

GEM STATE **Producer** Idaho Farm Bureau

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# Farmers' 2022 **Planting Intentions**





## EPA needs to bring more farmers to the table

**T**he Environmental Protection Agency recently held its first stakeholder roundtable on its new Waters of the U.S. rule, and I sure hope it wasn't a sample of what's to come.

The group lacked diversity of experience in agriculture, and few of the participants had any direct experience with the quagmire of Clean Water Act regulation.

This was a missed opportunity for EPA, and we are urging them to seek out and listen to all viewpoints.

You have often heard me talk about the importance of agriculture having a seat at the table, and the administration has agreed that the farmer's voice is critical to this rulemaking process.

But simply checking a box without hearing from farmers who can speak from experience will not do.

Water is the lifeblood of agriculture, and farmers across the country are taking proactive steps to protect water on and around our

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# The President's Desk



## Farmers plow ahead despite great uncertainty

**D**espite great uncertainty, Idaho and U.S. farmers plan to plant about the same number of acres this year as they did in 2021.

That's a great achievement when you consider the many challenges farmers face this year, from markets to weather to significantly increased input costs.

The prices that farmers and ranchers receive for their commodities are up substantially in many cases, but their overall cost of production is also way up.

In some cases, such as fertilizer, input costs have more than doubled.

On top of these challenges, Idaho farmers and ranchers have to deal with another year of drought conditions.

Although the many rain and snow storms that hit Idaho this spring have helped improve the 2022 water supply situation, producers throughout the state will be faced with another tight water supply this year.

Those spring storms also delayed a lot of

See **SEARLE**, page 7

# Inside Farm Bureau



## 'It takes a village'

**W**hile attending Mrs. Kathryn McLain's first-grade class field trip May 23, I was reminded of how true the saying "it takes a village" really is.

This saying is often expressed as "it takes a village to raise a child," with which I agree wholeheartedly. However, my thoughts on this particular field trip focus on the "it takes a village" part.

This field trip was a special one because of the places we went and the people we met. This field trip was to the city of Rigby, Idaho.

We visited many neat and incredible local businesses.

While I say that I think Mrs. McLain is terrific, I also believe there are many Mrs. McLains in every small and large school throughout Idaho.

Please insert your favorite teacher's name in the appropriate place in this column.

The same goes for the names of the many great businesses in your own town.

I'm using Rigby as an example but there are

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# Idaho Farm Bureau.

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Photo by Paul Boehlke

**This photo was taken Feb 28 in Boise County by More's Creek Summit above Idaho City. The constant stream of rain and snowstorms that have hit Idaho this spring have helped improve the water supply outlook for 2022 but they have not been enough to solve the state's drought issues.**

# Plentiful storms have helped Idaho's water outlook

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – The constant stream of rain and snowstorms that have hit Idaho since the first part of April have improved the state's water supply outlook for 2022.

But they haven't solved the state's drought and farmers and other irrigators still face some tight water supplies this year.

According to water managers, there will almost certainly be some curtailment of water supplies this year.

The storms "have helped a little bit but it's certainly not going to prevent some water rights from being curtailed later this year," said Tony Olenichak, watermaster for Water District 1, which encompasses the upper Snake River system.

Water District 1 is the state's largest and most important in terms of providing water to farmers. It typically provides enough water to irrigate well over 1 million acres of farmland in southern Idaho.

Idaho started its water year Oct. 1 with reservoir levels that were well below normal for that time of year and while the

See **WATER**, page 11

**COVER: Dry beans are planted in a field near Parma May 13. See page 12 for a story about how many acres of the state's main crops Idaho farmers plan to plant this year. (Photo by Sean Ellis)**



Photo by Joel Benson

This lone, 10-foot alligator on Leo Ray's fish farm in Hagerman is the last of thousands of alligators that used to be grown there.

# One alligator remains at Hagerman fish farm

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

HAGERMAN – All but one of the thousands of alligators that used to draw curious members of the public to Leo Ray's fish farm in Hagerman are gone now.

But Ray's operation, Fish Breeders of Idaho, is still going strong and growing catfish, tilapia, trout and sturgeon for

caviar and meat.

Ray, 84, who even grew tropical aquarium fish for a while, has one of the most unique fish farms around, said recently retired University of Idaho aquaculture extension educator Gary Fornshell.

"He certainly is an innovator," said Fornshell, who has worked alongside Ray on several projects, including his alligator endeavor.

"He comes up with ideas that many people wouldn't necessarily do and then pursues them," Fornshell said. "He's had a hand in just about all the different fish species grown here in Idaho."

The operation's diversity is what helped it to survive the government-ordered restrictions related to COVID-19, Ray said.

"The strength of the company is the diversity," he said. "The weakness is trying

to manage all that diversity.”

Ray has been producing fish in Idaho since 1971, when he left his catfish operation in California and moved to Idaho to take advantage of the geothermal water available in Idaho’s Magic Valley area.

The alligators used to get all the attention at Ray’s fish farm but now it’s the sturgeon that draw the curiosity of the public and media.

“Sturgeon is the big attraction now,” Ray said.

They’re also the work horse on the farm, he added, since they save him thousands of dollars a year in ditch maintenance by keeping the moss out of his fish ponds.

But it’s the catfish that has paid the bills through the decades.

“Catfish has been a very good fish for us,” Ray said.

Originally from Oklahoma, Ray earned a bachelor’s degree in zoology from the University of Oklahoma. After one of his professors received a grant to study catfish farming, Ray got a job working on that project “and I spent the rest of my life raising fish, mainly catfish.”

Ray and his wife, Judy, started their first catfish farm in the Imperial Valley of California in 1968 but moved to Idaho after seeing the potential of the geothermal water available in the Hagerman area.

They started in Idaho with catfish and then added tilapia, creating the first com-



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Sturgeon are shown in a fish pond at the Fish Breeders of Idaho operation in Hagerman.**

mercial tilapia farm in the United States.

They added trout production in 1978 and then sturgeon in 1988 and the operation now has a sturgeon processing facility as well.

Fish Breeders of Idaho added Idaho white sturgeon caviar to their product line in 2004 and marketed it as the “American beluga.”

The sturgeon are sold both for their caviar and meat but Ray believes sturgeon meat has a higher upside.

“I think sturgeon will expand and will one day be one of the major fish grown in Idaho,” he said. “I think sturgeon will become more profitable for their meat than their caviar because for caviar you have to grow them for about 10 years and for meat, you can sell them in three or four years.”

Alligators were added to the operation in the 1990s and for a time, they were pretty profitable, being sold for their meat and hides.

Fish Breeders of Idaho raised about 10,000 alligators over a decade, Ray said.

“That was pretty successful,” Fornshell said of Ray’s alligator operation. “He had customers from all around interested in (them).”

But then it was discovered that alligators

could carry West Nile Virus and potentially pass it on to humans.

Ray, who was bringing alligator hatchlings to Idaho, said he didn’t want the gators to spread it in the state, so the alligator operation was ended, although he kept 13 big ones in a caged pen on his property.

He sold one of the remaining gators a few years back and now a lone 10-foot alligator remains on his property.

“I leave him there to let people look at,” Ray said.

The availability of geothermal water has been one of the keys to his operation’s success, Ray said. Obviously, alligators couldn’t be raised in Idaho without it, he said, but it’s also required to raise catfish and tilapia in the state.

Fish Breeders of Idaho does that by mixing the geothermal water from wells with colder surface water. This allows the operation to maintain a perfect temperature for different fish species.

Ray said another one of the keys to his success over the decades has been his use of university research.

“Wherever I’ve lived, I’ve always worked with the university system,” he said. “It’s the biggest resource you can possibly have.” ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Fish farmer Leo Ray is shown in front of a catfish pond at his Fish Breeders of Idaho operation in Hagerman.**

# DUVALL

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Continued from page 2

farms.

We have been straightforward and consistent in our call for clear rules because we know how important it is to get regulations right, especially ones that impact the lives and livelihoods of so many.

All farmers should be able to look out on their land and know what's regulated, so we can continue to protect our natural resources while growing a sustainable food supply.

EPA's proposed WOTUS rule instead casts uncertainty over farmers and ranchers across the country and threatens the progress we have made to responsibly manage water and natural resources.

Let's recap how the proposed rule reaches beyond the protection of shared, navigable waters.

It would give the federal government the ability to regulate areas such as ditches, ephemeral drainages, or low spots on farmlands and pastures that are not even wet most of the year and that do not connect to flowing waterways.

This would subject ordinary farming activities to complex and burdensome regulations. Simple activities like moving dirt, plowing or building fences would require permits, and getting a federal permit can take months or even years and cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars.

*'All farmers should be able to look out on their land and know what's regulated, so we can continue to protect our natural resources while growing a sustainable food supply.'*

A farmer shouldn't need a team of lawyers to grow crops and raise animals, but these unclear and overbroad regulations could lead to large civil fines as well as criminal charges.

Farmers, ranchers and all landowners deserve clear rules and a system that respects voluntary conservation efforts.

Practices like no till and conservation tillage that reduce soil erosion and keep nutrients in the soil are becoming common practice, now being used on more than half of the corn, cotton, soybean and wheat planted across the nation.

That's more than 200 million acres.

