

GEM STATE **Producer** Idaho Farm Bureau

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Flooding
Has Idaho Ranch
UNDER WATER



Time to move on milk marketing system reform

My earliest memories of farming were in my family's dairy barn. Those were some of my happiest memories—rising before the sun to milk the cows, helping care for our animals and doing my part to provide a nutritious product for our community.

Dairying also brought some of my earliest heartache in farming. It's a hard business on

the best days, but the most frustrating part of the job came from the mysterious ups and downs of milk prices under the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) system.

Dairy farmers deserve a fair and transparent paycheck for the work they do, 365 days a year, and it's long past time we set about modernizing this system.

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By **Bryan Searle**

President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



The blessing of Idaho's reservoirs

Well, we prayed for snow this year and we got snow. Lots of it. Idaho received an abundance of mountain snowpack this winter and it was sorely needed following two years of water scarcity in many parts of the state.

Thanks to the foresight of our predecessors who built Idaho's vast reservoir systems, we will be able to capture a lot of the water that comes from that snow as it melts.

Contrast Idaho to California, which has

built no new water storage capacity for going on six decades despite its population more than doubling.

Record amounts of mountain snow were recorded in some parts of California this winter but most of the water from that snow will flow into the ocean and not be used to irrigate.

In Idaho, the state is spending millions of dollars each year pursuing ways to create

See **SEARLE**, page 7

Inside Farm Bureau

By **Zak Miller**

CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



1 out of 100

In a recent infographic using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, it was imagined what the U.S. labor force would be if the 200 million workers in the country were condensed down to just 100 people.

My title should have given away the answer. If all workers in the United States were concentrated to 100 people, there would be just 1 of you to feed the 99.

We know that those involved in agriculture tend to live more isolated existences than many in our society, but what if you were the

only one, period? What would you do the same? What would you do differently?

Interestingly, the data that goes along with the infographic says that of the world of 100, you would have 8 people in the food industry, so many of the other voices would ask about your work and production.

How would so many customers affect what and how you produce your crops? (According to the American Farm Bureau, the average farmer in the U.S. feeds 166 people.)

See **MILLER**, page 7



Idaho Farm Bureau.

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Photo by Bob Smathers

Wheat is harvested in a file near Genesee in this Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo. According to U.S. Census Bureau data released May 4, \$325 million worth of ag products were exported from Idaho during the first three months of 2023.

Idaho ag export value well ahead of last year's record pace

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The total value of agricultural exports from Idaho increased by 26 percent during the first quarter of 2023 compared with the same period in 2022.

That's significant because, according to one metric, Idaho set a record for total ag export value last year, at \$1.13 billion.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data released May 4, \$325 million worth of ag products were exported from Idaho during the first three months of 2023.

That was \$67 million, or 26 percent, more than the total recorded for the same period in 2022.

First-quarter Idaho ag export value surged on the back of higher commodity prices in a few sectors that are impactful for the state of Idaho, said Doug Robison, the Idaho president of AgWest Farm Credit.

For example, cattle values were elevated as a result of a smaller herd nationwide and potato prices and related products increased in 2022 as a result of drought, lower yields and fewer planted acres, he said.

Cattle and potatoes are the state's No. 2 and No. 3 agricultural commodities in terms of total farm-gate revenue, behind milk.

While some of the first-quarter ag value increase is due to higher prices, a lot of it is also due to increased volume.

COVER: See page 4 for a story about how the Guthrie Ranch in Inkom has sustained major flooding damage.

Photo by Joel Benson

See EXPORTS, page 11

Flooding engulfs most of Inkom ranch

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

INKOM – Sometimes the river gives, sometimes it takes away.

This year, an overflowing river has submerged most of the Guthrie Ranch in Inkom, causing major challenges for the owners, Jim Sr. and Carol Guthrie.

As of early May, more than 80 percent of the 160-acre ranch was under water. Jim Guthrie estimates the water is 8-foot deep in some parts.

The ranch, which is located at the confluence of the Portneuf River and Marsh Creek in southeast Idaho, has been no stranger to flooding over the years.

But with record snowpack in the Portneuf Basin this winter, this year's flood is an all-timer.

"This is the worst it's ever been," said Jim Guthrie said May 5. "The river's actually even with the fields right now, so you can't even tell where the channel is."

On May 5, much of the high-elevation snow in the basin hadn't begun melting yet.

"They are getting flooded very bad and it's just starting," Downey farmer Stacy Burmester, a friend of the Guthries, said May 8. "It could get even worse."

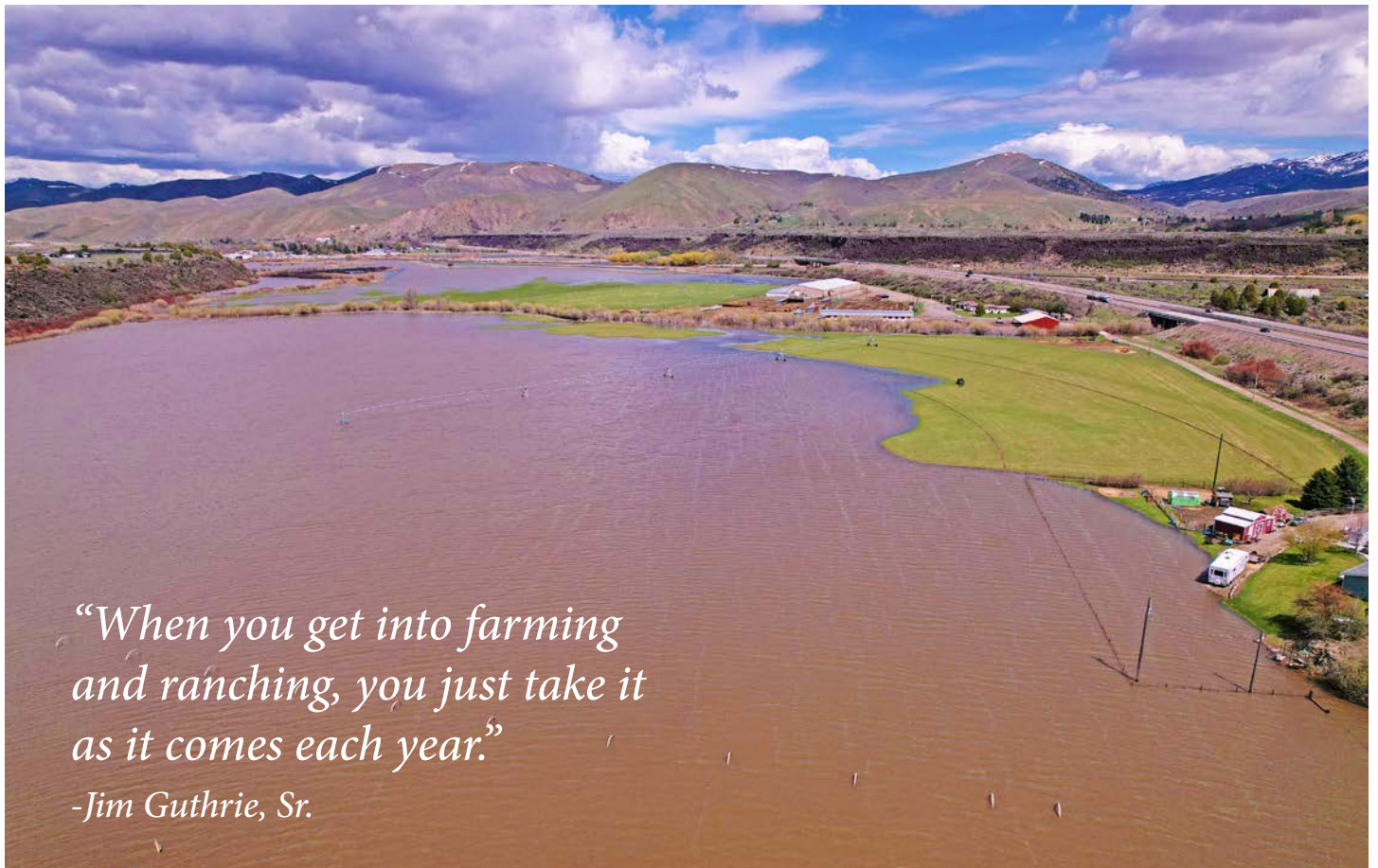
Peak snowpack in most basins in Idaho usually occurs around April 1, but this year that happened later in the month and into early May in some areas. That means a lot more water from high-elevation snow is still to come.

"We are hitting record levels" of snowpack in the Portneuf basin this year, said Sherrie Hebert, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Pocatello.

The Guthrie Ranch is located at the low point in the Portneuf and Marsh Creek system, said Jim Guthrie Jr., who ranches and farms in McCammon and helps his parents with their operation.

"It's where everything kind of collects," he said.

Jim Guthrie, Sr. Photo by Sean Ellis



“When you get into farming and ranching, you just take it as it comes each year.”

-Jim Guthrie, Sr.

Photo by Joel Benson

In this photo taken in early May, the Guthrie Ranch in Inkom was almost completely under water that measured 8 foot deep in some places.

The flooding this year at the Inkom ranch is particularly severe. It has killed the operation's hay and pasture crops and the Guthries will have to re-seed later this year.

“It killed the crop out,” said Jim Guthrie Jr. “They don't have any pasture this year and won't have any hay, or very little.”

The unlikeliness of the ranch even getting one cutting of hay this year, coupled with the fact there is no pasture left, is one of the factors that led the ranch to sell all its cattle after the flooding began, Jim Guthrie Sr. said. He's not sure whether the operation will return to raising cattle.

The water has also just about covered the ranch's wheel lines and the water is getting in the gear boxes on the pivot.

“It's going to be a pretty expensive venture,” Jim Guthrie Sr. said.

Jim Guthrie Sr. and his wife, Carol, have both given back to the region's farming and ranching community for many years.

They both served on the Idaho Farm

Bureau Federation board of directors in the past. Jim served as president of Bannock County Farm Bureau for two decades and Carol was director of IFBF's Women's Committee for a similar period.

Burmester said she feels for what this year's flooding has put the Guthries through.

“They're good, good people ... and they would do anything for anyone,” she said. “My heart goes out to them with the trials they are going through.”

The Guthries have spent a lot of effort and money over the years working with state water officials to strengthen the river's banks. That includes putting in about 2,000 willow trees and spending about \$100,000 of their own money on the bank-strengthening efforts.

They have also raised a road on the ranch to try to lessen the impact of flooding.

Outside of those type of efforts, “I don't know what you can do to prepare for

something like this year's flooding,” Jim Guthrie Sr. said.

He said he and his wife are trying to keep a good attitude about the situation, knowing that this year's tremendous snowpack will be good for a lot of farmers in the region after a couple years of drought conditions.

In years past, a little flooding has done some good for the ranch because it brings some great topsoil that has made it so the ranch doesn't need to use fertilizer.

But this year, the river will take more than it gives.

“Sometimes, this type of thing happens,” Jim Guthrie Sr. said about this year's flooding. “When you get into farming and ranching, you just take it as it comes each year.”

“You just have to try to keep a good attitude and go on knowing things will get better,” he added. “It's a good life.” ■

Continued from page 2

My frustration with the unfairness and uncertainty of the market as a young farmer was one of the issues that led me to get involved in Farm Bureau.

After yet another day of my complaining at the breakfast table, my dad told me that if I really wanted to see change, I needed to get outside my fencerows.

Back then the FMMOs needed improvements, and that was more than 40 years ago.

Change has been slow in coming to say the least, but it might never have come if we hadn't finally brought everyone—farmers, commodity groups and processors—to the table to find common ground.

