

GEM STATE **Producer**

Idaho Farm Bureau

October 2023 • Volume 27 Issue 7



DIRE TIMES For Sheep Industry

Idaho per capita farm income up, 4

Turning manure into gold, 13

New water department director, 16



EPA fails the test on WOTUS, again

Second chances don't come along every day. But every once in a while, we get a chance to start fresh, learn from our mistakes and do better.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had that chance with WOTUS. They had a prime opportunity to bring clarity to clean water regulations and respect the efforts of farmers and ranchers across the country.

Instead, the EPA threw that second chance away, and chose a shortcut rather than clear-

ing away the muddy uncertainty and government overreach.

Farmers and ranchers know the importance of clean water firsthand—our livelihoods depend on it—and we know our families, our neighbors and our communities are counting on us.

That's why farmers across the country take active steps to protect the water on and around our land—from planting cover crops to hold

See **DUVALL**, page 6

The President's Desk

By Bryan Searle
President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



One number – 5,794 – tells a great story about Idaho ag

In addition to being a big part of Idaho's history and culture, agriculture is a major part of the state's economy.

How big?

Well, as of right now, \$5,794 per Idahoan big.

According to data recently released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Idaho's farm

income on a per capita basis in 2022 was \$5,794.

In other words, if you divide Idaho's total farm and ranch revenue last year (\$11.2 billion) by the state's population (1.939 million), the state's farmers and ranchers generated

See **SEARLE**, page 6

Inside Farm Bureau

By Zak Miller
CEO, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



Artificial turf

At a recent water meeting, my mind made a strange connection between football fields and watering practices on the Eastern Snake River Plain.

I remember playing football games in various conditions. The field size was always the same, but the weather and field conditions sure did vary.

I played on green grass, dead grass, frozen grass, dirt, mud- and snow-covered grass. I never played on turf, which exposes my age and skill level.

Every condition required adjustments to game plan because the conditions dictated that we adapt.

Additionally, there has been ongoing discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of artificial and natural surfaces.

The recent injury to NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers on the fourth snap of his season created some talking points that artificial turf could have been a cause of his injury.

See **MILLER**, page 7



Idaho Farm Bureau.

Volume 27, Issue 7
IFBF Officers

President..... Bryan Searle, Shelley
Vice President..... Richard Durrant, Meridian
Executive Vice President/CEO Zak Miller

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Garner Clifton
Austin Tubbs Malad
Jason Fellows Weston
Scott Steele Idaho Falls
Doug Barrie Idaho Falls
Travis McAfee Howe
Darren Taber Shoshone
Rick Pearson Hagerman
Rick Brune Hazelton
Cody Chandler Weiser
Galen Lee New Plymouth
Matt Dorsey Caldwell
Marjorie French..... Princeton
Tom Daniel Bonners Ferry
Tom Mosman Craigmont
Ray Searle Shelley

STAFF

Executive Assistant Cara Dyer
VP of Operations Justin Patten
Operations Assistant Elly MacDonald
Director of Finance & Systems Tyler Moore
YF&R-P&E Manager Ott Clark
VP of Member Relations & Commodities..... Brody Miller
Dist. I Regional Manager Kylee Urie
Dist. II Regional Manager Camron Hammond
Dist. III Regional Manager Zack Lanier
Dist. IV Regional Manager Megan Parnell
Dist. V Regional Manager Bob Smathers
Boise Office Manager Quinne Russell
VP of Governmental Affairs Russ Hendricks
Director of Government Affairs Braden Jensen
Governmental Affairs Representative Dexton Lake
VP of Information Joel Benson
Project Manager Kristy Lindauer
Director of Publications Sean Ellis
Videographer Jacob Christensen
Broadcast Manager James Galacci
Director of Member Benefits Betty Inkepp

Printed by: Adams Publishing Group, Pocatello, ID

GEM STATE PRODUCER

USPS #015-024, is published monthly except the four months the Quarterly runs by the IDAHO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION, 275 Tierra Vista Drive, Pocatello, ID 83201.

POSTMASTER send changes of address to: GEM STATE PRODUCER, P.O. Box 4848, Pocatello, ID 83205-4848. Periodicals postage paid at Pocatello, Idaho, and additional mailing offices. Subscription rate: \$6.00 per year included in Farm Bureau dues.

MAGAZINE CONTACTS:

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
EDITOR (208) 239-4292 • ADS (208) 239-4384
E-MAIL: seanellis@idahofb.org
ADS: advertising@idahofb.org
web: www.idahofb.org



Photos by Sean Ellis

Wheat is harvested in a field near Ririe. Idaho ag export value through the first half of 2023 is ahead of last year's record pace.

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

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – Through the first half of 2023, Idaho is on pace to set a record for total agricultural export value for the third straight year.

Idaho businesses exported \$603 million worth of agricultural products to other countries during the first six months of 2023, according to recently released U.S. Census Bureau data.

That was 10 percent more than the \$548 million worth of ag products exported from Idaho during the same period in 2022, which was a record year for the state for ag export value.

In 2022, a record \$1.13 billion worth of ag products were exported from Idaho, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Last year's record eclipsed the 2021 total of \$1.02 billion, which tied a record set in 2014.

“With more than a 10 percent gain, overall (ag) exports from Idaho are outpacing U.S. ag exports, which were down more than 7 percent through the first half of 2023,” said Doug Robison, the Idaho president of AgWest Farm Credit.

He said Idaho ag export value increased during the first half of the year despite some modest declines in larger export categories that included dairy and potatoes.

Idaho exports of “malt barley appear to be rebounding in 2023 after a reduction in exports during the prior year,” Robison said. “Idaho's livestock exports are also up substantially through the first half of the year.”

See EXPORTS, page 8

COVER: Sheep ranchers Henry Etcheverry of Rupert, shown here, and Frank Shirts of Wilder are raising the alarm about the dire situation faced by U.S. sheep ranchers due to a flood of lamb imports from other nations. See page 10 for story. Submitted photo



Photo by Sean Ellis

A farmer plants wheat in a field near Rockland this spring. Idaho farmers and ranchers produced \$5,794 worth of agricultural revenue for every Idahoan last year.

Idaho easily leads the West in per capita farm income

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

POCATELLO – When it comes to farm income on a per capita basis, Idaho is the unchallenged leader in the West, far surpassing even agricultural juggernaut California.

Per capita farm income is derived by dividing a state's total population by its total farm-gate receipts, which is the revenue farmers and ranchers receive for their commodity.

Based on data released by USDA Aug. 31, Idaho's per capita farm income number in 2022 was \$5,794.

To put it in simple terms, Idaho farmers and ranchers produced \$5,794 worth of agricultural revenue for every Idahoan last year.

Of the 11 western states, Montana ranked second in that per capita farm income category at \$3,939, followed by

Wyoming at \$3,296.

No other western state had more than \$2,000 in per capita farm income in 2022 and California came in at a distant \$1,434.

“This number shows agriculture is far more important to the average Idahoan than it is to people in the other western states,” said Idaho Farm Bureau Federation President Bryan Searle, who farms in East Idaho. “That number is astounding and proves how important agriculture is to Idaho's economy.”

University of Idaho Agricultural Economist Brett Wilder, who crunched the per capita numbers, said it's also worth noting that Idaho's per capita farm income number increased at the same time that the state is leading the

nation in population growth on a percentage basis.

Idaho's per capita farm income number in 2021 was \$4,392. The 2022 number of \$5,794 represents a 32 percent increase.

"We are growing our ag economy faster than we're growing our population," Wilder said.

New Mexico ranked fourth among the 11 western states in per capita farm income (\$1,755), followed by Colorado (\$1,553), Washington (\$1,547), Oregon (\$1,466) and California (\$1,434).

Utah was next at \$795, Arizona came in at \$702 and Nevada was at \$293.

"When you look at how important agriculture is to the economy of the states in the West, it is just that much more important to everyone who lives in Idaho," Wilder said. "It is a huge part of our economy."

According to a University of Idaho study, agriculture is responsible for almost 13 percent of Idaho's total gross state product, one in every eight jobs in the state and 18 percent of Idaho's total economic output.

When it came to total farm-gate revenue, California brought in \$55.9 billion in 2022, making that state No. 1 in the nation in that category.

In the West, Washington was second in total farm-gate revenue with \$12 billion in 2022, followed by Idaho with \$11.2 billion.

Colorado was fourth in the West with \$9 billion, and followed

by Oregon (\$6.2 billion), Arizona (\$5.2 billion), Montana (\$4.4 billion), New Mexico (\$3.7 billion), Utah (\$2.7 billion), Wyoming (\$1.9 billion) and Nevada (\$951 million).

According to the USDA farm income data released Aug. 31, \$6.86 billion of Idaho's total farm revenue in 2022 came from the livestock sector and \$4.38 billion came from the crop sector.

Idaho's dairy sector was the state's top agricultural commodity in 2022 in terms of farm-gate revenue, according to the USDA data. The state's dairy operations brought in \$4.3 billion in farm-gate revenue last year.

The state's cattle and calves sector brought in \$2.25 billion in 2022, ranking cattle as Idaho's No. 2 ag commodity.

Idaho's iconic potato sector remained the state's top crop, bringing in \$1.2 billion in farm-gate receipts in 2022.

The state's hay farmers brought in \$776 million in farm-gate revenue in 2022, Idaho wheat farmers brought in \$622 million, sugar beet farmers brought in \$404 million and barley farmers brought in \$331 million.

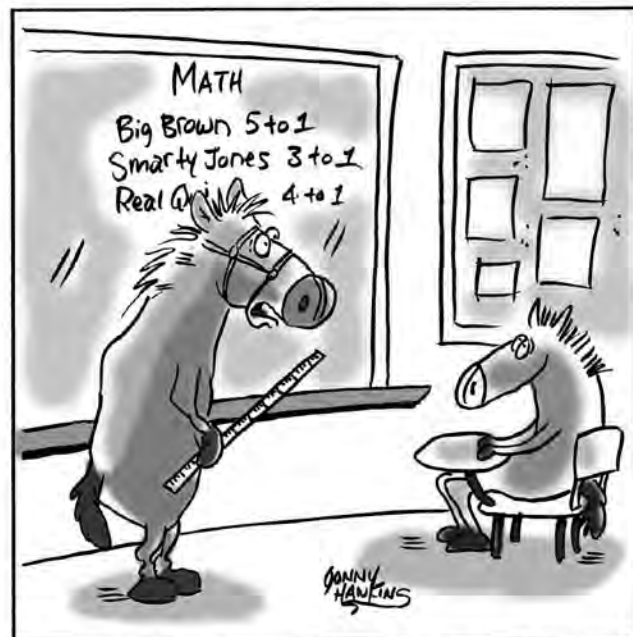
Total farm-gate revenue in 2022 for other Idaho ag commodities: corn (\$150 million), chicken eggs (\$140 million), onions (\$123 million), hops (\$93 million), dry beans (\$69 million), trout (\$43 million), mint (\$27 million), hogs (\$27 million), floriculture (\$21 million). ■

Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



"I tried a decongestant, but my head is still stuffy."



"Yesterday, we learned the even numbers. Today, we learn the odds."

Continued from page 2

the soil in place to cutting back on tilling to prevent runoff.

At Farm Bureau, we have long called for EPA to recognize and respect farmers' stewardship by providing clarity with clean water regulations.

Just a few months ago, farmers saw a landmark victory at the U.S. Supreme Court in the Sackett case. The justices unanimously struck down EPA's significant nexus test and forced the agencies to make substantial changes to the 2023 WOTUS rule.

If ever there was a time for the EPA to go back and take input from farmers and ranchers on the clarity we need, this was it. Instead, the agency charged forward, ignoring clear and important concerns raised by the court, 26 states, and farmers and ranchers across the country.

At every opportunity, Farm Bureau and our grassroots members have been coming

to the table and making our voices heard on this issue for years. EPA has simply chosen not to listen.

This time, they didn't even invite feedback or comment on their new rule. Although the EPA did remove significant nexus from the new WOTUS rule because of the court decision, they have not removed the ambiguity from the rule.

Here's one example: EPA has left the definition of "relatively permanent" water as vague as possible. This gives them plenty of room to regulate areas that look nothing like waterways to an ordinary person, and leaves farmers with no way to know what parts of their land might be "waters" in EPA's eyes.

For nearly a decade now, farmers and ranchers have been left guessing as regulations bounce back and forth. If the EPA had listened to farmers, they could have finally brought certainty and achieved a clear, permanent WOTUS rule.

While this latest WOTUS rule is not the

'For nearly a decade now, farmers and ranchers have been left guessing as regulations bounce back and forth.'

one we were hoping for, let's not lose sight of the fact that the courts, including the Supreme Court, have often put the EPA back in check when it comes to its blatant overreach.

We have achieved awesome victories together as we advocated for what is right for our farms, ranches and our natural resources. We will keep pressing forward, back to the courts again, until we have the clear rules that farmers deserve. ■

Continued from page 2

\$5,794 for every man, woman and child in Idaho.

[See story on page 4.]

How does that compare to the other 11 western states? Well, Idaho ranked No. 1 in that category and no other state was even close.

Montana ranked No. 2 among the western states in per capita farm income last year at \$3,939 and Wyoming was second at \$3,296.

California might as well be its own universe when it comes to total farm revenue – \$55.9 billion in 2022, making it the top state in the nation in that category by a long way.

But when you determine California's per capita income in 2022, it works out to \$1,434.

That means agriculture is four times more important to the average Idahoan than it is to residents of California, which is the ag king in terms of total production.

