farmers and ranchers are the ultimate environmentalists, even if you've never thought of yourself that way.

Your very livelihoods depend upon careful stewardship of existing resources, giving you instant credibility to speak on these topics.

It's time to start crafting your own sustainability story. Begin thinking about how your operation positively contributes to the environment and how to tell that story.

Whether it's through association boards, grower-led companies, or even your own social media channels, there are plenty of ways to spread the word

about how agriculture sustains both our environment and our communities.

There is now a premium on sustainable production practices thanks to consumers, elected officials, and food companies.

Agriculture has a unique story to tell and as we head into four years of a new administration, it's more crucial than ever that we share it.

Brad Griff grew up on a farm in Southern Idaho and spent 10 years working for members of Congress, specializing in agriculture and natural resources policy. He now serves as the executive director of the Idaho Sugarbeet Growers Association. ■

WHEAT

Continued from page 30

"It was an amazing growing season," he said. "It was the growing season without stress. It never got too hot and the rain came just like we had irrigation. It was a really low-stress year for the crop."

Wheat is grown in 42 of Idaho's 44 counties and according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 2,584 wheat farms in the state.

Wheat is Idaho's No. 2 crop in terms of total farm-gate revenue and the state is known for producing a consistent supply of wheat almost every year due to the fact much of the wheat produced here is grown under irrigation.

Idaho wheat farmers brought in an estimated \$525 million in farm-cash receipts last year.

Idaho farmers harvested 1.16 million acres of wheat in 2020, up 3 percent from 2019.

"But with those record yields, the total

production last year was up 14 percent above 2019," said Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Casey Chumrau.

Idaho's total wheat production in 2020 was 113 million bushels, compared with 99 million bushels in 2019.

"We never did have a rain or other weather event that stopped the combines. I can't remember a better harvest season."

— Dwight Little, Teton farmer

The record average yield set last year is for both irrigated and dryland fields combined and yields were much higher than that average number in some areas where wheat is grown under irrigation.

Meridian farmer Neil Durrant, who farms with irrigation, said his wheat yields, which normally average about 150 bushels per acre, were up a good 10-15 bushels in 2020.

"I heard a lot of guys were getting over 150 bushels an acre," he said. "We were a little above 150 and we were hitting almost 170 bushels on a couple of fields."

As in other areas of Idaho, growing conditions played a significant role in the higher yields in southwest Idaho, Durrant said.

"Yields were up significantly and I think the weather played a big role in that," he said.

With wheat prices on the uptick, Idaho farmers are expected to plant more wheat acres this year.

According to NASS, Idaho farmers planted 740,000 acres of winter wheat for the 2021 season, up from 720,000 seeded acres for the 2020 season.

"We're expecting spring wheat acres to be up as well, partially to take advantage of the higher prices we've been seeing on the futures market," Chumrau said.

She said hard red wheat futures prices are at their highest level since 2014 and export prices for soft white wheat out of Portland are at their highest level since 2015. ■

A look at how the markets are doing

At the time I wrote this article, the futures markets were still riding the trend higher.

Chicago May wheat was trading \$1.50 higher than the second week in August. May corn futures are up \$2.10 over the same time frame. This is good news for producers; however, a lot depends on your location as to whether or not you are able to take advantage of these price moves in the market.

When we look at Portland, the wheat producers that contract into that market have experienced higher prices as the basis for hard red winter and dark northern spring have remained steady, giving the producers higher bids along with the strength in the futures.

Producers of soft white have also seen bids move higher with the futures but the basis has also strengthened, giving you higher cash prices.

The market in southeast Idaho is a different story. The run times at the flour mills have been reduced with a reduction in the demand for flour in the domestic market. Retail flour sales are sluggish and for now the outlook into the spring and summer months remains the same.

Grain elevators are bidding based off of what they can sell into the Portland market. This means that these producers are now paying for the extra freight to deliver wheat into the Portland.

Let's take a look at the market that



gives everyone an opportunity to take advantage of the strength in the futures and that is new crop. At this time, the cash bids for new crop wheat are pretty good; however, when we take a closer look we can see that the basis for these delivery months is low and very weak for the most part.

With this in mind, this once again gives us the opportunity to use the futures for now and then watch and wait for the basis to strengthen before final-pricing your commodity.

Even though the basis at times isn't as large of a factor in the cattle market, we can still use the futures to manage your price risk in the market.

Using the futures in the cattle market is probably more essential than in grain just for the fact that with grain you can contract your crop long before it is even planted. In the cattle market, that is usually a bigger challenge to contract your calves before they are ready for market or even before they are born.

In the cattle business, using futures can be a very important part of your marketing program. The thing to remember is that it really doesn't matter the weight you sell your calves at, it all has a correlation to the futures market.

At this time, the October feeder cattle

futures contract is at \$154. This is near the high for the past 12 months. When we look at this level along with the historical timeline over the past five years, we can see that this could very well be a good time to hedge some of your calves and manage your price risk in the market.

Historically, feeder cattle over the past five years have been volatile between now and October. However, the charts tell us that even with the volatility, the market usually doesn't trade much higher than at this time of the year. It does have the possibility, however, to trade lower.

In the February World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report, USDA didn't change the wheat numbers that much overall; however, one number did stick out like a sore thumb.

