

GEM STATE **Producer**

Idaho Farm Bureau

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Investing in rural broadband



“**Y**ou are not connected to the internet.” This is a frustrating message for anyone to see, and sadly, it’s one that many of us in rural America have grown accustomed to.

A study by Broadband Now found that 42 million Americans, mostly in rural areas, don’t have broadband internet access. As schools, businesses and government services continue to move online, broadband access isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity.

I had always known the internet at my farm in Georgia was a bit slow. But when the pandemic

started and I had to temporarily do my Farm Bureau work from home, I realized just how unreliable it was.

I’ve had to try out different spots in my house to see if I can get a good signal. When I find one, it might not be good for long, or the internet speed is too slow.

I’ve had to go to nearby county Farm Bureau offices when participating in Zoom meetings with government officials so I knew I would have reliable internet throughout the meeting.

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President’s Desk

By Bryan Searle

President Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Pray for rain and snow



This growing season in Idaho has been one of the most challenging in memory because of drought conditions.

Add in a lengthy early-season heat wave that began in June and 2021 has been downright brutal for many farmers and ranchers.

“The heat and the drought are hitting us like a one-two punch statewide...” Jeff Raybould, chairman of the Idaho Water Resource Board, wrote in a column.

The drought-heat combo have taken a toll on agricultural producers in every part of the state

and farmers and ranchers in dryland areas are feeling the pain the most.

Cory Kress, a dryland farmer in the Rockland area and chairman of the Idaho Wheat Commission, recently told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, “I’ve been farming for 20 years and it’s by far the worst it’s ever been in my farming career.”

We’ve heard that sentiment in one form or another from a lot of dryland farmers in all parts of the state and not just in southern Idaho,

See **SEARLE**, page 7

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller

CEO Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

It’s not the bad years



Ido not know if the oft-repeated line, “It’s not the bad years that take a farm out,” is actually true. However, it has been said and printed enough that it is tough to discount the wisdom and accuracy of the statement.

I know many factors can create a good or bad year for an industry but it is hard for me to identify more important causes than bad weather and bad prices.

With 100% of our state in moderate and above drought conditions and 87% of the state in severe and above drought, this year, as far as weather

goes, is not one of the great years.

Thankfully for many, we came into this year with generally good stored water supplies that have been able to at least mitigate this year’s drought. Unfortunately, if we do not have a good winter snowpack, next year will not offer the same security.

If we go back to the adage of, “It isn’t the bad years that take a farm out,” and apply it to our water, what lessons can we learn?

Our state is what it is because our wise forebearers

See **MILLER**, page 6

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ON THE COVER: Members of the Reed family are shown on their Filer farm July 31 with a Century Farm plaque presented to honor the operation's 105 years in existence as a family farm. Along with Rex Reed, who turned 90 this year, Alex and Leah Reed are shown with their children: Left to right – Eleanor (3 years old), Abel (8), Adele (4), Emma (baby), Lela (6), Cash (12). See story on page 18. (Photo by Olie Turner)



Submitted photo

A contract construction worker installs piping for High Desert Milk's new MPC-70 production line. The Burley-based cooperative, one of Idaho's leading dairy processors, is undergoing a \$50 million expansion at its Burley facility.

Idaho agriculture scores four recent wins

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – In the past few weeks, Idaho's agriculture industry has chalked up four significant wins.

Lamb Weston recently announced a \$415 million capital investment in its American Falls plant that will result in the company adding a new french fry processing facility there.

According to a company news release, the new fry facility will have the capacity to produce more than 350 million pounds of frozen potato products each year.

High Desert Milk announced it is undergoing a \$50 million expansion at its Burley facility that will allow the facility to nearly double its current annual butter output and add a new milk-powder product called MPC-70 to its lineup.

Scouler Co. announced Aug. 4 it is launching a new program in Idaho called Barley MVP that is projected to increase food and feed barley acres in Idaho by about 38,000 over the next five years.

That program, which is launching in time for this fall's planting

See WINS, page 16



Photo by Laura Wilder

This is a picture of a new barley facility being built in Jerome by Scoular Co. Scoular has announced a new Barley MVP program which, in conjunction with the Jerome facility, will result in an estimated 50,000 new acres of food and feed barley varieties being grown in Idaho over the next five years.

Scoular announces new barley program in Idaho

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Scoular Co. has announced a new program that seeks to promote food and feed barley varieties as economically viable rotation crops for Idaho farmers

Idaho leads the nation in total barley production and Idaho farmers plant around 500,000 acres each year. Most of Idaho's barley acres are malt varieties produced for the beer brewing industry.

Scoular's new Barley MVP program, which was announced Aug. 4 and is launching in time for the fall planting season, will focus on helping Idaho growers expand the production of barley varieties that are produced for the animal feed or human food markets.

Those markets are growing fast, said Andy Hohwieler, a Scoular trade unit manager based in Twin Falls, and "farmers can help meet that demand by incorporating barley into their crop rotation."

Demand for feed barley by the live-

stock market in particularly is growing rapidly, he said.

"Barley is a highly sought after feed ingredient specific to the Idaho dairy and feedlot industries," Hohwieler said. "The demand from those sectors year in and year out far exceeds (the) amount of barley that is available to the feed markets. Dairy men and feedlot operators would love to include more barley in their rations if it was available."

One of the main goals of the Barley MVP program, he said, is to educate

Idaho farmers about how food and feed barley varieties can be an economically viable crop rotation for them.

Most farmers in Idaho are familiar with malt barley, which is well established in the state, but not so much with food and feed barley varieties, Hohwieler said.

“We feel that barley has a legitimate place in the rotation for farmers across Idaho,” he said. “What the essence of Barley MVP is really all about is shining the spotlight on barley and providing the information and the tools to the growers about how barley can fit into their enterprise, into their crop rotation, and the value that it can bring to them. It really is an all-encompassing program to bring an awareness to barley and what that means to the grower.”

Hohwieler said Idaho farmers converted more than 12,000 acres to production of feed and food barley varieties this year and the company expects that number to grow to 50,000 acres over the next five years.

Scoular last year announced it is

building a \$13 million barley facility in Jerome that will produce a barley protein concentrate for the aquaculture and pet food industries. The 15,000-square-foot facility, which is expected to open this fall, will also produce a high-energy liquid feed supplement for cattle feeders.

The 50,000-acre total that Scoular expects will be planted to food and feed barley varieties in Idaho over the next five years includes barley varieties that will be grown for the Jerome plant as well as varieties that will be planted as part of Scoular’s overall food and feed barley initiative in Idaho.

Hohwieler said those anticipated extra barley acres in Idaho will be in addition to the current malt barley acres in the state.

“We don’t expect those additional acres will take away from malt acres in Idaho,” said Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director Laura Wilder. “It will add to current Idaho barley acres.”

“Scoular’s new Barley MVP program is exciting news for the Idaho barley


industry,” Wilder said. “The company’s expanded focus on barley and initiatives around their new barley protein concentrate facility (in Jerome), as well as feed barley and food barley, will increase total Idaho barley acres.”

Hohwieler said the new program will provide a variety of risk management tools and high-yielding seed varieties for farmers seeking alternative rotation crops.

One of the big benefits for farmers who participate in the program, he said, is that Scoular will provide its global marketing expertise.

The 128-year-old company has \$6 billion in sales and focuses on supply chain solutions for end users and suppliers of grain, and feed and food ingredients. Scoular operates more than 100 offices and facilities in North America and Asia, including in Twin Falls and Jerome.

Farmers interested in learning more about the Barley MVP program can visit Scoular.com/barleymvp online or call Scoular’s Twin Falls office at (208) 324-0147. ■




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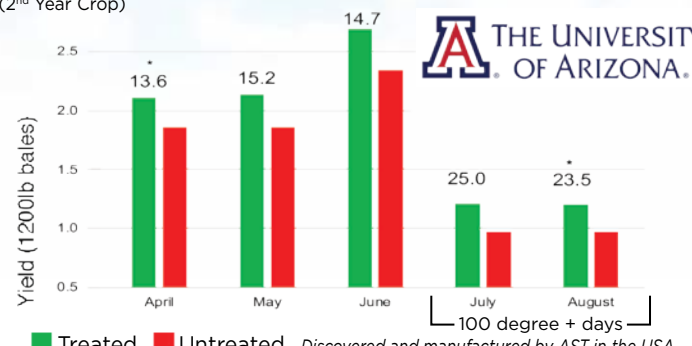
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DUVALL

Continued from page 2

Millions of Americans in rural communities have faced the same—or worse—struggles. When the pandemic forced schools to close and people to work from home, the digital divide grew even larger.