Why is this number so important? It's a simple yet profound reminder to lawmakers, other decision-makers and, really, every Idahoan as to just how important agriculture is to the lives of the state's residents.

This per capita farm income number shows that agriculture is

'Without a strong ag community and economy, Idaho would cease to be a great place to live.'

far more important to the average Idahoan than it is to residents in other states.

This number should, at the least, be shared with every elected official in Idaho. I would encourage you to share it with everyone you know: neighbors, family members, colleagues, your bank teller, the cashier at your local grocery store.

Idaho is a major player in the ag world and ranks No. 1 or very high in a lot of different agricultural commodities. In fact, 185 different agricultural commodities are produced here, everything from our famous potatoes to milk, beef, onions, beans, barley, yaks, sunflowers, truffles and wine.

In Idaho, agriculture still underpins the state's economy and it's important that everyone understands that so we can avoid the mistakes that some neighboring states have made when it comes to rules and regulations that impede or restrict the agricultural industry.

Idaho is the fastest-growing state in the nation on a percentage basis and people are flocking here because Idaho is a great place to live.

It's a great place to live in large part because of the amazing rural communities we have throughout the state that are that way because of agriculture's contributions.

MILLER

Continued from page 2

I have no opinion but I am fascinated by the debate. In a swift AI-led search, I found arguments for and against both types of playing surfaces.

Artificial turf

1. Durability: Artificial turf is much more durable than natural grass and can withstand heavy use for many years.
2. Consistency: Artificial turf provides a more consistent playing surface than natural grass. This can help to improve athletic performance and reduce injuries.
3. Year-round use: Artificial turf can be used year-round, regardless of weather conditions.

Natural grass

1. Player safety: Natural grass provides more cushioning and gives more than artificial turf. This can help to reduce the risk of injuries, such as ACL tears and concussions.
2. Versatility: Natural grass can be used for various sports
3. Feel: Many athletes prefer the feel of natural grass under their feet. They believe that natural grass provides a better playing experience than artificial turf.

Advocates for both surfaces make compelling arguments for their surface of choice.

All farmers involved in these discussions will most likely have compelling arguments for how they grow and water their crops.

I am certain of a few things about all farmers:

1. You believe you are doing your best to be prudent and efficient with your water.
2. You believe you have the right to use your water.
3. You don't want to harm other water users in other parts of the state.

If water appropriation issues were easy, the state would have no water wars. There is no perfect playing surface and no perfect water solution.

As in football, player safety must be a top priority, and in water, respecting the law and doing the least harm to all water users is imperative.

Idaho Farm Bureau is continually asked about our position in the current negotiations between water users on the ESRP.

Our answer is like my feelings about playing surfaces in football. I don't know the answer about football, but player safety is most important to me.

Regarding a settlement, we want a fair solution that harms the

Without a strong ag community and economy, Idaho would cease to be a great place to live.

Let's all do our part in keeping Idaho's agricultural community strong and thriving and part of that is making sure other Idahoans understand how important the state's 25,000 farms and ranches are to Idaho. ■

*If water appropriation issues were easy,
the state would have no water wars.
There is no perfect playing surface and
no perfect water solution.'*

fewest farmers regardless of where they farm in the ESRP, and one that respects the property rights of individuals to use this shared state resource.

We are committed to assisting the experts in doing the hard work and keeping everyone at the table to find an enduring solution.

Idaho is agriculture, and agriculture in Idaho is water. Farm Bureau's mission is to empower Idaho agriculture. A fair, realistic, and reasonable water agreement meets our mission and is what all Idaho needs. ■

Country Chuckles

By Jonny Hawkins



"I shot a duck."

EXPORTS

Continued from page 3

Live animal exports from Idaho continue to soar.

The U.S. Census Bureau data show that the total value of live animal exports from Idaho hit \$39 million during the first six months of 2023, 22 percent higher than the previous year.

Most of those live animal exports were cows sold to Canada.

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

That Idaho's total ag export value was up 10 percent over last year's record pace despite a slight dip in Idaho dairy export value is noteworthy since dairy typically accounts for a large portion of the state's total ag export value.

According to the Census Bureau data, \$139 million worth of ag products listed under the "dairy products" category were exported from Idaho during the first half of 2023. That was down slightly from \$142 million during the same period in 2022.

According to the U.S. Dairy Export Council, total U.S. export volume of dairy products during the first half of 2023 fell 5 percent and total value declined 10 percent compared with the same period in 2022.



Sugar beets are planted in a Power County field this spring. Idaho businesses exported \$603 million worth of agricultural products to other countries during the first six months of 2023.

Ag export value to Idaho's top five foreign ag export markets all increased during the first half.

Idaho exported \$193 million worth of ag products to Canada during the first half of the year, up 6 percent over 2022, and Canada remained the No. 1 destination for Idaho ag exports.

A total of \$34 million worth of live animals from Idaho were exported to Canada, making that the state's main ag export to that nation during the first half. Butter was second at \$17 million.

Idaho ag exports to Mexico during the first half increased by 57 percent, to \$115 million, and the state's ag exports to China increased by 7 percent, to \$55 million.

Malt was the state's top ag export to Mexico during the first half (\$36 million), followed by prepared vegetables (\$33 million, mostly frozen potato products), dairy (\$13 million) and oilseeds (\$12 million).

Dairy (\$20 million) and oilseeds (\$18 million) were Idaho's main ag exports to China during the first half of 2023.

Idaho ag export value to South Korea totaled \$39 million during the first half of the year, a 38 percent increase over the previous year, and Idaho ag exports to Japan totaled \$37 million, a 17 percent increase.

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

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

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

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

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



Idaho Farm Bureau FINANCIAL SERVICES

Harvest and hunting season is here. Now might be a good time to update your truck, side by side, ATV or motorcycle. If so, then consider financing with Idaho Farm Bureau Financial Services. You'll enjoy low member-priced rates, easy application process with quick response, as well as:

- Flexible payment terms and plans
- No application fees
- Loans for sport and recreation vehicles (RV's), including boats, motorcycles, RV's, and ATV's, snowmobiles & autos.

To learn more or to apply, please visit our website at www.idfbfs.com or contact your nearest Farm Bureau Finance office:

Boise 208-947-2519
Caldwell 208-455-1526
Lewiston 208-984-7700
Twin Falls 208-423-8808
Post Falls 208-618-2200
Pocatello 208-232-7914

We look forward to helping you on the path to financial freedom.



Apply Today!

Scan the QR code to go to our website to apply online.
www.idfbfs.com

Some restrictions apply based on the make and model of vehicle offered as collateral. Loans are subject to credit approval. Finance charges accrue from origination date of this loan.

Grad student finds mineral oil helps prevent PVY in irrigated spuds

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

Several studies have shown applying mineral oil is an economically and environmentally sustainable way for seed potato growers to prevent the transmission of potato virus Y (PVY), yet it's not a widely used practice in Idaho.

Mineral oil interferes with PVY in the piercing mouthparts, known as stylets, of aphids, which are vectors of the disease.

University of Idaho graduate student Kelie Yoho, who is pursuing a doctorate in entomology, suspects many of the state's seed potato growers avoid mineral oil as a crop protectant due to the potential for overhead irrigation to wash it off foliage.

Based on results of trials for Yoho's dissertation, concerns that mineral oil treatments might not withstand irrigation appear to be unfounded. Mineral oil applications are part of a three-pronged approach Yoho has been researching to help Idaho seed potato growers better protect their crops from PVY.

Yoho, a Twin Falls resident who was raised in South Bend, Ind., has also tracked timing of aphid flights and studied the tendency of potato plants to become less susceptible to PVY with age.

"When you're a seed grower and the threshold for PVY is as low as 1% for recertification, everything matters," Yoho said.

PVY is notoriously difficult to control with insecticides alone. Most of the more than 60 aphid species that transmit PVY don't colonize on potatoes, which aren't a good host plant.

Rather, they shallowly probe the epidermis of leaf tissue with their stylets, ingest PVY and quickly move on to the next plant to probe again, before insecticides take effect.

Yoho planted her trial at the U of I



Photo by John O'Connell

University of Idaho graduate student Kelie Yoho.

Kimberly Research and Extension Center adjacent to heavily infested plots. She obtained the best results with a combination of mineral oil and insecticide, despite the use of overhead irrigation.

In 2021 irrigated trials, crop oil alone reduced PVY rates by 10%, whereas mineral oil and insecticide used together reduced PVY by 23%. Insecticide alone reduced PVY by just 2%.

When she repeated the experiment in 2022, mineral oil reduced PVY by 14%, compared with a 20% reduction with a combination of mineral oil and insecticide and a 10% reduction with insecticide alone.

Yoho is also tracking populations of beneficial insects, which can tolerate mineral oil but are highly sensitive to insecticides. Mineral oil is cheaper than insecticide but generally must be applied more often.

Prior research has shown that mineral oil is absorbed into the leaf, which may

help it remain effective following overhead irrigation.

"Crop oil alone is not enough to reduce PVY levels beyond the threshold that seed growers would need to recertify their fields," Yoho said. "You would need to incorporate it into a broader integrated pest management program."

She's participating in a field study this summer assessing how much mineral oil remains on leaves after overhead irrigation in comparison with drip irrigation. Dye has been added to the mineral oil to help the researchers quantify oil concentration on leaves following irrigation.

Yoho and her team have also set out yellow bucket traps in seed potato fields in Ashton to track aphid migrations throughout the growing season.

The data will help them develop a model to help growers understand how the temperature affects insect development as a predictor of PVY risk.

The greatest peaks in aphid migrations they recorded were immediately after a nearby alfalfa field was harvested, leading aphids to search for new fields to inhabit.

For her third project, Yoho's team has set up hoop houses in a seed potato field in Kimberly, exposing plants to PVY-infected aphids at various points throughout the growing season.

Data from the experiment could help growers time protective crop oil sprays.

For her contributions to the potato industry, Yoho earned \$2,300 toward her education by winning the John L. and Lois K. Toevs Fellowship, which is awarded annually to a full-time student and gives preference to graduate research pertaining to potatoes or agronomy conducted at the U of I's Aberdeen, Kimberly or Parma Research and Extension Centers.

Yoho worked on her project under advisor Erik Wenninger, who is a UI Extension entomologist. ■

U.S., Idaho sheep operations facing extinction

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

BOISE – Things have gotten so dire for domestic sheep producers that some of Idaho's largest operations are questioning whether they can survive much longer.

While addressing the media during a press conference in the Boise foothills Aug. 22, two of the state's prominent sheep ranchers, Frank Shirts and Henry Etcheverry, supported a petition by R-CALF USA to place tariffs and quotas on sheep imports.

R-CALF is a cattle producer-only trade association that represents the U.S. cattle and sheep industries.

Underpriced foreign imports "are ruining the domestic sheep industry," said Etcheverry, whose operation is based in Rupert. "If we don't get a handle on this, we're done in time and not that much time."

In an Aug. 3 petition to U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, R-CALF asked for immediate relief for the U.S. sheep industry from "injurious imports of

lamb and mutton from Australia and New Zealand."

"The United States sheep industry is being decimated," states the R-CALF petition, which is signed by CEO Bill Bullard.

The R-CALF petition says U.S. sheep producers "are facing the prospect of near total extinction due to the unrestrained and ever-increasing importation of foreign lamb and mutton that do not meet the United States' more stringent production standards."

These lower-cost imports that originate from Australia and New Zealand "are displacing U.S. production of lamb and mutton at an alarming pace and creating what soon will be an irreversible dependency on foreign supply chains for an important American staple," the R-CALF petition states. "As revealed by the charts and data in the petition, this is by no means an exaggeration. Only with immediate intervention by the

*“When these range outfits are gone, they’re gone and they’re not going to come back.”
- Frank Shirts, Idaho sheep rancher*

administration and Congress can the impending, catastrophic outcome be averted.”

According to R-CALF, lamb and mutton imports to the U.S. have increased more than 543 percent in quantity and 2,363 percent in value since the U.S. entered its first major free trade agreement in 1994.

These imports, according to R-CALF, have displaced domestic lamb and mutton production, which has declined 60 percent during this period.

Despite a significant increase in U.S. consumption of lamb and mutton that began about 10 years ago, “all the increase has been captured by foreign supply chains while domestic production continually declines,” the petition states.

Etcheverry and Shirts said the sheep industry has played an important economic and cultural role in Idaho, particularly in rural communities.

They said sheep also perform an important environmental purpose when grazing as they take care of noxious and other undesirable weed species, reducing or eliminating the need for chemical control. Grazing sheep are also a powerful fire suppression tool, they said.

Etcheverry said the threat to the domestic sheep industry is real and

not exaggerated.

“If we don’t get this import deal straightened out and get this price where it’s stable, it might be adios,” he said. “We’re a small industry but when we’re gone, we’re gone.”

“When these range outfits are gone, they’re gone and they’re not going to come back,” said Shirts, who trails his sheep across Idaho State Highway 55 each spring before hundreds of onlookers.

Four decades ago, there were 13 million sheep and lambs in the U.S. and 17,341 full-time sheep operations, according to the R-CALF petition. Today, only 5 million head of sheep and lambs and 6,843 sheep operations remain in the United States.

“The number of Idaho sheep producers has gone down while the imports have gone up and it’s just tragic,” said Steve Stuebner, a public relations specialist who represented the sheep industry at the press conference.

According to the petition, about \$61 million worth of lamb and mutton were imported into the U.S. in 1993. That number increased 2,363 percent, to \$1.5 billion, by 2022.