The use of cover crops—another important tool in protecting water and promoting soil health—also continues to grow, increasing 50% between 2012 and 2017, according to the last USDA Census of Agriculture.

And farmers use several other tools and techniques to protect waterways and reduce runoff, such as buffer strips, protec-

tive zones between fields and waterways; strip cropping, growing alternating strips of erosion-resistant crops; and terraces, using slopes to help filter water and reduce erosion.

We will continue to hold the administration to their commitment to bring farmers to the table and to treat us as partners in our sustainability efforts.

It is no secret that Farm Bureau was extremely disappointed in EPA's decision to repeal the 2020 Navigable Waters Protection Rule, which brought much needed clarity to farmers.

But if the EPA is going to continue forward, they must ensure that the process truly offers the opportunity for meaningful engagement and feedback from all stakeholders.

Future roundtables must present the perspective of active farmers and be better organized and managed. Otherwise, EPA is doing nothing more than muddying the waters in this rulemaking. ■

# MILLER

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Continued from page 2

similar great teachers and businesses in every town.

As enjoyable and frankly exhausting as this outing was – first-graders have a lot of energy, and a class of them can be wilder than a herd of yearlings on new pasture – the absolute joy for me was the realization of just how great the village I live in is and how neat my neighbors are.

I spend nearly all of my time in agriculture. I love my part as the official voice of agriculture.

My wife complains all I talk about is farming and ranching and that cows don't need to be a topic of every meal conversation.

I doubt I am very different from many of you in that regard.

I'm so glad I got a chance to meet others in my village who might not be directly involved with the agriculture world.

*'If we want our ag voices heard, listened to, and understood, we must be a part of the village.'*

Here are some of my aha moments from the field trip.

- My neighbors care about my community and children. I doubt that any businesses that make time to host a first-grade class anticipate a real bump in business. As an adult, it was clear that they all genuinely care about our children, want to

share a little piece of their world with our kids, and are genuinely proud of what they do and who they serve.

- Teachers and parents are excellent, but I am not talented enough to extol all the praise that teachers and engaged parents deserve.
- People who live in the village care about the village. I wake up thinking about ensuring that your voices in agriculture are heard and understood. Still, I don't want my neighbors or their businesses to suffer. Visiting local businesses helped me realize the grocery store has different worries than a farmer. However, they are still cheering for the farmer, the tire store, the bank, etc.

The biggest lesson I learned was the simplest. If we want our ag voices heard, listened to, and understood, we must be a part of the village.

I truly believe the villagers want to hear from us and want to support us. We just need to do our part to listen to each other even when we don't always understand one another.

Idaho's speaker of the house for a bit longer, Scott Bedke, has shared this quote from President Abraham Lincoln: "I don't like that man. I must get to know him better."

I liked all the people I met on the field trip, and I like my village.

I also want agriculture to thrive. Thus, we all must continue to know one another better for the strength of our villages and our state. ■

## SEARLE

*Continued from page 2*

planting and crop emergence around the state, which will no doubt have an impact on yields this year.

As I write this column, there are potatoes that have been planted for six to seven weeks and only have a two-inch sprout. Spuds planted in Idaho are typically out of the ground in three to four weeks. This could have a significant impact on yields and overall production.

International developments have added more uncertainty to agricultural markets. That includes India announcing it is shutting off wheat exports and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Despite all those concerns, and many more, Idaho and U.S. farmers are once again plowing ahead with their usual plans to produce an abundant, safe and affordable supply of food.

According to USDA's March 31 Prospective Plantings Report, Idaho farmers planned to plant 4.01 million acres of principal crops in 2022, about the same as the 4.04 million acres they planted in 2021.

According to the report, which was based on a survey sample of almost 73,000 farm operators across the U.S. and 1,900 in Idaho, U.S. farmers planned to plant 317.4 million acres of principal crops this year, which is up slightly from 317.2 million acres in 2021.

In light of some of the concerns floating around of looming food shortages, it's great news to see that U.S. farmers plan to plant the same amount of acres as they normally do.

*'...Idaho and U.S. farmers are once again plowing ahead with their usual plans to produce an abundant, safe and affordable supply of food.'*

At the same time, it's important that we do not forget the many and serious challenges those farmers face this year.

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation will continue to assist farmers and ranchers with the many challenges they currently face, and it's important that each of us stays engaged in the effort to help ensure that

the American agricultural system continues to produce the food that feeds this nation and much of the world.

Farm Bureau is the largest and most effective agricultural organization in the nation and it's because of its grass-roots members and their commitment to defending and promoting the nation's agricultural industry. ■

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# New potato commission CEO 'a potato guy through and through'

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

EAGLE – In as much as it's possible, Jamey Higham, the new president and CEO of the Idaho Potato Commission, has potatoes in his blood.

Higham, who in February took over leadership of the commission that promotes the state's most famous product, was born and raised in Shelley, the epicenter of potato production in Idaho.

He attended Shelley High School, whose mascot is the russet potato. Like many high school students in Bingham County, he also spent a couple weeks each fall helping with spud harvest.

Most of Higham's professional career has been spent in the potato industry.

"Jamey is a potato guy through and through and he really understands the industry," said Brett Jensen, chairman of the IPC.

Higham spent many years in the trenches of the potato industry before being hired to lead the IPC, which promotes and advocates for the iconic Idaho potato.

Julie VanOrden, a Bingham County resident and one of the IPC's nine commissioners, said everything about Higham's background, from his potato roots to his vast experience within the industry, made him a great hire.

"His background, skills and experience were such a great fit for that position," she said. "That just all fit together for me."

There were a lot of really good, qualified candidates for the position but Higham's experience in the industry stood out, said IPC commissioner Eric Jemmett, from Parma.

"Jamey has the experience and background that we think will help" the Idaho potato industry going forward, he said.

Idaho potatoes are a world-famous brand that is so strong it's on most license plates in the state. Higham understands the importance of maintaining that brand recognition, VanOrden said.

"He knows the importance of the brand recognition that we have with Idaho potatoes," she said.

"I would put the Idaho potato brand up there with the big brands," Higham said. "When you say Idaho, people just instantly think of potatoes."

Higham got his start in the potato industry in 1991, working in quality control for Idaho-based Walker Produce and then spent several years in sales at Potandon Produce in Idaho Falls.

After earning a master's degree in international business marketing at Arizona State University, he spent five years at Ford Motor Co. in marketing and sales before returning to Potandon in 2003, where he worked for 13 years, ultimately serving as vice president of sales.



Idaho Potato Commission photo

**Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Jamey Higham holds an Idaho potato-themed perfume, which recently became a fragrant hit. Higham took over as head of the potato commission in February.**

He was named president and CEO of Farm Fresh Direct in 2016, where he helped drive growth of the company's conventional and organic potato lines.

He has also served as a member of the United Fresh government relations council, where he helped advocate for potatoes in Washington, D.C.

"I've been down in the trenches of the potato industry for a long time," he said. "This is just a different side of the business."

Besides being what Idaho is most famous for, potatoes are big business in the state and a big part of the economy. The spud industry directly and indirectly is estimated to have about a \$5 billion impact on Idaho's economy each year, Higham said.

"Potatoes are what Idaho is known for and I think the state overall embraces that," he said. "That's fun and there is some pres-



sure representing something the whole state is known for.”

The Idaho Potato Commission is charged with defending and promoting the Idaho potato brand. The commission’s annual budget is just over \$15 million and is funded through an assessment of 12.5 cents per hundred pounds of potatoes sold that is paid by growers, shippers and processors.

Higham said he has been well received within the industry and still has a lot to learn about his new position.

“The commission has done a great job over the years promoting Idaho potatoes and I hope I can keep that momentum going,” he said.

Higham said his main goal as head of the IPC is keeping what works going and “fixing” those things that don’t work so well.

“I want to keep doing the things that the commission is doing that work really well and for those things that aren’t working really well, we’ll pivot away from them and find new, different and exciting ways to promote the grown in Idaho potato products,” he said.

Higham said it’s too early to say whether the commission’s big promotional efforts, which include the annual big Idaho potato truck tour and sponsorship of the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, will continue as they currently are.

He did say he thinks the big Idaho potato truck tour “is a very successful marketing and public relations campaign and I like it.”

But, he added, “Along with everything else – the bowl game and the truck and the different sponsorships we do – I have to be very deliberate in my evaluation of what I think is the best spend of our growers’ and shippers’ money.”

“We are going to look at each of these things item by item and see what we think we get a good return on investment on,” Higham said. “And if it’s working, great. If not, we’ll probably have to fix it.”

“Everything gets reviewed,” Jemmett said.

Ultimately, Higham said, any promotional efforts the commission does undertake or continue will be designed with one main goal in mind: “What we want is that when people think about buying potatoes or fries, the first thing they think is ‘Idaho.’ That’s what we’re trying to do here.”

The commission is currently undertaking a long-range planning effort and Higham said while it’s important to have a long-range plan, it’s also important to be ready to change directions quickly if needed.

“The rate of change in



Idaho Potato Commission photo

**Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Jamey Higham, shown here, “is a potato guy through and through,” said Brett Jensen, chairman of the IPC.**

our industry and the world in general is just speeding up every month, so stuff that sounds like a great idea one month might be a bad idea six months later,” he said. “So we have to do a long-range planning that’s very flexible and nimble so that we can turn on a dime if we need to because it’s a different world out there than it used to be.”