That's just what Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack asked the dairy business to do a couple years back. So, last year, Farm Bureau held a forum to discuss what changes are needed in the FMMO system.

Nothing was off the table in those discussions, which covered everything from updating Class pricing formulas to reducing de-pooling incentives to milk check transparency and strengthening the farmer's voice in the referendums that are required to approve or reject changes to FMMOs.

Overall, everyone was able to agree on the need to modernize the FMMO system in a way that reflects the current market and is fair to everyone involved.

Now Farm Bureau, along with the National Milk Producers Federation, is calling on USDA to take the next step and hold a public hearing on FMMO reform.

In NMPF's petition to USDA they called for reforms to the FMMO that, in principle, are right in line with Farm Bureau policy:

- Discontinue the use of barrel cheese in the protein component price formula;
- Return to the "higher-of" Class I mover;
- Update the milk component factors for protein, other solids, and nonfat solids in the Class III and Class IV skim milk price formulas; and
- Update the Class I differential pricing surface throughout the U.S.

All these changes would reflect where the dairy industry is today and how the market has changed over the decades. What's more, these changes would help ensure farmers receive a fair price for their farm products.

NMPF is also asking for increases in the allowance that

processors receive in the milk price formulas for their cost of turning milk into cheese and whey and butter and powder.

Farm Bureau, however, believes these allowances for processors will only be fair if they are based on accurate data.

USDA can only ensure fairness in dairy pricing by accurately capturing those costs through mandatory surveys of processor costs and yields.

I recently sent a letter to USDA outlining these solutions on behalf of our members. We believe USDA has the legal authority to conduct mandatory, audited cost and yield surveys of dairy processors, which can be used for determining make allowances as they are factored into dairy pricing.

Voluntary surveys simply won't work, and the numbers prove it.

Two-thirds of the dairy processors that participate in USDA's weekly mandatory price survey did not provide cost data in the voluntary survey that USDA released in 2021.

And since there's no audit of the voluntary data that is provided, there's no way to ensure the little data available is accurate.

The only way to restore trust between farmers and dairy processors is to get full participation—just once every two years—of all the plants that are already working with USDA on the weekly price survey.

When USDA announces a hearing of this sort, they normally ask for additional proposals. We look forward to the opportunity to propose additional AFBF policies that NMPF hasn't addressed in their petition.

These include milk check transparency standards and additional price formula changes that could further reduce or eliminate de-pooling incentives and make milk pricing more predictable.

Just as everyone can agree that the FMMO system is long overdue for reform, we also can agree it's a complex issue that needs to be addressed thoughtfully.

We are hopeful the secretary's leadership will bring about a fair solution on these issues, and we are eager for USDA to take the next steps toward holding the hearings that can put these solutions in place.

America's dairy farmers have made tremendous strides in improving sustainability and increasing the nutritional value of the dairy products we all enjoy.

FMMOs should reflect the modern dairy industry and restore fairness for our hardworking dairy farm families. ■

'America's dairy farmers have made tremendous strides in improving sustainability and increasing the nutritional value of the dairy products we all enjoy.'

SEARLE

Continued from page 2

more water storage capacity, including by raising Anderson Ranch Dam by 6 feet, which will create an additional 29,000 acre-feet of new storage space on the Boise River system.

Idaho is also spending millions of dollars on aquifer recharge efforts.

Idaho and California are like night and day when it comes to managing their water supplies. Thank goodness for the wisdom and foresight of our state's predecessors when it comes to water management.

Water is the lifeblood of any region but it's critically important in Idaho because much of the state is dominated by desert-like conditions.

Idaho has 3.5 million acres of irrigated farmland and our reservoirs supply water to irrigators during the hot, dry summer months.

Without our state's reservoirs, much or

most of southern Idaho is bleak and barren and not the huge food-producing region it is today.

Idaho ranks in the top 8 nationally in 22 different ag commodity categories, including No. 1 in potatoes, barley, alfalfa hay, peppermint oil and food-size trout.

Of course, those reservoirs are supported by a vast network of thousands of miles of irrigation canals, ditches and laterals that bring the water to farm fields.

By the way, those reservoirs don't only supply water to farmers and ranchers. They provide precious water to wildlife, fish, recreationists and others, including subdivisions and golf courses.

Even during winters with below-average snowpack, the reservoirs act as a sort of insurance policy because they can carry over water from the previous year.

Idaho's reservoirs are truly a blessing and godsend to the state's residents.

This year's abundant snowpack has

created some challenges, including flooding in certain areas. In Inkom, the Guthrie Ranch is mostly under water that is up to 8-foot deep in some areas.

[See page ?????????????????????? for a story on the Guthrie Ranch flooding.]

We feel for those people directly impacted by flooding this year but the alternative – a dry winter with little snowpack – would be far worse because it would mean a scarcity of water for the 25,000 farms and ranches in the state that produce a good chunk of the nation's food supply.

Thanks to our reservoirs, we can capture and store what promises to be the enormous amount of water that comes from the state's mountain snowpack this year, and then provide it to farmers, recreationists and wildlife when they need it most – during the "dog days" of summer. ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

Another interesting thought this infographic raised for me is that 100 people would get hungry and they would have 8 people to help them locate, prepare, and cook their food, but just you to supply the raw resources.

As busy as you would undoubtedly be producing enough food for all your neighbors, how much time would you need to explain to them the what, why, and how of your busy day growing all of their food wants and needs?

In 2018, the citizens of California passed Proposition 12 on the ballot. Its title was, "Prevention of Cruelty to Farm Animals Act."

In passing that proposition, the citizens of California decided that new minimum requirements would be established to provide more space for egg-laying hens, breeding pigs, and calves raised for veal.

Because of Prop 12, California businesses are banned from selling eggs or uncooked pork, or veal from animals housed in ways that do not meet the

requirements of the ballot initiative.

The National Pork Producers Council and the American Farm Bureau brought a suit to challenge this initiative. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, where ultimately it failed.

As a result, in July of this year, the new requirements of Prop 12 will go into place, and California, the largest state economy in the nation, will effectively force the entire pork industry to change how it rears its pigs.

The pork industry believes these new requirements will cause significant increases in the cost of producing pigs and higher mortality for newborn pigs.

When the voters of California decided that pork, poultry, and veal farmers should change how they operate, there was never a question asked of the farmers as to why they currently do things the way they do.

Too often, farmers and ranchers take it for granted that everyone knows that current production practices continue to evolve to optimize plant and animal health and welfare and conserve natural resources. This is the model for financial

success on a farm or ranch.

Back to our world of 100 workers, what would you need to do if you were the only one farming?

How much time would you spend making sure your customers understood your needs to feed them? The good news is that polling still says that 89 of the 100 would believe what you tell them.

If it was just you alone with so much to do, I guess you would worry about the 99 trying to tell you how to provide for them and running the risk of the uneducated telling you how to do your job.

If you were the only farmer, you would carry a lot of responsibility. Not much is different in the real world.

You may not be the only farmer, but you are among a darn few compared to all the other people in this county.

You know your craft better than anyone else, but if you do not make time to represent yourself, many will decide they know better than you and then force you to work under their standards, not your own. ■



Year No. 2 for hemp in Idaho

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – It's year No. 2 for hemp in Idaho and it appears growers in the state will plant slightly more acres than they did last year.

According to the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, a handful of farmers plan to plant 859 acres of hemp in the Gem State in 2023.

That compares to 680 hemp acres planted in the state last year, the first year that farmers were allowed to grow the crop in Idaho.

Nationwide, 28,314 acres of hemp were planted in 2022, down from 54,152 acres in 2021, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Idaho was the last state in the nation to approve hemp production. While the state's climate apparently makes Idaho a great place to grow hemp, it will likely take some time for hemp to become more than just an alternative crop in the state, says Tim Cornie, who grew several acres of hemp last year and plans to grow several more this year.

To give some perspective on hemp acres in the state, Idaho farmers typically plant more than 1 million acres of wheat and hay each year, and about 550,000 acres of barley, 350,000 acres of corn and 300,000 acres of potatoes.

For now, Cornie said, he and other growers are just dipping their toes in the water when it comes to growing hemp.

"We're just getting a feel for it and learning the dos and don'ts," he said. "But I do see this crop getting a lot bigger in Idaho."

Cornie is owner of 1000 Springs Mill, an organic food company that contracts with growers in the area. The company produces hemp-based meal replacement bars and currently gets its hemp seeds from a Montana company.

Cornie believes Idaho is an ideal place to grow hemp and said he and other growers are currently experimenting with growing the crop locally. If the crop does take off in Idaho, 1000 Springs Mill, based in Buhl, would like to purchase their hemp seeds closer to home.

"Eventually we want to have growers who grow it locally here

LEFT: A hemp plant is shown in this submitted photo. Idaho will have its second hemp crop this year and so far, it looks like 859 acres of hemp will be grown in the state during 2023. Adobe Stock photo

for us,” Cornie said. “That’s our plan.”

Learning the correct agronomic lessons of growing hemp is part of the growing pains Idaho farmers need to go through, Cornie said.

For example, Cornie planted hemp at a rate of 20 pounds an acre last year but will up that to 30 pounds an acre this year, in order to get a better stand.

“We need a little thicker stand than what we had last year,” he said. “And we’re going to plant two different directions – 15 pounds one way and 15 pounds the other way. Crisscross it to choke those weeds because we’re organic and have to do that.”

Cornie also used a grass drill to plant last year rather than a regular grain drill, which wasn’t ideal.

“That was a mistake; we had to do a replant,” he said. “We should have drilled it with a regular grain drill.”

“We are the right climate and we have the right soils for hemp,” Cornie said. “The only thing we did wrong the first year is we didn’t get our plant population to where I wanted it. If the stand had been a little thicker, we would have really killed it.”

Industrial 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 commercially in the U.S.

The hemp products sold in the U.S. previously came from other countries.

Industrial hemp, by federal law, must not exceed 0.3 percent of THC, the psychoactive compound that gets a user of marijuana high. According to experts, it is impossible to get high from industrial hemp.

Idaho’s hemp program, as required by federal law, has safeguard to ensure hemp grown in the state does not exceed that 0.3 percent THC threshold.

If plants in a hemp field test above that 0.3 percent THC threshold, they must be destroyed. Last year, five hemp lots in Idaho had to be destroyed because they exceeded that level, said Sydney Plum, public information officer for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

Of the 680 hemp acres planted in Idaho last year, 445 were harvested, which worked out to a 65 percent success rate. Nationwide, that same harvest rate last year was 64 percent.

Idaho’s first hemp season was an opportunity for the ISDA, which is charged with regulating hemp, to learn how to best allocate time and resources toward the program, said Casey Monn, the ISDA’s hemp bureau chief.

Last year “served as an opportunity to educate industry and the general public on regulatory requirements, in addition to allowing ISDA to efficiently establish our role,” Monn said.

While 1000 Springs Mill is interested in hemp as a seed for human consumption, the crop can also be grown for fiber.

Idaho-based Hempitecture earlier this year opened a 33,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Jerome County that uses hemp as the main ingredient in fiber insulation products for the building industry.

For now, Hempitecture is sourcing its hemp from other states and Canada but, like 1000 Springs Mill, the company does see a future where it gets much of its hemp from Idaho growers.

Hempitecture is using about 36,000 pounds of hemp every two weeks, said Mattie Mead, the company’s owner and co-founder.



Photo by Sean Ellis

1000 Springs Mill owner Tim Cornie holds a hemp-based meal replacement bar the company produces. Cornie said the company, which currently gets its hemp seeds from Montana, would eventually like to source most of its hemp from Idaho growers.

