

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Government Affairs Report By Pat Kole

The Idaho Legislature began on January 9, 2012 with the Governor's State of the State and Budget Address. Throughout this session, it will be important to talk with your elected officials and tell them how important agriculture is to the economy of Idaho. During these tough times, agriculture has been one of the most stable and consistent sectors of the state's economy. But funding for agricultural research and extension services has suffered a disproportionate reduction compared to other programs. It's time to be heard. We've watched very good members of our potato research team move on to better opportunities. We've seen research into pests, viruses, new varieties, etc. diminish in scope and/or be eliminated. Supporting stable funding for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is critically important to maintaining a vibrant, prosperous and key component of our state's economy, the potato industry.

Industry Relations Report By Todd Cornelison

Idaho Potato Industry Political Action Committee Auction:

For those attending Potato School this year, there will be a silent and live auction at the Red Lion Inn in Pocatello on January 18, 2012 at 5:00 p.m.

All proceeds go to the Idaho Potato Industry Political Action Committee. Items on this auction include:

- Hoff's famous scenic bi-plane ride
- A jet boat fishing trip on the Snake River below Blackfoot
- Tractor rentals
- Crop Protection Products
- 1, 4 Sight for 50,000 cwt, including application

Thanks everyone and we hope to see you all there.

Key Issues discussed at the NPC Winter Meetings Held January 3-7, 2012

Crop Insurance

The 2012 Farm Bill is expected to result in a drastically-changed agricultural safety net. Direct and counter-cyclical payments are expected to be heavily cut or eliminated altogether, with much of the savings expected to be redirected to crop insurance. Indications are that policymakers desire to see more accessible crop insurance for all growers, including specialty crop growers. New crop insurance programs for commodities without insurance will likely be incentivized in some way, although that is yet to be determined.

Highway Reauthorization

Current highway bill has been reauthorized eight times, most recently in September 2011. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee passed a two-year bill in November 2011. House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee expects to conduct hearing and mark-up of a six-year reauthorization in February 2012.

Truck Weight

The Safe and Efficient Transportation Act (SETA) would increase truck weight limits to 97,000 pounds on six axles from the current limit of 80,000 pounds on five axles. SETA has 60 sponsoring supporters in the House. SETA has less support in the Senate. Since the Senate EPW Committee has already finished its work on the highway bill, the current strategy is to include SETA on the House version of the highway reauthorization bill and retain the language in conference committee. Chairman John Mica (R, FL-7) wants nothing to do with another extension of current law.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

An interim final rule issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits WIC program participants from using benefits to purchase fresh white potatoes. It is the only fresh vegetable prohibited in the program. The final rule is still at USDA but is expected to be sent to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review in early 2012. Public statements by USDA officials indicate they believe WIC participants eat enough fresh white potatoes already.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permits

Beginning on October 31, 2011, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) started requiring National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) pesticide general permits (PGP) for pesticide applications "to, over or near" waters of the United States. The requirement of NPDES permits is driven by a 2009 decision by the 6th Circuit Court which ruled that certain U.S. pesticide applications should be subject to the provisions of the Clean Water Act (CWA). H.R. 872 would eliminate the duplicative regulatory burden resulting from EPA's response to the 6th Circuit Court decision. Specifically, the bill would prohibit pesticides that are currently regulated according to FIFRA from also being regulated according to the CWA. Although the bill enjoyed overwhelming support in the House, progress has been stopped because of a hold by Senator Barbara Boxer (D, CA).

Mexico Access

On December 13, 2011, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack met in Washington, D.C., with Mexico's Secretary of Agriculture Francisco Javier Mayorga Castaneda to discuss issues of interest between the countries. Mexico access for fresh U.S. potatoes was the primary point of discussion and important strides were made in living up to the market access agreement negotiated in March 2003. An international panel of experts examined the dispute throughout the summer of 2011 but Mexico did not agree with the panel's findings, resulting in the need for a political resolution.

Calendar

January

- 17 ICIA Seed Growers Seminar, Clarion Inn, Pocatello
- 17 Cost of Production Meeting, Red Lion Inn, Pocatello - Please RSVP Todd Cornelison
- 18-19 Idaho Potato School and Ag Expo, Idaho State University, Pocatello
- 31 IPC Legislative Potato Delivery, Boise. Volunteers welcome. Please RSVP Todd Cornelison
- 31-1 Idaho Potato Commission Meeting, Eagle

February

- 1 IPC Legislative Dinner, Boise – By invitation only, RSVP required
- 7 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls
- 15 IPC Ag Affairs Committee Meeting, 9:00 a.m. -12:00 noon, IPC Office, Idaho Falls
- 15 USPB Idaho Delegates Meeting, 1:00-3:00 p.m., IPC Office, Idaho Falls
- 20-22 Larry Branen Idaho Ag Summit www.idahoagsummit.org, The Riverside, Boise
- 21 NASS Report, Stocks and Processing to February 1st
- 23-1 Potato Industry Leadership Institute, Washington DC
- 27-1 NPC Public Policy Fly In, Washington DC. Growers invited to attend. Contact Todd Cornelison

March

- 6 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls
- 7 IPC R&E Committee Meeting, IPC Office, Idaho Falls
- 12 NASS Report, Stocks and Processing to March 1st
- 13-16 USPB Annual Meeting, Colorado Springs, CO
- 20-21 Idaho Potato Commission Meeting, Eagle

April

- 3 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls
- 13 NASS Reports, Stocks and Processing to April 1st, Winter and Spring Potato Acreage and Production
- 17-18 Idaho Potato Commission Meeting, Eagle
- 30-5 United Fresh Annual Convention, Dallas, TX