The U.S. imported about 23,723 metric tons from primarily Australia, but also to a lesser extent from New Zealand, Canada and Mexico, in 1993. That number increased 543 percent to 152,646 metric tons in 2022.

The quantity of lamb and mutton imports in 2022, according to R-CALF,



RIGHT: From left to right, sheep ranchers Henry Etcheverry, his daughter, Dominique Etcheverry, and Frank Shirts speak to the media Aug. 22 about the dire situation faced by the Idaho and U.S. sheep industry.
Submitted photos



Some Idaho and U.S. sheep ranchers are calling for tariffs and quotas on sheep imports from other countries because of the impact they are having on the domestic industry.

was roughly equal to importing 4.5 million live lambs.

Australia accounted for more than 75 percent of total imports in 2022.

“The dramatic surges in lamb and mutton imports continues to cause serious injury to the domestic sheep industry...,” the R-CALF petition states.

The petition notes that import prices are consistently pegged below prices needed by domestic sheep producers to remain profitable.

Shirts, whose sheep operation is based in Wilder, said the prices U.S. sheep operations received last year were well below break-even and they are barely above that mark now.

Whenever prices start to strengthen, Australia will ship in more imports, he said.

The R-CALF petition claims Australian lamb and mutton exports have a distinct two-fold advantage over U.S. producers.

First, they don’t have to meet the United States’ more stringent production standards relating to environmental and wildlife concerns. Second, Australian exporters gain a significant pricing

advantage when the Australian dollar weakens relative to the U.S. dollar, “...which greatly exacerbates the production-cost advantage Australia already enjoys.”

“They don’t have the same type of regulations and restrictions like we do in this country, which makes it easier for them to produce the product,” Etcheverry said. “It’s not an even playing field and they can produce it cheaper than we can.”

The petition says the U.S. has zero tariffs on Australian lamb and mutton and miniscule tariffs on imported lamb and mutton from New Zealand.

“Tariffs on imported sheep and lamb products have been far too low to prevent the U.S. sheep industry from being overrun and all but destroyed by much cheaper products produced under lax production standards,” the R-CALF petition states.

“The U.S. sheep industry is in dire need of both tariffs and tariff rate quotas that will preserve an opportunity for the nation’s remaining commercial sheep producers to remain economically viable and competitive,” the R-CALF petition states. ■

Turning dairy manure into gold

By John O'Connell
University of Idaho

A University of Idaho Extension educator and his graduate student aim to help the state's dairymen cash in on their cow manure by amending it with specific minerals or carbon sources to make better compost from it.

Manure is bulky and tough to transport, which can lead to its over-application in fields surrounding dairies, contributing to environmental challenges.

Converting manure into portable compost is common practice among Idaho dairymen. However, dairymen seldom add supplemental carbon, aside from straw bedding, to optimize the important carbon-to-nitrogen ratio of their finished product.

Carbon feeds bacteria that aid in the composting process, thereby reducing the loss of nitrogen as ammonia and improving finished compost quality.

In the arid southern Idaho desert, however, carbon sources are in short supply, leading the researchers to explore using locally available minerals to replace certain functions of carbon additions.

UI Extension Educator Mario de Haro-Martí reasons that finding the ideal carbon or mineral amendment would help Idaho dairymen produce a marketable product meeting the specifications of land-



Anthony Simerlink, left, and his master's advisor, UI Extension Educator Mario de Haro-Martí, monitor a system de Haro-Martí designed and Simerlink built to study making compost from dairy manure with various amendments.

Photo by John O'Connell

scapers, greenhouses and other industries that have traditionally shunned dairy compost for its lower quality and variability.

To conduct the study, de Haro-Martí designed a unique, pilot-scale system of interconnected chambers, known as reactors, in which manure is composted.

Anthony Simerlink, a Washington State University master's student studying agriculture who has de Haro-Martí as his co-advisor under a special arrangement, built the system, housed at the U of I Kimberly Research and Extension Center.

"We have all of these dairies, we have a lot of manure and we have an excess of nutrients if we apply them at the rate that they're created," Simerlink said. "This is just an idea to give these farmers another revenue stream and make it easier to compost."

Carbon amendments they're analyzing include woodchips and biochar, which is a lightweight and high-carbon form of charcoal that could potentially be made from dairy manure.

They're also evaluating blending manure with pumice or clinoptilolite – both volcanic minerals mined in Idaho.

The reactors are tied to a common exhaust system, containing sensors to measure how each amendment may contribute

to reduced emissions of methane, carbon dioxide, ammonia and nitrous oxides by improving the balance of carbon and nitrogen.

In past research, de Haro-Martí calculated an up to 25% reduction in ammonia emissions from compost amended with clinoptilolite.

"Reduction in ammonia is huge because it's a local pollutant," de Haro-Martí said. "It travels in the air and returns to water sources and the environment around the region, which increases nitrogen levels."

Their four-year, \$600,000 research project is in its second year and was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the broader Idaho Sustainable Agriculture Initiative for Dairy grant, which aims to develop useful bioproducts from dairy waste.

De Haro Martí and Simerlink proved the concept for their project last summer at a smaller scale.

The compost produced in their system will be used some time next year to grow crops in a greenhouse.

The top-performing amendments from the greenhouse trial will be used in making compost on a larger scale with a standard compost turner. They'll apply that compost to plots in Kimberly in 2025. ■

Harvest Tour gives ‘influencers’ a taste of Idaho agriculture

By Sean Ellis

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Two dozen members of the media – traditional as well as social media influencers – got to experience a slice of Idaho’s vast agricultural industry Aug. 31 during the 2nd annual Idaho Preferred Harvest Tour.

The day-long bus tour took the participants to a wide variety of agricultural operations, from fifth-generation farms to first-generation operations, and from a small farm to a major food processor.

At each stop, tour participants had a chance to ask detailed questions and learn a little about the opportunities and challenges the operations face.

Idaho Preferred is an Idaho State Department of Agriculture program that promotes agricultural products produced by Idaho’s 25,000 farms and ranches and educate consumers about opportunities to purchase local food.

Idaho Preferred Marketing Specialist Dawn Larzelier, who helped organize the tour, said it was a great opportunity to help some media influencers in Idaho experience and learn a little bit about the state’s agricultural industry.

“The reason we do the media tour is to help tell the story of our farmers and our ranchers and the food they produce,” she said. “There’s an incredible amount of passion out there within the local food community and I think it often goes overlooked. The reason for this tour is to get together some of the people that can help tell that story.”

Idaho’s farms and ranches produce 185 different agricultural commodities, everything from main staple foods such as milk, potatoes, beef, onions, grain and beans, to small niche products such as pumpkins, yaks, sunflowers and truffles.

“We tried to showcase the variety of agriculture throughout Idaho, which is such a diverse state when it comes to farming,” Larzelier said. “I felt it was great for people to see the fifth-generation family farm and also the start-up farm.”

“What we tried to do is show a little bit of everything that we have to offer,” she added. “I think we did a pretty good job of showcasing everything from dairy to produce to wine, and some of our specialty crops.”

September is Idaho Preferred Month and the tour is held right at the beginning of that celebration on purpose, said Laura Johnson, who manages the ISDA’s Market Development Division.

“September is the peak of harvest, when we have the most



Nampa farmer Matt Wissel talks about some of the challenges of farming during the 2nd Annual Idaho Preferred Harvest Tour. Photos by Sean Ellis

products available,” she said. “We’re really celebrating the bounty of Idaho agriculture and we are making a real push to promote our Idaho products and help drive sales, whether it’s through restaurants or retail stores or direct to consumer.”

“Our Harvest Tour was really geared toward media and social media influencers and other people that can help us tell the story about Idaho agriculture,” Johnson said. “Consumers want to know where their food comes from but so many people don’t understand agriculture and I think the tour was enlightening for a lot of the media folks...”

Johnson said she hopes tour participants were “impressed by the quality of our ag products and the diversity of our ag products. They met the hard-working farm families that are behind our agriculture industry. I really hope people were impressed by Idaho agriculture.”

The tour’s first stop was at Hoagland Meat, whose goal is “to provide high-quality meat from your local rancher,” said CEO JD Hoagland.

Hoagland Meat, located in Homedale, offers custom harvesting and two of its main goals, Hoagland said, are to help local ranchers “capture more of the dollars from the animals that they work so hard to raise” and also to “get more local product onto your plates at home.”

The second stop was at Symms Fruit Ranch, a fifth-generation family owned operation in the Sunny Slope area near Caldwell.

Founded in 1914, the fruit ranch produces 25 varieties of apples, cherries, peaches, apricots, nectarines, plums, pears, wine grapes and onions on 5,000 acres.

“This time of year, you’ll see lots of harvesters in the area,” Larzelier told tour participants as they traveled by bus to the third stop, Wissel Farms in Nampa.

She also reminded them that September is Idaho Preferred Month. “It’s just a fabulous celebration of Idaho agriculture. We hope that you enjoy it and support local.”

A family-run business, Wissel Farms was established in 1911 and grows a wide selection of vegetables and melons, including green beans, sweet corn, cabbage, winter squashes, watermelon and pumpkins.

Farm owner Matt Wissel spoke frankly



Participants of the 2nd Annual Idaho Preferred Harvest Tour visit Hoagland Meat in Homedale.

about the many challenges the farm and others in the area face, including rapid development, water availability and ever-rising input costs.

He used diesel fuel as an example of the sometimes immediate impact of increasing costs.

“Diesel went up \$1.10 over the last 30 days,” he said. “That affects us immediately.

“On the selling side, it gets tougher and tougher. On the input side, it gets tougher and tougher,” he added.

Tour participants had a lunch prepared with 100 percent Idaho-grown ingredients at the fourth stop, Indian Creek Winery, a family-owned and operated winery in Kuna.

Tammy Stowe-McClure, part of the second generation running the operation, talked about the role agritourism plays for the winery.

“It’s not just the wine drawing people out here; it’s the experience,” she said.

The fifth stop was at Back Forty Farms in Nampa, which, in addition to food production, offers agritourism experiences and equine therapy for people suffering from mental health issues and trauma.

After selling their companies and “retiring” in 2013, Ron and Lisa Kearn sold

their dream home and started Back Forty Farms in 2018.

The 42-acre property used to be a 100-acre dairy farm in the early 1900s and was once visited by Annie Oakley.

The farm, which sells organic freeze-dried food, has a variety of animals, including alpacas, goats, chickens, horses, cows, llamas, bunnies and even two kangaroos.

With no real agricultural experience before starting the farm, “We’ve been on a learning ladder, not a learning curve,” Ron Kearn told tour participants.

But, he added, “We can hardly keep anything in stock. (People) like our food.”

The sixth and final stop was at the Lactalis facility in Nampa that produces cheeses, including mozzarella, string cheese and mascarpone.

Part of Lactalis Group, the world’s largest dairy group, the Nampa facility makes all of its products from Idaho milk, 90 percent of which is sourced from the Treasure Valley in southwestern Idaho.

“There’s so much breadth to Idaho agriculture,” Johnson said. “To be honest, the toughest part for us in planning a tour like this is selecting where to go because we have so many choices in this valley.” ■



Photo by Sean Ellis

The Boise River in downtown Boise this summer. As the new director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources, Mat Weaver will, among other things, be tasked with helping develop a consensus of agreement among ground and surface water users, as well as balancing municipal demands.

Weaver takes over as Idaho water department director

By Bill Schaefer
For Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

As of Sept. 1, Mat Weaver is the new director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources. He was appointed by Gov. Brad Little to succeed Gary Spackman, who retired after leading the IDWR for the past 14 years.

Weaver, 49, began working in the IDWR in 2008 as a staff engineer to support water rights and water distribution. During the past 15 years he has spent time working in a variety of capacities within the department, working his way up to deputy director for the past decade.

He has spent time on dam safety, on a special assignment from Spackman on Eastern Snake Plain delivery calls, on aquifer recharge work, and as the deputy director he oversaw the compliance bureaus and technical service groups.

Developing a consensus of agreement

among Idaho's groundwater users and surface water users along with balancing municipal demands would seemingly call for someone with the Biblical patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon, traits that Weaver might find useful in his new position at the IDWR.

As the old saying attributed to Mark Twain goes, in the arid West, "Whiskey is for drinking, water is for fighting."

Weaver credited Spackman with his advances within the IDWR.

"From very early on at the department, the director ... gave me a lot of elevated authority and responsibility," he said. "He promoted me to deputy director and I worked directly under him for 10 years and he has had just a profound impact on my career."

Spackman served two and a half years as

interim director prior to his appointment on July 11, 2012, by then-Gov. Butch Otter as permanent director.

"Maybe one of the reasons I was considered for the position of director is I have a lot of breadth at the department," Weaver said. "I've worked in almost every business or group that we have at the department."

One state official who has worked and collaborated on state water policy with both Spackman and Weaver over the years is Lt. Governor Scott Bedke, a rancher and farmer from Oakley. Prior to his current position, Bedke was the Speaker of the Idaho House of Representatives from 2012 to 2022.

"He brings a great background, good experience at the department," Bedke said of Weaver. "He's been Gary's number two for a while now. I think he's uniquely prepared



Photo by Bill Schaefer

Mat Weaver is the new director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources.

to be the director.”

Bedke said Spackman did a good job as IDWR director and has always had the best interests of Idaho at the forefront of his service.

“Being the director at the Department of Water Resources in Idaho and I’m assuming in any of the western states, in the arid West, is a very challenging job, because they’re part judge, they’re part administrator, they’re a large part mediator, because allocating scarce resources has always been difficult,” he said.