“We do see a future where ideally we’re sourcing (a lot) of our hemp from Idaho,” he said.

But he believes that will take time and won’t necessarily happen quickly.

“I think hemp is more of a long-term play in Idaho,” he said. “Where I see it fitting in is as a rotational crop.”

That will happen, he added, as more research on the crop is done, both in Idaho and nationally. As that happens, hemp production and usage will grow, he said.

“We’re still so early in the reintroduction of this crop to the United States and there is still a lot of research and testing that needs to be done to ensure farmers’ risk is mitigated,” Mead said. “We’re still in the process of learning what genetics work well, what cultivars work well. And we’re learning more about the farm-level infrastructure.”

“I don’t think it’s going to be an overnight sensation,” he said. “I see it as an opportunity that will grow over time, especially as the research comes out that substantiates some of the claims and beliefs that industrial hemp is a great rotational crop that rejuvenates soil quality and provides a number of other benefits.”

He pointed out that industrial hemp can be used in thousands of products.

“There are so many uses for industrial hemp and we’re just scratching the surface of it here in the United States,” Mead said. ■



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EXPORTS

Continued from page 3

For example, prices received by dairy producers during the first quarter of 2023 were more than 13 percent lower than the same period in 2022, Robison said.

“However, Idaho’s first-quarter dairy related exports increased an impressive 49 percent, year-over-year, while overall dairy exports from the U.S. only increased by 3 percent,” he said. “This suggests Idaho’s dairy exports benefited from capturing increased market share in foreign markets.”

The record \$1.13 billion in ag export value from Idaho last year eclipsed the 2021 total of \$1.02 billion, which tied a record set in 2014.

So far, through the first three months of the year, Idaho is on pace for three straight years of record ag export value.

According to the Census Bureau data, Canada remained the top destination for Idaho ag products during the first quarter, as \$98 million worth of ag products from the state were exported to that nation, a 7 percent increase over the same period in 2022.

Mexico ranked No. 2 with \$61 million

worth of Idaho ag products from Idaho sold to that country during the first quarter, a 73 percent increase.

South Korea was third (\$27 million, 151 percent increase), China ranked fourth (\$25 million, 18 percent increase), Netherlands was fifth (\$19 million, 33 percent increase) and Japan was sixth (\$15 million, 19 percent increase).

Dairy was the top Idaho ag commodity exported during the first quarter of this year with \$83 million worth of sales, up 49 percent from the same period last year.

Live animal exports from Idaho continue to soar.

The Census Bureau data, which is provided by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, shows \$20 million worth of live animals from Idaho were exported to other countries during the first quarter. That’s a 26 percent increase over the same period in 2022.

Virtually all of those live animal exports were cows sold to Canada.

Over the past three years, the total value of live animal exports from Idaho has risen from \$58 million in 2020 to \$78 million in 2021 to \$82 million in 2022.

Idaho exports of prepared vegetables, a

category that includes French fries, were up 82 percent, to \$34 million, during the first quarter.

The Census Bureau data, which is available on a monthly basis, differs from a separate set of data released annually by USDA.

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

The USDA data does a better job of capturing all of Idaho’s agricultural exports but the Census Bureau data is more timely because it’s released each month.

However, both sets of data track closely when it comes to percentage increases or decreases.

According to the USDA data, Idaho set records for total value of ag product exports in 2020 (\$2.34 billion) and 2021 (\$2.55 billion). The USDA data for 2022 will be released this fall. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

Wheat is harvested in a field in Ririe last year. The total value of agricultural exports from Idaho increased by 26 percent during the first quarter of 2023 compared with the same three-month period last year.



Photos courtesy of Hempitecture

Idaho-based Hempitecture has begun producing its hemp-based insulation products in a manufacturing facility in Jerome, shown here.

Hempitecture begins processing in Idaho

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

JEROME – Hempitecture, Idaho’s largest user of hemp, opened a 33,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Jerome in February.

The facility uses about 36,000 pounds of industrial hemp every two weeks and for now, all of that hemp is imported from out of state, mostly from Montana and Canada.

But company officials hope to source most of their hemp in the future from inside Idaho if it becomes a crop grown on a larger scale here.

“If it was to specification, we would definitely like to source (most) of our hemp from Idaho,” said Mattie Mead, owner and co-founder of Hempitecture. “We do consume quite a deal of industrial hemp and ... we do see a future where ideally we’re

sourcing (at least) half of it from Idaho.”

Headquartered in Sun Valley, Hempitecture has employees sprinkled around the country, from Seattle to New York.

Mead said the company looked at several possible sites to locate its manufacturing facility and chose Idaho because of its proximity to its main markets, as well as its pro-business climate and advanced agriculture industry.

Hempitecture’s Jerome facility is located just off of the main Twin Falls exit on Interstate 15, next to a truck stop.

“If you zoom out and look where our facility is – Jerome, Idaho – we’re really regionally well-situated to reach major markets, especially markets across the West,” Mead said. “We’re right on the interstate here and this location in particular, right

off the freeway, makes it easy for truckers to come in and out and load up on our materials and get back on the highway.”

Hempitecture looked at several different states as options to locate the facility.

“But we want to be close to where there’s agriculture, we want to be close to where there is a definitive supplier – IND Hemp from Montana – and we also want to make ourselves more proximal to the markets in which we’re selling,” Mead said.

“There are a lot of reasons Idaho made sense,” he added, noting that the company was welcomed and courted by local, county and state officials.

“Idaho has a pro-business climate; we’ve been really well received by local county commissioners, planning and zoning and state officials,” he said.



Hempitecture's new manufacturing facility in Jerome, shown here, uses about 36,000 pounds of industrial hemp every two weeks.

That included the Idaho Department of Commerce.

"Idaho is a proud home to a long line of agricultural innovators; we are a state that knows agriculture more than many others," Idaho Department of Commerce Director Tom Kealey told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation when asked to comment on Hempitecture. "Our state's rich agriculture industry is one of the reasons Hempitecture chose to locate in our state and why the company is a perfect fit in Jerome."

Hempitecture uses industrial hemp as the main ingredient to produce insulation products for the construction industry.

"Where you use conventional insulation, you can use hemp wool," Mead said. "There are other natural fibers that we're experimenting with ... but hemp is the primary ingredient in all of our products."

"Our goal is to produce more sustainable and high-performing bio-based building materials," Mead said. "I think we're on the cutting edge of what is a new and emerging industry."

He said the company is in the early stages of figuring out what type of hemp varieties work best for certain products.

Mead said the company is happy to be buying a product that contributes dollars

to rural communities "because it's grown by farmers. Our building material starts as a seed."

He said the company is still in the very early stages and learning as it goes, but things are starting to fall in place from a productivity and efficiency standpoint.

"While it's still early, we see a very bright future for what we're doing here," he said. "We are focused on building materials right now but there are so many applications outside of building materials that I think are really exciting."

"We are excited to see all the company will accomplish and the changes they will bring to the industry, the city and state," Kealey said. "The company has already opened so many doors to other similar

companies looking to locate to Idaho. We're certain they will continue to open many more, inspiring innovation throughout the state."

Idaho in 2022 became the last state in the nation to pass legislation allowing farmers in the state to grow and process industrial hemp, which by law must not exceed 0.3 percent of THC, the psychoactive compound that gets a user of marijuana high.

According to experts, it is impossible to get high from industrial hemp. The crop is also highly regulated – in Idaho by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture – and any fields with hemp plants that exceed that 0.3 percent threshold must be destroyed.

While Idaho lawmakers were debating proposed hemp bills, Mead worked alongside other groups in support of industrial hemp legalization within the state, including Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, which has supported hemp production for more than two decades.

Braden Jensen, who coordinated IFBF's efforts in support of industrial hemp, said it is good to see Hempitecture be among the first hemp-based companies in Idaho.

"Hempitecture is a cutting-edge company that is using a product grown by farmers and we were thrilled to see their manufacturing facility go online," Jensen said. "If the time comes that Idaho farmers decide to grow hemp on a large scale, we will be equally thrilled to see the company use a crop grown right here in the Gem State." ■



RIGHT: Hempitecture co-founder and CEO Mattie Mead is shown inside the company's new manufacturing facility in Jerome.



University of Idaho photo

Excavation equipment moves dirt at the future site of the University of Idaho-led Idaho Center for Agriculture Food and the Environment in Rupert. Ground preparation for the long-awaited facility, which will include the nation's largest research dairy, began on May 4.

U of I begins construction on nation's largest research dairy

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

RUPERT – Excavation crews have started laying the groundwork on local farmland for the University of Idaho-led Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (CAFE), which will include the nation's largest research dairy.

Earthmoving began on May 4. Once the site is prepared, construction workers will begin pouring cement for the milking parlor.

The first cows may arrive at Idaho CAFE before the end of 2024, with milking starting in

early 2025.

U of I and its partners had hoped to start work last summer but have reaped rewards from their choice to delay building CAFE, allowing time for exorbitant construction costs to fall.

The price of building the project's initial phase, which will include a 2,000-cow dairy adjacent to a 640-acre research farm, dropped by roughly \$4 million during the hiatus following a ceremonial groundbreaking for the project on June 30, 2022.

“Now the dream is a reality. When they sent me the picture of all of the equipment on site ready to start moving dirt, I was so excited.”

- Tammie Newman, director of pre-construction, McAlvain Construction

“The outlook is very bright,” said Mark McGuire, director of the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station. “The lower bids mean we have sufficient funds to fully build this project.”

The general contractor, McAlvain Construction of Boise, suggested pausing the start of work and rebidding the sub-contracts during winter, banking that labor and material costs would drop and that a more competitive field of bidders would emerge.

The strategy worked, as bids from subcontractors for a greater scope of work recently came back significantly below last summer’s numbers.

Fuel prices were high and excavation companies were involved in many jobs last summer. U of I received a single bid for the excavation work.

By contrast, several excavation companies competed for the recent bid. Supply chain constraints have also relaxed, leading to more affordable materials such as concrete.

“This has been such a long time coming and the excitement last year at the groundbreaking was just overwhelming how many people showed up,” said Tammie Newman, director of pre-construction with McAlvain. “It was probably the biggest attended groundbreaking I’d ever been to. Now the dream is a reality. When they sent me the picture of all of the equipment on site ready to start moving dirt, I was so excited.”

Construction of the milk barn should move quickly, though installing state-of-the-art equipment in the milking parlor will take more time.

Design for the project’s second phase should be completed during this summer, with the bid process occurring from September through November.

Phase two will include manure handling facilities and lagoons, maternity barn, feed area, an office building and structures to provide shade and wind protection for cows in a dry lot with several pens for research purposes.

The improved budgetary outlook also reopens the door to completing a third phase — a cross-ventilated barn capable of housing between 800 and 1,200 cows.

The barn would provide greater comfort to cows and would be useful in studies comparing productivity and environmental impacts of barn versus dry-lot production.

Work on the barn would likely commence in 2025, with the dairy gradually ramping up its occupancy throughout the first few years.

Idaho CAFE has gained momentum recently beyond the

improved construction cost outlook. The budget that recently passed through Idaho’s House and Senate contains funding to hire a ruminant nutritionist, a forage specialist and an air-quality engineer working at the facility.

Cargill and Burley-based Redox Bio-Nutrients have both announced \$500,000 donations toward CAFE since the beginning of 2023, bringing the total contributions from industry for the project to almost \$9 million.

In September 2022, the Idaho Board of Land Commissioners awarded \$23.25 million from the sale of U of I College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) endowment land in Caldwell that was no longer being used for experimental farming to support Idaho CAFE.

The state legislature approved \$10 million toward the project in 2018.