Some people I've heard from had to drive over 30 miles to find a parking lot where they could access the internet for school or a Zoom meeting.

Earlier this year, the American Farm Bureau joined Land O' Lakes and 18 other organizations to form the American Connection Corps. This project aims to empower young people to move to rural areas and lead projects to expand broadband access.

We can't expect people to move to rural areas if they can't be connected to their loved ones, their schools or their jobs through the internet.

Last year, the Kentucky Farm Bureau started providing free WiFi at almost 200 locations throughout the state to help get communities online. While our Farm Bureau family is proud to care for one another, this shouldn't have to happen.

In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed a bill to create the Broadband Development Council. One of the council members was Texas Farm Bureau member and cattle rancher Lindsey Lee.

Like many rural Americans, she has experienced unreliable internet firsthand. When the pandemic closed the real estate office she works at off the farm, Lindsey struggled to get her work done because she couldn't connect to the internet.

She told the Texas Farm Bureau, "We were all trying to work from home, but I spent more time in the office than my coworkers because my internet access is so terrible."

Arizona Farm Bureau member Reed Flake shared that as his family all came home during the pandemic, they had to coordinate who had to be online and when. The bandwidth available at their home wasn't large enough for all the family members to be doing schoolwork and attending meetings and college classes at the same time.

Not far from Reed, Arizona Farm Bureau member Hayley Andrus said her veterinary practice pays a lot for satellite internet access. Even that is slow, and something as common as a strong wind can knock out service.

That makes updating health papers and getting access to the latest science in veterinary medicine difficult or even impossible.

As technology on the farm continues to advance, a fast and reliable internet connection is more important than ever.

Whether mapping a field, tracking markets, or updating software on equipment, farmers and ranchers need the internet to remain competitive and implement climate-smart practices.

As Congress and the administration continue to work on a bipartisan infrastructure plan, we are pleased to see that the bill passed in the Senate included a \$65 billion investment in broadband expansion.

While this is a good step, we need Congress to finalize this agreement and keep the investment in broadband passed by the Senate. Then, the administration must act quickly to ensure these funds are used effectively.

The internet can connect us to others across the country to share best practices, explore innovative new technologies, conduct business, learn a new skill, and stay in touch with family.

The expansion of broadband access will help our rural businesses grow and remain competitive. It will help our children learn and help farmers and ranchers implement new technology on their farms that improves sustainability.

With all the benefits reliable broadband access can bring, investing in this expansion isn't just an investment in critical infrastructure but also an investment in the future of rural America. ■

MILLER

Continued from page 2

saw this fertile desert and knew that it could be more. Their foresight and ingenuity built the dams and reservoirs we have, and dug the canals and wells that have allowed this state to become what it is today.

Our predecessors did such a great job developing our water infrastructure that the same system worked for multiple generations.

However, as every good stockman knows, if the next crop isn't better than the current, the herd will deteriorate.

Hard work in recent years has led to

agreements between groundwater and surface water users. Instead of fighting to the death as the Eastern Snake Plain aquifer continued to decline, wise realized that more could be done to stabilize our water resources.

The partnership has involved irrigators and the citizens of the state and, to date, is working.

We have been smart in the good years to develop water recharge and storage capacity so that our precious water can be available in the good times and the bad.

When further water storage projects are discussed, it always seems so gargantuan

of an undertaking. Perhaps that is why the good years are so dangerous.

Right now, we see the value of every drop of water that we can hold in a drought in Idaho and not let go downriver.

Water management will never get easier, the costs will never be less, and the need will be more significant.

We cannot be afraid to invest now so that when the good times come, we don't forget the lessons of our more challenging times.

I have no doubt that our forebears' intelligence and wisdom when they settled this state are still alive and well here today. ■

Continued from page 2

which is mostly a desert. Farmers in North Idaho who normally get a good amount of moisture every year have had to suffer through a bone-dry year in 2021.

But producers with irrigation are also up against it.

“Besides not having any moisture, the excessive heat has been outrageous. It has killed us,” said Washington County Farm Bureau President Tristan Winegar, who farms under irrigation near Weiser.

What to do.

Well, pray for rain and snow for starters.

Farmers can also help themselves and others by looking for more ways to conserve water and make sure they are getting the best absolute bang for their water buck as possible.

In his recent column, Raybould pointed out that fellow water board member Dean Stevenson recommends fixing leaks on sprinkler lines and checking pump pressure as well as the regulators and nozzles on pivot system to make sure they are functioning at a high level.

If we don't have a good snowpack year this winter and the 2022 season turns out to be another challenging water year, farmers can think about planting more drought-resistant varieties or switching some of their planned plantings to crops that use less water.

Until the situation changes, one thing we can and should do is help our fellow ag producers when possible. That could mean encouraging them when they need it or it could mean assisting them in practical ways when possible.

One thing this year's drought has done is show just how critical Idaho's reservoir system is to the well-being of the state.

Farmers and others involved with agriculture already knew this, of course, but hopefully a lot of other people are also aware now that without those reservoirs, most of southern Idaho is one big desert with little more than sagebrush growing.

As bad as this year was because of the drought, it would have been an absolute train wreck without those reservoirs that provide water to farmers, recreationists and municipalities during the scorching summer months.

The state is pursuing several ways to potentially add more water storage capacity and the fact that those reservoirs and the water they provide saved our skin this year should help show why those efforts are so important.

Now is a great time to remind everyone, especially elected officials, how important water storage capacity is to the state and to the entire West for that matter.

Idaho producers are facing a real challenge due to this year's drought but so are our fellow farmers and ranchers in other Western states.

According to a recent analysis of the drought by American Farm Bureau Federation staff, the 11 Western states, plus the Dakotas, produce one-third (\$112 billion) of the nation's total agricultural production by value.

I recently returned from California where I attended Farm Bureau's annual Western presidents and administrators meetings.

This involves the 13 Western states, and the number one topic was drought.

The drought came upon us very quickly and is equally if not more devastating in other Western states.

In California, for example, some farmers are removing almond trees, tomato plants and the list goes on as there is just no water.

Our neighbors to the south in Utah are in their second year of this drought.

During those meetings, we viewed pictures and toured areas that are heavily affected. In Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and Colorado, ranchers have trucked water to their cattle for over six months and many are being forced to liquidate cow herds or purchase very expensive hay.

We are seeing the same types of things here in Idaho and are looking at ways to sustain us through the drought should it continue in the coming year.

Water is everything and without it we have nothing. We know the solution is rain and snowpack so let's make sure there are lots of prayers for that to happen over the days, months and years ahead.

We must also do everything we can to conserve, store, and use every drop of water as efficiently as possible. ■

1961 2021

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Photo by Jake Putnam

Water levels at the Little Camas Reservoir, shown here, and other Idaho reservoirs are well below what they were this time last year and irrigators are hoping for a good snowpack this winter to ensure they have enough water for the 2022 growing season.

Drought challenges Idaho farmers

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – This year’s drought in Idaho is not unprecedented but it is one of the state’s driest years on record.

According to reports from farmers and water managers across the state, this year’s drought will have a significant impact on Idaho’s 2021 crop year.

“I’ve been farming for 20 years and it’s by far the worst it’s ever been in my farming career,” said Cory Kress, a dryland

farmer in the Rockland area.

“It’s not looking good out there. It’s a dire water year,” said Corey Loveland, a supervisory hydrologist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Idaho snow survey program.

Idaho’s water year runs from October to September and 2021 is the fifth driest water year on record, according to David Hoekema, a hydrologist with the Idaho Department of Water Resources.

The only drier years were in 1924, 1931, 1977 and 1994.

The heat and lack of precipitation in Idaho this year have had significant impacts on dryland agriculture and rangelands.

The lack of moisture has made life difficult for ranchers who depend on rangeland to help feed their cattle. Little to no precipitation on rangelands has resulted in sparse feed for the cows.

“I actually feel worse for the cattle producers,” Kress said. “They are in a real tough spot.”

“Idaho is in the midst of drought that is unprecedented in recent memory, mostly



Photo by Sean Ellis

A corn field near Nampa is irrigated Aug. 17. This year's drought, combined with a lengthy heat wave, has made the 2021 growing season a challenge for many Idaho farmers and ranchers.

due to an exceptionally dry spring followed by a summer heat wave," Hoekema wrote in an Aug. 6 Idaho Drought Update.

The scarce moisture and heat are expected to reduce yields for many Idaho farmers this year, in some cases dramatically.

