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Idaho

UI ag school looks at BYU

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

CALDWELL, Idaho — The dean of University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences told stakeholders April 16 that CALS is open to partnering with BYU-Idaho on certain research projects.

John Foltz said those projects would have to make sense for both universities, which compete for ag students.

"We are trying to find ways to partner with them that are appropriate for them and for us (while) also realizing they are a competitor for us," Foltz said. "We want to make sure we don't give away the farm also."

Foltz made those remarks in response to a question asked during an informal "coffee with the dean" event in Caldwell that attracted more than 30 people.

Brigham Young University-Idaho is a private, four-year university located in East Idaho. The university's ag mission has been expanding and Foltz was asked whether CALS is interested in partnering with BYU-Idaho on some research projects.

Foltz said the college is exploring what he termed "competitive collaborative partnerships" with BYU-Idaho, which has an enrollment of more than 16,000, about 4,000 more than UI.

He encouraged faculty and staff to "keep your ears to the ground" for possible ideas.

"We're very open to looking at those sort of relationships," Foltz said. "If you have some ideas on that, we should talk about it."

BYU-Idaho doesn't have a graduate program for its ag students and many of them are ending up at UI as graduate students.

"It would behoove us to strategically collaborate on various research projects (if the opportunities arise)," said UI Food Technology Center Director Josh Bevan, who asked the BYU-Idaho question.

In response to a question about what CALS is doing to continue increasing enrollment, Foltz said the college is focusing on several areas, including forming partnerships with the agricultural industry to help explain the career opportunities available in the farm sector.

One of the keys to attracting students is informing them of the many career opportunities involved with farming and who better to do that than the industry itself, he told the Capital Press later.

"The challenge is that many young people think of agriculture as just farming," he said. "It's not just that; it includes all of the supporting industries. We want to partner with industry to help them share (that) message because they're the ones that are hiring our graduates."

Specialty crop fund applications low

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — The Idaho State Department of Agriculture received 16 fewer proposals for specialty crop block grant funding this year and the total request for funding was down substantially from last year.

This happened despite the fact the program in 2015 will again receive almost twice as much funding from the USDA for the program than it has received in previous years.

The ISDA received \$1.91 million from USDA last year

and will receive a similar amount this year. That is almost twice as much as the state has received from the federal specialty crop block grant program in previous years.

But while the state received a record 38 requests for funding last year and a total funding request of \$3.64 million, also a record, the ISDA only received 22 proposals requesting a total of \$2.1 million this year.

"I personally thought that with more funding available, we may receive more requests," said Amanda Gibson, who administers the ISDA program.

This year's totals were in line with the years prior to 2014, she said.

ISDA found out right before last year's application deadline that it would receive almost twice as much funding as normal because of changes in the new farm bill and it wasn't able to notify the state's specialty crop industry of that fact.

So the department extended the deadline for another five weeks and received an additional 17 applications.

Whether the department announces a second round of applications for 2015 depends

on the competitiveness of the applications submitted, Gibson said.

Three-member judging teams with no conflicts of interest evaluate each project, score them and include comments. ISDA officials review those scores and have the final say on which projects get funded.

"If there are not enough solid projects, we may consider going out for a second application round," Gibson said. "At this point, we have to wait until the review panel completes their scoring and we can evaluate the results."

Gibson said the department received more applications than normal this year that focused on unique economic development plans that seek to increase value-added production.

Most of the applications the ISDA receives are for straight research or promotion and marketing projects, but the department received several this year that fall outside those boundaries, Gibson said.

"We had a few pretty creative ideas this year," she said.

The ISDA expects to announce which projects will be funded before June.

Grower tries new canola production method

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

AMERICAN FALLS, Idaho — Kamren Koopin is taking a new approach to raising canola this season, which he believes will increase profits while significantly reducing the odds of crop losses.

The Koopins have planted canola in southeast Idaho about six times during the past two decades, finding winter crop yields can nearly double spring canola production.

In the past, however, they've had trouble with snow mold and winter kill with fall-seeded canola.