Furthermore, the Idaho Dairymen’s Association contributed \$2 million toward the purchase of farmland in Rupert to house the facility.

“Without the support first and foremost of the Idaho Dairymen’s Association, we wouldn’t have been able to purchase that site, and now with all of these other allied industry partners coming on board we will be able to build a facility that will meet the needs of the dairy industry and serve the citizens of Idaho,” McGuire said.

Research at CAFE will help develop strategies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from animals, housing areas, waste systems and in-field applications, advancing the dairy industry’s nationwide net zero initiative.

The facility will even seek markets for dairy waste, which may be made into valuable byproducts such as bioplastics and transportable fertilizers.

The facility will be designed with flexibility in mind. As the project receives additional funding, more options will be possible to add extra components and address a wider variety of scientific and research questions.

“The manure handling system is designed to be flexible so we can put in new components and test them as any new technology might come forward,” McGuire said. “We can also install a methane digester. If it works, we can keep it in operation, or we can unplug it and put something else in its place.”

The project has already generated over \$13 million in grant activity and supports the work of more than 30 graduate students and numerous undergraduates hired as research assistants. ■



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation file photo

Safeguarding Idaho farmland

By **Sen. Mike Crapo**
R-Idaho

There has been increased concern in Idaho and across the country regarding Chinese companies' purchases of U.S. farmland.

Idaho agricultural land is a precious resource that should be protected from foreign adversaries. I recently co-sponsored legislation that would prevent foreign adversaries' purchases or investment in U.S. farmland.

There are no federal restrictions on the amount of private American agricultural land that can be owned by foreign entities. However, since 1978, federal law has required foreign persons or entities to disclose foreign investment and ownership of U.S. agricultural land to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

According to a 2021 report from the USDA's Farm Service Agency, Chinese investors own 192,000 acres of farmland (crop-land, pasture, forests or other agricultural lands) in the U.S.

The same report indicates Iranian investors own more than 2,300 acres of agricultural lands in the U.S., while Russian investors own less than 100 acres.

In Idaho, according to the FSA data, more than 127,000 agricultural acres are owned by foreign investors.

The FSA report provides the following breakdown of the countries of those foreign investors and the acres attributed to each:

- Canada: 13,206 acres;
- Netherlands: 1,804 acres;
- United Kingdom: 14,468 acres;
- Germany: 12,589 acres; and
- All others: 85,285.

Fourteen states already have some level of restriction on foreign ownership of land.

The Idaho House of Representatives on March 2 passed, by a vote of 69-0, House Bill 173, which amends existing law to provide that a foreign government or foreign state-controlled enterprise

shall not purchase, acquire, or hold any interest in certain types of property in Idaho.

The Idaho Senate amended the House bill and passed it by a vote of 64-0, and Gov. Brad Little signed it into law on April 3.

At the federal level, I co-sponsored the Promoting Agriculture Safeguards and Security Act, which seeks to prevent foreign adversaries like China from purchasing or investing in U.S. farmland.

The legislation would:

- Prohibit China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from purchasing U.S. farmland and agricultural companies;
- Add the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture as a standing member of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States to consider agriculture needs when making determinations affecting our national security; and
- Require the president to submit a report to Congress on any waiver granted to a prohibited country.

In March, the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation was among a group of 25 food and agricultural groups that released a report quantifying the jobs, wages and economic output of agricultural production across our country.

The group reported, "the food and ag industry in Idaho is responsible for 370,878 jobs in the state, as well as \$21.9 billion in total wages, \$7.5 billion in taxes and \$1 billion in exports."

Agricultural land in Idaho and across our country is far too important to let it be bought up by foreign adversaries.

We must protect this important sector, while we safeguard our national security interests. I look forward to the enactment of the PASS Act to better safeguard this essential resource. ■



Sen. Mike Crapo,
R-Idaho



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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE NEW ANTIBIOTIC RULE

WHAT IS THE NEW RULE?

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration released Guidance for Industry #263, which requires drug manufacturers to change labels on antibiotics for all animals to require a veterinary prescription.
- Law will go into effect June 11, 2023

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ANIMAL OWNERS?

- Starting June 11, 2023, animal owners will be required to have a veterinary prescription to purchase antibiotics.
- Antibiotics will have to be purchased from a licensed pharmacy.
- They will no longer be available for purchase over the counter.
- Feed stores will have to be licensed to accept prescriptions.
- To get a prescription for antibiotics, contact your veterinarian.

For more information on the FDA Guidance, visit:
ag.utah.gov/new-fda-rule-on-antibiotic-use-in-livestock/ or scan QR code



Busy Day Casserole


Ingredients:

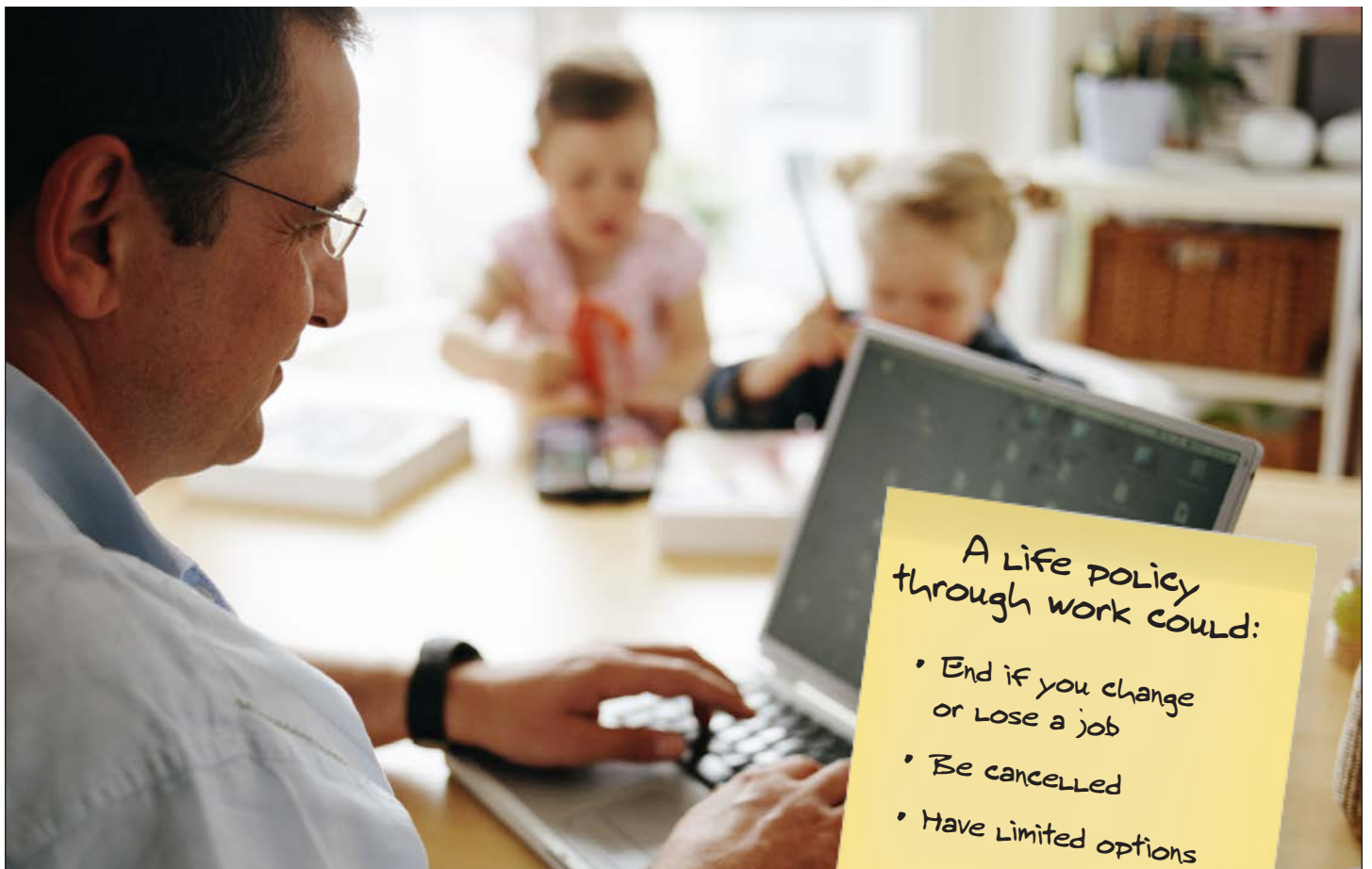
- One lb. Hamburger
- One Onion
- One Large Can of Pork & Beans
- Two Cups of Macaroni
- One Large Can of Tomato Sauce
- Two Cups of Ramen Noodles
- Salt and Pepper

Instructions:

- Brown the hamburger and onion
- Boil macaroni noodles until done
- Combine the hamburger, onion, macaroni, pork and beans, tomato sauce and two cups of water in a casserole dish.
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Cook at 350 until bubbly
- Sprinkle ramen noodles on top and place under broiler just long enough to brown noodles.



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Western larch and western red cedar – two of Idaho’s unique trees

By Randy Brooks
University of Idaho

In my previous two articles I wrote about Idaho native conifer identification. Recall that pines have needles in packs, firs are friendly (friendly fir), and spruce are spikey (spikey spruce).

The other species I want to discuss today are western larch and western red cedar.

Western larch

Western larch (*Larix occidentalis*) is a species of larch native to the mountains of western North America (eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, northern Idaho, and western Montana) and parts of south western Canada.

It is almost exclusive to the Columbia River drainage/watershed. The furthest south it is naturally found is around Weiser, Idaho.

Western larch is also called mountain larch, hackmatac, tamarack, or western tamarack. The Native American name hackmatac is seldom used, and tamarack should be reserved for *Larix laricina* of the northeastern United States and Canada.

Of the three larch species native to North America, it is the most productive.

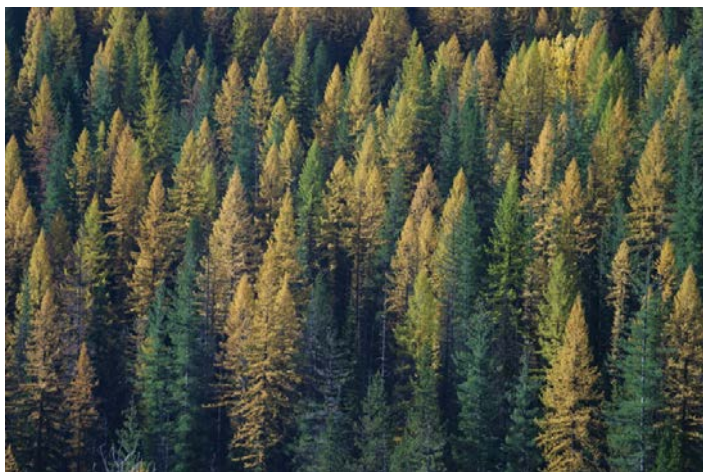


Photo #2: Western larch is deciduous with foliage that turns yellow in the fall and loses its needles



Photo #1: Western larch needles occur in bunches of 15-30 with cones about the sized of a large marble or ping-pong ball. Photos by Chris Schnepf

Trees can reach heights of 100-200 feet tall with a trunk that can reach close to 5 feet in diameter. Needles occur in bunches of 15-30 (see photo #1) and emanate from 1/8” to 1/4” “nubs” or spur shoots and cones are typically larger than a large marble and smaller than a ping-pong ball.

The most interesting factoid about western larch is that it is deciduous, meaning it loses its needles in the fall (photo #2). I often get calls from folks who have driven over Lolo Pass asking me what is killing all the pine trees. My response is often, “Well, Idaho has a native conifer that is unique in that it is deciduous, meaning its leaves turn yellow and fall off each fall.”

