

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



Brought to you by the Idaho Potato Commission
Website: www.idahopotato.com

Government Affairs Report

By Pat Kole

Last week, Phyto-sanitary government officials from Thailand visited Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California in what we hope will be the final stages of completing a Protocol to allow U.S. potatoes into Thailand. The Idaho portion of the visit included seeing potatoes harvested in fields, looking at seed and commercial potato fields, meetings with seed certification personnel at Idaho Crop Improvement Association, and a visit to a chip potato packing shed. We're hoping the final steps to begin shipments to Thailand will be concluded shortly.

This week I'm participating in the Potato Cyst Nematode program review. USDA officials from Riverdale, MD; Ft. Collins, CO; Boise and Idaho Falls; state officials from New York and Boise, and myself are participating. At the conclusion of this meeting, a report will be prepared and I will summarize the findings in a future issue of the Pulse.

Industry Relations Report

By Todd Cornelison

FMI (Food Marketing Institute) Sustainability Summit

I recently attended the 2nd annual FMI Sustainability Summit. FMI, or the Food Marketing Institute, basically caters to the retail industry. Therefore I attend this summit for two reasons: one, for information on sustainability of course and two, to gauge the level of interest in sustainability from the retailer sector. Since this summit was around three times the size of the first, I believe we can assume that there remains a great deal of interest in sustainability from the retailers. Due to the amount of information I obtained from the summit, I will give you brief highlights followed with a link you can use to gain more information about the subject.

It is not surprising to learn that Walmart continues to be a leader in promoting sustainability. What you may not know is they now have put their money where their mouth is. In August 2007, Walmart presented a check to the University of Arkansas to fund first year operations of the new Applied Sustainability Center (ASC). Two years later, the ASC is going strong and is one of the leaders in teaching, training, science and research in sustainability, and their fingerprints were all over the summit. If one wants to learn about where sustainability is headed from a retail point of view, one only needs to visit the ASC website <http://asc.uark.edu/>.

From the ASC, although the path is a little hard to follow, there arose another sustainability group, the Sustainability Consortium. The consortium is jointly administered by the University of Arkansas and Arizona State University. It is comprised of academic researchers, companies, government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working together to create scientifically valid and coherent product indices that will allow retailers to compare consumer products as to their sustainability. From what I can ascertain, this may be another group putting together another set of sustainability guidelines that we may have to follow. For more information on this group follow this link, <http://www.sustainabilityconsortium.org/>

Not to be outdone, the University of Illinois has obtained some government grants and jumped on the sustainability bandwagon by putting together a website that brings local producers and retailers together; it is called Market Maker. While Idaho is not one of the states they cover yet, it is very interesting to visit this site to see how it works. Local producers enter their information - where they are located and what they grow - and then the retailer can visit the site and search for the producers in any number of ways. For example, the retailers can search by product or by location either using cities or zip codes. I don't believe price is listed on the website. To view the site, click on this link <http://national.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>

For the farmer who wants to begin to track his sustainability efforts, I ran into a software package that can help him do that. I am including this link here only because it is the first one I have seen. I cannot say if it is better than any others or even if there are any others. <http://www.sureharvest.com/index.php>

For those of you who are asking, what is the IPC doing to help with sustainability? The goal is still to have a potato specific sustainability program. The IPC, along with the NPC, is working with various sustainability groups to obtain a nationally accepted sustainability standard for potatoes. The difficulty is, we are a vegetable and most standards want to treat us the same as other vegetables. This becomes extremely difficult when sustainability and food safety overlap, which they inevitably do. While the difference in water conservation from watering a potato plant may not differ much from that of a lettuce plant, when you apply food safety techniques to each, they are very different.

2010 University of Idaho Potato Conference to be held January 20 and 21, 2010 in Pocatello, Idaho

The 2010 U of I Potato Conference is fast approaching. Do you have any suggestions for topics, seminars, workshops, or panels? How about speaker suggestions? Do you have a good idea for the conference theme? If you have ideas on any of these items, please call or e-mail Bill Bohl by October 2, 2009. His contact information is: Bill Bohl, 583 West Sexton Street, Blackfoot, ID 83221-2063; Phone: 208-785-8060; email: wbohl@uidaho.edu

Calendar

September

- 1 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID
- 2-4 IGSA Annual Convention, Sun Valley, ID
- 2 IPC Marketing Committee Meeting, 1:30 – 2:45 pm, Continental Room, Sun Valley Inn
- 2 IPC Ag Affairs Committee Meeting, 3:00 – 4:45 pm, Continental Room, Sun Valley Inn
- 3 IPC Commission Meeting Breakfast, 7:30am, Sun Valley, ID
- 14-17 USPB 2009 State/National Workshops, Phoenix, AZ

October

- 2-5 PMA, Anaheim, CA
- 20-21 IPC Commission Meeting, Boise, ID