Weaver received his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from Montana State University in his hometown of Bozeman. He went on to earn a Master of Physical Science degree in hydrology from Boise State University.

Weaver grew up in Bozeman, spending his summers working with both his grandfathers on their separate farms.

It was during this time working on the farms helping repair irrigation pumps and moving irrigation pipe that he developed an understanding of the importance of water in the landscape of the northwest.

“Both of those endeavors were focused on water, getting water to the right place at the right time ... and so there was an interest there and so I think I just sort of gravitated towards that,” Weaver said,

explaining how he came to eventually studying hydrologic sciences that would lead to his career with the IDWR.

Weaver said his paternal grandfather was an important mentor and strong influence on his career path.

“I’m fourth generation engineer, my great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father, all on the paternal side are all engineers and in my grandfather’s mind there was no question that I would be an engineer,” he said.

“As far back as I can remember this was the expectation. Now he hoped I would be an electrical engineer and that didn’t work but he was still satisfied that I was a civil engineer,” Weaver said. “He was a real strong influence on me, always saying, ‘This is what you’re capable of.’ Certainly, I had both him and my father to look to as examples of professional engineers who made a life of it and to achieve some hard things.”

The role of the IDWR is to oversee and administer Idaho’s water resources in such a way as to maximize its benefits for all users – agricultural, industrial, recreational and the general population – in a time of increasing demand in a state that is one of the fastest growing in the country.

Weaver cited the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer as a prime example of the ever-in-

creasing demands being placed on Idaho’s water due to both its increasing population growth and constantly expanding agricultural markets.

“It is the flagship example of a declining resource in Idaho but we’ve got a lot of them, especially in the southern two-thirds of the state,” he said.

“One of our critical issues right now is we have a growing population, we have a growing economic base, but we have finite or diminishing water resources,” Weaver said, “and so we’ve got to confront that and there are ways we can deal with that. Conjunctive management is one such way. Adopting management plans that are broad in their support by the water user communities is another way. And certainly, building out (aquifer) recharge programs and projects, and cloud seeding, those are other ways that we can augment the water supply to address these issues.”

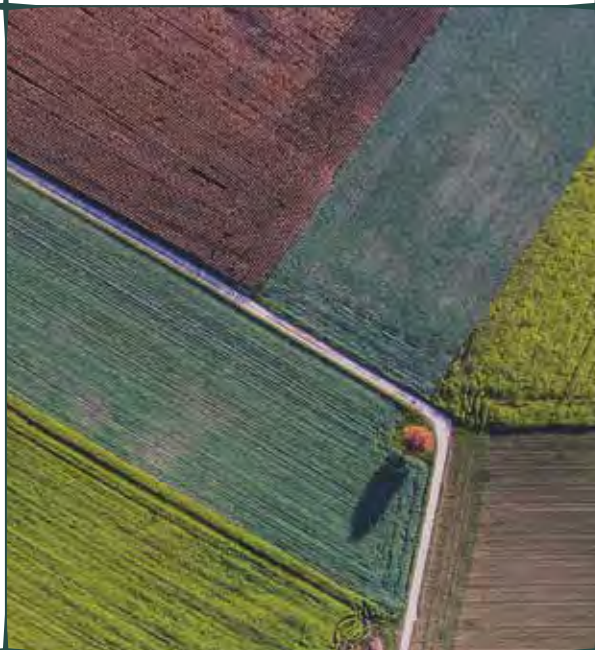
Conjunctive management is a policy that recognizes that all waters of the state – surface water and groundwater, also known as an aquifer – are inter-connected, not separate entities, and must be managed as one, unified water resource.

Moving the IDWR forward will require a change of emphasis, Weaver said.

“In the past the department has been very focused on receiving applications on water use and processing them and approving them and I think looking forward much more of the focus is going to be on administering those water rights as opposed to dispensing those water rights,” he said.

One of the long-term goals he would like to see completed during his tenure as director is adjudication of Idaho’s stream basins.

“I think adjudication is another real focus of the department,” he said. “The SRBA (Snake River Basin Adjudication) was a grand achievement, something that no other western state has achieved, but we are still going forward with our northern Idaho adjudication and our adjudication in the Bear (River basin) so that we will get the entire state adjudicated, hopefully, by the end of my career. I think that’s a very realistic goal. We’ll become the first western state to adjudicate all of their stream basins.” ■



New name. Same commitment to your success.

Northwest Farm Credit Services is now
AgWest Farm Credit.

Providing agricultural financial services, backed by a
century of experience—to help you grow your legacy.

Contact your local branch
or visit AgWestFC.com
to learn more.



IFB Idaho Farm Bureau FINANCIAL SERVICES

INTRODUCING OUR FALL YOUTH INVESTOR SPECIAL!

To help our hard working Idaho youth learn the importance of investing, now through October 31, 2023, we are offering a special rate debenture note for youth!

- 6.00% APR
- 6 month term
- \$100 to \$5,000 new investment amount
- Only available to Idaho youth under the age of 18
 - Must have an adult listed as co-owner of this investment
 - Limit of one special rate debenture note per person
 - Must be a resident of the State of Idaho

Now is their time to invest their summer earnings at one of the highest rates currently available!

The offering of Idaho Farm Bureau Financial Services debentures are made solely by our offering prospectus, and only to residents of the State of Idaho. These debentures are not FDIC or SIPC insured bank deposit accounts.
A copy of our prospectus is available upon request.

CONTACT US AT 888-566-3276 OR VISIT WWW.IDFBFS.COM

LOW INTEREST LOANS FOR IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

3% 4% 5%
Terms 7-15 Years
Up to \$600,000

- Sprinkler Irrigation
- No-Till Drills
- Fences
- Livestock Feeding Operations
- Solar Stock Water Pump Systems

ASK ABOUT OUR COMPETITIVE RATES

SWC.idaho.gov (208) 332-1790

IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION LOAN PROGRAM



SQUASH PIE

- 1 1/2 CUP COOKED SQUASH OR PUMPKIN
- 1 1/4 CUP CANNED MILK
- 1/2 TEASPOON SALT
- 2 TEASPOONS GINGER
- 2/3 TEASPOON CINNAMON
- 2 EGGS SLIGHTLY BEATEN
- 1 1/2 TABLESPOONS FLOUR
- 2/3 CUP SUGAR
- 1/2 TEASPOON VANILLA

Mix together and bring to a boil, stirring constantly until the mixture thickens. Pour into baked cold pie shell. Top with whipped cream.

RECIPES FROM
1966 IDAHO
FARM
BUREAU 

Idaho Farm Bureau Member Benefits

<p>ENTERTAINMENT</p>         	<p>HOTELS</p>     	<p>AUTO</p>   	<p>RETAIL</p>    
<p>PROPANE</p>   	<p>RENTAL CARS</p>    	<p>TRANSPORT</p>  	<p>AGRICULTURE</p>   
<p>HEALTH & BEAUTY</p>        	<p>FINANCE & INSURANCE</p>    	<p>MOVIE TICKETS</p>     	    
<p><i>Thank you,</i> MEMBER BENEFIT PARTNERS</p>	<p>HOME & OFFICE</p>        		

*All programs and benefits are subject to change without notification.



idahofbstore.com



FARM BUREAU MEMBERS SAVE UP TO \$300 REBATE*
 ON 
 ASK FOR DETAILS

— AVAILABLE ON —
ALL MOWER MODELS AND DECK SIZES

WITH PURCHASE OF NEW TRACTOR & DECK*

PLUS

Retail financing available with approved credit.

Proof of valid and active membership required to take advantage of this deal.

**Commercial-grade gas and diesel mowers with cutting decks from 41" to 72"
 Optional PowerVac™ Collection Systems and Implements for year-round productivity.**

ENJOY THIS EXCLUSIVE MEMBER BENEFIT AT YOUR AUTHORIZED GRASSHOPPER DEALER



Committed to the Cut.®

*\$300 Rebate on 200, 300G, 300, 400, 600, 700 and 900 Series models. \$150 Rebate on 100V, 200V and 500V Series models. Farm Bureau rebates valid when purchasing new, unregistered Grasshopper tractor and mowing deck. No other sales programs may be combined with this offer. Financing available at participating dealers. See dealer for available financing offers and to apply for qualification. Proof of active Idaho Farm Bureau membership required at time of sale. See dealer for complete Farm Bureau offer details.

Find your nearest dealer at GrasshopperDealers.com

LOCAL BENEFIT PARTNERS

CENTRAL IDAHO

Recorder Herald
 419 Van Duff - P.O. Box 542 - Salmon, Idaho 83407
 Office: (208) 756-2221 - Fax: (208) 756-2322

RED-E-MIX
 756-4475

EAST IDAHO

Paramount THEATER
 2085 Niagara - Across from the mall (208) 523-1142

ESTABLISHED 1915
L7
 MACKAY IDAHO

ESTABLISHED 1958
Ron Keller Tire, Inc.

HEBER HATCHETS
 AXE THROWING

Smitty's
 PANCAKE & STEAK HOUSE

DERMACHIC
 LASER & SKINCARE CENTER

Centre TWIN
 461 Park Ave - Downtown Idaho Falls (208) 525-3340

VE VALLEY
 EQUIPMENT & IRRIGATION

SLED SHED
 BIKES BOARDS BOULDERING

Idaho Potato Museum

Cub River Guest Ranch

WHAT DO FARMERS USE TO MAKE CROP CIRCLES?



~ A PRO-TRACTOR

*All programs and benefits are subject to change without notification.



idahofbstore.com

LOCAL BENEFIT PARTNERS

NORTH IDAHO

SOUTH CENTRAL IDAHO

SOUTHWEST IDAHO

Visit the idahofbstore.com or download the app and start saving today!



Download your **Exclusive Members Only** Ford Cash* certificate at idahofbstore.com



Farm Bureau Members Receive a \$500 Exclusive Cash Reward* on an Eligible New Super Duty®, F-150®, Ranger® or Maverick®

2023 Ford F150®

\$500 Exclusive Cash Reward*
on an Eligible New Ford Vehicle!

*Visit FordRecognizesU.com/FarmBureau today for complete offer details!

*All programs and benefits are subject to change without notification.



idahofbstore.com

What's wrong with the treetops across Idaho?

By Randy Brooks
University of Idaho

This summer I wrote an article on wood borers that we noticed were killing trees around Idaho. This was unusual, as wood borers do not typically kill trees.

The Idaho Department of Lands forest health team has done an outstanding job monitoring forest health across Idaho and was helpful in writing that article with me.

We – UI Extension Forestry and IDL – recently conducted several field days and workshops across Idaho this summer and have also noticed an uptick in the number of coniferous trees with dead tops, not just in north Idaho, but also in the eastern and southern parts of the state.

On a recent trip with my Natural Resources 101 class to McCall, I noticed quite a few trees with dead or dying tops and thought this would be a timely article as I'm sure others are noticing the dead tops as well.

The critter responsible for this top kill in pines is the pine engraver beetle, or *Ips pini*. We have also seen top kill in non-pine species like Engelman spruce which is due to another species of *Ips*.

After a quick google search, I counted at least 19 genera of *Ips* beetles. *Ips* is a genus of beetles in the family Curculionidae, the true weevils.

They are bark beetles and are distributed throughout the Northern Hemisphere and with some known introduced species in Australia and Africa.

Many species are pests of forest trees, especially pines and spruces. They are known commonly as engraver beetles, *Ips* engraver beetles and pine engravers.

Recall that bark beetles kill trees by boring in through the bark and feeding on the cambium layer. Each species of bark beetle creates a distinctive gallery which makes it



Photos by Tom Eckberg, Idaho Department of Lands
(Fig. 1) Pine engraver beetle, *Ips pini*. This species only attacks pines, hence the name.

easy to identify which beetle it is and most bark beetles are specific to a tree species. I.e., *Ips pini* only attacks pine trees.

Pine engraver beetles (Figure 1) can attack most pine species in Idaho. Outbreaks are most severe in small-diameter ponderosa and lodgepole pines.

Beetle activity begins in the spring when daytime temperatures start getting above 60 degrees. The adults begin to emerge with warming temperatures, and they like to colonize green slash, wind-thrown trees, or winter damaged trees less than 3 inches in diameter.

At this point they – the first generation – don't typically attack standing trees. Females lay eggs beneath the bark and the larvae spend up to six weeks feeding on the cambium layer before emerging as a second generation of that season of adults.

It's this generation of adults that emerge from the slash or downed/damaged trees that infest additional green slash, standing small-diameter trees, or the tops of larger trees.

There are typically two to three generations per year depending on climate and elevation.



Dense pine stands, drought-stressed stands and trees growing on rocky-sandy soils are especially susceptible to Ips infestation.

Outbreaks often intensify during drought but are usually of short duration. If green slash is not available the following spring, outbreaks usually subside after one year.

The first indication of an Ips attack is reddish-orange boring dust in the bark crevices or around the base of the tree, although the first visible sign you may notice is a red/brown top (Figure 2).

The male beetle initiates the attack on the tree and attracts females by emitting a pheromone. Egg galleries from multiple females form a Y, H, or starshaped design under the bark (Figure 3).

Timing of management activities in pine is critical to preventing outbreaks. A best management practice (BMP) is to avoid creating slash from about December through mid-July.

Slash created by November usually, but not always, has sufficient time to dry before spring and subsequently will not be attractive to the beetles.