The rest of our native conifers are evergreen, meaning they keep their needles year-round.

Western larch grows more quickly than many of its associated trees due to the fact it is shade-intolerant and is indeed our most shade-intolerant conifer.

In forest ecology, shade tolerance is a tree’s ability to tolerate low light levels. It needs significant openings to regenerate.

It is relatively drought-tolerant with an extensive root system that also makes it one of our more wind-firm species.

Like ponderosa pine, western larch is very fire-adapted with thick basal bark, and rapidly self-prunes its lower branches. It also happens to be our most root disease resistant conifer.

The wood is tough and durable and valued for yacht building when it is free of knots. It is often used as tongue and groove flooring and is highly prized for firewood.

It is also used to produce Venice turpentine.

Idaho’s current state record western larch is 142 feet tall and 76” in diameter and is found in Latah County.

It can live for centuries and the largest known living species is about 1,000 years old and about 160 feet tall and over 7 feet in diameter, and is found near Seeley Lake, Mont.

Western red cedar

Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) is a large evergreen coniferous tree in the Cupressaceae family. It is also known as pacific red cedar, giant arborvitae, or just cedar, giant cedar, or shinglewood.



Photo #3: Western Red Cedar tends to have trunks that swell at the base.

It is not a true cedar, which have the genus *Cedrus*. One of the reasons our trees were called cedar is due to their fragrant, sweet smelling wood.

True cedars are native to Europe and Asia. Western red cedar is native to the Pacific Northwest. It is one of the most widespread trees in the PNW and is often associated with Douglas Fir and western Hemlock.

It grows best on moist sites and can tolerate a variety of soil types.

Western red cedar is a large to very large tree ranging from 150-230 feet tall and up to 23 feet in diameter.

The trunk is known to swell at the base (photo #3) and has shallow roots

with thin gray-brown bark.

This species is very shade-tolerant and can establish in the understory or shade of other species.

Because of this, it is considered a climax species growing with limited resources under the shade of parent trees and given no disturbance, will dominate the site continually.

Western red cedar typically does not self-prune, especially when growing in more open conditions, and may have branches to the ground.

The species is long-lived with the oldest verified aged at 1,460 years old. Many of these trees tend to have heart rot, making ages difficult to determine.

Cedar foliage is unique in that it doesn't have needles but has leaves that appear to be scale-like in opposite pairs like a serpentine necklace.

The foliage is green on top with a whitish stomatal band on the underside. Foliage is very aromatic when crushed.

The individual leaves are 1/32" to 5/32". The cones are slender with overlapping scales and to me, look almost tulip shaped (photo #4).

Western red cedar is an important species for wildlife and provides cover for bears, racoons, skunks and other animals with nests inside trunk cavities.

Bird, especially woodpeckers, prefer

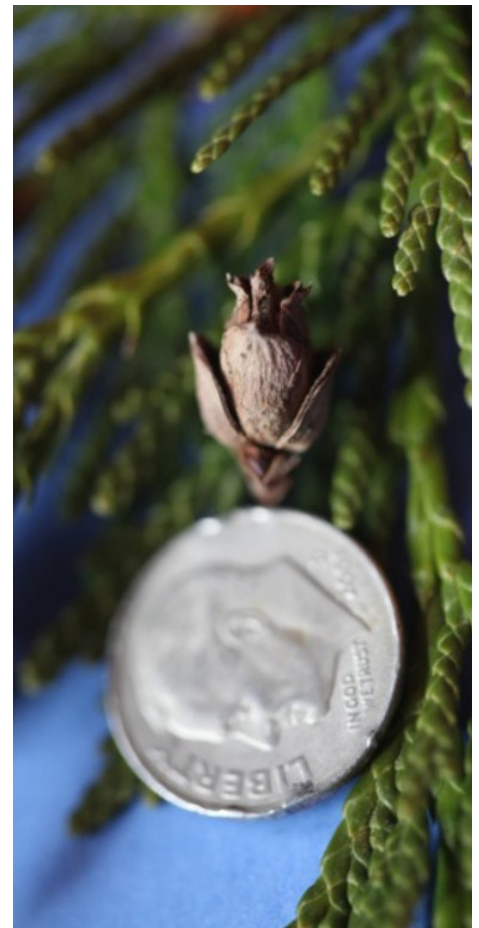


Photo #4: Western red cedar has small cones that are almost tulip-shaped.

large cedars with heart rot. Deer love to munch on the tops of cedar trees and in fact, the presence of deer may be linked to a decline in western red cedar recruitment.

The foliage is popular for wreaths and the tree overall is very fire-prone due to its thin barks. The soft red-brown timber has a tight, straight grain and few knots.

It is valued for its distinct appearance, aroma, and its high natural resistance to decay, being extensively used for outdoor construction in the form of posts, decking, shingles, and siding.

In closing, western larch and western red cedar are important commercial species in Idaho. They are unique in their characteristics which makes them fairly easy to identify. ■

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

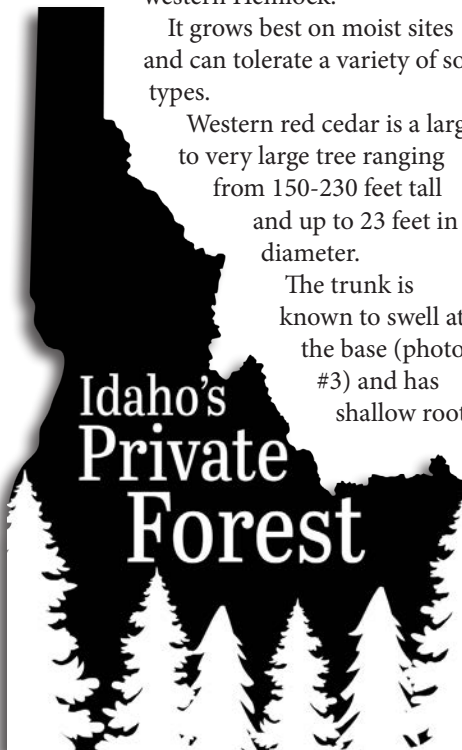




Photo by Sean Ellis

The newest inductees into the Southern Livestock Hall of fame, from left to right (husbands are standing while their wives are sitting in front of them): LaRay and Janet Easterday, Gerald and Celia Marchant, Dr. Bill Barton (no spouse shown in the picture), Steve and Abby Whitesides, John and Barb Brubaker.

Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame welcomes new inductees

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

TWIN FALLS – The Southern Idaho Livestock Hall of Fame welcomed five new inductees April 11.

The 62nd Annual Hall of Fame Banquet, which attracted 175 people, was a great opportunity to reflect “on these wonderful people we’re honoring tonight,” said Mike Guerry of Castleford, one of the organization’s board members.

A common theme from the inductees during their acceptance speeches was that any achievements by them over the years were a team effort, involving family, employees and friends.

“You don’t get this award by yourself,” said John Brubaker, who was inducted along with his wife, Barb. “We didn’t do this by ourselves. It was a team effort.”

“I also have to thank my family and friends because without them, I couldn’t have done it,” said LaRay Easterday, who was inducted along with his wife, Janet.

When inductees talk about thanking family, “That extends down to the people you work with,” said Steve Whitesides, who was inducted along with his wife, Abby. “You learn to love their families also. It’s about more than just raising crops or raising cattle.”

Here are the five inductees:

Dr. Bill Barton

Born in Hailey, Barton was raised on the family's Diamond A Ranch in the Three Creek area of southern Idaho and northern Nevada.

In his award bio, he said that growing up on the ranch "was the stuff of young boys' dreams. Whether it was cowboying, haying, picking rock or the dreaded spring cleaning of the storehouse, the lessons learned have stayed with me for life."

After graduating from Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, Barton returned to Idaho and began his veterinary career at Rupert Animal Hospital.

He joined the Idaho State Department of Agriculture in 2006 and served as state veterinarian and administrator of the ISDA's division of animal industries.

"Livestock has always been the cornerstone of my life since conception," he told the hall of fame banquet crowd. "I could not have been blessed with a more idyllic life than the one I was growing up on the Diamond A."

John and Barb Brubaker

John Brubaker grew up working on his family's small dairy farm in Pennsylvania and at age 22 took over and operated his father's dairy.

He and his wife, Barb, worked side by side running the dairy and raising their four children. In 1991, they moved their family and cows to Buhl.

John told the hall of fame crowd that when they moved to Idaho, they didn't know anyone.

"This area is one of the friendliest areas I've ever run across," he said. "We are truly blessed in this area."

John Brubaker has also served on the boards of the Idaho Dairy Products Commission, Dairy West, Dairy Management Inc. and the U.S. Dairy Export Council.

One of the Brubaker's children, Eric, said his parents started out with nothing.

"We all learned a work ethic," he said. "Dad taught us how to work. You didn't work, you didn't eat. I couldn't be more proud of them for the hard work they've put in."

LaRay and Janet Easterday

LaRay Easterday was born in Nebraska and his family moved to Buhl in 1948. According to his award bio, while attending high school in Castleford, "he also spent a lot of time planning his future with farming and cattle."

After marrying Janet in 1964, they lived in the Buhl area for about six years, farming with LaRay's father. In 1972, they moved to the Blue Gulch area, taking land out of sagebrush and farming it for the first time.

According to the couple's award bio, while LaRay was custom farming for a lot of large dairies and feedlots, he was planning their own cattle operation, gleaning information from the owners about feed rations and animal health.

That seed has grown into the family's current 4,000 head feedlot.

"In high school, my favorite class was ag class," LaRay told the

hall of fame crowd. "You've got to love what you're doing to be doing it. I've always enjoyed having livestock."

"Grandpa and grandma have really created a picture of the American dream," said the couple's grandson, Logan Easterday.

Gerald and Celia Marchant

Gerald and Celia Marchant established Marchant Ranch in the Oakley Basin of southern Cassia County in 1986.

Celia grew up on a registered Hereford outfit in Nevada, while Gerald was raised in the mountain country of Summit County, Utah, where his family maintained a small dairy herd and modest herd of range cows.

The two married in 1961 and later moved to Oakley Valley in Idaho. The Marchant Ranch includes about 400 pairs of mostly Limousin-Angus cross cows.

Besides ranch life, the Marchants have been active in the county fair, 4-H, Idaho Farm Bureau and area church and civic activities.

Gerald served on the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation board of directors for many years.

Their daughter Karen Williams told the hall of fame crowd her parents have "committed their lives to promoting the industry by volunteering their time on countless committees, boards and industry leadership positions."

"I can think of no two people who greater exemplify a life devoted to agriculture and the livestock industry," she said. "I'm ever proud to be the daughter of the two most upstanding individuals I know and am grateful for the legacy in the livestock industry they have left for our family and community."

Steve and Abby Whitesides

The couple married in 1978 shortly after graduating from high school and Steve started working for Bailey Farms, milking cows. According to the couple's award bio, Steve's boss let him buy 10 cows and that was the beginning of what would become Whitesides Dairy.

After the Whitesides moved to the farm Steve's father homesteaded in 1979, their herd grew to 200 head. They then built a double-six milking parlor in 1985, rented Steve's father's farm and formed a partnership with Steve's brother, Brent, as the herd grew to 600 head.

Whitesides Dairy Inc. was formed in 1996 and, according to the couple's award bio, included a double 24 milking parlor with open lots for 1,500 cows.

The business continued to grow over the years and the operation is currently milking 6,800 head of cows, feeding 15,600 head of Holsteins, and farming 8,300 acres of corn, alfalfa and barley.

