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Idaho ag exports double over six years

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Idaho's agricultural exports — led by wheat and followed by dairy — are soaring, growing to \$2.59 billion in 2013, according to state export data released by USDA Economic Research Service on Jan. 30.

The state's ag exports in 2013 were double its 2007 exports, which totaled nearly \$1.32 billion.

Global economic growth and an expanding middle class, particularly in Asia, are driving the increase in Idaho's exports, said Laura Johnson, market development bureau chief at Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

China, for example, has 300 million middle-class consumers demanding higher-value products, greater variety and more convenience, she said.

Quality and safety are becoming increasingly important in food purchases, and consumers around the world know they can rely on the quality and safety of Idaho products, she said.

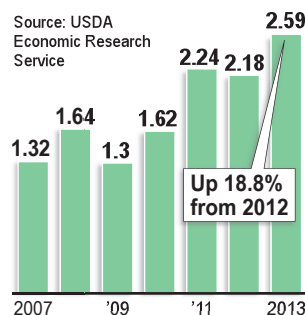
In addition, Idaho exporters are providing the kinds of products consumers are seeking, she said. Idaho ag exports ranked 20th in the nation in 2013 and claimed prestigious rankings in specific products, according to USDA statistics.

The state's exports ranked fourth in dairy, fifth in both fresh and processed vegetables, sixth in wheat, ninth in beef, 10th in livestock, and 10th in "other" — which includes such items as sugar products, planting seeds, horticulture products, and processed foods.

Canada and Mexico were Idaho's largest customer in 2013, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the state's ag exports. But imports by Asian countries were also significant, accounting for about 36 percent of Idaho's exports, according to data from Global Trade Information Services.

USDA doesn't provide state data on export destination, but its Economic Research Service does a better job of capturing the state origin of exports. GTIS

Idaho agricultural exports (Billions of dollars)



Source: USDA Economic Research Service

Top Idaho ag exports in 2013 (Millions of dollars)

Item	Total
Wheat	\$503
Dairy	428.8
Processed vegetables	234.2
Beef and veal	171.5
Fresh vegetables	130.1
Feeds and fodder	106.7

Carol Ryan Dumas and Alan Kenagar/
Capital Press

credits a lot of Idaho's export products to other states where they head for markets through brokers and other companies, Johnson said.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Amphibian expert Wild Bill Toady hosts a sporting event featuring several species of toads for young fans during the North Bannock County Fair in August 2013. The Bannock County Commission has decided to cancel the North Fair, which had an urban theme, to emphasize the more popular South Bannock County Fair in Downey, Idaho, which focuses on agriculture.

Bannock County consolidates fairs

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — The Bannock County Commission has dissolved a long-running, local fair with an urban theme in order to place greater emphasis on its more popular rural fair in Downey.

County Commissioner Howard Manwaring said ending Pocatello's North Fair should free up at least \$50,000 more to invest in the South Fair, which enjoys greater attendance and more 4-H participation.

"We've been looking at the records," Manwaring said. "All the way back to 1957, commissioners and the Fair Board were concerned because the North Fair was doing so poorly. Even though we had a few 4-H kids, most of the 4-H program was already in the South County."

The North Fair's major draws have been a free baked potato feast and a few beauty pageants, Manwaring said.

Manwaring recalled visiting with a young girl who was distraught after showing a goat at the North Fair, and no spectators came by to see her animal. He believes youths

with 4-H projects will enjoy a better experience in Downey, which is a 30-minute drive from Pocatello.

He emphasized 4-H programs will also continue at the North Fairgrounds, where a new 4-H building was constructed last year. This month, Traci Kirby started working as Bannock County's new youth development educator, based in Pocatello. Kirby hopes to revive the community's former bucket calf program.

"I think it's going to be awesome change from everything I'm hearing," Kirby said. "The livestock program has been huge in Downey, and not so much up here."

Reed Findlay, University of Idaho Extension educator for Bingham and Bannock counties, said the South Fairgrounds should accommodate all of the animal projects from Pocatello. Findlay said he's fielded several calls from people asking questions about the change, but few have opposed it.

Bannock County Fair Board Chairman Sheldon Barfuss said the change was sudden and unforeseen, but he believes it was the right call.

"When there are more volunteers there than patrons, we

need to look at this," Barfuss said. "If you read the Idaho statutes of what a county fair is supposed to be, it leads me to believe that county fairs belong in the country."

Manwaring said the additional revenue from the North Fair will enable the county to continue upgrades of the Downey facilities. New restrooms have already been completed in Downey, and new bleachers are planned this summer at the grandstand. Manwaring said the county also has plans to upgrade the concession area and corrals and to build new buildings to "house some of the programs that will go from the north to the south." He said tents may be used during this August's fair to help organizers determine the best locations for permanent facilities.

At the North Fairgrounds, the county plans to improve its equestrian facilities to lure back horse cutting and racing events, and to attract more rodeos. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game recently installed a children's fishing pond on the grounds, and the Portneuf Health Care Foundation intends to invest \$12 million to build an amphitheater and sports complex there.

Ag Dept. requests funding for 6 new positions

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture is requesting \$149,800 in additional funding and spending authority for \$420,300 for six new positions to meet its growing workload.

A growing workload "is a good problem to have. It's a sign that agriculture overall is doing very well," ISDA Director Celia Gould said on Friday.

It's a tremendous time for Idaho agriculture, she said. Farm income is at record highs, exports are booming, farm gate receipts have never been better, and debt-to-asset ratios are at record lows.

The additional general fund request would increase the agency's total FY2015 budget to \$29,265,400 from the current \$29,115,600.

Gould presented the agency's budget requests to the state

Legislature's Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee in Boise earlier this week.

Legislative approval of ISDA's requests would add two positions in the agency's range program, one position in human resources, two positions in animal industries, and one position to facilitate the federal Specialty Crop Block Grant program in the state.

It would also authorize ISDA to increase spending in its weights and measures program.

The agency's highest priority is enhancement of its range program with two additional positions, a range program manager and a technical records specialist, due to a significant change in workload, Gould said.

This year, ISDA negotiated and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Land Management in which ISDA will advise and coordinate

with more than 1,600 ranchers who graze on BLM allotments to ensure range photo monitoring is being followed in accordance with BLM protocols.

BLM has agreed to accept the data and use it in its grazing permit renewal process. The lack of recent photo data has hindered BLM in its permit renewal decisions and resulted in widespread reductions in grazing, Gould said.

ISDA is looking to enhance its range-monitoring service with the U.S. Forest Service as well, she said.

Another top priority is bringing in someone to lead ISDA's human resources department, which is stretched thin. The agency's employee numbers range from 190 to as many as 600 due to a high demand for fresh fruit and vegetable inspection services as well as invasive species and pest inspections, Gould said.

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