The decisions on the direction the commission goes in the future will be made in concert with the nine-member IPC, which includes representatives from the grower, shipper and processing communities.

IPC Commissioner Mark Darrington, from Declo, said he likes Higham’s take on planning for the future but being ready to shift directions rapidly if the situation dictates.

“The world is changing and Jamie is ready to face that,” said Darrington, who is chairman of the IPC’s long-range planning effort. “You have to have some flexibility in what you are doing because the world does change rapidly.”

He also said the commission welcomes and seeks input from growers and others within the industry as the IPC undertakes its long-range planning effort.

“We want to make sure we hear every voice and hear their input,” Darrington said. “Your commissioners are all ready to hear you and we want to canvas all of our growers. Every grower has a voice and if they have some constructive suggestions, we want their perspective.” ■



# Chobani makes \$1 million gift to CAFE project

By John O'Connell  
University of Idaho

TWIN FALLS – Chobani Founder and CEO Hamdi Ulukaya expects the state's dairy industry will soon have a major edge when it comes to finding top talent and meeting the lofty challenge of improving sustainability.

During a May 11 ceremony at the company's local food processing plant, Chobani awarded a \$1 million gift to the University of Idaho-led Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (Idaho CAFE).

As Chobani prepares to significantly ramp up its local production, Ulukaya is certain Idaho CAFE will play a critical role in helping his plant fill a host of jobs, including at the Ph.D. level, while also generating unique research to help the dairy industry achieve greater production with fewer inputs.

Idaho CAFE is scheduled for a June 30 groundbreaking and will span three counties with a 2,000-cow research dairy and 640-acre demonstration farm in Rupert, a public outreach and education center in Jerome and collaborative food science efforts developed in partnership with the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls.

Idaho CAFE will be the nation's largest research dairy, conducting research and delivering education that will support a sustainable future for Idaho's dairies, livestock operations, crop production and food processing industries.

"The most important help we need is educated young Idahoans, either people from here or people who come to our state and are educated in our state schools and would love to stay here and live and build a life here," Ulukaya said. "We all have to come together to make sure that this talent, this young talent, stays in this beautiful place."

Ulukaya believes Idaho CAFE will be a monument to food production for building workforce, improving sustainability in the Magic Valley, enabling the region's food makers to implement better and more



Photo courtesy of Chobani

**From left, Idaho Dairymen's Association CEO Rick Naerebout, Gov. Brad Little, Chobani Founder and CEO Hamdi Ulukaya, University of Idaho President Scott Green and University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Dean Michael Parrella pose together May 11 during a celebration of Chobani's \$1 million contribution to the Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment.**

sustainable practices and helping them lead the country through their innovation.

Research at Idaho CAFE will focus on areas such as nutrient management, water management and the intersection between the state's agricultural and urban lands.

Chobani has long been a supporter of U of I's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, including the Chobani Scholars program that supports students from the Magic Valley pursuing degrees related to agriculture.

"With nearly 20 percent of Idaho's total economic output, the agricultural industry clearly influences the health of our state's economy, and I firmly believe that what's good for Idaho agriculture is good for Idaho," CALS Dean Michael Parrella said. "For that reason we are tremendously thankful for Chobani's investment in moving us closer to the finish line for constructing the research dairy and getting to work conducting research that is critically important for Idaho's dairy producers."

The facility will provide the state's dairymen with solutions to help industry meet ever-growing demands to conserve precious resources and minimize their environmental impact.

"It's going to be the difference maker for our dairymen to be able to accomplish these goals and to be able to have something to pass on to the next generation," Idaho Dairymen's Association CEO Rick Naerebout said.

The facility will tackle many research questions that have never previously been explored.

It will operate like a commercial farm and is designed to represent the average dairy in southern Idaho. The initial construction phase of the \$22.5 million project includes facilities to house milking and nutrient management operations.

U of I aims to start milking cows in the Rupert location after the first phase is completed in 2023. ■

*Continued from page 3*

late-season storms have helped, they haven't come close to solving the drought issues, Olenichak said.

"We're still below average and we still have a deficit from last year," he said.

Mountain snowpack levels around Idaho were well below average on April 1, which is typically the time of year that peak snowpack occurs in Idaho.

Snowpack is important because it's snowmelt that fills the state's reservoir systems and those reservoirs provide water to farmers and other irrigators during the hot, dry summer months.

The late-season storms brought some much-needed extra precipitation to the state but it wasn't enough to end the drought conditions that have plagued Idaho since last year, said Corey Loveland, a supervisory hydrologist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Idaho snow survey program.

"They have helped a little, but we're not out of the drought," he said.

Farmers and ranchers in arid southern Idaho depend on the water from the state's reservoir systems to get them through the hot, dry summer months.

Heading into 2022, most reservoir systems in the state were well below average and irrigators were hoping for good snowpack levels through the winter to fill those reservoirs to levels that could ensure irrigators had an adequate amount of water this year.

That didn't happen.

The recent storms that have hit the state since early April have helped the water situation in Idaho but they haven't been enough to get the state out of its drought, according to water managers around the state.

The upper Snake River and Boise basins received the most late-season snow, said David Hoekema, a hydrologist with the Idaho Department of Water Resources.

That made somewhat of a difference in the water supply outlook for irrigators that depend on the reservoirs that are filled with snowmelt from those basins.

For example, on April 1, water supply



Photo by Paul Boehlke

**Ample spring moisture has helped improve the water supply outlook for 2022 but it has not been enough to solve the state's drought issues.**

forecasters gave the Boise valley about a 70 percent chance of experiencing water shortages in 2022, Hoekema said. On May 1, there was a 50 percent probability of the valley having an adequate water supply this year.

While the precipitation in the Boise valley didn't solve the drought issues, "It's definitely put us in a better position than we were," said Mark Zirschky, manager of Pioneer Irrigation District, which provides water to 34,000 acres in the Treasure Valley of southwestern Idaho.

Based on river flow forecasts, the late-season snowfall in the upper Snake River basin added about 350,000 acre-feet of water in that basin.

"That's nowhere near enough to prevent shortages in the Snake River system, but it certainly helps," Hoekema said.

Even with the added precipitation, "I think there's very little chance that we'll fill any of the major reservoir systems this year," he added.

On its Facebook page, the Idaho Water Users Association noted on May 4 that,

"Although this precipitation has improved the immediate water outlook, much of Idaho remains in drought conditions. This recent precipitation has not been enough to overcome the lack of precipitation in January through March."

"River flows are low, water in reservoirs remain low," the IWUA post added. "Irrigation districts and canal companies throughout southern Idaho are limiting water allocations and remain skeptical that supply will get them through the 'normal' season."

The plentiful spring storms took some of the rough edges off of the year from a water supply perspective, but the lack of snow from January through April left a pretty big water hole to fill, IWUA Executive Director Paul Arrington told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

"While the extra moisture we received ... has been very welcome and has maybe allowed the season to maybe stretch a few days longer, ultimately it still is a drought year and we still need to be mindful of water usage throughout the state," he said. ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Sugar beets are planted in a field near Meridian this spring. Based on a USDA survey, Idaho farmers expect to plant about the same amount of acres in 2022 as they did last year.**

# USDA report shows Idaho farmers' planting intentions

**By Sean Ellis**

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – According to a USDA survey, Idaho farmers intend to plant a little more wheat and hay in 2022 and a little less barley, sugar beets and corn.

The survey also shows Idaho farmers plan to significantly reduce the amount of chickpeas and dry beans they plant in 2022.

The National Agricultural Statistic Service's Prospective Plantings Report, released March 31, is the first early season estimate of what farmers plan to plant this year.

NASS' June 30 Crop Acreage report is more accurate because it's based on actual plantings while the prospective plantings report is based on growers' planting intentions.

But the March 31 report does offer an early glimpse of what farmers intend to plant in 2022 and the report shows no signs that

*“We need to keep in mind that this is an early season estimate. We’ll have a lot better information when the June report comes out.”*

*-Laura Wilder, Idaho Barley  
Commission Executive Director*

Idaho or U.S. farmers plan to leave a significant number of fields fallow this year due to much higher farm input costs.

The report shows Idaho farmers intend to plant a total of 4.01 million acres of principal crops in 2022, in line with the 4.04 million acres planted in the state in 2021.

Nationwide, U.S. farmers plan to plant 317.4 million acres of principal crops this year, up slightly from 317.2 million acres planted last year.

The surveys for NASS’ 2022 planting intentions report was conducted during the first two weeks of March from a sample of nearly 73,000 farm operators across the United States.

Approximately 1,900 Idaho producers were surveyed.

The report shows that Idaho farmers intend to plant 1.265 million acres of wheat during the 2022 growing season, up slightly from 1.227 million acres last year.

The report shows that Idaho farmers expect to harvest 1.26 million acres of hay in 2022, up slightly from 1.24 million acres last year.

The report estimates Idaho farmers will plant 510,000 acres of barley in 2022, down 2 percent from 520,000 acres in 2021.

Idaho leads the nation in total barley production.

Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director Laura Wilder said the prospective plantings report tends to conservatively estimate Idaho barley acres and based on conversations with industry leaders, she expects Idaho barley acres to actually increase this year.