In the couple's award bio, Steve said it's a blessing to work "with so many great employees and great people in the community. Without the people we had to work with along the way, none of this dream would have been possible."

Brek Cranney, a banker who met the Whitesides in 1998 and introduced them at the hall of fame banquet, said their operation's success is all about the livestock.

"They've been successful because they've taken care of the ... livestock," he said. ■

Farm Bureau and tee times for fun fundraisers

Idaho FFA Foundation hosts annual statewide golf tournaments

By **Dianna Troyer**

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Planting the seeds of philanthropy, the Idaho FFA Foundation will offer several golf tournaments statewide this summer with businesses, community members, and Farm Bureau members as competitors and sponsors.

“This year, we’re thankful for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation’s gracious sponsorship at each of our tournaments,” said Carly Weaver, the foundation’s interim executive director. “Several local Farm Bureau groups support Idaho FFA through sponsorship or hosting a golf team to join in on the fun for a day of golf. Other local Farm Bureaus have supported other programs beyond golf, like our state convention and student competitions in the past.”

An enthusiastic supporter, Cole Lickley, a Bingham County Farm Bureau member, said golfing is among the ultimate community activities.

“It brings people together to raise money for great causes – like FFA – all while allowing time for networking, catching up with old friends, and making new connections,” he said. “These connections make the Idaho ag industry strong, and we need to maintain that strength for the upcoming leaders coming through the FFA program.”

In 2021, the foundation launched the tournaments “in the spirit of adapting and working in a new environment,” Weaver said.

Previously, auctions were organized as the foundation’s primary annual fundraisers to support Idaho’s 100 FFA chapters.

“We brainstormed about a new, fun activity that could bring many people together to celebrate and fundraise for our more than 6,000 Idaho FFA members and their advisors,” Weaver said.

Funds raised during the golf tournaments go toward the foundation’s college



Photo courtesy of Idaho FFA Foundation

Farm Bureau team with Idaho FFA state officers and members at the Treasure Valley Tournament in 2022.

scholarship program, student project grants, classroom grants for teachers, and more.

“The foundation team who puts on the golf tournaments hopes to raise about \$10,000 per tournament to put toward high-need programs,” Weaver said.

The tournaments have varied supporters.

“Some are ag businesses like Zions Bank, AgWest Farm Credit, Valley Wide Cooperative, and Stotz Equipment and Nutrien,” Weaver said. “While some of our other sponsors like Alliance Title & Escrow, BBSI, Culver’s of Idaho, and varying car dealerships may not specifically be considered an ag business, they strongly and enthusiastically support the leaders currently growing and developing in FFA.”

Along with businesses, many individuals sign up with family or friends to golf.

“Some of these folks may be FFA alumni or simply want to support the Idaho FFA Foundation,” she said. “We welcome

Golfing to support FFA

Golf tournaments benefitting FFA are scheduled statewide.

- June 7 – University of Idaho Golf Course, Moscow
- June 16 – Shadow Valley Golf Course, Boise
- June 28 – Pinecrest Golf Course, Idaho Falls

any and all who want to join us for a great day on the golf course.” ■

To participate as a golfer or sponsor, register at www.growidahoffa.org/2023-golf-scrambles/



IDAHO WINE FACT:

Every dollar invested in Idaho's wine industry generates approximately \$260 of business revenue across the state.

Pictured: Gregg Alger of Huston Vineyards

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If you desire to be featured on the "Find Local Directory," and be added to the Idaho farm, ranch, and ag-artisan food maps, while unlocking a trove of additional producer promotional and educational resources, reach out to the team at idahopreferred@isda.idaho.gov.

Visit www.idahopreferred.com to check out the directories.

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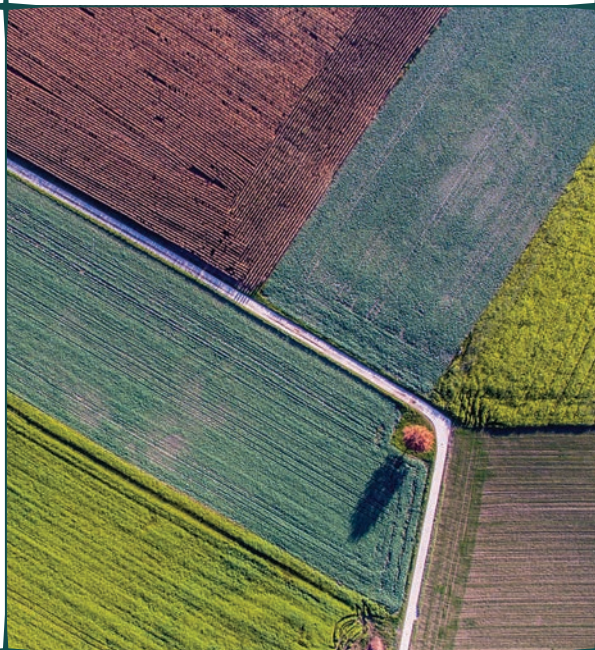
Idaho Preferred Community Calendar

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Looking to turn your passion for food and beverage into a profitable business? This guide offers practical advice on developing a business plan, marketing and branding, regulations, certifications, and licensing, and accessing funding and other resources. By utilizing this valuable resource, Idaho food crafters can increase their chances of success and bring their delicious and unique products to a wider audience.

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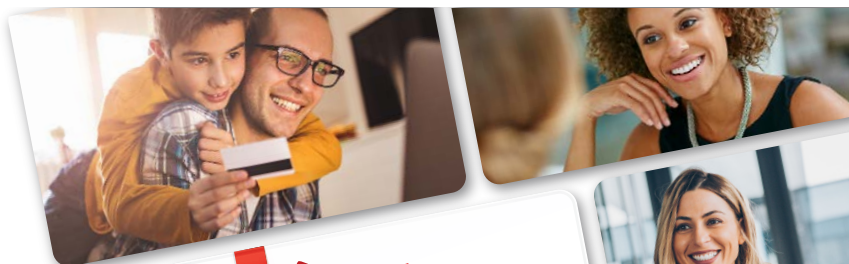
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Darla Fletcher (third from left) of Cocolalla, the winner of our 4th quarter 2022 Refer A Friend, Get A Gift \$500 drawing.



Photo by: Gabe Border

As a part of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture’s regulatory duty, ISDA’s Bureau of Laboratories was established in 2014 to provide a wide range of services to Idaho agriculture. ISDA’s six laboratories support veterinarians, livestock producers, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. Between the six laboratories, ISDA employs 33 full time staff and three temporary positions in the Boise and Twin Falls locations. Throughout 2022, the Bureau of Laboratories staff performed 562,561 scientific tests for Idaho’s agricultural industry.

“Our staff greatly understands the importance of laboratory work and how it impacts both producers and consumers,” said Dan Salmi, bureau chief, ISDA Bureau of Laboratories. “Through chemical, biological and other procedures, our laboratories ensure that agricultural products are safe and accurately labeled for sale, export, import and or consumption by Idahoans.”

Animal Health Laboratory

The Animal Health Laboratory identifies diseases in animals using molecular, bacteriology and serology testing.

Essentially, this lab provides abortion screens in goats and sheep, Brucella in cattle and avian influenza. This lab accepts samples from livestock producers, veterinarians, and state and federal agencies.

Dairy Laboratory

The Dairy Laboratory performs Food and Drug Administration (FDA) testing of dairy products to assure compliance with Federal Grade A requirements and Idaho State Rules. Lab personnel also accredit milk laboratories and analysts in industry through laboratory audits and sample proficiency testing. This lab only accepts regulatory inspector submitted samples. The Dairy Lab supports this testing and certification for Idaho’s dairy industry.

Seed Laboratory

The Seed Laboratory offers germination, purity, noxious weed and other special tests for over 250 different crops. Crops tested in the seed laboratory include beans, alfalfa, grains, onions, turf grasses and corn. The Seed Lab is the only Association of Official Seed Analyst (AOSA) seed testing laboratory in Idaho and supports enforcement of the Idaho Pure Seed Law.

Feed and Fertilizer Laboratory

The Feed and Fertilizer Laboratory (FFL) is a regulatory lab that offers formal quality assurance testing for commercial feed, fertilizer, and soil and plant amendments. These practices ensure the truth in labeling and detection of harmful material. This lab only accepts regulatory inspector submitted samples. In 2022, the FFL tested over 1,800 samples. Of those, 38% were fertilizer samples and 62% were feed samples.

Idaho Food Quality Assurance Laboratory

The Idaho Food Quality Assurance Laboratory (IFQAL) offers third party food quality and environmental testing to Idaho producers, government agencies, agricultural groups, processors and consumers. All reported data is fully auditable, of the highest quality possible and suitable for regulatory and legal use.

Plant Pathology Laboratory

The Plant Pathology lab provides phytosanitary and diagnostic testing on seed, plants and plant material. Molecular testing through real-time PCR for viral, bacterial and fungal plant pathogens. The lab also participates in surveys for regulated plant pathogens across the state.

For more information on ISDA laboratories, visit:
agri.idaho.gov/main/labs/



Photos by Sean Ellis

Wheat is planted on the Kress farm in the Rockland area of Power County this spring. The county is small in population but big in agriculture.

Power County has small population but lots of farming

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

AMERICAN FALLS – With fewer than 8,000 people, Power County is one of Idaho’s smallest counties when it comes to population.

But it ranks as one of the state’s top counties when it comes to total value of agricultural production.

People just passing through the county on the interstate might have no clue it produces so much food, said Power County Farm Bureau President Evan Call.

“Yet we produce a lot of the food and agricultural crops this state and country uses,” said Call, who grows potatoes, sugar beets and wheat on 1,500 acres.

According to USDA data, farmers and ranchers in Power County brought in \$254 million in farm-gate revenue in 2019,

“The youth are eager to learn. Even in a rural area like this, let’s make sure they don’t grow up here without knowing the truth about agriculture.”

- Greg Andersen, dairy owner and PCFB board member

which placed Power as the state’s No. 11 county in that category.

When it comes to just crop production, Power County ranks No. 5 in the state.

It ranks No. 33 out of 44 counties in Idaho in population.

“Power County is a small county in population but we’re big when it comes to the total value of agricultural crops we produce,” said Seagull Bay Dairy owner Greg Andersen, whose operation also grows 300 acres of hay and corn.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 486,377 acres of land in farming in the county during the 2017 census year.

A lot of agricultural production in the county just kind of quietly happens but the industry is the driving force in the local economy, said Rockland farmer Jamie Kress, who grows wheat, safflower, canola, mustard, dry peas and chickpeas.

“Agriculture is clearly a major boon to the county’s economy,” she said.

According to the ag census, there 115,990 acres of wheat grown in Power County, 43,848 acres of potatoes, 15,234 acres of sugar beets and 11,643 acres of corn.

The state’s most iconic crop – potatoes – is well represented in Power County, which ranks No. 2 in spud production behind Bingham County.

The average size of farm in Power County was 1,649 acres, much larger than the statewide average of 468 acres.

“There are a lot of potatoes grown here and there are a lot of big farms in this county,” said Andersen.

Irrigation is the driving force behind the bulk of agricultural production that

occurs in the county but there are also a good number of dryland farms, which rely only on precipitation.

Most of those dryland farms are located in the Rockland and Arbon valleys.

“Dryland farming is definitely part science and part art,” said Kress, one of the county’s dryland farmers. “On the one hand, there are no bills to pay for pumping water and taking care of pivots and wheel lines. On the other hand, not knowing when your next rain event will be is very difficult.”

“All your decisions factor around, how do you maintain soil moisture?” Kress said. “Everything you do is designed to hold moisture in the soil for as long as you can.”