Kress, the dryland farmer from Rockland, said his winter wheat yields are about 50 percent of normal and his spring wheat yields are only 20-25 percent of normal.

He said all his dryland neighbors are facing a similar situation.

"I have several friends (in the Soda Springs area) who aren't even cutting their fields," he said. "It wasn't even worth getting the combines in."

Dryland farmers in most parts of North Idaho normally can rely on a good amount

of rainfall but this year has been different.

"The crops up here on the Palouse yielded about half or less of what they normally do," said "Genesee" Joe Anderson.

He said canola, for instance, came in at about 1,000 pounds per acre vs. the more typical 2,500 pounds in a normal year and winter wheat yields were about half of what they normally are.

While there have been five drier years in Idaho, this year could end up being unprecedented in that the dryness was compounded by an early-season heat wave that began in June and pushed temperatures above 100 degrees in many parts of the state for a lengthy period.

"What we were hearing pretty much across the state was that irrigation was

coming on way earlier and way stronger than normal just because of the heat waves that we were experiencing," said Erin Whorton, Idaho water supply specialist with the NRCS.

Idaho reservoirs entered the 2021 water year last October in a good position and available carryover water in those reservoirs for irrigators was well above average. Snowpack during the winter was OK and Idaho irrigators entered this spring believing the 2021 water year would be a decent one.

But then the drought hit and there was basically no or very little precipitation in many parts of Idaho during the spring and summer. The heat exacerbated things.

"We didn't get any spring precipitation



Photo by Joel Benson

These docks at the American Falls Reservoir are completely dry. Idaho irrigators are hoping for a good snowpack this winter to ensure they have enough water for the 2022 growing season.

... and then we were hit with 100-degree temperatures,” said Loveland. “It went from good to not good pretty quickly.”

It’s not just dryland farmers who are up against it this year. Even farmers who rely on irrigation have felt the pain, largely due to the excessive heat.

“Besides not having any moisture, the excessive heat has been outrageous. It has killed us,” said Weiser farmer Tristan Winegar.

Winegar had irrigation water during most of the season but the heat was relentless.

“Our water usage is much higher than normal,” he said. “We’re losing it to evaporation. The crop just can’t utilize it.”

Making matters worse, the reservoir that Winegar and other farmers in his area depend on for their irrigation supply shut off Aug. 17, almost two months earlier than normal.

“We’re in uncharted territory. We don’t know what’s going to happen,” he said about what will happen to his corn, beans and sugar beets that still have to fill out with no water. “We’ll make the best of it no matter what. Farmers, we do the best with what we’ve got.”

Even irrigators in Water District 1 who depend on the upper Snake River reservoir system are feeling the pressure this year. Water District 1 is the state’s largest and provides enough water to irrigate well over 1 million acres.

The water district began the year with quite a bit of carryover water in its reservoirs but it’s still been tight this year, said watermaster Tony Olenichak.

“Generally, most people (on the system) are going to make it through this year,” he said. “But there is the potential for some people to lose a crop.”

On the other side of the state, Pioneer

Irrigation District, which gets its water from the Boise River system and supplies water to more than 34,000 irrigated acres, shut off its water in early September, a good month earlier than normal.

“It has been a struggle this year,” said PID President Alan Newbill. “The heat and shortage of water have not been a good combination.”

While it appears most Idaho farmers who rely on irrigation water will make it through this year with enough water, some by the skin of their teeth, next year’s water season is a major concern.

Most Idaho reservoirs entered the 2021 season with ample carryover water but that is mostly not the case heading into the 2022 water year, which begins in October, Hoekema said.

“We’re going to be entering next year with a really depleted reservoir system,” he said. “We need a pretty solid snowpack to

fully recover the reservoir system.”

The good news, he said, is that the current forecast favors a wetter winter than normal in Northern and Southern Idaho.

The bad news is that if that doesn't happen and this winter's snowpack is below normal, Idaho's 2022 water year could be worse than 2021.

Much worse.

As of mid-August, the upper Snake reservoir system, which has the capacity to hold 4 million acre-feet of water, was 30 percent full. Water District 1 managers are projecting the system will only be 10-20 percent full when this year's water season ends Sept. 30.

Last year, the system was 54 percent full when the water year ended.

“We need an average or above-average snowpack this coming winter,” Olenichak said. If that doesn't happen, he added, “then there will be shortages next year.”

“We're going to need at least an average snowpack” this winter to be able to provide a normal amount of water to irrigators next year, said Newbill. “The more, the better.”

Things would have been much worse for farmers in Idaho if the state's reservoir systems didn't enter the 2021 water season with a good amount of carryover water, Whorton said.

“Every reservoir you drive past now is so low,” she said. “If we don't hit the winter we're hoping for, I think next year could be really hard for a lot of folks.”

The late-season rains that hit much of the state helped soil moisture levels but they weren't near enough to make up for what happened before that, farmers and water managers said.

“It's been raining today and yesterday and this is probably the best mood I've been in for several months,” Kress said Aug. 19. “This is a lifesaver as far as getting fall crops in.”

But, he added, “It hasn't solved the problem by any means. If we don't get enough snowpack this winter, even the irrigators are going to be dryland farmers next year.” ■



Photo by Jake Putnam

Water levels at the Magic Reservoir, shown here, and other Idaho reservoirs are well below what they were this time last year and irrigators are hoping for a good snowpack this winter to ensure they have enough water for the 2022 growing season.



Photos by Greg Kreller

Gov. Brad Little speaks to Idaho ag industry leaders Aug. 24 about ways farmers and ranchers can feed a growing world while helping find solutions to environmental challenges. He signed a proclamation declaring 2020-2030 as the Decade of Agriculture in Idaho.

This is officially the ‘Decade of Agriculture’ in Idaho

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Gov. Brad Little has signed a proclamation declaring the period of 2020-2030 as the Decade of Agriculture in Idaho.

Little, a rancher and farmer from Emmett, signed the declaration Aug. 24 in a room filled with about 50 people involved in Idaho’s agricultural industry.

Little became the first governor in the

United States to issue such a declaration and he was joined by Erin Fitzgerald, CEO of U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action, a coalition of agricultural groups around the nation, including American Farm Bureau Federation.

USFRA seeks to unite farm and ranch and other groups to push for more private investment in agriculture that can enable farmers and ranchers to not only feed a fast-growing global population but also help provide solutions to

environmental challenges such as carbon emissions.

“Farmers and ranchers can do this,” Little said about the goals of feeding the world and protecting the environment. “They have done it literally for generations.”

According to USFRA’s website, the group’s principles include: having U.S. agriculture “lead the creation and deployment of global climate solutions; valuing ag land, people and communities



Gov. Brad Little is shown with Dairy West CEO Karianne Fallow, left, and Erin Fitzgerald, CEO of U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action, after he signed a proclamation Aug. 24 declaring the period from 2020-2030 as the Decade of Agriculture in Idaho.

as the foundation for a thriving America; bringing innovative mindsets, technology and practices to evolve the agricultural system and value chain” and “informing agricultural food, fiber and energy production with scientific research.”

The group’s vision for the Decade of Ag is: “A resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system that produces abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous America.”

USFRA has asked leaders from across the nation’s ag value chain to endorse that vision statement.

Fifty-seven organizations, including AFBF, have endorsed the group’s Decade of Agriculture push.

Sixty-one groups representing Idaho’s agricultural industry, including Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, have endorsed this state’s involvement in the Decade of Agriculture vision.

“In Idaho, we’re all in,” Little said. “We might even do two decades.”

The governor said farmers and ranch-



This is a proclamation Gov. Brad Little signed Aug. 24 that declares the period of 2020-2030 as the Decade of Agriculture in Idaho.

ers are innovators and can handle any challenge provided they have the necessary resources and incentives.

“The farmers and ranchers that are

represented here are all survivors,” he said. “We’ve had crisis after crisis after crisis and agriculture has done an incredible job adapting to change.”

He said ensuring producers have a financial incentive to tackle these challenges should be a major part of the plan.

“Everyone wants clean water, clean air, efficient, sustainable agriculture but the best signal you can give to agriculture is profit as the motivator,” Little said. “If they can see profit out there, farmers and ranchers are more than willing to (take on) a little risk, particularly if they think it’s going to make them and their families feel good about doing it.”

The governor said agricultural producers will adapt and rise to the challenge if the right market signals are there.

“Change is inevitable; adaptation and survival are optional,” he said. “People still in agriculture in this state all did that. They all adapted to change. Farmers and ranchers can do this. They just need to have the right signals. It really is about allowing the signals to get from the market and society to those people who are out there on the ground and who have dirt on their fingernails.”