“I believe the (NASS) numbers are low and that we will be 5-10 percent above where those estimates are,” she said.

When the surveys were being conducted for the report, Wilder said, many farmers were still making final planting decisions and those decisions in Idaho largely come down to water availability and fertilizer costs.

Farmers in Idaho’s main barley growing regions had not received letters from their canal companies informing them of how much water to expect when the surveys were being conducted and since that time, it has become apparent most farmers in Idaho will have less water than normal this year, Wilder said.

Plus, she added, fertilizer prices are significantly higher this year.

Compared with a lot of the other major crops grown in Idaho, “Barley is a good choice this year because it requires less water

and fertilizer than those other crops,” Wilder said.

“We need to keep in mind that this is an early season estimate,” she added. “We’ll have a lot better information when the June report comes out.”

The NASS report estimates that Idaho farmers intend to plant 58,000 acres of chickpeas, also known as garbanzo beans, in 2022, which would be a 27 percent decrease compared with the 79,000 acres planted in 2021.

Idaho ranks second in the nation in chickpea production, behind Washington, and most of the state’s crop is grown in North Idaho.

Dirk Hammond, manager of George F. Brocke and Sons, which processes garbanzo beans, peas and lentils in Kendrick, expects Idaho chickpea acres to be down 20-25 percent this year.

Most of those lost chickpea acres will go into spring wheat because of much higher wheat prices, he said, and some of the lost chickpea acres will also be planted to canola because prices for that crop are up 30-35 percent compared with last year.

“That’s where a lot of those chickpea acres are going – to spring wheat and canola,” Hammond said.

He said the chickpea market is quiet right now due to supply chain issues linked to the congestion at West Coast ports.

“They’re all plugged. It’s difficult for us to get new bookings to guarantee shipments,” Hammond said. “Buyers are sitting on the sidelines until the congestion gets taken care of. It’s an absolute mess.”

NASS expects chickpea acres nationwide to decrease 18 percent, from 369,000 acres last year to 304,000 acres this year.

According to the NASS report, Idaho farmers plan to plant 350,000 acres of corn in 2022, down 8 percent from 380,000 last year.

Idaho producers intend to plant 170,000 acres of sugar beets, down 1 percent from last year’s 172,000-acre total.

Idaho dry bean acres are expected to total 47,000 in 2022, down 19 percent from 58,000 last year, and dry edible pea acres are expected to total 37,000 acres in 2022, up 28 percent from 29,000 last year.

Based on the NASS survey, Idaho farmers intend to plant 35,000 acres of oats in 2022, down 30 percent from 50,000 last year.

Lentil acres in Idaho are expected to remain level at 20,000.

Estimates for Idaho’s most iconic product – potatoes – won’t be released until June. Idaho potato acres typically hover a little above 300,000.

Idaho leads the United States in potato production – the state’s farmers produce a third of the nation’s total potato crop – and the June potato acreage estimate will be closely watched by industry.

The NASS prospective plantings survey shows that U.S. farmers intend to plant a record 91 million acres of soybeans in 2022, up 4 percent from last year. U.S. farmers also plan to plant 89.5 million acres of corn, down 4 percent from last year.

Total wheat acres in the U.S. for 2022 are estimated at 47.4 million, up 1 percent from 2021 but, according to NASS, this would represent the fifth lowest all wheat planted area since records began in 1919. ■



Photos by Sean Ellis

Third-graders learn about some of the byproducts produced from animals May 5 during the annual Third Grade Ag Expo at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Rigby. More than 600 third-graders from Jefferson County attended the event, which was held May 4-5.

# 600 students attend Third Grade Ag Expo in Rigby

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

RIGBY – More than 600 third-graders from Jefferson County were taught some of the basics of agriculture May 4-5 during the county’s annual Third Grade Ag Expo.

The event, a partnership between the Rigby FFA chapter and Jefferson County Farm Bureau, is meant to introduce kids in the county to farming and ranching and to give them an appreciation of what agriculture means in their everyday lives, said Lex

Godfrey, an ag education teacher and FFA advisor from Rigby High School.

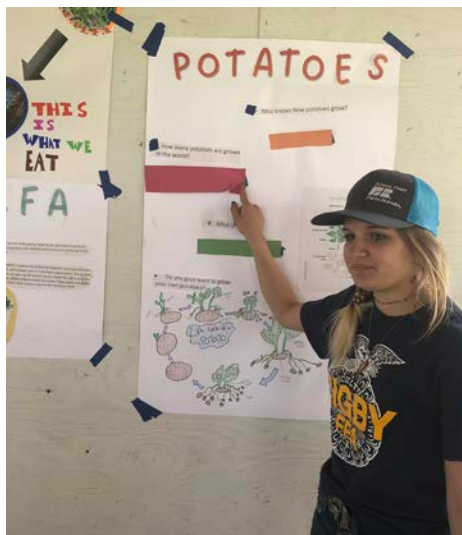
“Agriculture literacy is decreasing,” he said. “People’s awareness and understanding of how their food is produced, how it gets to their plate, and where it comes from is diminishing. It’s important for us to be able to educate people about that simple part of their lives that they touch every day, three times a day.”

There is still a lot of agricultural activity happening around Rigby and in Jefferson County but the area is also experiencing

rapid population growth and the newcomers, as well as long-time residents, need to have a basic understanding of what agriculture means to them and the area’s economy, Godfrey said.

Jefferson is one of Idaho’s top 10 counties in terms of farm revenue and the county’s farmers and ranchers brought in \$295 million in farm-gate receipts in 2017, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

But the area is also one of the state’s fastest-growing as well and a lot of those



**A Rigby FFA student teaches third-graders about potatoes, hay and other Idaho farm commodities May 5 during the annual Third Grade Ag Expo at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Rigby. More than 600 third-graders from Jefferson County attended the event, which was held May 4-5.**

newcomers have very little understanding of what farming and ranching is or what it means to the area's economy and way of life, Godfrey said.

"We have agricultural roots in this area but those agricultural roots are slowly (disappearing)," he said. "Our community is growing at an exponential rate. Each year we're seeing over a hundred new students in our school district and we're seeing more and more subdivisions popping up all over. With that amount of growth, it becomes more important for us to educate the youth about agriculture...."

Jefferson County Farm Bureau provided \$3,000 toward the event this year to help offset the cost of transporting the students to the Jefferson County Fairgrounds, where it's held.

Third-graders from throughout the county attend the event.

"We are getting a lot of out-of-state people coming into this area. Let's teach them about agriculture," said Jordon Raymond, chairman of Jefferson County Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers committee. "Let's educate them about farming and let's have them learn about agriculture from the farmers, not from somebody that has an agenda."

The event includes 10 learning stations and the third-graders are divided up into

groups that visit each of the stations, where they learn about dairy, potatoes, grains and beef, the importance of fertilizers and other crop chemicals, veterinary health and medicine and other aspects of the agriculture industry.

The stations include lessons about the importance of rangeland and the importance of water and water quality.

At one of the stations, students plant a potato in a plastic cup that they can take home with them.

The students are learning about many of the concepts presented during the event, Godfrey said. "Here, they are able to come and touch it, feel it, understand it on a deeper level."

The event is planned and run by local FFA members, who also man the stations and escort the individual groups of students.

About 45 FFA students worked with local industry representatives to plan and execute this year's Third Grade Ag Expo and the event is an opportunity for FFA members to learn more about the industry as well, Godfrey said.

"We think that part right there, that mentorship between industry partners and our youth leaders, is essential and important," he said.

Jordyn Gebarowski, president of the Rigby FFA chapter, said some of the third-graders have a decent basic understanding of agriculture but many don't.

"As our area is growing, we want our population to know more about agriculture," she said. "We are getting (a lot of people) who don't know anything about it. If we start at this young of an age, they keep it with them forever. They are going to remember six years down the line things they learned on this field trip."

"The message we want to get out to these kids is that agriculture is important and your food doesn't just come from the grocery store," said Kayda Hickman, an FFA member who coordinated this year's event. "As third-graders, they are young enough that you can still get the message across to them and they'll remember it. Third grade is the best age to get their attention and be able to teach them things."

Hickman said if she could have each student remember one thing about the field trip, it's "that agriculture is important, and I also want them to remember that agriculture is part of their everyday life."

She said she was told by multiple teachers during this year's event that the kids had been talking about the field trip for weeks and couldn't wait to attend.

The students weren't the only ones itching to attend the event.

"I've been teaching for 24 years in this district and this is my favorite field trip that we've ever had," said Susan Lindsey, who teaches third grade at South Fork Elementary. ■



**Third-graders learn a little about veterinary medicine, including animal vaccines, May 5 during the annual Third Grade Ag Expo at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Rigby. More than 600 third-graders from Jefferson County attended the event, which was held May 4-5.**

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	Yield	.150	.250	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	
\$ 2,500 - \$ 4,999	Rate	.200	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	
	Yield	.200	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	
\$ 5,000 - \$ 9,999	Rate	.250	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	
	Yield	.250	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	
\$ 10,000 - \$ 24,999	Rate	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	
	Yield	.300	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	
\$ 25,000 - \$ 49,999	Rate	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	.950	
	Yield	.350	.450	.550	.650	.750	.850	.950	
\$ 50,000 - \$ 99,999	Rate	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	1.00	
	Yield	.400	.500	.600	.700	.800	.900	1.00	
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Photos by Rob Keefe

Ground-based skidding can be obtained with self-loading forwarders.