It’s almost impossible to out-think the weather, she added. “Everything you do, you kind of have to go by your gut to a certain degree. That’s tricky.”

One of the main things the Power County Farm Bureau organization focuses on

is educating youth about the agriculture industry, said Andersen. Even in a rural county like Power, that’s still very important, he added.

“The youth are eager to learn,” said Andersen, a member of the PCFB board of directors. “Even in a rural area like this, let’s make sure they don’t grow up here without knowing the truth about agriculture.”

“We want to speak to the youth in our community and help them understand more about the agriculture that’s happening all around them,” said Kress, who is also a member of the PCFB board.

The county Farm Bureau also provides scholarships to high school seniors and mini-grants to schools to help with their needs when it comes to agricultural education.

“We’re very excited about being more involved in the scholarship program,” Kress said. “That’s another way we want to show the community we value education.”

Another major focus of the local Farm Bureau is giving back to people in the community and letting them know the organization cares, Call said.

“That’s a huge focus of the board right now,” he said. “We want people in the county to know we’re an organization that’s giving something back.” ■



RIGHT: Sugar beets are planted in a field near American Falls this spring. Power County ranks No. 5 in Idaho when it comes to farm-gate revenue from crops.

Classifieds

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2021 Custom-Built 34' x 8.5' Gooseneck. 75amp, single phase shore power cord; 15,000 watt Honda gasoline generator; Manual power transfer switch; Waterproof lighting & electrical; Wash down and sterilization ready inside & out. 19'8"L x 7'10"W x 9'10"H kill floor, 9K BTU Bosch A/C heat pump; 200K BTU Rinnai LP tankless water heater; Upgraded plumbing incl. backAow; T rolly & upgraded 550 lb winch & extended trolley rail; 3,000 lb winch & lander; Complete rail system w/ switch. 14'3"L x 7'10"W x 9'10"H drip cooler 13K BTU Russell refrigeration unit; Cooler door with tie to rail system. \$195K Contact James@americanostrichfarms.com. Kuna, Idaho.

Bale wagons: New Holland self-propelled or pul-type models, parts, tires, manuals. Also interested in buying bale wagons. Will consider any model. Call Luke 208-880-2889.

Unique Antique! Farmhall M tractor with farm hand loader attached. Bought in 1955 used and has been in the same family since. Last ran in 2018. Will need to be hauled. Call 208-785-8001 or 208-681-4920 Blackfoot, Idaho.

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Paying cash for unwanted fireworks, the older the better. I collect firecrackers, Roman candles, mortars and anything else aerial. I also collect old m-80s like fish and game used to hand out.

Great way to repurpose old fireworks as they are disassembled and used to create new ones. 208-866-2112.

Looking for old sawmill two or three saw board edger mounted or by itself. Older three- or four-sided lumber planner. Call 208-743-9204. Lewiston, ID. Paying cash for old cork top embossed bottles and some telephone insulators as well as other vintage and antique items. Call Randy. Payette, ID. 208-740-0178.

Paying cash for German & Japanese war relics/souvenirs! Pistols, rifles, swords, daggers, flags, scopes, optical equipment, uniforms, helmets, machine guns (ATF rules apply) medals, flags, etc. 208-405-9338.

Pre-1970 Idaho License Plates Wanted: Also Revere Ware and Solar-Sturges Permanent cookware, and old signs. Will pay cash. Please email, text, call, or write. Gary Peterson, 115 E D

St, Moscow, ID 83843. gearlep@gmail.com. 208-285-1258.

Wanted old Idaho Patches! Farm Bureau, Farming, Hunting, Idaho Cattlemen Assoc, Idaho Fish and Game. Top Dollar Paid! Call, email, or text pics. Rusty Kramer idahotrappguy@hotmail.com, 208-870-3217.

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Mail ad copy to:
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2023 could be tougher financially for Idaho farmers, ranchers

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Wheat is planted in a field near Rockland this spring. Farm-level prices for ag commodities are creeping downward while overall farm production expenses hold steady. This could result in 2023 being a more challenging year financially for many Idaho farmers and ranchers. Photos by Sean Ellis

POCATELLO – Farm-level prices for many of the state’s top agricultural commodities have softened from record or near-record levels last year.

But overall farm production costs have held steady for many of the state’s ag producers.

This has created some headwinds for the 2023 growing season and could squeeze profitability for many of Idaho’s 25,000 farms and ranches.

For example, Idaho’s dairy industry, the state’s No. 1 ag commodity in terms of total farm-gate revenue, received record-high milk prices in 2022 that were enough to offset record production costs.

This year, milk prices have headed downward but overall dairy expenses haven’t followed suit.

“On the income side, we’re seeing (things) ease a bit,” said Idaho Dairywomen’s Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout. “But on the cost side, we’re not seeing those same easing factors.”

Feed costs, a dairy’s biggest expense, have not budged from last year’s record level, he said.

“More normal milk prices against record high feed costs are not a good situation for a dairy,” Naerebout said.

As a result of the current costs vs. income scenario most Idaho dairies are facing this year, he added, “We project negative margins for at least the first three quarters of the year.”

According to a recent Market Snapshot report by AgWest Farm Credit, the 12-month profitability outlook for dairies in the Northwest suggests break-even returns.

“Dairies will face headwinds from continued elevated feed costs, tight forage supply and weaker milk prices,” the AgWest report states. “In 2022, record (milk) prices supported dairy producers. Now, elevated production costs and lower milk prices are squeezing dairy profitability.”

AgWest, part of the 107-year-old Farm Credit system, is a financial cooperative with \$30 billion in total assets that provides financing and related services to farmers, ranchers, agribusiness-

es, rural homeowners and crop insurance customers primarily in seven Western states.

According to estimates by University of Idaho economists, Idaho farmers and ranchers brought in a record \$11 billion in farm-gate revenue in 2022.

But the U of I economists also estimate the state’s ag producers had a record \$8.9 billion in total expenses last year as well.

Heading into the 2023 season, total revenue is expected to drop as farm-level prices head downward. But expenses aren’t budging much, if at all, from their record levels.

“(Expenses) are not going up a lot like they were the last few years but they’ve not going down either,” said Ben Eborn, owner of North American Potato Market News.

Open market potato prices right now are good and they’re climbing higher, he said. Whether they’ll be enough to cover record production expenses is an unknown at this point in the year, he added.

“I think it all depends on yields,” Eborn said. “Production is the wild card right now.”

Eborn said the late start to planting this year due to cold weather could be a factor in how yields ultimately turn out.

“Growers are concerned that the late start and cold temperatures could hold back yields for the 2023 crop,” he wrote in the April 6 edition of North American Potato Market News.

On May 3, Eborn told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation there is still plenty of time for Idaho spuds to catch up and flourish if the state has a normal growing season in 2023.

This winter’s great snowpack means water availability won’t weigh on spud farmers’ minds in 2023 like it did in 2022, the Market Snapshot report states.

“While strong demand is expected for the new crop, rising input costs weigh on producers’ profitability,” the report states.

“Potato growers should prepare for heightened production costs,” the report adds. “Still, demand for potatoes is expected to be strong and higher prices will help sustain production in the

face of increased expenses.”

North American Potato Market News projects potato acres in Idaho will total 305,000 in 2023, up from 295,000 last year.

Potatoes are Idaho’s top crop in terms of total revenue and rank as the state’s No. 3 agricultural commodity, behind dairy and cattle and calves. Ranking Nos. 4-7 are hay, wheat, sugar beets and barley.

The AgWest report suggests profitable returns this year for cow-calf producers.

“The U.S. beef cow herd is at a record low, resulting in higher cattle and beef prices,” the report states. “National beef supplies will remain low until at least 2025, and producers can expect elevated feeder cattle prices.”

“Higher fed cattle prices and sizeable export volumes will create tailwinds for producers’ profitability,” the report adds.

The AgWest report is also forecasting profitable returns for small grains, which include wheat and barley.

USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates Idaho wheat acres will total 1.2 million in 2023, up 3 percent from last year, and Idaho farmers will plant 590,000 acres of barley, up 5 percent from 2022.

The report notes that overall national farm production expenses increased by 18 percent in 2022, the largest annual increase on record.

While fertilizer and fuel prices have declined from record highs last year, those decreases “are outpaced by inflation and increases to all other expense categories.”

“Small grain producers are in a solid financial position and while wheat prices are expected to be down from 2022 record highs, prices are still profitable,” the AgWest report states. “The key to determining how much profit wheat producers make [this year] will be their ability to manage production costs.”

North Idaho farmer Bill Flory said the cost of production for wheat farmers in his region is currently in the mid to high \$5 per hundredweight range.

“That cost structure hasn’t adjusted with the change in commodity prices,” he said. “I’m definitely concerned about the drop in prices.”

“I’m a little bit concerned about the cost structure,” he added. “It’s not going to be



Potatoes are planted in a field near Firth in April. Farm-level prices for ag commodities are creeping downward while overall farm production expenses hold steady. This could result in 2023 being a more challenging year financially for many Idaho farmers and ranchers.

quite as easy as it was last year when it comes to our cost of production vs. grain prices.”

Ag West’s outlook expects slightly profitable returns for alfalfa hay producers in the Northwest this year and break-even returns for timothy hay producers.

NASS forecasts that Idaho hay acres will total 1.37 million this year, down 3 percent from last year.

The AgWest report says Idaho dairies are operating with limited hay inventory, expecting more affordable hay prices with the new crop.

“With dairies carefully managing all expenses, hay growers can expect continued hesitancy from dairies when purchasing hay,” the report states ... “Hay prices will soften from 2022 records, and the spread between feeder and dairy quality hay prices – which narrowed in 2022 – will widen.”

“Softening hay prices and historically high production costs challenges hay growers’ profitability, but most are still expected to make decent money [this year],” the AgWest report adds ... “However,

timothy hay growers may face lower prices due to built-up inventories and weakening trade demand, which will pressure prices and profits.”

The AgWest forecast expects slightly profitable returns for sugar beet farmers.

NASS estimates sugar beet acres in Idaho will total 175,000 in 2023, up 1 percent from 2022.

“Improvements in moisture conditions from snowpack will benefit sugar beet production,” the AgWest report states. However, it adds, “High production costs will squeeze beet growers’ cash flow.”

The report notes the sugar market depends heavily on marketable prices and higher domestic sugar prices will support producer payments.

“The domestic sugar price outlook is bullish as anticipated reductions in sugar beet and cane acres [nationwide] will limit supplies, therefore supporting higher prices,” the report states. ■

Research at U of I ranch finds promise in long-lasting herbicide

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

The 7 acres of hilly pasture along Little Rock Creek were lush with bluebunch wheatgrass, needlegrass and an abundance of native forbs.

Georgia Harrison, a University of Idaho plant sciences graduate student, was encouraged by the healthy native plant communities in her experimental plot, which had been aerially treated nearly two years earlier with the long-lasting herbicide Rejuvra.

Just as important to the researcher were the plants that weren't present -- the hillside was devoid of cheatgrass, Japanese brome and other invasive annual grasses, which outcompete native species, degrade forage quality and increase wildfire risk.

While showcasing her research to a tour group at U of I's Rinker Rock Creek Ranch in central Idaho's Wood River Valley in the spring of 2022, Harrison also surveyed an 8-acre untreated check plot nearby.

Both areas were part of the same grazing unit, but annual grasses were getting a foothold in the untreated pasture.

Harrison, of Kalamazoo, Mich., is involved in one of three ongoing U of I studies at the research ranch evaluating the efficacy of Rejuvra, as well as how it should be applied and its effects on nontarget plant or animal species.

The herbicide could provide land managers with an important new tool.