Rick Naerebout, executive director of the Idaho Dairymen’s Association, which has endorsed USFRA’s Decade of Ag, echoed the governor’s sentiments about making sure farmers and ranchers are incentivized to participate in any new solutions to help and protect the environment.

He said agriculture is already helping achieve USFRA’s goals “and if you want us to help more, find a way to do it in concert with us. Don’t try to ... force ag into a corner. But if you incentivize it and show farmers and ranchers a way they can profit off things like carbon sequestration, agriculture will be all in and we will exceed expectations.”

“We already produce well beyond our own country’s need for food and if you want to see the same productivity in carbon sequestration and climate initiatives, provide that same market opportunity for farmers and ranchers in this country and you will be surprised at what they will be able to achieve,” he added.

Naerebout said dairymen and farmers will add their own capital toward projects if there are market-based incentives.

“There were expectations at one time



Erin Fitzgerald, CEO of U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action, a coalition of agricultural groups around the nation, speaks to leaders of Idaho’s agricultural industry Aug. 24 before Gov. Brad Little signed a proclamation declaring the period of 2020-2030 as the Decade of Agriculture in Idaho.

that we would fall short on food production at this point in history and we’re nowhere close to that,” he said. “We can over-produce the same way in carbon reduction and sequestration and in helping people achieve their climate goals.”

Fitzgerald said farmers will need to produce a lot more food to feed a global population estimated to increase by two billion people over the next 30 years.

She said the Decade of Ag push “is all about farmers stepping up ... and saying, we are the solution.”

Dairy West CEO Karianne Fallow told people who attended the governor’s proclamation signing that consumers around the globe are continually looking to the agricultural industry to solve some of the biggest challenges facing the world.

“I would challenge everyone in the room to think about the unique opportunity we have to come together, to rise up to this challenge ... and build a prosperous and productive future for farmers and ranchers,” she said.

The proclamation that Little signed says that farmers and ranchers “have shown over the course of history the ability to create economically viable solutions in harmony with ecological sustainability, thereby feeding the world.”

It also recognizes that Idaho agriculture is already engaged in meeting the economic, social and environmental demands of a growing global population through sustainable practices and investment in much-needed research.

The proclamation adds that “the agricultural industry of the state of Idaho is resilient, innovative, evidence-based, solution-oriented and learns from its remarkable past.”

It notes how valuable the state’s agricultural sector is to Idaho’s overall economy, pointing out that agriculture in Idaho is directly and indirectly responsible for \$26 billion in annual sales, which equals 18 percent of the state’s total economic output; one out of every eight jobs; and 13 percent of Idaho’s gross domestic product. ■



Submitted photo

Lamb Weston has announced plans to add a new French fry processing facility at its American Falls plant, shown here. The new facility represents a \$415 million capital investment.

Lamb Weston plans new fry facility at American Falls plant

By John O'Connell

Intermountain Farm and Ranch

AMERICAN FALLS — Officials with Lamb Weston Holdings Inc. have announced plans to add a new french fry processing facility at the company's American Falls plant.

The new facility will represent a \$415 million capital investment and will have the capacity to produce more than 350 million pounds of frozen potato products per year, according to a press release.

Construction is expected to be completed by mid-2023, and the facility should bring 130 new jobs to the community. The total investment also includes funding for additional modernization of the plant, which was built in 1961.

"We continue to be confident about the long-term health and growth of the global french fry market," Tom Werner, president and CEO of Lamb Weston, said in the press release. "This investment in American Falls complements our recently announced plans to construct a greenfield french fry processing facility in China, as well as capacity expansion in Russia by our European joint venture, Lamb-Weston/Meijer. Together, these investments will strengthen our global manufacturing network and provide us added flexibility to meet demand growth and serve our customers around the world."

In May, the company announced separate but complementary plans to build a new plant where chopped and formed

potato products such as patties and puffs will be produced.

That plant will require 70 new workers and should be completed by early 2022, according to the company.

Area potato farmers explained the line for chopped and formed potato products will be located between the old and new fry facilities and will make use of cuttings and off-sized spuds from both fry lines.

American Falls farmer Ritchey Toevs has heard the plant will have a more than 60 percent recovery rate of the potatoes it sources. Toevs estimates the plant will require production from another 10,000 acres of spuds in Idaho.

"It's great to see them invest in Idaho," Toevs said. ■

Continued from page 3

season, will help Idaho growers expand the production of barley varieties that are produced for the animal feed or human food markets. Most of Idaho's barley acres are malt varieties used in the beer-brewing industry.

Idaho entrepreneur and rancher Frank VanderSloot recently announced his Riverbend Ranch will build a new cattle processing plant in Idaho Falls that initially will have the capacity to process 300 head of cattle per day.

"If we can create cattle where the feedlots can make money and the processors can make money, they're going to pay more to the rancher..." VanderSloot said in a video.

"We're going to be open next summer," he added. "We've been preparing for it now for over a decade and now's the time and we're really excited."

Because Idaho is at a logistical disadvantage due to increased transportation costs to get farm products produced here to market, Idaho's agriculture industry benefits when it adds value to commodities before they leave the state, said University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor.

That is what those recently announced projects will doing for the most part, he said.

"More value will be added to Idaho products before they leave the state," he said. "These things are going to strengthen Idaho



Photo by Laura Wilder

This is a picture of a new barley facility being built in Jerome by Scouler Co. Scouler has announced a new Barley MVP program which, in conjunction with the Jerome facility, will result in an estimated 50,000 new acres of food and feed barley varieties being grown in Idaho over the next five years.

agriculture."

Taylor said Idaho is an agriculture-friendly state with elected officials who understand how important farming and ranching are to the state and encourage investment and expansion within the industry.

In some other states, agriculture is constantly criticized and penalized, he added.

"You don't see that in Idaho," he said. "We celebrate agriculture here."

Asked to comment on the recent investments in Idaho's agriculture industry, Doug Robison, the Idaho president for Northwest Farm Credit Services, said that commodities in general benefit when the Federal Reserve eases monetary policy and the fed "has been extremely accommodating since March of 2020. Commodity prices and asset values have surged higher and this has benefitted Idaho agriculture, despite the related increase in input costs."

In addition to supporting higher commodity prices, Robison said, "the accommodative fed policy keeps borrowing costs low and this stimulates capital investment, an important factor supporting the investments being made across Idaho."

Echoing Taylor's comments about Idaho's business climate, he added, "Idaho is a great place to do business with a supportive regulatory environment and the state welcomes the new opportunities that investment brings." ■

An advertisement for low interest loans. The top part has a dark blue background with white text: "LOW INTEREST LOANS FOR IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION". Below this is a photograph of several cows. A yellow starburst graphic contains the text: "1% - 1.5% Terms 7-15 Years Up to \$600,000". To the right of the cows is a list of eligible uses: "• Sprinkler Irrigation", "• No-Till Drills", "• Fences", "• Livestock Feeding Operations", "• Solar Stock Water Pump Systems". At the bottom left is the Idaho Loan Program logo, and at the bottom right is the website "swc.idaho.gov" and phone number "(208) 332-1790".



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Members of the Reed family are presented a plaque recognizing their farm in Filer as a Century Farm.

Photo by Sean Ellis

Reed Farms of Filer recognized as Century Farm

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

FILER – Considering all the economic challenges of owning a farm or ranch, as well as the agronomic ones, it's no small task to remain in agriculture for more than a few decades.

So, when a farm remains in existence under the same family for 100 years, it's a significant achievement that is recognized by Idaho's Century Farm program.

On July 31, the Reed family farm in Filer became the latest Idaho farm or ranch officially recognized by the state as a Century Farm. The operation has remained in

the same family since it was purchased in 1916.

"It's hard for a family to hold onto a family farm. It has to be important to every descendant to want to keep farming it and keep it in the family," said Alex Reed, who owns and operates the 420-acre farm with his wife, Leah, and their six kids, along



Photo by Sean Ellis

About 140 people showed up July 31 to see Reed Farms in Filer recognized by the state as a Century Farm, which is a farm that has remained in existence under the same family for at least 100 years. Shown here is Rex Reed and behind him is Alex and Leah Reed with their baby, Emma.

with Alex's father, Rex, who has spent his entire life there.

Alex Reed, president of Twin Falls County Farm Bureau, said the Century Farm designation "is very exciting to me and my family. We're mostly proud of all the hard work my parents and grandparents and great-grandparents put into the farm."

"I drove a team of horses on this farm when I was 9 years old," Rex Reed said during a Century Farm celebration that attracted 140 family, friends and neighbors.