# What harvesting system is best for your stand?

By **Randy Brooks**  
*University of Idaho*

When it comes time to harvest trees on your property, several options exist for what equipment to use. Choosing a good logger and talking to a forester can help take the guesswork out for the landowner.

Silvicultural systems and methods, roads, skid trails, and forest road drainage structures are all necessary parts of the

harvest systems and methods of getting forest products from the land to the mill but selecting the best equipment for the job is very important.

So, let's discuss the options!

## **Ground-based skidding**

Ground-based skidding with grapple or cable skidders, and occasionally horses, is common in Idaho and is appropriate on slopes less than 40%.

However, ground-based skidding should

only be conducted when conditions are either dry or snowy enough (or on hard frozen ground) that excessive rutting and soil compaction is avoided.

Rutting occurs under wet conditions when the weight of a machine, as well as possible spinning of tires, cause depressions in the ground. Ruts create water-courses on hillsides that allow sediment to be carried.

Additional traction for rubber-tired





**Ground-based skidding using a grapple skidder; machines can have rubber tires or tracks.**

skidding machines can be created by putting slash mats down to increase traction, especially in wet areas on skid trails and during winter operations. Slash mats also help to catch sediment that may be carried in overland flow.

On steep slopes, and where soil compaction is a concern, tracked skidders (cats) should be used. Tracked skidders reduce ground pressure because machine weight is spread out over a larger surface area.

With either tracked or rubber-tired skidding machines, careful planning of skid trails is important for reducing soil compaction. Unplanned skid trails can occupy more than one third of total stand area, and most soil compaction occurs during the first one to two machine passes.

Cable skidders have the advantage of being able to yard logs from sensitive areas, such as within the stream protection zone (SPZ), without having to drive to the stump.

On the other hand, pulling logs without lift means that yarding with a cable skidder can also cause more ground disturbance than a grapple skidder. Careful consideration of the pros and cons for each piece of equipment is important in each harvesting operation.

### **Cut-to-length systems**

Cut-to-length logging uses a harvester with a processing head that limbs and bucks logs to length in the woods. A log forwarder is then used to carry the logs to the landing.

Because ground skidding is not needed,

cut-to-length systems tend to reduce both the total stand area with soil disturbance and the area in skid trails, which can reduce overall soil compaction.

Because trees are always processed in the woods in cut-to-length operations, plenty of slash is available during forwarding and can be used to pad forwarder trails. This reduces ground disturbance, increases tire traction, and traps sediment.

### **Shovel logging**

When turn distances are short, shovel logging using loaders, also known as swing machines, to advance logs to the roadside can be more productive than ground skidding and causes less ground disturbance.

Shovels are on carriers with tracks, so machine weight is distributed over a larger surface area than on rubber-tired skidders.

Shovel logging is now the most common ground-based logging system used on moderate slopes on many industrial ownerships west of the Cascades.

However, when shovel logging requires more than two to three swings, the productivity drops off and this system becomes less cost effective.

In logging operations where it is feasible, shovel logging is an excellent practice to reduce soil disturbance and rutting during weather conditions when precipitation is possible, such as during early summer and



**Shovel logging, using tracked loaders, is an excellent practice to reduce soil impacts.**



**Cable yarding with a Thunderbird line machine is used in areas with steep slopes. A loader for loading logs on trucks sets to the left of the line machine.**

late fall harvesting.

### **Cable yarding**

Cable yarding is more expensive than ground-skidding but causes less soil compaction. Cable systems designed with appropriate deflection maximize payload by creating lift, which diverts physical force from the ground to the skyline or mainline, thus protecting soils.

Corridors created by cable systems create a vertical path on the hillslope that can become a route for sediment transport.

For this reason, hand-piling or using a sky carriage to deposit a slash mat along a corridor after completion of cable yarding may help to reduce subsequent downslope transport of sediments, especially with ground-lead cable systems like single-drum Jammers and tong throwers.

It is common in the Inland Northwest for tailholds in skyline systems to be located across the stream in the bottom of a draw. This helps create a vertical skyline profile with sufficient deflection to create lift, optimize the payload capacity of the yarder, and create partial or full suspen-

sion for logs.

In highly sensitive areas, such as when crossing streams within SPZs, systems should be designed so that full suspension is possible, in order to prevent damage to stream banks and beds.

Where possible, using anchor Cat's as tailholds for skyline systems can provide flexibility in laying out cable corridors when tailtrees may not be available in desired locations.

Small, guyless yarders called yoders or excaliners are highly versatile machines for yarding short distances (e.g. 600-800 feet) in broken terrain in Idaho.

Because of their ability to move quickly from corridor to corridor, these machines are highly efficient for cable logging operations in short, steep draws where ground-based equipment can't be used.

Yoders with tong throwers may be useful for productively clearing the area in front of a medium- to full-sized yarder prior to line logging.

### **Summary**

As a reminder, once you have chosen the

system you will use for your harvest operation, the locations of key areas must be established. It is important that designated skid trail networks are followed, rather than simply heading to each bunch of logs.

The use of designated skid trails and directional falling minimizes the total stand area in skid trails, which otherwise can occupy as much as 30% of total stand area.

The majority of soil compaction caused by ground skidding occurs during the first one to two passes. Herringbone skid networks that utilize a combination of contour-based skidding across the slope on moderate slopes with favorable skidding in draws work well.

Skid trails should stay out of draw bottoms whenever possible.

Soil compaction is a function of total vehicle weight and the amount of tire or track surface area in contact with the soil.

Tracked machines tend to have lower pounds per square inch of ground pressure because the weight is distributed over a larger total surface area.

For the same reason, rubber-tired skidders with doubled wheels (duallies) on each axle exert half the ground pressure of those with single tires.

The use of slash mats helps catch sediment during and after skidding operations and also reduces soil disturbance by providing additional traction.

Ground-based skidding, cut-to-length systems, shovel logging, and cable systems are all options for logging in Idaho.

Deciding which system to use largely depends on appropriate stand and site conditions of your property.

Grapple skidding and whole tree processing at the landing is the most popular ground-based harvesting method on moderate slopes (less than 40%) in Idaho, with manual felling and cable logging being the preferred methods on steep slopes.

If you have harvesting questions, talk to your local Idaho Department of Lands private forestry specialist. They can be located here: <https://www.idl.idaho.gov/about-forestry/assistance-for-forest-landowners/private-forestry-specialist-finder/>.

*Randy Brooks is a University of Idaho Extension forestry specialist. He can be reached at [rbrooks@uidaho.edu](mailto:rbrooks@uidaho.edu).* ■

# Food delivery robots arrive in Idaho at U of I campus

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

MOSCOW – Social media immediately exploded when food delivery robots made their debut on the University of Idaho campus March 23.

“There is so much buzz about them,” Kim Howe, director of marketing for Idaho Eats, the university’s contracted food service provider, said March 30. “Social media was on fire the first week and it’s continuing to catch on.”

The autonomous robots can be seen rolling along sidewalks all over U of I’s Moscow campus, making their way to dorm rooms, offices and other locations, delivering food and drinks to students and university faculty and employees.

Carlos Arriaga, a senior pursuing a marketing degree, said he was pretty surprised the first time he saw one of the robots strolling down a sidewalk.

“I had never seen anything like this before,” he said. “It was definitely something I was surprised to see but they’re actually pretty cool, honestly.”

Like many other students on campus, Arriaga had to try one out for himself so he ordered a bagel and a coffee.

“I had just two minutes in-between my classes, so I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to try it out and it worked perfectly,” he said.

People on campus can have food delivered to them by the robots from several Idaho Eats locations.

The service is provided by Starship Technologies, which debuted the technology on campuses in 2018 and now operates food delivery robots on two dozen college campuses in the United States.

The U of I campus has a fleet of 15 food delivery robots, which can each carry the equivalent of about three shopping bags of groceries.

Starship has hired 12 students to help operate the service on the Moscow campus.

The robots drive autonomously but are monitored by humans, who can take control at any time if necessary.



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Social media immediately exploded when these food delivery robots made their debut on the University of Idaho’s Moscow campus on March 23.**

“Operators can help out if one gets stuck or broken,” said Andrew Tucker, Starship’s site lead on the U of I campus.

Ordering a delivery from a robot is pretty simple, he said. You download the Starship Food Delivery app, find your location on campus, select a vendor, place an order and choose where you want it delivered.

A delivery takes about 30 minutes total, on average, Tucker said, and an order comes with a \$1.99 delivery fee.

People who place an order can follow the robot’s journey in real time through an interactive map. When the robot arrives, the user receives a “two-minute warning” alert and they can use the app to unlock the robot to get their delivery.

The robots can also be programmed to deliver a little bit of a personal touch and Howe said she has seen them play music and even perform a little dance for a faculty member.

They have even been known to say “Go Vandals” after completing a delivery.

Starship offers its food delivery service on the Moscow campus from 7 a.m.-10:30 p.m. and the robots make their way to a central location after hours to be recharged overnight.