Winter or spring logging in low-elevation areas is common due to accessibility but can increase the risk of pine engraver attacks. If precautions are taken to treat the slash, winter logging of pines can be accomplished with less chance of unwanted infestations.

Speaking of BMPs, slash management should consider 4 options:

1. Minimize the amount of slash created by cutting to a 4' top and removing most of the tree.
2. Treat slash by bucking tops and logs and allowing them to dry in the sun (top and scatter), mastication, or dozer trampling. Chipping or mastication of slash eliminates the food supply for pine engraver.
3. Size and placement of slash piles can influence pine engraver behavior. Small piles created in the winter or spring are often fully colonized by April or May and beetles will then emerge to infest nearby trees and cause mortality later in the summer.

Large slash piles that are at least 10 ft. X 10 ft. X 20 ft. can remain green in the interior of the pile and emerging beetles may stay in the pile rather than attack standing trees.

4. The safest option is to conduct management activity in pines between mid-July and November to avoid the availability of green slash in the spring.

In summary, dense stands of small-diameter trees are vulnerable to pine engraver mortality.

Thinning these types of stands will decrease susceptibility to attack but should be done in two stages.

The first thinning should be to approximately 6 foot spacing between



ABOVE: (Fig. 2) The first visible sign of pine engraver attack is usually a dead top, seen in the photo here.

RIGHT: (FIG. 3) Pine engraver beetle egg galleries from multiple females form a Y, H, or star-shaped gallery. Also seen here are the white colored larvae. Frass can also be observed in the galleries.



trees with a later entry (about 15 years later) to open the stand up to 10-12 foot spacing between the trees.

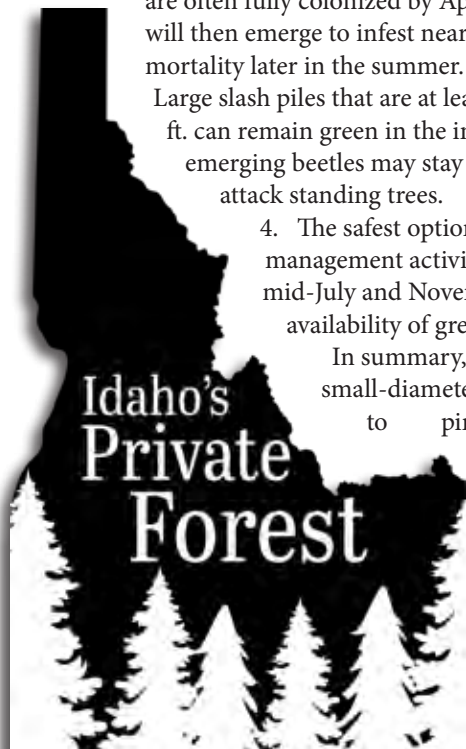
Thinned stands have more available resources and are less attractive to pine engraver.

Thinning larger-diameter trees to a basal area of about 80 ft² per acre will increase resistance to pine engraver and other bark beetles. Care must be taken not to remove more than 25% of the basal area to reduce chance of wind damage.

Lodgepole pine is shallow rooted and is susceptible to wind-throw and stem breakage if thinned too heavily.

If you see or suspect you have an Ips issue in your trees, contact your local UI Extension Educator, your nearest IDL forester, or send us an email. ■

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



USDA forecasts 23 percent drop from 2022 farm income levels

By Daniel Munch
AFBF Economist

USDA's most recent Farm Sector Income Forecast, released Aug. 31, dropped net farm income expectations for 2023 lower than initial February estimates to \$141.3 billion, down 23% from 2022's \$183 billion.

This \$41.7 billion decline nearly erases the \$42.9 billion increase that was forecast between 2021 and 2022 but is smaller than the \$46 billion gain between 2020 and 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic.

When adjusted for inflation, net farm income, a broad measure of farm profitability, is expected to decrease \$48 billion (25.4%) in 2023.

The forecast also shows farm and ranch production expenses continuing to increase, rising by \$29.5 billion (7%) in 2023 to \$458 billion, following a record increase of \$56 billion in 2022.

It is important to note USDA finalized net farm income for 2022, which has been forecasted until this release.

In February, USDA had estimated 2022 net farm income at

\$162.7 billion, a 16% increase over 2021. This was adjusted to \$183 billion, a 31% increase over 2021.

USDA made upward revisions to cash receipts received in 2022 by over \$6 billion and downward revisions to production expenses over \$12 billion, explaining much of the difference.

Direct government payments are estimated to decrease by \$3 billion, or 19%, between 2021 and 2022 to \$12.6 billion.

This marks the third consecutive decrease in government payments for producers since the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 but is higher than the \$10.2 billion in payments forecasted in February.

The decrease corresponds to near total reductions in both USDA pandemic assistance, which included payments from the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program and other pandemic assistance to producers, and non-USDA pandemic assistance programs, such as the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program.

Ad hoc and supplemental program payments, which include payments from the Emergency Relief Program (ERP), Quality Loss Adjustment Program and other farm bill designated-disas-

FIGURE 1: NET FARM INCOME

With and without Federal Support

U.S. Farm Sector Net Farm Income, Billion Dollars

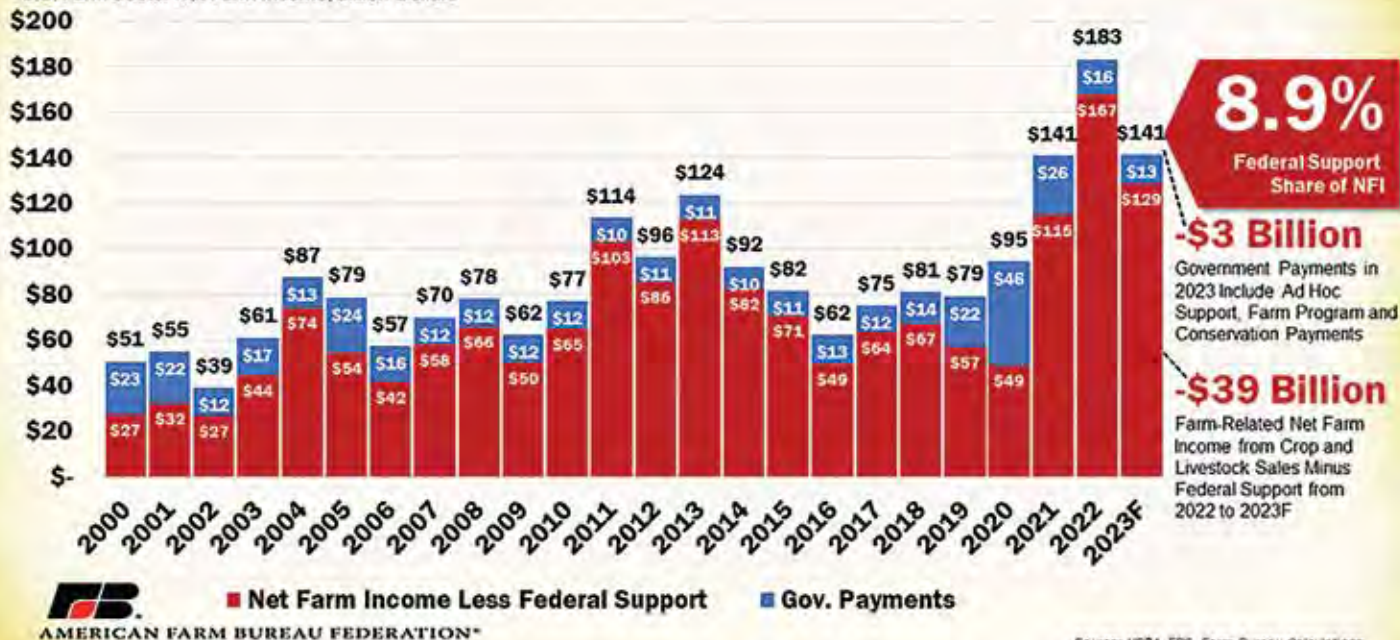


FIGURE 2: U.S. FARM INCOME | LIVESTOCK RECEIPTS

August 31, 2023, Release | F = forecasted



ter programs, are expected to decrease from \$11.3 billion to \$7.4 billion, a 34% decline.

Importantly, programs like ERP have not yet been extended for 2022 or 2023. If Congress authorizes more payments for disasters in these years, corresponding numbers are expected to increase dramatically.

Commodity insurance indemnities were adjusted down slightly for 2023 for an expected \$21.85 billion. This is a 9%, or \$1.79 billion, increase over 2022's \$20.06 billion, marking the highest payout of indemnities since the data series began in 2005.

This increase is likely the result of increased crop insurance enrollment by those who received a Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program-Plus or ERP payment and are required to purchase crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program coverage (when crop insurance is not available) for the next two available crop years.

Livestock

The largest decrease in net farm income is tied to a projected fall in cash receipts from livestock due to lower prices for all major categories except cattle and turkeys.

The value of livestock production (in nominal dollars) is expected to decrease nearly 5%, or \$11.9 billion, in 2023.

This is a slightly smaller drop than forecasted in January, when a 6%, or \$14.7 billion, decline was estimated.

Chicken eggs, broilers and milk are responsible for the largest percentage decreases, with cash receipts for chicken eggs projected to slip by \$6.26 billion or 32%.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza has affected nearly 59 mil-

lion birds in commercial and backyard flocks in the U.S., including over 43 million egg layers, pressuring supplies and pushing up prices.

As the flock continues to recover, egg production increases and consumer demand fundamentals recalibrate prices lower.

A similar dynamic has resulted in a \$6.52 billion, or 13%, drop in expected cash receipts for broilers.

Milk receipts are expected to decline nearly \$12 billion (21%) as milk prices have faltered throughout the year.

June 2023 marked the first month that the Dairy Margin Coverage program's "catastrophic" \$4 margin level has been breached, illustrating the severity of price declines.

Cash receipts for cattle and calves are estimated to increase by \$15 billion or 18%. Drought drought conditions in the West and southern Plains have damaged pastures and led to higher costs for feed such as hay.

This has compelled many farmers to market heifers that would typically be kept for breeding and herd replacement, pressuring U.S. cattle inventory for years to come.

Tighter cattle supplies have pulled both cash and futures prices higher, leading to continued growth in cash receipts. Notably, weather conditions continue to be a problem for cattle operations.

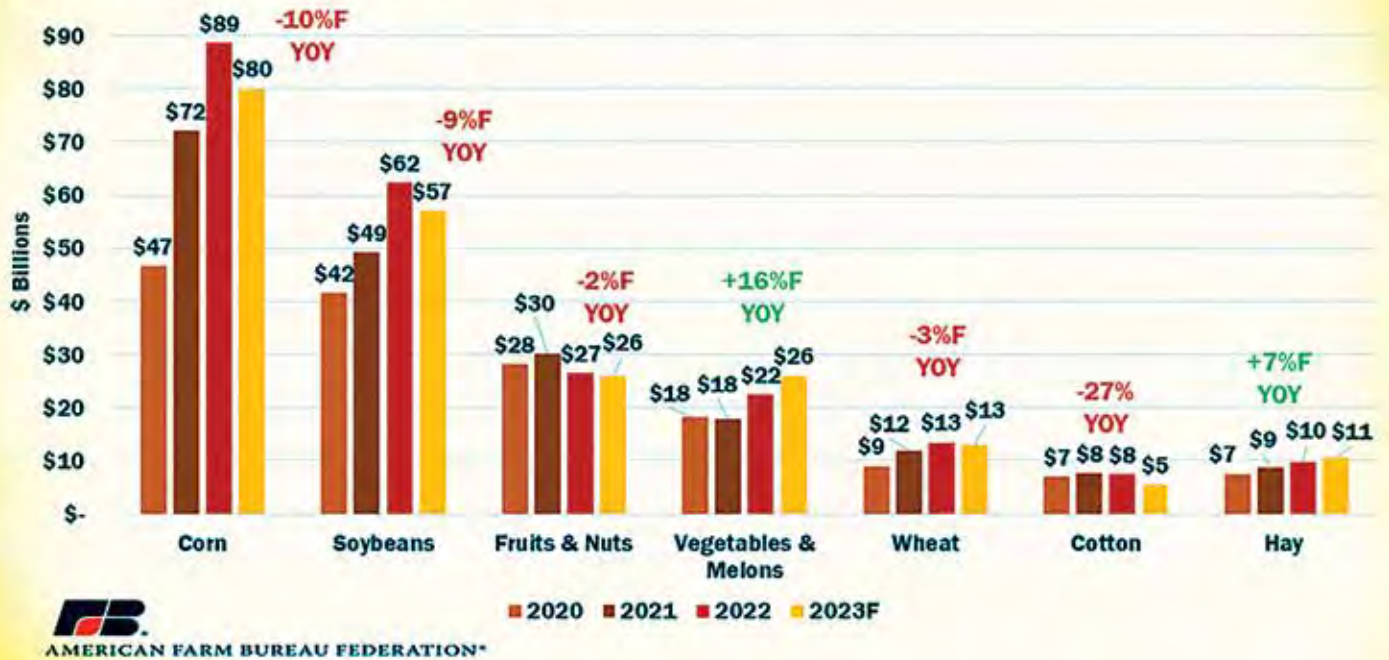
Excessive heat in the Southwest and along the Gulf Coast has contributed to the direct deaths of livestock associated with heat exposure as well as forced liquidations and early calf weaning due to forage problems.

These conditions only push cattle prices up further.

It is worth noting that producers who have had to liquidate the bulk of their cattle or lose animals to weather conditions are not

FIGURE 3: U.S. FARM INCOME | CROP RECEIPTS

August 31, 2023, Release | F = forecasted



benefiting from higher receipts. Strong price conditions apply only to those who can supply the market.