The state's Century Farm program is jointly operated by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and Idaho State Historical Society. Recognized farms or ranches are presented with a plaque honoring their longevity.

Idaho has 450 Century farms or ranches that have been in the same family for at least 100 years and include at least 40 acres

of the original land parcel.

Paul Smith, a trustee for the ISHS who presented the Reed family its Century Farm plaque, said documentation to prove a farm has remained in existence for at least 100 years under the same family is checked by state archivists.

"This is my favorite duty as a trustee," Smith said before presenting the family with its Century Farm plaque.

"Hopefully, our family can hang onto it for another 100 years," Alex Reed told people gathered for the celebration. "I've had a lot of help hanging onto the farm and I want to thank everyone who has helped."

ISDA Director Celia Gould, a rancher, sent a letter to the Reed family congratulating them for becoming Idaho's latest Century Farm.

"I cannot imagine life in Idaho without farming and ranching and fortunately don't have to," Gould wrote. "With

long-time family operations, the industry remains dynamic and carries traditions forward into the future."

She said the Reed family can take pride in the contributions it has made to the history and prosperity of agriculture in Idaho.

"The Reed Farms has survived hardships and persevered throughout the years," Gould wrote. "The work you have put into your family operation for so many years is an admirable model for other farm owners to follow."

Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, also sent the family a letter of congratulations.

"Sustaining a working farm through so many generations is exciting and commendable," the senator wrote. "Your family's continued operation of Reed Farms is a great example of the dedication, determination and stewardship that has been demonstrated by Idaho farmers for more than 100 years." ■

Idaho Farm Bureau

For detailed information go to: www.idahofbstore.com

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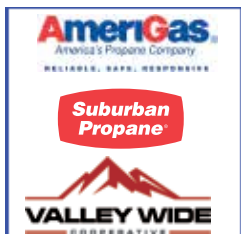
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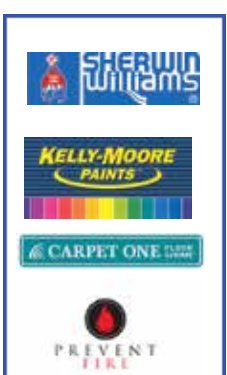
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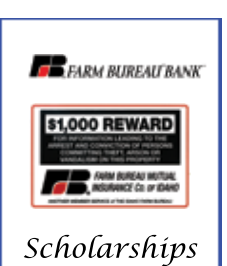
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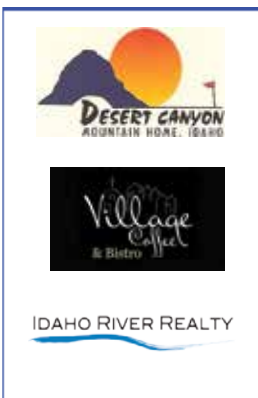
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Photo by Chris Schnepf

Removing flammable materials connected to your home is one of the most important things you can do to keep it from burning in a forest fire.

U of I publications provide help with forest fires

By Chris Schnepf
University of Idaho

The 2021 western drought has made everyone more aware of the risks of wildfire, whether it be to homes in the wildland urban interface (WUI) or surrounding forests.

Fires are a natural part of the ecology of Inland Northwest forests. Our forests evolved in response to varied types of fires.

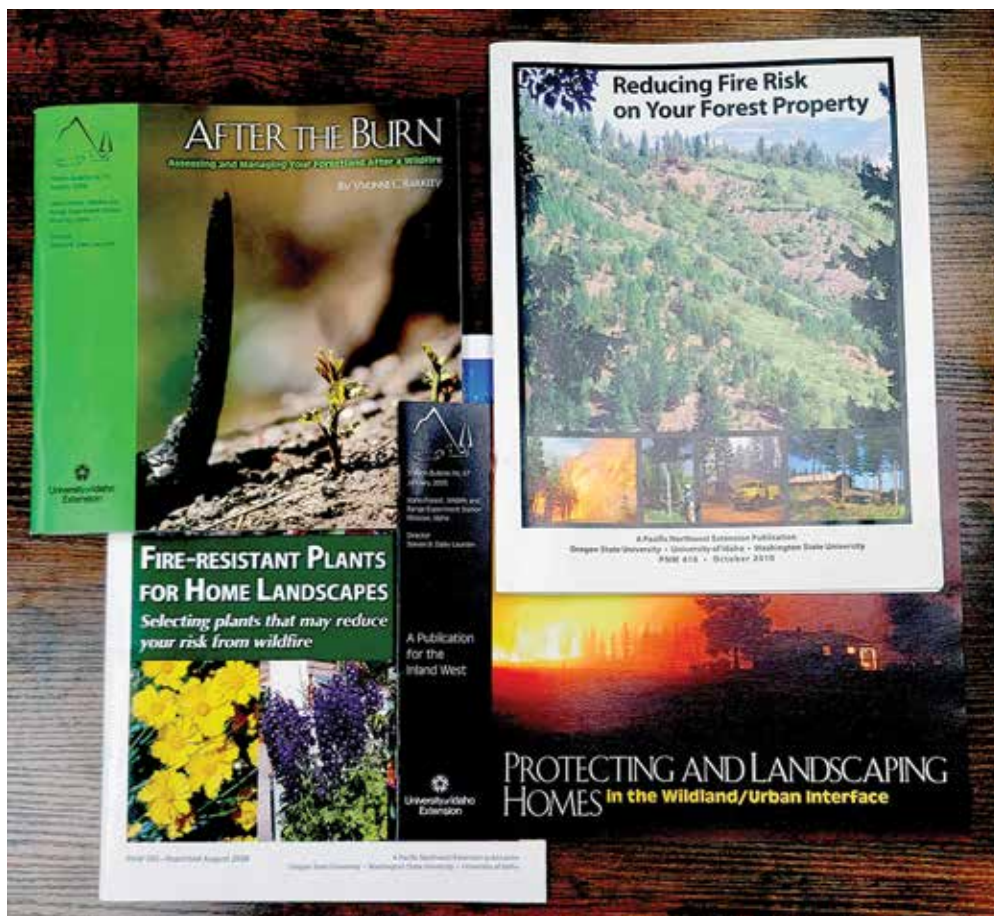
For example, drier forests typically had regular surface fires burning mostly in the understory. Colder,

higher elevation forests did not burn as regularly but when they did, stand-replacing crown fires were common.

The larger part of Idaho forests, particularly family forests in northern Idaho, more typically burned in mixed-severity fires, which burned along the forest floor in some areas and became stand-replacing in others.

Fire exclusion and a variety of other factors have made our forests quite different now than they were historically. Idaho forests often have more stems per acre and more shade-tolerant species (e.g., grand fir





The University of Idaho has a variety of publications and other educational opportunities to help Idahoans prepare for fire and restore forests after fires.

Photo by Chris Schnepf

and Douglas-fir) than in centuries past.

Generally, this has increased fire risks both to homes and to forests, risks that become more acute during droughts.

You can never completely eliminate fire risks, but you can reduce risk significantly by taking some preventive actions to prepare your home and your forest for fire.

We have multiple UI Extension publications that help you chart a path to this goal.

Most peoples' first focus is protecting their home from wildfire. There are many very good local guides to creating defensible space by reducing both horizontal and vertical ladder fuels within 100 feet of a house.

Unfortunately, people often delay acting on these measures until they smell smoke. If fires are already burning in the area, cranking up a chainsaw may be ill-advised.

In extreme fire situations, use of chainsaws and similar devices may be highly discouraged or limited due to fire risk.

The good news is that there are important things you can do to reduce risk of fires burning down a structure that do not focus

on removing nearby vegetation (though that should still be done at some point).

Jack Cohen is a U.S. Forest Service scientist who has done extensive research on homes that burned down in forest fires.

He discovered that while the disposition of vegetation surrounding a home is important, it was really factors connected directly to the house – the roofing material, organic flammable materials that collected around the house, firewood stored under a deck, etc. – lit by embers, sometimes called firebrands, that most determined whether a structure burned down in a forest fire.

This is something he has called “the home ignition zone.”

The UI has an excellent extension publication outlining both these “survivable space” principles and defensible space practices titled “Protecting and Landscaping Homes in the Wildland/Urban Interface” downloadable at <https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/SB/SB67.pdf>

You can also see an excellent YouTube video titled “Your Home Can Survive a

Wildfire” with Cohen discussing his research with home ignitions from wildfires.