According to the report, China is currently holding 51% of the total wheat stocks in the world. You can make up your own mind as just what impact this may or may not have in the market.

This could have an impact on specific classes of wheat as the U.S. has been exporting a good amount of soft white, which could leave the stocks-to-use ratio of soft white at some of the lowest levels in recent years.

As a producer I wouldn't hold out thinking soft white has nowhere to go but up but short stocks and high prices have a way of enticing more acres to be planted and it might not take many additional acres to increase the supply of soft white in the market.

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

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Photo by Bill Schaefer

People check out farm equipment during the 2020 Eastern Idaho Ag Expo in Holt Arena in Pocatello. The Eastern Idaho Ag Expo and other farm equipment shows were held virtually this year and that might be impacting sales of farm equipment.

Outlook varies for farm equipment sales during COVID

By Bill Schaefer

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – While the U.S. economy continues to slowly recover from the impacts of COVID-19, a recent report indicates that U.S. agriculture enjoyed record net farm income during 2020.

Net farm income in Idaho and the United States are both estimated to have increased substantially in 2020.

With the increased farm income, said UI Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor, Idaho farmers and ranchers should be sheltering their increased revenue with land or equipment purchases.

“Where are they going to shelter this?”

Taylor asked rhetorically. “Well, they’re going to incur some additional expenses and try to update their equipment line and try to buy land and other expenses.”

Mike Lindsay, a John Deere field sales rep for Stotz Equipment in American Falls, said that sales for new tractors are up and that the waiting period for a new John Deere tractor is up to a year out.

“If they want new, yes, it’s gotten a lot harder to get the new equipment,” said Lindsay.

Tractor sales may be up nationally but sales representatives for potato equipment manufacturers in Idaho and Utah say that their equipment sales range from average to slightly above average.

The National Potato Council’s Potato Expo, the Idaho Potato Conference and the Eastern Idaho Ag Expo, all scheduled for January, moved to virtual platform this year, resulting in an absence of public gatherings that may have contributed to a reduction of orders.

“Sales are above average but we’re not going hog wild,” said Kelly Duffin, a sales rep for Double L, a potato farming equipment dealer based in Heyburn.

Duffin said the potato industry has yet to recover from last year’s economic crash and that has impacted equipment purchases.

He said another issue facing manufacturers is the increased price of steel and multiple large increases in steel prices have

taken place since November.

Duffin said that the lack of in-person ag shows has impacted the company's ability to meet with their customers and that creates roadblocks to success.

"When you don't have those opportunities, yeah, it's a little frustrating," he said. "You spend a lot more time on the phone talking to people instead of face to face."

In an effort to get together with their customers, Duffin said, Double L and two other equipment manufacturers, Lockwood and Milestone, were exploring the possibility of holding open houses for small groups that fall within the state mandate that limits groups to 10 people or less.

Shane Mitchell, marketing director for Milestone Equipment in Blackfoot, said that sales were better last year than this year.

"I would say it's looking like an average year," he said. "We're selling enough to keep us busy but it's not as busy as we were last year."

Milestone produces a variety of potato equipment but specializes in seed potato cutters and cut-seed treaters along with pilers and conveyors.

"There's still interest out there but all the growers do seem to be a bit more careful in their decisions right now," Mitchell said.

He said Milestone didn't participate in the virtual conferences because the company didn't believe they were worth the time or the money.

"The virtual thing just didn't feel like it was going to be productive," Mitchell said.

There is no substitute for a personal meeting with someone, he said.

"As I'm out here working on sales and equipment, I always prefer to meet someone in person when we're going over these machines and going over these quotes," Mitchell said.

Allen Peterson, owner of Better Built Equipment in Orem, Utah, said that equipment orders are down

for 2021. Better Built produces seed cutters and cut-seed treaters for the potato industry.

"Typically, our busiest times of the year are after harvest and before planting," Peterson said. "Last year when COVID happened, it basically shut us down during our busy time of the year and it wasn't because we weren't able to go to work, it was because people weren't calling and ordering stuff. This year is kind of fairly similar; we do have some sales but the numbers are definitely down."

Peterson said he participated in the NPC's virtual Potato Expo but that he didn't have a single encounter during the time he was online. He said virtual shows don't create the traffic that he has seen at past in-person shows.

"The Potato Expo is always one of the good shows for us," Peterson said. "That's one of the ones we go to and we do pick up quite a few sales from that one and then obviously" also from the other shows.

Peterson is hoping to pick up some orders this spring but he is looking forward to the day when the Expo and other conferences return to normal.

"Nothing beats that personal contact," he said. "Even parts sales are down and I think one of the reasons is when those guys are attending those conferences, when they're having their break and walking the trade show, it also sparks, 'Oh hey, if I'm not looking at buying new equipment, I'm looking at servicing my equipment so I need to make sure I order these parts.' I think right now just because of the way things are going, it's quieter than it normally is this time of year." ■

Photo by Bill Schaefer

People check out farm equipment during the 2020 Eastern Idaho Ag Expo in Holt Arena in Pocatello. The Eastern Idaho Ag Expo and other farm equipment shows were held virtually this year and that might be impacting sales of farm equipment.





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