

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Government Affairs Report By Pat Kole

August marks the time when Congress adjourns and it is common for our two Senators and Representatives to visit with constituents. There are several town hall style meetings taking place, and it's always a good idea to attend if you possibly can. At the federal level, health care reform, climate change/energy legislation, food safety legislation and pesticide re-registrations are all moving forward and will greatly impact the agricultural community.

At the state level, the lower than estimated tax receipts continue to point towards a difficult legislative session coming up next January. Much of the discussions now taking place revolve around further reductions in state funded programs. The impact on the potato industry can be seen in discussions on how to balance the budget of UI's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, particularly the discussion on which extension centers will close to balance the budget.

Industry Relations Report By Todd Cornelison

National Potato Council (NPC) Board Members

The National Potato Council is a voluntary organization supported by quota assessments from state organizations, allied industry memberships and sponsorships, and directly by potato growers through membership dues. Idaho currently has nine board members on the Council. This year, one of our board member positions has been vacated. People interested in filling this position should contact Todd Cornelison (208) 559-4792 or Pat Kole (208) 830-4936. Leadership positions on the Council allow individuals to work with government officials and leaders in the potato industry nationwide. At the upcoming Sun Valley meetings, a discussion will be held on establishing procedures for selecting people for these positions.

Conservation Stewardship Program

The NRCS has announced the initial sign-up for the Conservation Stewardship Program as authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill. This program provides annual payments to producers for existing and additional conservation practices. There is also a supplemental payment for producers adopting a "resource conserving crop rotation", which means two out of three years must be planted to a resource conserving crop. Like other NRCS programs, producer applications will be ranked. In this case the ranking pool for potato growers will be Southern Idaho Ag land. By statute the maximum annual payment cap is \$40,000 per farm. The exact payment rate will not be known until the total sign-up request is known.

The initial program sign-up ends September 1st, with additional sign-up periods to follow. Growers need to go to their local NRCS office to get an information packet and learn the details of the program.

Please refer to the press release below and this link from the Idaho NRCS office:

http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/index.html

Calendar

August

- 17-19 FMI Sustainability Summit, San Francisco, CA
- 19-20 Thailand Government Officials seed tour, Idaho Falls, ID

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