Cash receipts for hogs are estimated to decline by 10% or \$3 billion. It is important to note that hog farmers have experienced considerable losses in 2023.

Losses for farrow-to-finish farms in Iowa were estimated to be \$18.81 per head in June, the eighth consecutive month of losses in these operations.

Lower hog prices have been the main cause for negative returns but prices have recovered and provided farmers with better profitability in July.

Crops

On the crops side, receipts for major row crops like corn, soybeans, cotton and wheat are expected to decline while receipts for vegetables, melons and hay are expected to increase.

Receipts for corn are expected to fall by 10% (\$8.4 billion), while soybeans are expected to be down 8.6% (\$5.4 billion).

Both commodities have faced declining prices since their peaks in 2022.

Cotton receipts are expected to fall 27% from \$7.5 billion to \$5.4 billion. This is on top of high abandonment rates and low yields that have not yet been reflected in higher prices.

Wheat is expected to be down \$420 million to just over \$13 billion.

Fruits and nuts are expected to hover close to \$26 billion in receipts, while vegetables and melons are poised to rise from \$22.4 billion to \$25.9 billion (+27%).

Improved drought conditions in Western states like California,

Oregon and Washington may be linked to better volume dynamics to produce and sell product.

Hay receipts are expected to increase for the fourth consecutive year as livestock producers continue to recover from drought-impacted low-quality forage in the central part of the nation.

As always, weather and climate conditions will have strong impacts on the true outcome of this year's price outlook.

Heat, flooding and wind have battered different regions of the country recently, bringing uncertainty to final harvest volumes and quality.

Global political factors continue to cast a shadow on commodity markets. Flare-ups in the Russia-Ukraine conflict could affect farm-level prices.

High production out of competing suppliers to our south, such as Brazil and Argentina, further contribute to price volatility.

On the cost side, production expenses, including operator dwelling expenses, are forecast to increase for a sixth consecutive year, growing in 2023 by \$29.5 billion, or 7%, to reach a record \$458 billion.

And while it's little consolation, some major input items such as cumulative fertilizers and fuels and oil are expected to decline from record highs.

Fertilizers, lime and soil conditioners are expected to decrease \$420 million, or 1%, from \$36.85 billion to \$36.43 billion.

Fuels and oils are expected to experience the largest percent decline – 13% – from 2022, moving from \$18.46 billion to \$16.07 billion.

These drops, however, are easily outpaced by increases in other expense categories including marketing, storage and transporta-

tion, which are forecast to increase 5%.

Feed costs, which represent the largest single expense category, are expected to increase \$2.71 billion to \$86.37 billion (+3%).

This is an upward revision from the forecasted decline in feed prices in the February report and is also contrary to the decline in most commodity receipt expectations.

Labor costs are expected up across all subcategories with cash labor forecast to move from \$41.16 billion to \$43.35 billion (+5%).

Heightened periods of inflation have pressured interest expenses as the Federal Reserve Bank attempts to bring inflation under control through higher rates.

Between 2022 and 2023, interest expenses, including operator dwellings, are expected to jump 38%, going from \$24 billion to \$33.28 billion, making it more difficult for farmers and ranchers to acquire lines of credit to purchase inputs and equipment this year.

Livestock, seed, electricity, and repair and maintenance are among the other categories expected to increase in price.

Other farm income, which includes things like income from custom work, machine hire, commodity insurance indemnities and rent received by operator landlords, is estimated to increase by \$1.6 billion, or 3.5%, from \$46.5 billion in 2022 to \$48.17 billion in 2023.

But when all the factors influencing income are accounted for, the resulting expectations for net farm income decline become apparent.

Other considerations

USDA's Farm Sector Income Forecast also provides expectations of farm financial indicators that can give insight into the overall financial health of the farm economy.

During 2023, U.S. farm sector debt is projected to increase \$24 billion, or 5%, to a record \$520 billion in nominal terms.

Though a record, this is a \$15-billion downward revision from the February report.

Nearly 70% of farm debt is in the form of real estate debt, for the land to grow crops and raise livestock.

Real estate debt is projected to increase \$19.6 billion to a record-high \$354 billion, largely due to an increase in land values across the country.

Non-real estate debt, or debt for purchases of things like equipment, machinery, feed and livestock, is projected to increase by \$4.5 billion to a record \$165.7 billion.

The value of assets regularly being purchased with debt is rising, which means it will continue to be important for farmers and ranchers to pay down debt and cover interest to maintain a healthy balance sheet, an endeavor that will be even more cumbersome in a high interest environment.

Based on 2023 debt and asset levels, USDA expects the debt-to-asset ratio to be 12.72% for 2023, which sits marginally below the prior five-year average (13.5%), meaning farmers are borrowing slightly less to finance the purchase of assets.

Higher interest rates will likely act as a barrier for farmers to finance new assets moving forward.

Working capital, which takes into consideration current assets and liabilities, is the amount of cash and cash-convertible assets minus amounts due to creditors within 12 months.

In 2023, working capital is projected to fall by \$7.13 billion, or 5.5%, to \$121.9 billion, which is the first decline since 2016, and sits at \$880 million above 2014 levels, when farmers and ranchers held just over \$121 billion in working capital.

Lower levels of working capital often suggest that many U.S. farmers have just enough capital to service their short-term expenses and debt, which becomes more difficult as interest rates rise.

Another metric that highlights the concern about farmer profitability in 2022 is the rate of return on assets. For 2023, the rate of return on assets is projected at 9.1%.

This is a drop from 2021 and 2022 when returns were up over 12.5% but remains above returns experienced between 2014 and 2020.

Compared to 2021 and 2022, farmers and ranchers are seeing smaller revenues or returns for the investments made in the cost of production and in assets used to produce a farm product; the opposite is true from 2014-2020.

Summary

USDA's most recent estimates for 2023 net farm income provide an updated estimate of the farm financial picture.

For 2023, USDA anticipates a 23% decrease in net farm income, moving from \$183 billion in 2022 to \$141 billion in 2023.

Much of the forecasted decline in 2023 net farm income is tied to lower crop and livestock cash receipts, continued increases in production costs and a decrease in ad hoc government support.

It is important to highlight the projected nature of this forecast. 2022 net farm income numbers were not finalized until August 2023 and were adjusted upward over \$20 billion in the eight months since the year ended.

During this time USDA is digesting new information and data as it becomes available, shifting calculations from estimates to actual values.

This means there is still much variability in 2023 net farm income. At the very least, these estimates show the relationship between, on average, falling commodity prices and rising production costs and the ultimate impact on farmers' bottom lines.

Combined with weather uncertainty and a high cost of capital to operate their businesses, farmers and ranchers will be forced to adapt as they always have.

Part of being able to adapt means having clarity on rules that impact their businesses' ability to operate, having access to comprehensive risk management options and being given a resounding voice during formulation of vital legislation such as the farm bill, which can either complicate or streamline farmers' and ranchers' ability to sustainably contribute to a reliable and resilient U.S. food supply. ■

IDAHO VALUES FARMER AND RANCHER WELLNESS

Caring for the health and wellness of our Idaho agricultural community has never been more important. If you or someone you know is struggling, reach out and find help.



farm.idaho.gov



Statement of Ownership

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: **IDAHO STATE PRODUCER**

2. Issue Frequency: **Quarterly**

3. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: **09/2023**

4. Issue Period: **09/01/2023**

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: **4**

6. Annual Subscription Price: **\$9.00**

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): **275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: **275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: **Idaho Farm Bureau, 275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

10. Owner: **Idaho Farm Bureau, 275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: **None**

12. Tax Status: **Complete Mailing Address**

13. Publication Title: **IDAHO STATE PRODUCER**

14. Issue Frequency: **Quarterly**

15. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: **09/2023**

16. Extent and Nature of Circulation

17. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	10000	10000
b. Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000
18i Paid or Requested Circulation Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
18j Paid or Requested Circulation Within the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	10000	10000
c. Total Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000
d. Total Distribution Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Sum of 18k and 18l)	0	0
18k Paid or Requested Circulation Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
18l Unpaid or Unrequested Circulation Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Include all unpaid or unrequested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states, including unpaid or unrequested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
e. Total Distribution Within the 48 Contiguous States (Sum of 18m and 18n)	10000	10000
18m Paid or Requested Circulation Within the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	10000	10000
18n Unpaid or Unrequested Circulation Within the 48 Contiguous States (Include all unpaid or unrequested circulation within the 48 contiguous states, including unpaid or unrequested circulation within the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
f. Total Copies (Net press run) (Sum of 17b, 17c, 17d, 17e, 17f, 17g, and 17h)	10000	10000
g. Total Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000
h. Total Distribution (Sum of 18m and 18n)	10000	10000
i. Copies not Distributed (Sum of 18k and 18l)	0	0
j. Total (Sum of 17b and 17c)	10000	10000
k. Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000

19. If you are mailing electronic copies, provide the URL on page 1. If you are mailing electronic copies, page 1 of page 1.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: **IDAHO STATE PRODUCER**

2. Issue Frequency: **Quarterly**

3. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: **09/2023**

4. Issue Period: **09/01/2023**

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: **4**

6. Annual Subscription Price: **\$9.00**

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): **275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: **275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: **Idaho Farm Bureau, 275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

10. Owner: **Idaho Farm Bureau, 275 Third Floor Boise, Idaho 83726-4343**

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: **None**

12. Tax Status: **Complete Mailing Address**

13. Publication Title: **IDAHO STATE PRODUCER**

14. Issue Frequency: **Quarterly**

15. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: **09/2023**

16. Extent and Nature of Circulation

17. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	10000	10000
b. Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000
18i Paid or Requested Circulation Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
18j Paid or Requested Circulation Within the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	10000	10000
c. Total Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000
d. Total Distribution Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Sum of 18k and 18l)	0	0
18k Paid or Requested Circulation Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
18l Unpaid or Unrequested Circulation Outside the 48 Contiguous States (Include all unpaid or unrequested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states, including unpaid or unrequested circulation outside the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
e. Total Distribution Within the 48 Contiguous States (Sum of 18m and 18n)	10000	10000
18m Paid or Requested Circulation Within the 48 Contiguous States (Include all paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states, including paid or requested circulation within the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	10000	10000
18n Unpaid or Unrequested Circulation Within the 48 Contiguous States (Include all unpaid or unrequested circulation within the 48 contiguous states, including unpaid or unrequested circulation within the 48 contiguous states that is not paid or requested circulation)	0	0
f. Total Copies (Net press run) (Sum of 17b, 17c, 17d, 17e, 17f, 17g, and 17h)	10000	10000
g. Total Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000
h. Total Distribution (Sum of 18m and 18n)	10000	10000
i. Copies not Distributed (Sum of 18k and 18l)	0	0
j. Total (Sum of 17b and 17c)	10000	10000
k. Paid or Requested Circulation (Sum of 18i and 18j)	10000	10000

19. If you are mailing electronic copies, provide the URL on page 1. If you are mailing electronic copies, page 1 of page 1.



IDAHO HARVEST FOOD FACT:

If Idahoans had to eat all products produced within the state, every resident would need to consume 137 slices of bread, 38 potatoes, 3 pounds of sugar, 2 pounds of cheese, 2 pounds of beef, and 1 cup of beans every day.

Pumpkin Patch + Corn Maze THE STATEWIDE IDAHO DIRECTORY

Idaho's 2023 Pumpkin Patch and Corn Maze Brochure promises a memorable autumn adventure. The statewide directory and brochure make it easy for Idahoans to discover local farmers' autumnal offerings and experience seasonal agriculture this fall. If you know of a farmer whose operation is missing from the directory please reach out to Idaho Preferred in our effort to create a stronger, inclusive, state-wide resource. Dive into the joys of the fall season with this guide, connecting you with some of Idaho's agricultural heritage and experiences.

Visit: <https://idahopreferred.com/idaho-pumpkin-patch-and-corn-maze-directory>

Blue Rock Farms and Market *Idaho Farmer Story*



Scan to Watch



idahopreferred.com/member/blue-rock-farm

Ty and Tenda Regehr are devoted to providing their community with top-notch, locally sourced food, both from their own fields and in collaboration with other Idaho producers at their farm market.



www.idahopreferred.com/idahos-farm-to-chef-connection-series/

IDAHO'S FARM TO CHEF CONNECTION

Idaho Preferred is thrilled to announce videographer Guy Hand has been recognized as a finalist in the prestigious International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) Digital Media Awards for his work on Idaho Preferred's, 'Idaho's Farm to Chef Connection Series'.

This 6-part video series showcases chefs across Idaho dedicated to utilizing locally sourced ingredients from the state's agriculture communities. At the heart of this movement are the farmers and ranchers who supply the ingredients for the chef's seasonal menus. These chefs play a vital role in bolstering local economies and elevating Idaho's distinctive cuisine. The IACP is where culinary professionals come to sharpen their skills and glean insights from the industry's heavyweights. The award is a testament to Hand's contribution to Idaho's culinary movement.



MARKETING YOUR HOLIDAY PRODUCTS



ARE YOU A HOLIDAY PRODUCER?

Do you grow, raise, or craft Christmas trees, wreaths, or holiday food and treats in Idaho? Maybe you even provide enchanting sleigh rides, u-cut Christmas tree farms, or unique holiday meat offerings.

We invite you to join the Idaho Preferred Program and let us help you promote your seasonal agricultural treasures by integrating your farming treats and experiences into our Holiday Guides and Digital Directories.

