

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Government Affairs Report

By Pat Kole

On the state level, funding issues continue as the economic situation fails to improve. Agricultural interests, working jointly through Food Producers of Idaho, are monitoring the many complex impacts on our industry.

On the federal level, the Health Care issue has temporarily backed up consideration of climate change legislation, food safety and traceability legislation, child nutrition reauthorization and many other matters that could significantly impact the industry. However, agencies continue to move forward with administrative rule changes that will impact use of crop protection tools. Future issues of the Pulse will discuss this in greater detail.

Industry Relations Report

By Todd Cornelison

Haitian Relief Efforts

The IPC has received multiple inquiries into the possibility of using some of our surplus potatoes in the Haitian relief efforts. While the idea is sound, in practice, it is much harder to accomplish. The Haitian's immediate needs are water, food and medicine. Since the earthquake has wiped out all infrastructures, any type of food that requires refrigeration is out of the question right now. That eliminates the possibility of fresh or frozen potatoes in the near future. Since the devastation is so complete, the Haitians' will most certainly need aid well into the future. That is where we can help. Pat Kole is currently working with John Keeling of the NPC to see if we can add to the USDA Section 32 purchase (see the information below), and how we might get more dehydrated product included in the emergency aid program. If you can't wait that long to help, it is our understanding that the best immediate thing to do is to make monetary contributions to the programs that already have boots on the ground.

USDA Section 32 Purchase

The following is a news release from Senator Crapo's office:

DELEGATION SEEKS ASSISTANCE FOR POTATO GROWERS
Requests USDA purchase of surplus potatoes

Washington, D.C. - Idaho's Congressional Delegation is asking the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assist potato producers struggling due to a high supply of domestic potatoes and low prices. In a letter sent to USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Administrator, Idaho Senators Mike Crapo and Jim Risch and Representatives Mike Simpson and Walt Minnick are asking USDA to give favorable consideration to a pending request for purchase of fresh surplus potatoes for federal nutrition programs under the Section 32 program.

The Delegation detailed the considerable potato market challenges. "The growing conditions for the 2009 Idaho potato crop were almost perfect resulting in record yields and excellent quality. Therefore, the percentage of saleable potatoes is above average this year, and currently Idaho potato stocks on hand are nearly 13.5 percent more than last year's stocks, despite Idaho shipping 4.5 percent more than 2008 volumes. This situation has caused prices to drop, and prices have continued to be low for quite some time," the Delegation wrote.

Further, the Delegation emphasized the difficulty potato producers are facing nationwide. "Potato growers are struggling right now with their returns, which are quite low. Without action, the combination of a high supply and low prices will drive many growers in the State of Idaho and throughout the country to go out of business. In today's financial market, trying to get financing for next year's crops could be quite difficult when producers present the returns for this year's crop," the Delegation wrote.

A link to the full letter can be found here: <http://crapo.senate.gov/issues/ag/ag.cfm>

Idaho Potato Industry Political Action Event

The Idaho Potato Industry will be having a Political Action Event on January 20, 2010 at the Red Lion Hotel in Pocatello. The event will start at 5 p.m. in the pool lobby with an opening reception. Doors will open at 6 p.m. for the silent auction and then there will be a banquet at 6:30 p.m. There is a charge for the banquet of \$20 per plate so please let Martha Dance at pgimd@cablone.net know as soon as possible if you will be coming. This event is being organized through the IGSA and Potato Growers of Idaho.

There will be many nice gifts at the silent auction. After the dinner Gale Harding will be auctioning off other gifts like a Sun Valley Ski Vacation, fishing float trip down the South Fork of the Snake River, tractor rentals, crop protection products and more.

Please plan on attending and supporting this good cause. All proceeds will go towards supporting those candidates who support the potato industry.

Calendar

January

19	Cost of Production Meeting, 10:00-12:00 p.m., Red Lion Hotel, Pocatello, ID
19	ICIA Seed Seminar, 12:00-5:00 p.m., Holiday Inn, Pocatello, ID
19-21	East Idaho Ag Expo, ISU Holt Arena on the ISU campus, Pocatello, ID
20-21	UI Potato Conference, Student Union Building, ISU campus, Pocatello, ID
20	IGSA/PGI POPAC auction, 5:00-8:30 p.m., Red Lion Hotel, Pocatello, ID
21	IPC Marketing Committee Meeting, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Student Union Building, ISU campus, Pocatello, ID
26-27	IPC Commission Meeting, Eagle, ID
26	IPC Legislative Dinner, Boise Center on the Grove, Boise ID
28	IGSA Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID

February

8	Ag Trans Workshop, Doubletree Riverside, Boise, ID
8-9	2010 Larry Branen Idaho Ag Summit, Doubletree Riverside, Boise, ID
18-25	2010 Potato Industry Leadership Institute
22-25	NPC Public Policy Conference, Washington, DC

March

2	United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID
11-12	USPB Annual Meeting, Denver, CO
16-17	IPC Commission Meeting, Eagle, ID
18	USDA Portal Training Workshop, Pre-Registration Required University Place Campus in Idaho Falls, ID 1:00-5:00 p.m., Room 204, Center for Higher Education Building (CHE)