People on campus “are definitely excited about them,” Arriaga said. “There is a lot of social media buzz going on. People are posting videos and photos and following them around. It’s kind of cool to see the energy they bring to campus.” ■

# Challenges elsewhere have U of I plant pathologist optimistic about Idaho barley, wheat

By John O'Connell  
*University of Idaho*

IDAHO FALLS – A University of Idaho plant pathologist specializing in cereals is advising Idaho wheat and barley farmers the current growing season could be one of their most profitable in years, making it especially important for them to pay attention to details and produce a quality crop.

Professor Juliet Marshall, Plant Sciences department head with U of I's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, said Idaho grain farmers will have to cope with short irrigation supplies, minimal soil moisture, prospects of a hot and dry summer and a cool spring delaying growth and spring crop emergence.

Nonetheless, Idaho farmers appear to be in good shape relative to producers in other major grain production areas throughout the U.S. and abroad, and tight supplies are pushing grain prices sky high.

"It's going to be important for everybody to do their best to increase their production as long as it's profitable," Marshall said. "This will be a really good year for everybody to pay attention to their wheat production when it's usually not considered a cash crop."

The state's fall wheat stands have weathered winter well, and pressure from stripe rust, which is an economically significant fungal pathogen of wheat and barley, appears to be low early this season.

Marshall urges farmers to carefully scout their fields and to promptly report any signs of stripe rust, but she doesn't expect them to have many problems with the disease this season and advises against applying fungicide at herbicide timing to control it, even in susceptible varieties.

The likelihood of a hot summer could elevate grain growers' risk of another disease of concern, Fusarium head blight. Fusarium head blight, however, thrives in moist conditions, and an anticipated dry summer could counterbalance the heat.

Many farmers who are concerned about having their irrigation supplies cut off early after a light winter are planting fewer acres of long-season crops, such as corn, and will opt for more acres of wheat and barley, which require a shorter irrigation season.

Marshall encourages growers to heavily irrigate their grain fields before the weather turns hot to deepen their soil moisture, providing reserves for wheat and barley roots to tap at the height of summer when they need water most.

Recent cool and moist weather throughout southern and



Submitted photo

**Professor Juliet Marshall is the Plant Sciences department head with University of Idaho's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and a plant pathologist.**

eastern Idaho has delayed fall wheat growth and spring wheat and barley emergence.

However, the cool conditions have also triggered the winter crop to produce more tillers – lateral branches – which could ultimately lead to higher yields.

On May 3, Marshall hosted the university's Ag Talk Tuesday program, which is a series of virtual sessions featuring agricultural experts from U of I and the industry.

It's hosted on the first and third Tuesdays of each month from May through August. Her guest, Keith Esplin, addressed the irrigation outlook for the season, which he said has improved due to April precipitation but still has farmers concerned.

Esplin is executive director of both a nonprofit involved in a private aquifer recharge program, called Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Recharge, and of Eastern Idaho Water Rights Coalition, which represents the water interests of eastern Idaho canals,

groundwater districts, cities and businesses.

Esplin said a lack of mountain snowpack this winter has contributed to lower stream flows at the expense of storage. For example, American Falls Reservoir, which normally fills in the spring, is only at about 85% of capacity.

Just a month ago, he explained, irrigators drawing water from canals off of the Snake River feared they'd run out of water in June or July.

The outlook has improved thanks to a cool spring delaying the start of the irrigation season and prolonging runoff.

"Canals that are normally short in bad drought years are probably going to be short. Canals that normally make it will probably make it," Esplin said.

Casey Chumrau, executive director of the Idaho Wheat Commission, agrees the state is still in the midst of a drought, but she adds Idaho farmers are well off compared to their peers elsewhere in the country.

Farmers in the Midwest have coped with continued dry weather and early heat. Elsewhere in the northern U.S., excess rain has

delayed planting, to the point that many farmers there are concerned about meeting planting deadlines for crop insurance.

"That is not good for the outlook of wheat production," Chumrau said. "A lot of those states are expecting a reduction in their output."

Globally, Chumrau agrees the conflict with Russia in Ukraine and production challenges in key areas will reduce grain stocks, maintaining pressure on prices. Russia and Ukraine together are responsible for about 30% of global wheat exports, she said.

Extreme heat has affected the wheat crop in India. Severe flooding prevented planting of much of the usual fall wheat acreage in China, which accounts for a large percentage of global wheat stocks but doesn't export its grain. Europe's wheat crop is also expected to be down.

"It's significant right now that the prices are high because our input costs are so high. At these prices, farmers will be able to cover their input costs," Chumrau said.

*(John O'Connell is an agricultural writer for University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.)* ■

# Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



**"I graduated with honors as an Ag major.  
I was outstanding in the field."**



**"Is this like an episode of 'The Bachelor'?"**

# Waitley honored for decades of service to Idaho agriculture

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BOISE – A person who has promoted and defended Idaho’s agriculture industry for more than five decades has been given a special honor by the University of Idaho.

The U of I recently presented an honorary doctorate degree in agricultural science to Rick Waitley, who has organized and managed countless agricultural-related organizations and events in Idaho for half a century.

About 120 members of Idaho’s agricultural industry attended a Feb. 23 event recognizing that honor.

An honorary doctorate is awarded by U of I to a person who has made significant contributions to the state of Idaho, Michael Parrella, dean of U of I’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, told those who attended the event.

Waitley is a partner to the university “who has made a considerable impact on our institution, the agricultural industry and the state of Idaho,” Parrella said.

Waitley serves as president of Association Management Group, which oversees the management and lobbying for more than 40 agriculture commodity and farm organizations in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest.

He is responsible for creating or managing numerous groups and events that have advanced Idaho’s agricultural industry over the years, including Leadership Idaho Agriculture, Food Producers of Idaho, the Idaho Coop Council, Idaho Ag in the Classroom and Idaho Ag Summit.

The university received 34 letters of support endorsing Waitley’s honorary degree.

“Suffice it to say I do not believe there is another person in this state who has done more to positively advocate for Idaho’s farmers and ranchers than Rick Waitley,” Blair Wilson, the former Idaho state president for Northwest Farm Credit Services, wrote in support of Waitley’s honor.

He said Waitley’s “enthusiastic and tireless approach has encouraged hundreds (if not thousands) of Idahoans to become involved in leadership positions all around the state.”

“Through his own tremendous energy, multiplied a thousand-fold by the literal army of agriculture advocates he has developed over his decades-long leadership, Rick has lifted the profile of the agricultural industry throughout Idaho and beyond,” Wilson’s letter of support states.

Waitley grew up on a farm in Meridian and became active in 4-H at a young age. He said his first exposure to the U of I occurred 56 years ago on a trip to Moscow to attend a 4-H congress on the university’s campus.

He graduated from the university in 1973 with a degree in ag



Photo by Sean Ellis

**Rick Waitley addresses a crowd of about 120 people involved with Idaho’s agriculture industry Feb. 23. He was recently presented by the University of Idaho with an honorary doctorate degree in agricultural science for his decades of support for the state’s agriculture industry.**

education. He serves on numerous community and state boards and committees and holds the chair position for CALS’ Dean’s Advisory Board.

He has remained a staunch supporter of the University of Idaho and the state’s agricultural community for more than five decades, Parrella said.

“Mr. Waitley’s commitment to educating Idaho’s agriculture industry has made profound and enduring contributions that have shaped the landscape of Idaho’s agriculture industry,” states a joint letter from Idaho’s four congressional representatives.

Gov. Brad Little, a rancher, wrote a letter of support for Waitley’s nomination that states, “I have worked with Rick for years. His advocacy work for policies that advanced the agricultural industry and his commitment to agricultural education have helped propel the state forward.”

“I describe Rick as the go-to guy for anyone seeking information on agriculture in the state of Idaho,” Wayne Thiessen, a retired member of Idaho’s potato industry and an active CALS supporter, told people who attended the Feb. 23 event.

He said when he first started writing his letter of support for Waitley, he thought to himself, “How many pages can I write in praise of Rick’s contributions to agriculture? The list goes on and on.” ■

## We need to continually look at changes in our markets

In the past, we would have discussions about being in the “heat of the battle.” What was meant by this term was that when producers are dealing with the day-to-day activities (that quite often are unforeseen), you don’t have the time to study the markets.

Whether those markets are for your inputs or when or where you can sell the commodities you produce, there are only so many hours in a day and you can only do what you can do.

There without a doubt is a season for buying or preparing, a season for producing and a season for selling. These seasons can and do overlap to some degree but we all know that we can only concentrate on one thing at a time.

Even when we are multi-tasking, our concentration can only be on one thing. Maybe a better term would be, focus.

With the level that all prices are at this time, the need for “focus” is now greater than ever. Inputs are up, so we need to be able to market the end product in a way that allows us to still make a margin.

The thing that many people don’t understand is that the costs of doing business has increased tremendously but in most cases the margins haven’t increased and in some cases those margins are getting squeezed.

Therefore, the need to take additional time to study, analyze and ponder just what you should do in this environment daily is now more important than ever.

I know that it is difficult to designate a specific time during the day to do this, as in most operations we spend a great deal of time putting out fires. However, I also know that in most businesses and operations this needs to take place in order for the business to remain on track.