Learn More at www.idahopreferred.com/membership

Idaho State Department of Agriculture



Photo by Sean Ellis

Barley is planted in a Caribou County field this spring. Barley and wheat are the main agricultural commodities produced in the county.

Caribou County a major producer of wheat and barley

By Sean Ellis
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

SODA SPRINGS – Caribou County is a major grain-producing county, despite much of the farming going on here being done without irrigation.

Only 17 percent of the total land being farmed here is irrigated.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 55,247 acres of barley and 53,628 acres of wheat grown in Caribou County during the 2017 census year.

“Wheat and barley are the primary crops in the county,” says Jerry Brown, a wheat and barley farmer from Soda Springs.

Because a lot of the farming that occurs here happens from 5,700 to 6,300 feet in elevation, “Our growing season isn’t as long as, say, it is in the Snake River plain,” he says.

“We can’t raise crops here that require a longer growing season.”

But, Brown adds, “the volcanic soil is well suited to raising barley and wheat and we get a decent amount of rainfall. That enables us to raise some pretty decent dryland wheat and barley here. Those crops are well suited to this elevation and the amount of rainfall we get.”

Brown averaged 123.8 bushels of barley per acre on his farm one year and says it’s not uncommon for the farm to get winter wheat yields in the 80- to 90-bushel an acre range.

While grain is the main ag commodity produced in Caribou, the county does also produce a fair amount of seed potatoes, hay and cattle.

The spuds, which are primarily raised around the Grace area, are grown under irrigation.

According to the 2017 ag census, 27,834 acres of hay were grown in the county in 2017 and 6,565 acres of potatoes.

There were 25,146 cattle and calves in Caribou County during the 2017 census year and ranchers here brought in \$27 million in farm-gate receipts from cattle and calves that year.

“There are a lot of cow-calf operations here,” says Lori Anne Lau, who direct-markets grass-fed beef and lamb from her operation near Soda Springs.

According to the ag census, the county’s farmers and ranchers brought in \$90 million in farm-gate revenue during the census year, \$56 million of that from crops and \$34 million from live-stock products.

According to the ag census, there are 411 farms in Caribou County and 366,499 acres of land in farms in 2017. The average size of a farm here was 892 acres, much larger than the statewide average of 468 acres.

While the county is largely rural and agriculture has a sizable economic impact here, many of the county’s 7,000 residents don’t understand the critical role it still plays in the local economy, says Lau, who serves as president of Caribou County Farm Bureau.

That’s one of the reasons the county Farm Bureau organization began holding an Ag Appreciation Day, which is held on odd years, in place of the CCFB’s annual picnic.

The event is held in a city park and attracts about 400 people, who are fed and educated about agriculture by CCFB members and other ag groups that pitch in to help organize the event.

In past years, the governor has spoken during the event and Rep. Kevin Andrus, chairman of the Idaho House Agricultural Affairs Committee, spoke during this year’s event.

“We just want to bring the community together to celebrate the importance of ag in our community,” Lau says.

The message during the event, she says, is, “We’re all in this thing together. The community needs the farmers and the farmers need the community to support them. The community won’t do very well without us and there’s no point in us raising the crops if the community is not there willing to buy them.”

Lau says Caribou is blessed to have county commissioners who understand the important role agriculture plays in Caribou County, “but I don’t know that the average citizen always understands that. That’s part of what our job is as Farm Bureau, to try to help them understand.” ■



TOP: About 400 people show up for Caribou County Farm Bureau’s Ag Appreciation Day, where they are fed and taught about the important role agriculture plays in the community and state. Submitted photos
ABOVE: Children “milk” a plastic cow during Ag Appreciation Day in Caribou County this year. The fair is held by Caribou County Farm Bureau and other ag groups to help citizens learn a little about and celebrate the county’s farming and ranching industry.

Classifieds

FARMING/EQUIPMENT

Ford diesel 4500 tractor. Equipped with front end loader & HD 15' backhoe. \$3,000 obo. You haul, Pocatello call 208-416-1668

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

1978 Peterbilt cabover livestock truck and trailer. 400 Cummins. 13 speed. Decked for sheep or cattle. 208-365-1868

LIVESTOCK

Fisher Texel ram lambs for sale. Born February/March Located in Payette, ID. Call 208-315-5659

AUTO

2006 Buick LaCrosse 167K \$3500 fine! condition 208-970-6556

PROPERTY

40 acres near Victor, Idaho. Water rights. 25 miles from Jackson, Wyoming. 208-317-5652

FOR SALE

2002 Honda 4-wheeler "Rancher" – Very low miles, runs great

\$1,500. Call Jeff 208-269-8355

Cedar Fence Posts for sale. 7 Foot unless different length requested. \$5.25 per post, you haul. \$7.25 per post I haul up to 300 miles. If more than 300 miles price will be negotiated. Located in Orofino. Call or text 208-816-1620

MISCELLANEOUS

Our Idaho family loves old wood barns and would like to restore/rebuild your barn on our Idaho farm. Would you like to see your barn restored/rebuilt rather than rot and fall down? Call Ken & Corrie 208-530-6466

WANTED

Paying cash for unwanted fireworks, the older the better. I collect firecrackers, Roman candles, mortars and anything else aerial. I also collect old m-80s like fish and game used to hand out. Great way to repurpose old fireworks as they are disassembled and used to create new ones. 208-866-2112

Looking for old sawmill two or three saw board edger mounted or by itself. Older three- or four-sided lumber planner. Call 208-743-9204. Lewiston, ID

Paying cash for old cork top embossed bottles and some telephone insulators as well

as other vintage and antique items. Call Randy. Payette, ID. 208-740-0178

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

Pre-1970 Idaho License Plates Wanted: Also Revere Ware and Solar-Sturges Permanent cookware, and old signs. Will pay cash. Please email, text, call, or write. Gary Peterson, 115 E D St, Moscow, ID 83843. gearlep@gmail.com. 208-285-1258

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

SERVICES

4S Welding- Mobile welding for Bingham County and surrounding areas. Fencing, pipe, equipment repair, etc. Carbon and stainless, 20 years of experience. Call Mike 208-680-7372

Nat's Farm Yard Care- Brush hogging, rototilling, scraping manure, and stump grinding. Servicing Bingham County, Power County, and surrounding areas. Text or leave a voicemail for Natalie 8am-5pm M-F 208-917-2726

Ranch made items- Personalized Stainless Steel Shovels with your name stamped on it. Dependable Chain Oilers- for harvesters, planters, every chain on earth. Custom Portable Stainless Steele Tilting Bathtubs- With sliding seat for home care. Rocking Cowboy Piano-Chassis 21" wagon wheels. Weiser, ID call 208-550-4619

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 October 17 for the November Quarterly.

Mail ad copy to:
FARM BUREAU PRODUCER
P.O. Box 4848, Pocatello, ID 83205-4848
or email Kristy at knlindauer@idahofb.org

**Free Classified ads for
Idaho Farm Bureau Members
Send to knlindauer@idahofb.org**

COMMIT TO BLUE

Donate and make an impact on Idaho FFA Members and agriculture, because an investment in the future requires action today!

Help us send state champion Career and Leadership Development Event teams to compete at Nationals this November in Indianapolis, IN!

If you are one of just 20 people who give \$25, your group gift would offset the costs of sending another FFA member to travel and compete at the National FFA Convention.

Will you help today?



Name _____

Address, City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email address _____

Payment: All information will be kept confidential. Card or check accepted.

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____ Security Code (Back of Card) _____

Donation Amount \$10 \$25 \$40 \$100 Other Amount _____

Mail form to:
Idaho FFA Foundation
P.O. Box 827
Star, ID 83669

Rather pay online? Scan QR code with your smart phone!



Questions?
Contact Carly Weaver at Carly@growidahoffa.org

‘Best career ever’

U of I helping Idaho meet challenges of ag educator shortage

By John O’Connell
University of Idaho

American Falls High School students Echo Porath and Anna Hernandez scoured the bushes for litter while classmates raked brush and spread dirt piles at the Power County Hospital grounds.

Their class is part of a steadily growing AFHS agriculture program with a track record for brightening futures and bettering the community.

Demand for agricultural curriculum is on the upswing in high schools nationwide – rural school districts have been expanding upon existing agricultural programs while urban districts have been launching them.

Finding qualified candidates to fill agriculture teacher openings has been the challenge. It’s a taxing job requiring intense dedication and long hours for relatively modest pay, which has contributed to an agriculture teacher shortage.

The University of Idaho is uniquely positioned to address the shortage, producing most of Idaho’s pool of agriculture teachers in addition to providing the support to keep them working in the field.

Many AFHS students have discovered careers through the agriculture program, which covers four pathways – mechanics and welding, leadership, animal sciences and plant sciences.

Hernandez, a rising junior, signed up for a floral class and now aims to become an entomologist specializing in pollinators.

“I absolutely love working in the greenhouse and working with plants every single day,” Hernandez said.

Porath, also a rising junior, plans to head an agricultural classroom of her own someday.

“This is all stuff I’ve been very passionate about as I’ve learned about it, and I absolutely love spreading information agricultural classes have taught me, and I’d love to teach that to the younger generations,” Porath said.

The AFHS agriculture program started in 1990 and still had a single teacher – U of I graduate Marc Beitia.

As of 2017, U of I agricultural education graduates Bret Kindall and Savannah Stroebel are now part of the staff, and a fourth



University of Idaho alum Bret Kindall joined the expanding American Falls High School agriculture program to meet rising demand.
Photos by Garrett Britton, University of Idaho

“On a day-to-day basis it can feel overwhelming, and I think that’s part of why we don’t have as many people going into agricultural education.”

- Savannah Stroebel, agricultural educator

agriculture teacher who studied at U of I, Anthony Jefferies, will start next fall.

AFHS agriculture course offerings have also expanded. For example, the school now offers seven plant sciences courses, compared with three courses just three years ago.

“Ag education is one of the most important things kids can learn in school. People need to eat and our population is growing, but the amount of people working in the agriculture industry is decreasing,” Stroebel said. “Even having students know what goes into putting food on their plate is important because then they can share that with other people.”

According to the National Association of Agricultural Educators, there were 1,179 agriculture teacher positions waiting to be filled nationwide as of 2022, and the average starting salary of an agriculture teacher in the U.S. was \$43,651.

U of I offers Idaho’s only agricultural education program, with both bachelor’s and master’s degrees to prepare future sixth-through 12th-grade agriculture teachers.

The bachelor’s program provides hands-on learning opportunities with local teachers, including student teaching in Idaho, Montana, Washington, Oregon, California or Alaska, and at on-campus animal centers, greenhouses and plant science farms.

Students learn teaching methods, curriculum planning, classroom management and how to supervise out-of-classroom learning programs.

The 30-credit master's agricultural education program is research-based, requiring a thesis or practical project for a real-world client.

It's ideal for candidates who have completed a bachelor's degree in agriculture or a related field and are considering an education- or research-based career.

Salaries for graduates range from \$59,000 at the entry level to \$157,000 at the senior level.

Service

AFHS agriculture students have come to the aid of Power County Hospital's groundskeepers several times throughout the past three years.

The high school requires agriculture students to join the youth agricultural-based career-development and leadership organization FFA, and such community service projects count toward membership requirements.

Through their service, classes also learn relevant course concepts.

On that recent morning at the hospital grounds, late in the 2022-23 school year, a student approached Kindall holding an uprooted plant, which the teacher identified as bulbous bluegrass.

As a class project, Beitia's honors ag biology students must collect and correctly identify 40 plant species.

"They start to notice the vast diversity of plants that are actually out there," Kindall said.

Through the hospital project, students have learned how living roots prevent erosion as they've vegetated a barren hillside. They've landscaped with native shrubs and grasses, growing the starts from seed donated by the U of I Aberdeen Research and Extension Center.

They've learned horticulture by producing vegetable starts, some of which they gave to residents of the hospital's long-term care facility, who are growing them in personal planters.

Kindall was raised in Cambridge, a farming town of 300 in which almost every student is enrolled in agriculture classes.

During his senior year, Kindall's agriculture teacher implored him to pursue a career as an agriculture teacher. Nowadays, Kindall often finds himself on the other



American Falls High School agricultural students have access to numerous learning labs including a 2,160-square-foot greenhouse.

end of that conversation, urging his own students to study agriculture education.

He assures them the job is difficult but rewarding to those who value shaping lives.

"Not everybody is cut out to be a teacher, but you've got to really find those right students and really encourage the ones that should be going into teaching careers to go into it," Kindall said.

Stroebel, who was raised in Kuna, was also encouraged to enter the field by her teachers. Stroebel has watched students blossom in her agriculture classes.

The long hours are a tradeoff. She typically arrives at work at 6:45 a.m. and heads home after 5:30 p.m., after helping students prepare for any number of FFA contests. She's often on the road during weekends, taking students to various competitions.

"On a day-to-day basis it can feel overwhelming, and I think that's part of why we don't have as many people going into agricultural education," Stroebel said.

Researching turnover

After a few years on the job, some agriculture teachers reach a tipping point when long work hours and rigorous job requirements for a relatively modest salary begin to outweigh the benefits.

Dan Billington, who works as an agriculture teacher in Castleford, concluded in a paper he authored in 2018 as a U of I graduate student that the tipping point is the primary reason why agriculture teachers leave the field.

Billington, who worked on the project under Kattlyn Wolf, interim head of the Department of Agricultural Education, Leadership and Communications, based his findings on interviews of about 10 Idaho agriculture teachers who had left the field.