The research projects

Harrison's three-year study, funded with \$90,000 from Bayer Crop Science, wraps up this season, analyzing how treatments affect annual grasses, nontarget species and wildfires.

"We saw reduced annual grass cover and minimal impacts on native forbs and grasses," Harrison said. "It looks promising."

Another project wrapping up this season, funded with \$30,000 from Bayer, will quantify how the broad and even distribution of Rejuvra droplets improves the herbicide's efficacy.

The study is also evaluating a treatment of Rejuvra applied in combination with the herbicide imazapic, which moves farther laterally in soil but doesn't last as long.

A two-year study launching this spring will be funded with \$110,000 from a U.S. Forest Service competitive grant, building upon the prior research.

The project seeks to inform federal land managers how Rejuvra's effects on nontarget vegetation may impact small mammals and sage grouse.

The Forest Service will use the results to guide the possible approval of Rejuvra, which contains the active ingredient indazi-



Photo by John O'Connell

Tim Prather, a University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences professor and senior associate director of the U of I Rangeland Center, discusses research on the herbicide Rejuvra at University of Idaho's Rinker Rock Creek Ranch in Idaho's Wood River Valley in the spring of 2022.

flam, for use on its terrain.

The federal Bureau of Land Management may also look to the study for its own Rejuvra approval process.

Studies show Rejuvra controls cheatgrass for at least 18 months following spring application, compared with about one year with imazapic, which is the agencies' current go-to herbicide.

Other researchers involved in the Rejuvra studies include Tim Prather, a College of Agricultural and Life Sciences professor and senior associate director of the U of I Rangeland Center; Tracey Johnson, an assistant professor in the College of Natural Resources and director of research at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch; and master's student Kirby Lau, of Hillsborough, N.C., who is studying natural resources.

"The idea is when you make changes in plant communities, that's basically the habitat in which small mammals and sage grouse live," Prather said. "When you make changes, is that to their benefit or detriment?"

A powerful tool

Rejuvra would help federal land managers remove highly

flammable annual grasses from fuel breaks on public lands. The herbicide could also provide a tool for restoring largely intact plant communities where annual invasive grasses are beginning to take hold.

Lau will evaluate treatment responses of forbs of importance to sage grouse, in addition to trapping small mammals to assess their responses. The researchers will also evaluate how annual grass density affects fire patterns and behavior.

“If we understand something about how animal communities or wildlife habitat are affected by herbicides, that’s going to inform when and how to use these herbicides,” Johnson said.

Small mammals of interest in the study area include deer mice, Great Basin pocket mice and sagebrush voles, which are a species of conservation concern.

The rodents are essential cogs in the food web of their ecosystem and seeds from annual grasses may provide them an important food source. Furthermore, the researchers will be interested

to see how treatments affect certain shallow-rooted native annual grasses.

To understand how the herbicide affects sage grouse habitat, the team will monitor bird droppings, the time sage grouse spend in treated areas versus untreated areas and how well forbs of importance to chicks fare.

“What we have found is we’re getting forb recruitment. Forbs are increasing,” Prather said.

Within hill pasture at the research ranch, where Rejuvra has been applied aerially, Prather has also observed encouraging signs for sage grouse.

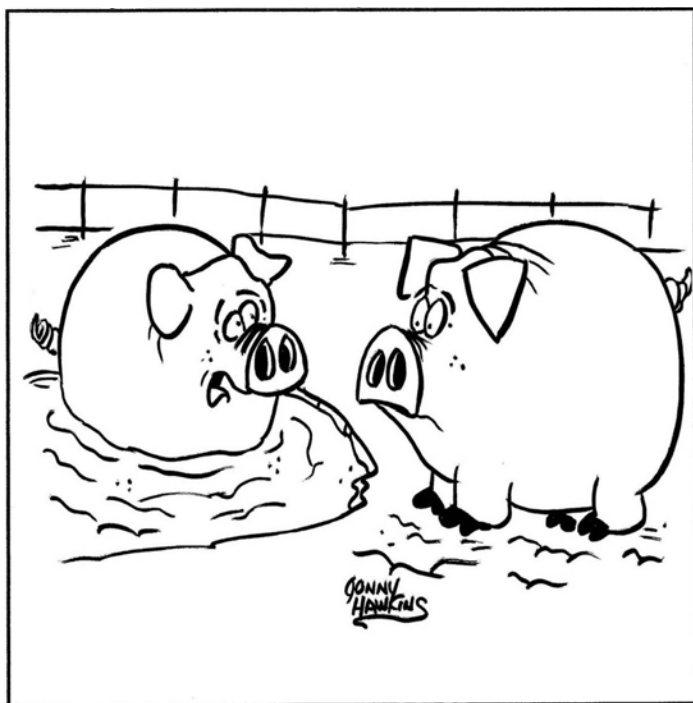
“There is a lek there,” Prather said, referring to locations where sage grouse gather for courtship displays, “and when we go there to sample plants for a study looking at differences in the plant community, pretty much every time we flush at least one group of sage grouse. We haven’t lost those sage grouse.” ■

Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



Attila the Bun



“Uh oh, I’ve been wallowing too long. My feet fell asleep.”



A Budding Field

Raising commercial cut flowers from home

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

The rural Meridian home Tara McCallister and her family bought early in the COVID-19 pandemic to escape urban life had a 5-acre yard rife with shoulder-high weeds and dead fruit trees.

Rather than putting in sod to improve the property's aesthetics, McCallister came up with an alternate beautification plan that's also providing her family a supplemental income, using skills learned through University of Idaho Extension's Master Gardener program.

McCallister is among a growing group of Treasure Valley property owners who are devoting residential yard space for raising and selling cut flowers.

The Master Gardener program has provided aspiring entrepreneurs in the budding field of homegrown cut flowers with a trusted source for training and helpful tips.

McCallister sells her cut flowers at farmers markets and via subscription services, through which locals pick up bouquets throughout the growing season. She recently sold out every slot for a wreath-making course that made use of her dried flower petals.

Her expansive flower garden also makes an

LEFT: A growing number of people are devoting residential yard space for raising and selling cut flowers. Submitted photos

idyllic setting for paid events, such as wedding showers.

Through Master Gardeners, McCallister has become well versed in the science of gardening, broadening her background in soil health, irrigation, fertility management and controlling pests and weeds.

An advanced master gardener who spoke to her class gave her valuable tips for designing the perfect greenhouse in which to raise flower seedlings.

She's also become better prepared to answer frequent questions from the public that come with being a professional gardener, including from aspiring cut-flower gardeners.

"I think the Master Gardener program helped me not only with actual knowledge, but also with the confidence and resources to problem solve as we move forward," McCallister said. "As we are expanding our business, I feel like my foundation is so much stronger, and it also helps me in representing the agricultural community to our customer base."

Participants must perform 50 hours of community service to become certified as master gardeners. McCallister helped with the landscaping at the UI Extension office in Ada County.

She also answered phone calls and interfaced with community members seeking information about specific plants and insects from the program's diagnostic lab. Furthermore, she taught some beginning gardening courses.

McCallister believes interest in growing cut flowers on residential property ballooned in response to the pandemic, as people looked for opportunities to maintain a safe social distance while working outside and surrounding themselves with beauty. Early in her endeavor, McCallister joined a Facebook group for Treasure Valley flower farmers – most of whom raised beds in their suburban yards.

About 25 local flower farmers showed up to a social gathering McCallister hosted at her home, including Adele Smith, who was in her Master Gardener class.

Smith worked as a healthcare administrator with the Veterans Administration in Boise before leaving her career of 13 years to raise cut flowers full time. She grows some of them in her one-third-acre downtown Boise yard.

She also rents land and a greenhouse in Garden City for cut flower production and raises more flowers in an acquaintance's backyard, providing the property owner the chance to have a garden without putting in the work.

"During COVID, hospital staff, we were all so burned out. I

read a book about cut flower production, and I thought, 'Oh my gosh!'" Smith said.

Prior to making the life-changing transition, as an exercise in a leadership training program, Smith was asked to identify her personal short-term and long-term goals.

Her short-term goal was to become a master gardener. In her home office, her certificate of completion from the Master Gardener program hangs beside her master of public health certificate.

"There's no way I'm going to call myself a professional gardener unless I have some kind of certificate that validates it," Smith said. "I think it was always a pipedream for me to have a badge of honor to say, 'I am a master gardener.'"

Smith supplies local florists, and like McCallister, she sells bouquet subscriptions directly to area residents. Furthermore, she partners with local wineries, bringing in buckets of bulk flowers for bouquet-building workshops and wine tastings.

"There are so many people moving to Idaho and so many people have no concept of how to grow in our soil," Smith said. "They're hungry for knowledge."

UI Extension educators involved in the Master Gardener program have also noticed the trend of patrons seeking information on raising cut flowers on residential properties.

In recent years, the Extension office in Ada County has been fielding three or four calls about cut flower production per month.

"It seems to be a really up-and-coming thing," said UI Extension educator Susan Bell, Ada County. "What we find with the Master Gardener clinic we have, which is a

free clinic, we're getting the public calling the master gardeners on how to get started with their flower farm."

In Twin Falls County, UI Extension educator Andy West fields frequent calls from people interested in raising cut flowers with questions about how to break new ground, when to add fertilizer and why soil testing is important.

He's heard from a few gardeners who raised cut flowers in California and moved to Idaho's Magic Valley, seeking guidance on how to continue production in a new growing area.

A former Pocatello florist who recently moved to Twin Falls also contacted West. She's now raising flowers in Twin Falls to supply hard-to-find flowers to her former flower shop.

"It's a trend that's moving here in southern Idaho and up into the Boise Valley," West said. "It's a nice niche market." ■



A growing number of people, such as Boise resident Adele Smith, shown here, are devoting residential yard space for raising and selling cut flowers. Gul ubliae fauci

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The following are recipients of the 2023 Idaho Farm Bureau Scholarships. The scholarships are provided by the IFBF Scholarship Fund, Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee, and Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company.

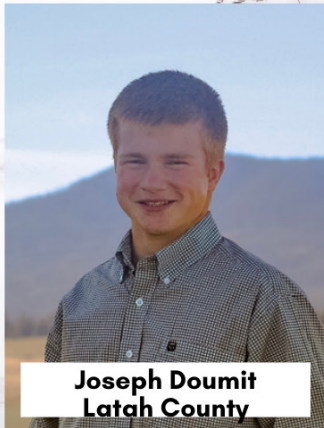
Ag Winners will receive \$3,000



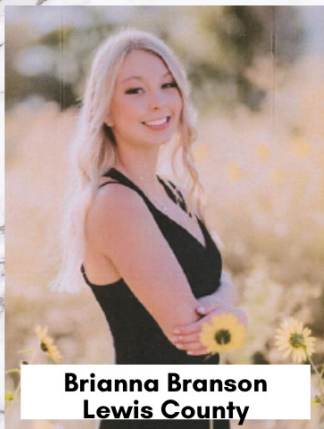
Macy Maloney
Washington County



Kamille Mirkin
Jerome County



Joseph Doumit
Latah County



Brianna Branson
Lewis County

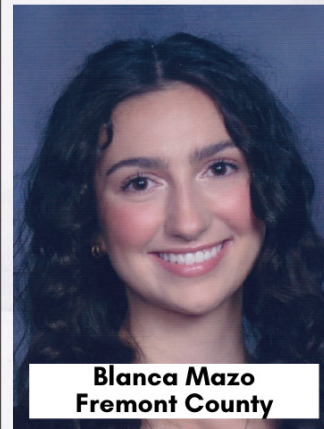


Emily Blattner
Ada County

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