Someone within the operation needs to have the responsibility of not only marketing but managing the price risk in the markets. There are large farms and small farms,

*‘I think we all need to continually be looking at the changes in our markets and just how we can use those changes to our advantage.’*

large cow-calf operations and small cow-calf operations that are currently taking the time necessary to accomplish these tasks.

I visited with a young couple that is just starting out and is currently using the tools available to hedge their commodities using futures to manage their price risk in the market.

They understand what they produce may not influence the movement in the futures markets but they also understand how the movement in the futures market influences just how they can market their commodities in the local market.

Now, not every move or position they take will or has been a winner, so to speak, but when they keep in mind that this is risk management, it works just fine.

There have been times when they have taken a step back and simply said that this is an education and their goal is to grow their operation for years to come and they feel that these tools are an intricate part of their future.

They studied and learned enough to make the decision that hedging will work for them. Now they designate some time



each day to study and learn more about how to accomplish their objective.

Now, hedging with futures may not work for you but you should take enough time to become knowledgeable enough to make that decision. Even if you don’t hedge, you will be able to study the markets in a manner that will help you in your marketing decisions.

I know that this is only an example of one young couple but they are looking into the future and have realized that things change all the time and they need to be open to looking at all aspects of farming and ranching and how to improve how they will operate in the years ahead.

I think we all need to continually be looking at the changes in our markets and just how we can use those changes to our advantage.

We need to continually be looking at just how and where we market.

Studying the local basis, for instance, can and will reap rewards in the long run. One producer told me that watching the local basis on diesel helps him make his decision on just when to fill his tank. Interesting, isn’t it. ■

# Agricultural Profile

## Idaho County



Photos by Sheryl Nuxoll

Felix Nuxoll cultivates a field near Cottonwood May 23 that will be planted to forage barley and black peas for hay.

## Wide variety of crops grown in Idaho County

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

GRANGEVILLE – The Camas Prairie in Idaho County normally receives an ample amount of rainfall that allows farmers to grow a variety of crops here without irrigation.

Wheat, barley, rapeseed, canola, green peas, chickpeas, blue grass seed, hay, oats, quinoa and Austrian winter peas are some of the many crops grown in Idaho County.

“The prairie part of the county is a rich ag area,” says Bob Smathers, a regional field manager in north Idaho for Idaho Farm Bureau Federation.

There were 708 farms and 537,000 total

land in farms in Idaho County in 2017, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

A tiny amount of farmland in the county is irrigated because the region normally receives about 22 inches of rainfall annually.

“We don’t irrigate ... in the county because we usually get a pretty good amount of rainfall,” says Cottonwood farmer Sheryl Nuxoll, who farms wheat, barley, canola and peas.

While the Camas Prairie, like most other regions in Idaho, received a lot less moisture than normal during last year’s drought, this year it has received almost too much moisture and that has delayed or prevented a lot of planting.

“We have gotten so much moisture

that some people aren’t even seeding this spring,” Nuxoll says.

Many farmers on the prairie could file for prevented planting insurance this year due to the unusually wet spring, Smathers says. Prevented planting in crop insurance policies provides coverage when extreme weather conditions prevent expected plantings.

“This year, constant spring rains and even snow have kept farmers out of the fields, making it impossible (for some farmers) to plant spring crops,” Smathers says.

But during more typical precipitation years, farmers in this county plant a lot of acres.



According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, farmers in Idaho County planted 54,470 acres of wheat and 34,545 acres of forage crops, including hay, during the 2017 census year.

They also planted 7,228 acres of barley, 5,980 acres of canola and 2,683 acres of chickpeas.

The county, Idaho's largest by size, also has a sizable beef cattle industry. According to the 2017 census of ag, there were 26,185 cattle and calves in Idaho County in 2017 and the county's beef cattle industry brought in \$14 million in farm-gate revenue.

"There is a vibrant ranching community in Idaho County (and) ranching is an important part of the economy," Smathers says.

The county, like many others in the state, has experienced some rapid growth but so far that growth has not had a major negative impact on farm ground, says Idaho County Farm Bureau President Eric Forsman, who farms near Grangeville.

"The rapid growth so far has only eaten up some pasture ground," he says. "It hasn't really affected farm ground yet and I hope it doesn't."

Nuxoll, who served as ICFB president until December, says the local Farm Bureau organization spends a lot of effort on educating county residents about agricul-



**A winter wheat field near Cottonwood is shown in this photo taken in May.**

ture.

"We try to ... keep people educated about ag issues," she says.

The Idaho County Farm Bureau also focuses on making sure residents are informed about county, state and local politics and issues, Nuxoll adds.

Local Farm Bureau members interview all local political candidates in person and

inform county residents about the candidates and where they stand on issues, she says.

One of the positive things about Idaho County agriculture is that the county has a lot of young farmers and ranchers, Nuxoll says. According to the 2017 ag census, there were 121 agricultural producers in Idaho County under the age of 35 in 2017.

Before COVID, the annual ICFB meeting attracted a significant number of young people, Nuxoll says.

"There are so many young people involved in farming and ranching up here," she says.

According to the 2017 ag census, farmers and ranchers in Idaho County brought in \$44 million in farm-gate revenue in 2017.

There were a lot of small farms in the county: 284 brought in less than \$2,500 in farm sales in 2017 and 227 were from 1 to 49 acres in size.

But there were a good number of bigger farms also: 112 brought in more than \$100,000 in sales in 2017 and 121 were larger than 1,000 acres in size while 55 were from 500-999 acres in size.

According to the ag census, 97 percent of the farms in the county are family farms and 5 percent sell directly to consumers. ■



**A field near Cottonwood that will be planted to forage barley and black peas for hay is cultivated May 23.**

# Classifieds

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For Sale: AKC registered Anatolian Shepherd Livestock guardian dogs. [www.elkhornas.com](http://www.elkhornas.com) [www.elkhornbnb.com](http://www.elkhornbnb.com) Mesa, ID 208-741-2071

## FARMING/EQUIPMENT

Case 511-B, 1960 case. Needs a little work to get running. New rear tires. Aberdeen, ID 208-339-0274, 208-240-8079

2008 NH 1475 Hydro-swing Swather 14Ft. excellent shape, well maintained, 2214 Header. \$1750.00. Also a 2006 NH 570 Hayliner small baler, lined chute, Moisture monitor, great shape, well maintained \$1950.00. Call 208-253-4346 Council, ID.

New Holland 1032 Stackliner Bale-wagon. Good condition, good tires, good working order. No longer

needed. Asking \$5,800. 208-365-0281, Emmett, ID.

Stanley Chipper for sale. Only used two times. \$100. Murtaugh 208-731-7040.

Fordson Major Diesel, 42 Hp. 6 speed Trans. 3 pt. Hitch, Very good tires, Fluid and wheel weights on rear. Included: Shop Manual, drawbar, top link and chains for rear. Engine overhaul – 2020. Price \$5950.00. Call or text 208-892-1887.

Balewagons: New Holland self-propelled or pull-type models, parts, tires, manuals. Also interested in buying balewagons. Will consider any model. Call Jim Wilhite at 208-880-2889 anytime.

1973 Veermer Trencher Gas M450 blade and back-hoe with 12" bucket, Ford 4 speed engine. Firm \$4,250. Boise 208-757-3943.

ALFALFA SEED \$2.70/LB. Alfalfa seed, \$2.70/lb., Dormancy 4. Tests well with great persistence and winter hardiness. Inoculated in 50lb. bags. Kuna, ID. Contact Dave 208-890-1066 or Jessica 208-761-2720 or email [seed@davereynolds-farms.com](mailto:seed@davereynolds-farms.com).

Hesston 4655 Little Baler; asking \$8,500, Case 8555 Baler; asking \$8,555, H&S CR12 Hayrake, ground driven; asking \$4,500, John Deere 4010 Tractor; asking \$12,000. All have been maintained well. Kuna, ID 208-559-6091.

I am 10 years old and raising chickens. Eggs for sale. \$2.00 dozen or \$3.00 for 18 count. 208-420-7916 text or call Lars. Can deliver to Twin Falls/Kimberly area.

## AUTO

1994 F250 Pickup Heavy Duty. 97,000 miles, bad head gaskets, tore down needs put back together. Gas 460, 411 gears. Aberdeen, ID 208-339-0274, 208-240-8079.

## FOR SALE

I am 12 years old and making Faux earrings and bath bombs. I Specialize in Idaho earrings. Earrings are \$3.00 each, Bath bombs are \$5.00 for a box of 4. Sarah 208-420-7916. Can deliver to Twin Falls/Kimberly area.

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Vintage snowmobiles pre 1980s. Mercury snow, trail twisters, Polaris, txt xl, star fires, Yamaha, GPX, SRX, Exciters, Ski doo, TNT, Rvs Bizzard, Ripp, Nitro or other performance sleds. Kimberly, ID Text call or email Craig 208-539-1264 [dginder@gmail.com](mailto:dginder@gmail.com).

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](mailto:gearlep@gmail.com). 208-285-1258.

Old Idaho related patches and Farm Bureau patches. Top dollar! Text or email a picture to 208-870-3217, [idahotrappguy@hotmail.com](mailto:idahotrappguy@hotmail.com).