He found many of the teachers who walked away from the profession also lacked an adequate support system, especially those who came from expedited, alternative certification programs.

A year later, graduate student Ryanna Meacham, working under Kasee Smith, an associate professor in the department, published survey results from agriculture teachers who stayed in the profession.

They agreed the job of an agriculture teacher is stressful and demanding, but they emphasized that the career offers an unparalleled opportunity to help students reach their potential.

Agriculture teachers often have the same students over multiple years, and they emphasize personal growth of students,

teaching according to a “three-circle model” comprising classroom and laboratory instruction, leadership development and experiential learning.

“Being able to take those raw pieces of clay that are adolescents and form them into someone that’s going to change the world is a heady tonic in some ways, and we really get to do that I think more than almost any other teaching profession,” Wolf said.

A combined paper incorporating the findings of both graduate students’ surveys is under review for future publication in the “Journal of Agricultural Education.”

U of I agricultural educators tend to enjoy long careers in the field. Among the U of I program’s class of 2020, for example, 12 of 14 graduates are still teaching in high school classrooms.

Wolf attributes her program’s strong retention to the support graduates continue to receive, both from their former classmates and her department.

Wolf has records detailing the work history of every program graduate dating back several years, and she keeps in touch with them. She encourages graduates to pursue advanced degrees, thereby improving their standing on the salary scale.

She also contacts top graduates when she’s in need of a good classroom for placing student teachers.

Aside from boosting teacher wages – a recent point of emphasis within the Idaho Legislature – Wolf advocates for greater investment in scholarships for agriculture education students and providing “more opportunities for students to see themselves in a college environment.”

For example, the Idaho State FFA Career Development Events and Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention bring hundreds of prospective students to the U of I campus in Moscow each summer, familiarizing them with higher education.

Starting from scratch

There’s usually a waiting list for Kya Vines Bideganeta’s agricultural classes at Mountain Home High School. One freshman class recently had 50 students register for 25 open seats.

“My program is bursting at the seams. I have been working with my district to add a second teacher,” said Bideganeta, a 2013 U of I graduate. “I have such a hard time turning away kids who want to be there.”

There were no agriculture classes at MHHS when Bideganeta attended the high school.

She took it upon herself to create the wildly popular program after returning home to teach in 2017, convinced agriculture classes help students evolve as leaders and communicators while teaching them life skills.

“I wanted to bring what I knew our community so desperately needed for the young people,” she said.

Bideganeta taught for three years with the West Ada School District, which employed about a dozen agriculture teachers, before joining MHHS, where she established an agricultural welding course.

She soon added animal science courses covering zoology, fish and wildlife and livestock production. In 2018, she received a grant for a greenhouse, which she erected with help from the community and her senior welding class.



Savannah Stroebel, a University of Idaho alum, completed her first year of teaching at American Falls High School in 2023.

Last semester, she hosted a U of I student teacher. She’s also inspired some of her students to pursue a career in agricultural education. One former student is in the third year of agriculture education courses at U of I.

Bideganeta emphasizes the importance of self-care and maintaining a healthy work-life balance to students mulling the possibility of becoming an agriculture teacher.

“Many of my colleagues feel like they’re failing at their job and failing their families because they’re spread too thin, and they’re thinking about leaving teaching every day,” Bideganeta said.

She also warns that teaching isn’t a good fit for those who are motivated primarily by income potential.

“I’m showing students jobs they don’t have to go to college to get and they can make more money than me,” she said.

For all the job’s challenges, there’s a reason why the National Association of Agricultural Educators chose as its tagline, “Are you ready for the best career ever?”

NAAE’s National Teach Agriculture campaign has sought to recruit and retain good agriculture teachers and celebrate the contributions they make toward their schools and communities.

The organization produces reports highlighting where individual states should focus their recruiting efforts for agriculture teachers. The program also distributes funds to states to apply toward their agricultural teacher retention efforts.

The good news is annual retention among agriculture educators is on the upswing nationally, reaching 94% for the 2021-22 school year. Idaho beat the national average that year, with just six of 162 agriculture teachers leaving the classroom prior to the fall semester – good for better than a 96% retention rate.

U of I produced nine agricultural education graduates this spring and is projected to graduate 10 agricultural teachers in 2024 and 11 agricultural teachers in 2025.

“I love what I do and I love providing opportunities for my students and my community, and I know I’ve made a positive impact, and that rewards me like money doesn’t,” Bideganeta said.

To learn more about pursuing a degree in agricultural education, or to learn more about the program, visit U of I’s Agricultural Education, Leadership and Communications webpage. ■

WEED OF THE MONTH

FALL EDITION

Around the state County Weed Control Districts are working hard to manage fall noxious weeds to get an early jump on next year's spring growth. Take a look below at what some of our folks around the state are seeing as far as fall noxious weeds and their control and management options:

BONNER COUNTY

It's no surprise that scotch broom is in North Idaho this fall. Due to the short growing season and since it's a quasi-evergreen this will be the only noxious weed that Bonner County will be working on. This woody species has alfalfa like leaves with yellow flowers, producing a pea-like pod and grows in large clumps up to ten feet tall. Fall foliar herbicide treatments using Triclopyr products are taking place along with cut stump treatments depending on the size and scope.

ADA COUNTY

In the southwest part of the state county weed supervisors are noticing an influx of canada thistle and whitetop. This southwestern part of the state is primarily using fall herbicide applications as there are limited biological and mechanical treatment options for these weeds.

MADISON COUNTY

In Madison County the main weeds that they are seeing are leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, any kind of thistle (including canada thistle), and kochia along the roadsides. Madison County has used biological control this fall by releasing beetles for leafy spurge and spotted knapweed infestations. They will continue to apply Milestone for thistles and spotted knapweeds. Lastly, they have been using HighNoon, a newer 24D for knapweeds and thistles.

TWIN FALLS & CASSIA COUNTY

In Twin Falls County they are focusing on the fall control of scotch thistle and houndstongue. Perennial noxious weeds such as rush skeletonweed, canada thistle, leafy spurge and knapweeds are also present in Southern Idaho. Twin Falls County Weed Control is applying Milestone in pastures this fall to control these noxious weeds. This provides spring residual and takes care of any weeds that might come up after application.



What can you do? Beware of the weeds that are being seen in your region of the state and do your research! County Weed Department websites and the Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign's website are great places to start:
<http://idahoweedawareness.org>



Photos by Steve Stuebner

A new irrigation system replaces an old open ditch system that diverted water from the Snake River near Glens Ferry to water users in the Hammett Valley.

King Hill open ditch to pipeline project

By Steve Stuebner
Idaho Water Resource Board

The King Hill Irrigation District recently completed a \$5 million irrigation efficiency pipeline project to benefit local irrigators and farmers in the Hammett area.

The King Hill District put together a funding package that includes a Natural Resources Conservation Service grant, a \$1.9 million Aging Infrastructure Grant from the Idaho Water Resource Board, a \$1.5 million low-interest loan from the water board, and a \$275,000 Water Quality Program for Agriculture grant from the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

The WQPA grant helped make the project balance financially after high inflation drove the cost of irrigation pipe to a point where the project was in the red, officials said.

“We were over budget and in a deficit, and then we got the WQPA grant, and that was huge to put everything back in the

black,” said John Hafen, manager of the King Hill Irrigation District.

“When we started this process several years ago, we figured it’d have a \$3 to \$3.5 million price tag. As it is today, it’s going to be in excess of \$6 million,” adds Jeff Blanksma, chairman of the King Hill Irrigation District.

“We’re extremely grateful to all of the different agencies that have been helpful in this process,” Blanksma said. “The Elmore Soil Conservation District and the Commission for their grant, Idaho Water Resource Board for their grant and loan, and especially NRCS which has been our partner since the beginning. They helped us design and engineer the project.

“And then of course, our water users and producers. Without them stepping up to the plate, helping with the cost-share in the loan, it’d only be a dream if it weren’t for them.”

Connie Tharp, conservation team leader for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Elmore County, said the project

has multiple benefits in reducing water use, improving water quality and reduced pumping costs of an estimated 4 million kilowatt-hours per year.

“It’s a win-win project all the way around,” Tharp said. “It’s a win from a resource standpoint, it’s a win for the shareholders, the landowners who are the water users, it’s a win for the irrigation district, and it’s going to have a positive impact for our community.”

Construction started in November and completion has occurred in time for the 2023 irrigation season.

About five miles of irrigation pipeline was buried from a new point of diversion by the Snake River to reach about 120 different farms and water users spread over 2,000 acres of land that will benefit from the project.

A bank of five large irrigation pumps with variable speed drives will push the water flows to the farmers served by the pipelines. The new irrigation system replaces an old open ditch system that diverted water from the Snake River near Glens Ferry and slowly conveyed it toward the Hammett Valley.

The old open ditch system could take 20-24 hours to deliver water to the Hammett Valley, and if there were any power outages or issues in water conveyance, that could disrupt farmers locally, Blanksma said.

“It’s a win-win project all the way around. It’s a win from a resource standpoint, it’s a win for the shareholders, the landowners who are the water users, it’s a win for the irrigation district, and it’s going to have a positive impact for our community.”

- Connie Tharp, Natural Resources Conservation Service

“Our infrastructure was over 100 years old and conservative estimates were that we were losing 30 percent of our water before it reached the Hammett Valley,” he said.

“From a farmer’s perspective, we were trying to reduce the cost and therefore gain efficiency in what we were pumping,” he added. “Another big factor is we were trying to increase the reliability of water here in the valley. We’re eight miles from the pumping plant, and so if there was an interruption in the pumping plant, it was sometimes two, even three days before we’d receive water down here.”

Blanksma’s family runs Legacy Farms, a large operation that produces dairy-quality hay, potatoes, dry beans, and winter wheat. Other crops raised in the Hammett Valley area include onions, sugar beets, corn for grain and silage.

Legacy Farms typically gets five cuttings of high-quality hay each year, he said. The hay is marketed to dairy farms located near the Oregon border and in Idaho’s Magic Valley.

The Hammett Pipeline project has both water quality benefits and water quantity savings.

“I believe there will be a lot of water quality benefits,” Blanksma said. “Putting it in a pipe, we’re not going to be reintroducing any water to the Snake River [no return flows]. That’ll eliminate a lot of sediment and foreign debris in the canal system. I think that’ll be of great benefit to the environmental quality of the water in the river.”

“And we’ll be pumping far less water out of the river. Right now, we’re pumping 5 acre feet per acre of water. Hopefully by the time we put in the pipe, we can reduce that to 3 to 3.5 acre feet to deliver what our growers need.”

The existing irrigation efficiency project is just the first phase of six planned in the future.

“Hopefully this is just the first of many projects that will improve the delivery efficiency of water to our customers,” Blanksma said. “The producers are really excited about this. When you start talking about high-value crops where even a day’s delay in water can be critical, I think this will be extremely beneficial to producers in this area.” ■



LEFT: About five miles of irrigation pipeline was buried by the Snake River to reach about 120 different farms and water users spread over 2,000 acres of land.

THE BEST DEAL ON HEARING AIDS AND CARE

Welcome Idaho Farmers Federation Members

As a member of the Idaho Farmers Federation, you have access to the Great Hearing Benefits (GHB) program. GHB provides family members access to hearing care and hearing aids at discounted rates.

Up to 50% Off Retail
Pricing on Prescriptive Hearing Aids

Free 60-Day Hearing Aid Trial

3-Year Warranty and Service

Share Your Benefits
with up to 3 family members

5,000+ Locations Nationwide



Great Hearing Benefits™
Great Hearing. Great Benefits. That Simple.

© 2023 GN Hearing A/S. Great Hearing Benefits is a registered company owned by GN Hearing A/S. All rights reserved.

Call Now to Schedule Your Appointment (877) 914-1046

greatearingbenefits.com/farm-bureau/idaho

REFERRAL CODE: IDFFGPFA23



Member Savings Up To
40% OFF
on Jabra Audio Products

Your referral, like Darla's, could be worth \$525.



Get
\$25

WHEN A FRIEND YOU REFER PURCHASES A POLICY FROM US

Get
\$500

IF YOU WIN OUR QUARTERLY DRAWING*



Farm Bureau INSURANCE

*You're automatically entered into our \$500 drawing when you refer a friend, even if they don't purchase a policy.

Visit: idahofarmbureauinsurance.com/refer-a-friend-get-a-gift for complete rules and restrictions. Above left:

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



YOUR TWO CENTS MATTER

Financial Planning | Retirement Planning | Life Insurance | Mutual Funds | College Funding

No matter how full your piggy bank is, a financial advisor can **help you as you plan for your future.**

Visit us at fbfs.com



Securities & services offered through FBL Marketing Services, LLC,* 5400 University Ave., West Des Moines, IA 50266, 877/860-2904, Member SIPC.
Advisory services offered through FBL Wealth Management, LLC.* Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company*/West Des Moines, IA. *Affiliates. *Company provider of Farm Bureau Financial Services. WM032 (8-23)

**SAVE
THE DATE**



P.O. Box 4848
Pocatello, ID 83205-4848

**December 5-7, 2023
Idaho Farm Bureau
Annual Meeting**

**INVITING ALL IDAHO
FARMERS AND RANCHERS!!**



- Guest speaker: AFBF President Zippy Duvall
- Keynote speaker: Rulon Gardner
- Agriculture technology vendors
- Young Farmers & Ranchers events (Starts Dec 4)
- Policy Development
- Networking
- Award banquets
- Promotion & Education workshops



Use QR code to
register after
October 10, 2023

idahofb.org/events