The video includes footage of an enormous lab where scientists are showering different building materials and structural elements with artificially generated embers and is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL_syp1ZScM

Fire-resistant plants can also be a factor in reducing home fire risk. They are far less important than reducing ladder fuels and risk factors connected to the house, but if you are interested, we have a PNW extension publication (PNWs are joint publications of the University of Idaho, Oregon State University, and Washington State University) titled “Fire-Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes” (PNW 590) that will help you explore the topic. It is downloadable at <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/pnw590.pdf>

In interviews with people whose homes burned down in a fire, some people have expressed as much or more loss for the surrounding forests that were burned by a fire as

they did their home.

There are many strategies to reduce forest fire risk on family forests and we have an excellent 40-page PNW extension publication to give you insights on reducing fuels and other measures to prepare for fire on family forests.

The publication is titled "Reducing Fire Risk on Your Forest Property" (PNW 618) and can be downloaded at (<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/pnw618.pdf>)

Finally, if you are impacted by fires, or if you know of others in your community who are addressing the consequences of forest fires, we have a good publication to help assess the damage, prepare for post-fire

consequences, and restore areas that have been burned. The publication, titled "Assessing and Managing Your Forestland After a Wildfire" (SB76) is downloadable at: <https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/SB/SB76.pdf>

Forest fires are a fact of life in western forests. The key to responding to them is to reduce the likelihood of homes igniting and preparing forests so they are more resilient in the face of fire.

In addition to the publications described here, we also have many other publications on related tools such as thinning and pruning.

For more information go to www.uidaho.edu/extension/publications and click on

"Forestry Range and Water."

If you would like some on-site assistance in assessing fire risk on your home, check with your local fire protection district. In some cases, they may have people willing to do a walk-through with you.

They or local Idaho Department of Lands offices may also be aware of programs available locally to help you pay for the cost of these fuel reductions around your home as well as in surrounding forests.

Chris Schnepf is an area extension educator in forestry for the University of Idaho in Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and Benewah counties. He can be reached at cschnepf@uidaho.edu. ■

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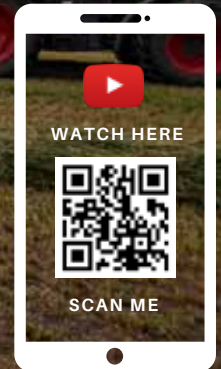
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Lucille Moore, the winner of our second quarter Refer A Friend, Get A Gift \$500 drawing, with agent Jason Gardner.



Photo by Sean Ellis

Weiser farmer Tristan Winegar stands in a black bean field near Nampa with a new subdivision right next to it Aug. 17. Winegar and other Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members are trying to find a solution that could help slow the rapid loss of farmland that is occurring in some parts of the state.

Farm Bureau members seek plan to slow farmland loss

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

PAYETTE – Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members in the southwestern part of the state will lead an effort to try to find a solution to slow the rapid loss of farmland that is occurring in some parts of the state.

Idaho is the fastest-growing state in the

nation on a percentage basis and most of that population growth is concentrated around the Treasure Valley area of southwestern Idaho.

Not surprisingly, farmland is disappearing in some parts of the valley at an alarming rate as houses take the place of what was once farm ground.

“It’s getting ugly,” said Washington

County Farm Bureau President Tristan Winegar, who farms near Weiser. “We’ve got a problem with the loss of farm ground in Idaho. The whole state is growing but it’s happening here in this area more than anywhere else.”

Winegar said he and other Farm Bureau members have looked at numbers that show how rapidly farmland is disappearing



Photo by Sean Ellis

Farm Bureau members from counties around southwestern Idaho meet July 29 in Payette to discuss trying to come up with a solution that could help slow the rapid loss of farmland that is occurring in some parts of Idaho, especially in the southwestern part of the state.

in some areas of Idaho and it doesn't look good.

"If we don't do something now, in five years we won't have anything to save," he said.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Idaho lost 1 percent of its total ag ground from 2012 to 2017, which comes out to 117,000 acres.

That might seem like a small amount given Idaho still has 11.7 million acres of total farmland.

But the loss is most pronounced in the Treasure Valley area, where the vast majority of the state's population growth is occurring. According to the 2017 census, Canyon County lost 10 percent of its farm ground between 2012 and 2017 and Ada

County lost 22 percent of its farm ground during that time.

And, Winegar and others said, the pressure to sell farm ground so subdivisions can take their place has accelerated in the past several years, since the 2017 census was taken.

Winegar and other Farm Bureau leaders and members from several southwestern Idaho counties met in Payette July 29 to discuss the issue and talk about what could be done to at least slow the pace that farm ground is being gobbled up in Idaho.

They agreed to try to come up with a plan that, if approved by Farm Bureau delegates from around Idaho during IFBF's annual policy convention in December, could be presented as a bill during the

state's 2022 legislative session.

During the July 29 meeting, participants discussed several options to incentivize farmers to keep their land, including taking a look at what California has done to preserve farm ground in that state.

Among other things, California has incentivized farmers to keep their ground in agriculture by allowing the creation of locally designated agriculture preserves for farmland. Farmers who voluntarily agree to preserve their farmland receive low property tax rates based on generated income and not market value.

Farmers who take advantage of that incentive choose to voluntarily enter 10- or 20-year landowner contracts. Those contracts can be ended early but the landown-



Photo by Sean Ellis

Homes are replacing farmland at a rapid rate in some parts of Idaho and some Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members are trying to find a solution that could help slow the rapid loss of farmland. Here, a new subdivision near Nampa is located next to a black bean field.

er has to pay a penalty.

Winegar and others who participated in the Payette meeting said the California incentive was just a way to get the conversation started and Idaho farmers and ranchers can craft any ag land preservation bill they choose to.

“We want to talk about all of our options and we want to get behind something and go forward,” Winegar said.

An urban growth model created by a team of Boise State University researchers in 2017 projected that between 110,000 and 240,000 acres of ag land in Ada and Canyon counties will be lost to development by 2100. Those two counties currently have about 360,000 acres of ag land combined.

In the model’s best-case scenario, which has population density increasing as a result of so-called “smart growth” policies, the valley loses 110,000 acres of ag land by 2100.

The worst-case scenario, which has population density unchanged from what it is now, shows the valley losing 240,000 acres of ag land.

Winegar urged Farm Bureau members to join the effort to create some type of

Idaho-specific farmland preservation program in time for the 2022 Idaho legislative session, which begins in January.

“In my opinion, this needs to be a priority. It needs to happen,” he said. “We need to be meeting people, educating them about why this is important and we need to do our part and try to push this through. This is important.”

Rep. Judy Boyle, a Republican rancher from Midvale who attended the Payette meeting, told participants that a lot of lawmakers would likely support an effort to preserve farm ground in Idaho.

“(You) would have support because everybody loves agriculture,” she said. “Even (urban) legislators understand ag is what drives Idaho. Every time we have an economic downturn, it’s agriculture that holds the state together.”

Winegar said it’s important to let people know that this is an effort to preserve farm ground and not an effort to stop growth.

New Plymouth farmer Galen Lee, a member of IFBF’s board of directors who attended the Payette meeting, said any plan to incentivize the preservation of farmland in Idaho will have to be voluntary and it will also need to be acceptable to farmers

across the entire state, not just producers in the Treasure Valley area.

He said the issue of slowing down the loss of farm ground has been talked about for a long time and so far, there has yet to be a solution that works for most farmers.

“But I think it’s worth running it up the flagpole again and taking another look at it,” he said.

Caldwell farmer Matt Dorsey, who is also a member of IFBF’s board of directors, said he supports the idea of trying to come up with a workable solution but he’s not overly confident that can be done given that this issue has been around for a long time.

Whatever the plan is, he said, it’s going to have to be more than just a tax incentive.

“The only way you’re going to stop houses from taking the place of farm ground is if the production of food can compete with housing prices,” he said.

Any plan that is accepted by Idaho farmers and ranchers will also have to respect private property rights, Dorsey added.

That said, he added, “I support the idea of trying to come up with a solution.” ■



Submitted photo

High Desert Milk employees Fabian Beltran and Kim Espinoza monitor processes in the control room of the cooperative's Burley dairy processing facility July 28. The Burley-based cooperative, one of Idaho's leading dairy processors, is undergoing a \$50 million expansion that will nearly double its total output.

Idaho dairy processor undergoes major expansion

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BURLEY – High Desert Milk, one of Idaho's leading dairy processors, is undergoing a \$50 million expansion at its Burley facility.

The project by the Burley-based cooperative will allow the facility to increase

its annual butter output from 45 million pounds to 85 million pounds and add a new milk-powder product called MPC-70 to its lineup.

