

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Government Affairs Report By Pat Kole

Last night, October 18, 2011, at approximately 5:30 p.m. Eastern Time the U. S. Senate passed an amendment to the Senate Agricultural Appropriations Bill that would prohibit the United States Department of Agriculture from spending funds to limit the amount of potatoes from being served in school meal programs. The Senate amendment was co-sponsored by Idaho Senators Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, and was phrased similarly to a House amendment proposed by Representative Mike Simpson that was subsequently adopted in the House Agriculture Appropriations Bill. That bill passed the House of Representatives several weeks ago. Passage of the Senate bill could take place yet this week. We anticipate that the House and Senate bills will now be sent to a committee to reconcile the differences between the two bills and then the agreed upon final bill would move to passage. There is always a possibility that the process could get derailed, but for now we are one step closer to keeping potatoes in schools.

Should you get the chance, please send a note or make a call to the members of our delegation to thank them for their hard work on our behalf. And be sure to ask for their continued support on these important issues to our industry.

Industry Relations Report By Todd Cornelison

Main Topics discussed at the United Fresh Public Policy Conference in D.C. last week.

For Time and Space considerations, I will make this a two piece report.

United Fresh Public Policy Conference:

Every year United Fresh Produce Association holds a public policy conference in Washington D.C. The aim of the conference is for fresh produce growers from around the nation to meet and discuss the political issues that are most concerning to the industry. This year the conference focused on:

- CHILD NUTRITION INCREASING FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION/ School Nutrition – Breakfast and Lunch Program
- ENSURING A VIABLE AG WORKFORCE/ E-verify issues
- FOOD SAFETY/Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI)
- PROTECTING VITAL SPECIALTY CROP PROGRAMS/ Farm Bill

The following topics were addressed in Part 1; *Potato Pulse* dated October 12, 2011

Child Nutrition and Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Ensuring a Viable Ag Workforce

FOOD SAFETY/Produce Traceability (PTI)

As part of the Public Policy meeting, we had the opportunity to visit the FDA, and discuss the implementation of the recently passed Food Safety Modernization Act. Since the passage of this bill, our message to our Congressmen, Senators, and United Fresh has not changed. While we support food safety, the new Act needs to be risked based and commodity specific. Our concern is that we might be under the same rules and regulations as melons or leafy greens (high risk fruits and vegetables). During the FDA presentation, fruits and vegetables were separated into three classes,

"In Scope," "In Scope with Exemptions" and "Exempt." Basically, "In Scope" means high risk, and "In Scope with Exemptions" means generally eaten cooked. A slide shown during the presentation clearly listed potatoes as a vegetable that is "In Scope with Exemptions." This is our first indication that potatoes will be handled differently than other high risk crops. Since implementation of the bill is in its infancy, we can't really say where that leaves potatoes when it comes to PTI and other food safety issues, but we can surmise that the standards we will have to meet look like they will be commodity specific.

PROTECTING VITAL SPECIALTY CROP PROGRAMS/ Farm Bill

Without exception, every office we visited discussed the current economic situation and most of the outlooks were dim. With that said, the 2012 farm bill will be quite a challenge. Specialty crops made many inroads in the 2008 farm bill, such as MAP (Market Access Funds) funds, and disaster program funds. It will be tough to make sure all of our "new" programs from the 2008 Farm Bill make it in to the 2012 Farm Bill, but that is our goal. Our message to our Legislators is this: roughly 82% of the Farm Bill is actually nutrition funds, i.e. Food Stamps and School Nutrition. Only approximately 18% of the Farm Bill is actually spent on farm programs. If there are cuts, we need to make sure that all of the programs receive the cuts, not just the agriculture part of the Bill.

Calendar

October

26-27 USPB Dehy Industry Meeting, Boise

November

1-2 IPC Meeting, Moscow
1 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls
8-9 Idaho Association of Plant Protection Meeting, Jerome
9 NASS Report Fall Potato Acreage and Production
15 New IPC/IGSA Office Open House, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., 3670 S 25th E, Idaho Falls
16 United Potato Growers of Idaho/IPC Whistlestop Tour, 11:00 a.m., Hilton Garden Inn, Idaho Falls
16 IGSA Fall Meeting/IPC Whistlestop Tour, 6:00 p.m., Hilton Garden Inn, Idaho Falls
17 IPC R&E Committee Meeting, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., IPC/IGSA Office, Idaho Falls
18 U of I Storage Advisory Committee Meeting, Kimberly
30 Introduction to Food Safety and HACCP Workshop for Spanish Speakers, Idaho Falls
Registration: 208 364-6188, paulap@uidaho.edu, www.techhelp.org

December

3 IGSA Board Meeting, Salt Lake City, UT
6 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls
8 PRIMUS GFS Certification Workshops for Onion & Potato Packers/Growers, Idaho Falls
Registration: 208 364-6188, paulap@uidaho.edu, www.techhelp.org
11 NASS Report Fall Potato Acreage and Production, Percent of Fall Acreage by Variety
15-16 IPC Meeting, Eagle
17 First Annual Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, Boise

January

4-6 POTATO EXPO 2012, Orlando, FL
6-7 NPC Annual Meeting, Orlando, FL
18-19 Idaho Potato Conference and Ag Expo, Idaho State University, Pocatello