1997-98 Chevy Tracker 4 door- 4x4 for parts. Call 208-749-7631

## FREE CLASSIFIEDS

Non-commercial classified ads are free to Idaho Farm Bureau members. Must include membership number for free ad. Forty (40) words maximum. Non-member cost is 50 cents per word. You may advertise your own crops, livestock, used machinery, household items, vehicles, etc. Ads will not be accepted by phone. Ads run one time only and must be re-submitted in each subsequent issue. We reserve the right to refuse to run any ad. Please type or print clearly. Proofread your ad. Ads must be received by June 16th for the July Producer.

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Photo by Sean Ellis

**USDA is forecasting that total winter wheat production in Idaho will be up 46 percent this year compared with last year. Nationwide, total winter wheat production is forecast to decline by 8 percent.**

# Idaho winter wheat production forecast to be up 46 percent

**By Sean Ellis**

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

POCATELLO – Idaho’s total wheat production could be substantially higher this year than it was in 2021, mainly due to a better water supply outlook.

Idaho’s winter wheat production this year is expected to be up 46 percent compared with last year.

The severe drought conditions in Idaho last year resulted in yields for most crops, including wheat, being way down so it’s no great surprise that winter wheat yields are forecast to be up substantially this year.

“We’ve gone from last year being the worst crop in most farmers’ careers to having the makings of at least an average if not above-average crop this year,” said north Idaho wheat farmer “Genesee” Joe Anderson.

Snowpack and total precipitation levels in many parts of the state weren’t looking that great as of late March. But a series of snow and rainstorms since that time have significantly improved the crop outlook in Idaho this year.

The lack of water last year resulted in the average wheat yield in Idaho dropping from a record 96.7 bushels an acre in 2020 to 67.6 bushels an acre in 2021.

Based on conditions as of May 1, USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service is forecasting that winter wheat yields in Idaho will average 91 bushels an acre this year. According to NASS, Idaho farmers expect to harvest 730,000 acres of winter wheat in 2022, up from 640,000 acres in 2021.

NASS estimates total winter wheat production in Idaho this year at 66 million bushels, up 46 percent from 45 million bushels last year.

Due to the drought conditions last year, Idaho’s total wheat



*“The water situation is looking a little better than what it was last year, but we’re still very cautious of how we’re using water.”*

*-Neil Durrant, Meridian wheat farmer*

production in 2021 fell 32 percent compared with 2020, to 76.5 million bushels. Idaho farmers typically produce more than 100 million bushels of wheat each year and produced 112.5 million bushels in 2020.

It’s too early in the growing season to forecast spring wheat yields and production for 2022. But the state’s total wheat production this year is expected to be up substantially from last year and the main difference is the spring moisture and better water outlook.

“Right now, the crop is looking better than it did last year,” said Meridian wheat farmer Neil Durrant. “The water situation is looking a little better than what it was last year, but we’re still very cautious of how we’re using water.”

While most wheat farmers in southern Idaho depend on water from reservoirs to get through the hot, dry summer months, farmers in north Idaho depend on natural rainfall.

Anderson said wheat fields in north Idaho are benefiting from the recent rains.

“We’re back to a more normal amount of precipitation,” he said. “Last year was an extreme moisture deficit.”

Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director Casey Chumrau said if NASS’ forecast of Idaho winter wheat yields averaging 91 bushels an acre this year holds true, it would be one of the highest ever average yields in the state.

“I was a little surprised at the yield per acre forecast,” she said. But, she added, “obviously the precipitation we’ve received in the last month or so has greatly improved our crop outlook. We really have had good moisture the last six weeks and that’s setting us up for a pretty good crop if we get favorable temperatures moving forward.”

In addition to higher yields, Idaho wheat farmers are also looking at substantially higher farm-level wheat prices this year. But production costs have also risen, dramatically in some cases.

“The costs are way up; fertilizer is just out of sight,” said Dwight Little, a grain farmer from Teton in east Idaho.

Little said farm diesel cost a producer about \$1.85 a gallon last year if the farmer bought it early, but it costs close to \$5 now.

“You know what it’s like to fill up your car at the pump? Well, diesel is worse,” he said. “These input cost increases are real to the farmer.”

Anderson said the increased input costs this year have added about \$100 an acre to his variable cost of production.

Those increased production costs mean that Idaho wheat farmers will need to have close to normal yields this year to make things pencil out financially.

NASS forecasts that total winter wheat production nationwide will be down 8 percent this year, to 1.17 billion bushels. ■

# Mackay FFA students harvest a taste of the tropics in their greenhouse

By Dianna Troyer

For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Strolling through their greenhouse, Mackay Junior/Senior High School students pick fruit and harvest other plants from the tropics – passionfruit, papaya, figs, and sugar cane.

“At some point, our greenhouse has become a jungle, just from one single passion fruit vine,” said a student, Garrett Wilkie.

“To my knowledge, we’re the only greenhouse nationwide growing passionfruit hydroponically in a greenhouse,” said Trent Van Leuven, the school’s agriscience instructor and FFA advisor. “It’s been a great success for us.”

Planted four years ago, their first passionfruit vine yields about 260 fruits annually with a winter and summer harvest. Students care for seven vines of different ages, growing them from seeds and cuttings.

“We started by ordering one plant, Purple Possom, which has a purple exterior and produces fruit about the size of a large kiwi,” Van Leuven said. “Since then, we’ve taken cuttings and cloned. We also started another purple variety and a yellow variety from seed. We just started a species called banana passionfruit from seed that has pink flowers and finished germinating in early April.”

They cross-pollinated some vines to induce hybrid vigor. Each vine takes one year to mature, then it begins to produce flowers.

“It’s exciting to see the fruit varieties,” Van Leuven said. “There are more than 60 varieties worldwide.”

Tasting exotic tropical fruit was a novel experience for students.

“I loved trying these tropical fruits for the first time,” said a student, Ryker Esplin.

In mid-April, students picked the winter crop of passionfruits from a vine that climbs up a line 10 feet before growing out 15 feet in each direction. As the remaining fruit are being picked, the flowers have started blooming for a summer crop, which is harvested in early September.

Van Leuven picked passionfruit to grow because its large flowers make it ideal for teaching flower anatomy and to demon-



Photos courtesy of Mackay FFA

A variety of passionfruit called Purple Possom has a showy flower that bears fruit the size of a large kiwi.

strate pollination. Impressive showy flowers span 2 to 3 inches and are white and purple with frilly-edged petals.

“The flowers provide the perfect example of male and female parts that are easy to see,” he said.

Students remove a pollen-heavy anther and dust it onto the pistil of another flower on the vine.

Last fall, Macy Larsen was in charge of pollinating the passionfruit.

“It’s easy,” Larsen said. “You just rub two parts of a plant together, and a passionfruit grows where the flower was. When it’s purple, you pull it off and wait a few days, then enjoy eating it.”

Known for culinary versatility, passionfruits can be eaten raw, or the pulp can be pressed through a sieve to make juice and added to beverages or desserts.

“It’s hard to describe the flavor because it’s unique,” Van Leuven said. “It’s sweet and slightly tart, with that very characteristic taste that is of passionfruit.”

Students take the fruit home to share a taste of the tropics with their family.

Van Leuven became familiar with passionfruit while living in Brazil.

“It was a treat,” he said. “People made a delicious dessert with it that was similar to a mousse. You blend the passionfruit pulp with cream and sweetened condensed milk. The texture is similar to a key lime pie filling. It’s good in a cheesecake, too.”

Passionfruit vines are an ideal plant in the greenhouse because they are productive for five years or more, are low maintenance and pest-free.

“They just need pruning once a year,” Van Leuven said. “They have extrafloral nectaries at the base of leaves, which produce nectar that tastes practically like honey. In the wild, that nectar encourages ants to travel the vines, and they clean up insect pests.”

Based on the success with passionfruit, Van Leuven added more tropical plants to the greenhouse. Their fig tree is starting its third year and was beginning to fruit in April.

“We had a great crop of figs last year,” he said.

Another tropical crop, sugar cane, roots out quickly in about three days.

“We’re on our fourth generation of sugar cane,” Van Leuven said. “We clone a piece every fall and time how quickly it roots. When it gets big enough, we cut and eat it.”

Wanting to share the sweet success of growing sugar cane, Van Leuven has donated 20 cuttings to other FFA programs



**Paylen Bruley shows what a passionfruit looks like inside. Edible seeds are covered with a gelatinous membrane.**

statewide.

Last April, students began caring for a papaya tree after Trish Stokes, one of the Meridian FFA advisors, donated a 3-foot tree to the Mackay program.

“It wasn’t bearing fruit for her,” he said. “It quickly rose up to more than 10 feet, flowered, and gave more than 20 fruit. I’m not sure what we did, but it was very productive. In March, we had to cut it down, so it wouldn’t tear up our greenhouse. We have since started another papaya tree that will be transplanted later in the year.”

While students have experienced sweet

success with their exotic fruit, they have also confronted failure.

“We tried growing kiwis, but it was so humid in the greenhouse that they developed mildew,” Van Leuven said. “We have some dragonfruit, but it isn’t getting enough light. We’re also trying but can’t get pineapple to induce fruit. Dwarf banana trees grew 7 feet tall but never produced.”

Van Leuven said the setbacks and successes “are all part of experimentation. You try different plants and see what works and enjoy the fruits of your labor.” ■



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