MPC-70 is a milk-protein concentrate that contains 70 percent protein and is great demand worldwide, according to a High Desert Milk news release. The product is used in protein bars, sports-nutrition

beverages, icings, desserts, soups, sauces, baked good and dairy foods.

According to the news release, the co-op will produce 36 million pounds of MPC-70 annually.

Idaho ranks No. 3 in the nation in total milk production and industry leaders said the investment by High Desert Milk is a big win for the state's dairy farmers.



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Submitted photo
High Desert Milk CEO Randy Robinson is shown at the High Desert production facility in Burley July 28. The Burley-based cooperative, one of Idaho's leading dairy processors, is undergoing a \$50 million expansion that will nearly double its total output.

According to High Desert CEO Randy Robinson, the facility currently receives 2.2 million pounds of milk per day and the expansion will increase that total to 4.7 million pounds.

"It's 2.5 million more pounds of capacity that we didn't have last year," said Idaho Dairymen's Association Executive Director Rick Naerebout. "It is a significant development for Idaho's dairy industry. It is no small investment by those dairymen."

"Any time our processors choose to expand production, it's a great thing for the industry," said Karianne Fallow, CEO of Dairy West, which represents dairy operators in Idaho and Utah. "It's good to see that markets are expanding."

She said the expansion project "speaks volumes to the innovative mindset that dairy farmers have."

Idaho's 429 family-owned and operated dairies produce about 13 billion pounds of milk per year.

Fallow said High Desert's current output represents about 5 percent of the total milk processed in Idaho.

Robinson said in the news release that although High Desert Milk is a cooperative, it recently began contracting milk.

"Finding new sources of milk is a new business model for us as a vertically integrated cooperative," he said. "We are in a unique position to help other dairymen in the Magic Valley who are struggling to achieve their ambitions."

A half-dozen dairy farm families joined together in 2001 to create High Desert Milk as a marketing cooperative to secure better pricing. High Desert built a milk powder plant in 2008 and began producing sweet cream in 2008 and butter in 2013.

Robinson said Idaho is a great place to dairy.

"We have dedicated people, the resources and the room it takes to have a thriving dairy industry in this state," he said. ■

Remain focused on your marketing plan

Have you ever just paused for a minute and looked at the markets and then said to yourself, “This just doesn’t make sense.” Well, if you never have, you just missed another great opportunity to do just that.

The August World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report cut production as well as ending stocks for wheat and corn in the U.S. and the world.

The markets strengthened immediately, bulling everyone up thinking we had nowhere to go but higher. But by the end of the third week of the month, we had taken all of that strength out of the market plus a little more.

Just a little example of the volatility: Chicago December wheat closed at \$7.39 per bushel on Aug. 11. The report was released on Aug. 12 and the futures rallied and closed at \$7.64. By the time we got to Aug. 20, the December contract closed at \$7.28.

Now I know that by the time this is published we could very well be back up again but this, if nothing else, reminds us just how volatile the markets can be. We can analyze this until we are blue in the face but the thing to remember is that the market is always right.



Years ago I was told and I learned that the worst position to be in when it comes to marketing is for you to think you are right and the market is wrong. This will keep you from watching just what the market is doing as well as making decisions based

on the market.

Some of you are kicking yourself for contracting wheat back in the late part of winter or early spring. Be real careful, as your decision at that time was based on the current market conditions and the news at that time.

Those decisions were good, sound decisions and you should keep making your marketing decisions using those same principles.

There will always be something come along that was unforeseen and moved the markets one way or another. This could be news that moves the futures or news that moves the local basis.

Remember, in your marketing decisions you should always be mindful of both. The basis will tell you just what is happening in your local supply demand. Just look at the current basis for soft white.

If your local market is a domestic

like a flour mill, the basis for soft white is being pushed by the Portland market.

However, it is important to remember that a flour mill will only contract enough wheat to produce the flour that the mill requires to meet their demand. They are not open-ended and once they meet their needs they quit contracting for that time frame.

Thus it is important to sell when someone wants to buy. This is when the local basis will be at the highest levels.

I know that there are a number of reasons for all of us to be a little depressed at this time. Depending just where you live, this summer has been a challenge to say the least.

Some of you are currently in a survival mode while other areas are doing okay. As we move into the fall, all of you are busier than 10 people ought to be but we all still need to remain focused on our marketing plan.

You may not have the bushels but it will be important to not get caught up in the emotions of the market. Look at the futures levels for next year. Are we at a level that we could hedge our production next year using the futures?

The answer is a definite maybe.

All of us are different and have different needs for our operations. For some of you the answer is yes the futures are at a level you can live with.

If so, then let's get started. Don't let that opportunity slip away. Remember, a little here and a little there. ■



Photos by Carol Chamberlain

Custer County is big on cattle but ranchers there increasingly face challenges grazing their cows on federal land.

A look at Custer County's agricultural profile

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

CHALLIS – Custer County is sparse on people – 4,275 according to the 2020 Census – but big on cattle, which is the

county's top agricultural commodity in terms of revenue.

It's the state's third-largest county by area but close to 90 percent of the land in Custer County is owned by the federal government.

"We're a big county land-wise but most of that is federal land," says Challis rancher David Philps, president of Custer County Farm Bureau.

That means ranchers in the county are heavily dependent on federal grazing allot-



Cattle graze in Custer County. Cattle and calves is the top agricultural commodity in the county in terms of farm-gate revenue.

ments to make their operations work.

But, according to ag producers in the county, it's becoming increasingly difficult to graze cattle on federal land there because of several lawsuits that have made that no easy task.

"We're real dependent on grazing on federal land and that keeps getting tougher and tougher on us ranchers to do," says Jim Chamberlain, a Challis rancher. "It's a yearly battle."

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, ranchers in Custer County brought in \$24 million farm-gate revenue during the 2017 census year, making cattle the top ag commodity in the county by far.

According to the ag census, there were 31,167 cattle and calves in Custer County in 2017.

Those cattle need somewhere to graze and lawsuits by environmental and animal activist groups have made it increasingly difficult to do that on federal land in the county, says Custer County Commissioner Steve Smith, who owns a cow-calf operation and grows his own hay.

"Those lawsuits have really had an impact on things," he says. "They make it harder and harder for ranchers to utilize their grazing allotments."

The grazing on federal lands issue is one

the commission constantly deals with, he says.

Smith says the commission and others in the county also hope to revive logging as an industry in Custer County, which lost its mills because of lawsuits.

Bringing back logging as an industry in Custer County is a major goal but funding to restart a mill will be a big challenge, he says.

"Once you eliminate any kind of industry or manufacturing system, to start back up is prohibitively expensive," Smith says.

Aside from grazing issues, Custer County Farm Bureau members also focus a lot of their energy on educating the county's youth about the importance of agriculture in their lives.

"We try to get the youth to know where their food really comes from," Philips says.

That includes taking students out to Chamberlain's ranch during lambing and calving season, providing scholarships and educating kids and their parents about farming and ranching through the use of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's MAC (Moving Agriculture to the Classroom) Trailer.

The mobile MAC trailer uses hands-on activities to teach kids about beef, wheat, dairy and other farm commodities.

"There are so many students out there who have no idea how their food is grown and brought to them," Chamberlain says. "They think it's just produced in the grocery store. We focus on elementary school students because they will carry that information through the rest of their lives if we can make an impression on them."

CCFB also presents a ranch woman of the year award and an achiever award to a high school student who is helping out in the agriculture industry.

According to the 2017 Census of Ag, there were 267 farms in Custer County in 2017 and 148,000 acres of land in farming and ranching.

The average size of farm in the county was 554 acres, which was greater than the statewide average of 468 acres.

Almost 33,000 acres of hay and forage crops were grown in Custer County in 2017 and 3,283 acres of barley.

Thirty-two of the county's 267 total farms were large farms of at least 1,000 acres in size, 38 were 500-999 acres in size and 93 farms in the county were small farms between 1-49 acres in size.

Seventy-four of the county's farms brought in at least \$100,000 in farm revenue in 2017 and 89 brought in less than \$5,000. ■

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Photo by Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation members discuss policy issues during the IFBF Summer Leadership Conference, which was held in Island Park July 19-21.

Farm Bureau leaders learn how to strengthen organization

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Dozens of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation leaders from throughout the state met in Island Park July 19-21 to learn how they, together, can strengthen and promote the organization and agricul-

ture.

The annual meeting used to be called the Summer County Presidents Conference and brought together presidents of IFBF's county Farm Bureau organizations.

But the name was changed this year to the Summer Leadership Conference

and in addition to county Farm Bureau presidents or vice presidents, participants included members of the state's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee and Promotion and Education Committee, as well as the chairs of IFBF's various commodity committees.

IFBF President Bryan Searle, a potato

farmer from Shelley, said the organization's leadership felt it was important to bring together leaders from throughout the organization to show them how they can work together to strengthen Farm Bureau.

Sometimes, Farm Bureau members can become their own individual silos and not see the bigger picture, he told participants.

"We felt the need to bring down some silos and work as one," Searle said. "It's important we do everything we can to work together. We're a state organization and we ought to function that way and not just get in our own little circles."

He said the conference is an "opportunity to network and it's an opportunity to learn how we can strengthen each other."

The conference was a chance for Farm Bureau members to meet and network with others and learn more about how the organization functions and the tools it offers to help farmers and ranchers succeed both individually and collectively as an industry and organization, said IFBF CEO Zak Miller.

"We need to encourage our members to recognize the strength they have not just individually but collectively by getting them together to see how strong we are together, how much we have in common with one another and all of the tools that are available to them to take back to their counties, to their communities and help collectively share the story of agriculture," he said.

Hopefully, he added, the conference will allow some people to begin to realize the potential they have as individuals and collectively together with other farmers and ranchers.

"What we've seen as staff is that all of our members have phenomenal stories, they just don't believe in themselves enough sometimes to tell that story," Miller said. "We need leaders to help people embrace their own potential and to tell their story."

The conference included a discussion on various policy proposals that Farm Bureau members will be asked to vote on later this year during IFBF's annual meeting.



Photo by Joel Benson

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation leaders from throughout the state met in Island Park July 19-21 during the IFBF Summer Leadership Conference.

"It's important that everybody is educated on all of the issues," Searle said. "If I'm a potato guy, I need to know about the wolf and rangeland issues also."

Searle said Farm Bureau operates most effectively when its members are on the same page on the various issues and work together to strengthen and promote agriculture.

"We are family and we are stronger together," he said. "We are in this together and as we go forward together, we'll be stronger as an organization."

"We appreciate you and we appreciate all that you do," Searle added. "Continue to come with those ideas because it's you that makes us strong."

During the conference, Todd Argall, CEO of Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. of Idaho, told participants that the company is in a solid position financially.

But he also said the insurance company would continue to strive to become even better.

The theme of FBMIC, he said, is to go from good to better to best when it comes to meeting the company's mission of providing financial peace of mind to

Idaho families, farmers and businesses.

"We're good in a lot of areas but we have work to do in a lot of areas also to accomplish that mission," he said.

The insurance company will continue to work closely with Idaho Farm Bureau Federation to accomplish its goals, Argall added.

"We are in this together for the long haul," he said. "A strong insurance company means we will have a strong federation and a strong federation means we will have a strong insurance company."

Conference participants also learned that during 2020, the state's county Farm Bureau organizations collectively provided \$137,000 in academic scholarships to Idaho students and donated \$166,000 to local 4-H and FFA chapters.

Those county Farm Bureaus also donated \$172,000 to charitable causes and spent \$87,000 bringing members together at county barbecues and picnics.

Those totals do not include what the insurance company spent improving local communities, said Justin Patten, IFBF's director of operations.

"We're doing all of this together, under the Farm Bureau name," he said. ■

Idaho potato growers brace for inferior crop

By John O'Connell

Intermountain Farm and Ranch

Randy Hardy, of Oakley, is not alone among Idaho farmers in his assessment that the potato crop he'll soon harvest will be the worst of his career.

Statewide, some spud farmers conducting test digs or early harvest are uprooting plants supporting no tubers.

Where there are spuds, there are fewer than normal, and most of the tubers are undersized and misshapen. Some spuds resemble boomerangs; others are light bulb shaped.

"I've never had this happen before, and I've got an agronomist who works with me on potatoes and he's been doing it for over 20 years and he said he's never seen a worse crop than this," said Hardy, who raises spuds for the fresh market and serves as chairman of the board of Sun Valley Potatoes. "... I would really be surprised if we don't get into a ration situation where there simply aren't enough potatoes to go around."

It's been an exceptionally hot, dry and smoky growing season throughout the Gem State, and farmers say their potatoes, grain and alfalfa have suffered because of the tough combination of conditions.

Growers with a sufficient irrigation supply are much more optimistic, however, about their heat-loving crops, such as sugar beets, dry beans and corn.

In Washington, Hardy noted, growers forced to dig early to supply processors have unearthed some "really scary stuff." He said a few early digs are also underway in parts of Idaho.

Hardy isn't scheduled to harvest un-



Photos courtesy of Debra Tiede
American Falls farmer Jim Tiede holds up Ranger Russet spuds from one of his fields on Aug. 24.

til Sept. 20, and he's hoping the extra time will allow his tubers to add a bit more bulk.

United Potato Growers of Idaho asked growers to submit results from Aug. 1 test digs and will gather follow-up data in person during harvest.

Hardy said the average number of tubers in the test digs was down 30 percent from last year. Weight was also down substantially, he said.

"We did a 10-foot test dig. Two plants out of the 10-foot dig had no potatoes under them," Hardy said. "I'm not the only one who has heard that story. ... This is going to be more of a widespread thing than we've ever seen before."

Typically, Hardy explained, farmers can expect to produce lots of big, top-grade tubers in years in which they get low tuber sets — referring to the number of spuds that grow beneath each plant.

In years with larger sets, they usually harvest more potatoes but with a slightly smaller size profile.

This year, however, farmers planted into fields with little deep soil moisture. The lack of deep moisture also lightened grain yields.

"We were waiting for spuds to come up like they normally do at the first of June. They were hesitant to come up. The ground was too dry," Hardy said.

Hardy started watering on May 28, and he had three pivots that he never shut off throughout a seven-week period.

The potato set is determined in mid-June, before the development stage known as row closure when potato plants grow to form a solid canopy of foliage.

That's when the state was hit with record heat, which contributed to a smaller set.

Then the smoke arrived from massive Western wildfires. Hardy believes the haze has impeded tuber bulking — dealing a double-whammy of small size and small set.

"When that August smoke hits every year, it seems they stop growing. This has been relentless (smoke) since the middle of June," Hardy said.

Hardy estimates his wheat yields are down by about 20 percent this season. He noted that the wheat price has increased from about \$5 per bushel to well above \$7, thereby offsetting the disappointing yields.



An Aug. 24 test dig at Tiede Farms in American Falls revealed undersized potatoes.

Selling fresh spuds on the open market has its benefits in years in which crops are short. The lack of supply drives up prices and can offset poor yields and quality.

It's a different story for growers who raise spuds for processors and are locked into contracted prices.

Jim Tiede, of American Falls, will start early digs on Sept. 12; those early spuds will be hauled directly to his fry processor.

Tiede said farmers who have been digging in his area have reported yields of 20 percent below normal, oddly shaped spuds and problems with specific gravity — a measurement of the amount of solid matter in each tuber.

"It's going to be a short crop," Tiede said. "Fryers have been very active out looking to purchase more."

Tiede said Lamb Weston, McCain Foods and Cavendish Farms have offered growers an extra \$1.50 per hundredweight for additional spuds.

"We're going to wait a little bit," Tiede said. "I get the feeling most guys are doing that."

One of the few bright spots in the state for potato growers is the Rexburg Bench in Eastern Idaho.

"Further down in the valley things are not as rosy as we would like them to be. Up in the Rexburg area at this point in time it

looks like we're closer to normal than some other areas of the state," said Lynn Wilcox, with Wilcox Fresh in Rexburg.

Wilcox's production area stretches about 45 miles from Rexburg to Montevieu, where he's concluded "some fields don't have much under the plant."

During Aug. 1 test digs, Wilcox said, a dig site within a Russet Norkotah field in Montevieu yielded 9.4 pounds of potatoes and 42 tubers.

In the Rexburg area, however, another dig site yielded between 28 pounds and 32 pounds of potatoes and 88 to 94 tubers. Generally, quality and shape were also acceptable.

Amid a dry growing season, Wilcox said, showers that arrived at inopportune times have hurt the quality of his hay and grain. Alfalfa prices are now exceptionally high, but Wilcox described his hay crop as a "disaster."

Rain fell on most of his first cutting. He said heavy late-season rain also ruined lots of wheat and barley.

The rain contributed to the spread of Fusarium head blight, which creates the DON toxin, causing loads of barley to be rejected by maltign plants and wheat to be snubbed by millers.

"We could really have used that rain in the middle of July," Wilcox said. ■

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PAGES 20 & 21

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