Koopin believes new products on the market should alleviate snow mold problems. And he hopes to reduce winter kill by following University of Idaho canola breeder Jack Brown's advice and planting his winter canola in the spring, nearly four months early.

Because winter canola requires a vernalization period to flower and go to seed, thereby completing its life cycle, Koopin plans to take three cuttings of canola this season as a high-quality hay. By winter, the root system should be fully developed, helping the crop to better withstand harsh conditions that might kill less mature plants. During the following season, he'll let the canola bloom and harvest



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Kamren Koopin, of American Falls, Idaho, shows the supply of winter canola seed he plans to plant this spring and raise for forage and harvest for seed during the following season. The production method, promoted by University of Idaho, should also minimize winter kill.

the oil seeds, currently worth about 22 cents per pound.

"You're getting kind of a double whammy off of one crop," said Koopin, who learned about the concept in January, when Brown made a presentation to growers and grain elevator personnel in Grace, Idaho.

Koopin plans to plant

about 200 acres of canola seed genetically engineered to withstand glyphosate herbicide, and about 50 acres of conventional seed that Brown developed. Buyers offer a premium for conventional canola.

Koopin, who will blow on his canola seed with fertilizer and harrow it in to avoid planting too deep, said cano-

la is a good low-water option that tolerates drought stress once it's established.

Canola forage yields are typically no better than two-thirds of alfalfa yields — about 4 to 6 tons per acre under irrigation.

But Brown said canola hay and green-cut "canolage" have more protein than alfal-

fa. The relative feed value for good canolage can score up to 320, compared with 200 for top-grade alfalfa. Canola hay is also low in lignin, enabling feeders to mix in a greater percentage of cheaper forage.

By leaving canola in the ground for two seasons, Brown said growers also maximize the soil health benefits of the rotation crop. Brown said spud growers report less disease and a higher percentage of No. 1 tubers following canola, which leaches a natural fumigant into soil.

Brown believes the major driver of increased canola acres throughout Idaho will be that Scouler Co. has begun developing the infrastructure to procure canola from throughout the Northwest for Pacific Coast Canola's new plant in Warden, Wash.

J.C. Olson, a merchandiser with Scouler, said the bulk of the 350,000 metric tons of canola processed at the plant per year is imported from other growing regions.

Given its proximity to Warden and its rotational capacity, Olson said Idaho has "some real potential to carry canola production now that has not been tapped."

Olson said Scouler has worked with elevators throughout Idaho, including in the state's Eastern region, to begin handling canola.

Rise in Idaho farm deaths worries OSHA

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

BOISE — The director of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Boise office said he's focusing on agricultural workplace safety in Idaho following a rash of on-farm fatalities in Fiscal Year 2014.

In most years, Dave Kearns said Idaho experiences a couple of agricultural fatalities. In the fiscal year that ended last October, however, Kearns said seven of the state's 14 workplace fatalities involved agricultural workers.

"That kind of raised a red flag for us," Kearns said. "We've always known that agriculture was a lot more of a high hazard industry, but

we couldn't really account for why this was occurring."

Kearns said there have been a pair of agricultural fatalities in FY 15 — one highway related and another from a heart attack triggered by an electric fence.

Of the FY 14 fatalities, two involved all-terrain vehicle rollovers. Fatalities also occurred when a tractor started and crushed a mechanic making repairs, when a combine pinned a driver against his truck, when a worker was wedged inside a feed mixer, when a diesel tank exploded while a farm owner was welding it to a trailer and when a potato farm worker was crushed between two trucks.

Tractor rollovers are the major cause of farm fatali-

ties, and many accidents stem from blind spots on heavy equipment, Kearns said.

Kearns said OSHA and Idaho fund free workplace safety consultations for small businesses, including farms, through a program staffed by Boise State University. Kearns said participants receive no citations but must try to improve any deficiencies. OSHA has also offered agricultural safety training at recent community events. Kearns recently spoke about safety to a couple of agricultural groups and has been invited to grower meetings planned for next winter. Web training is available at nasdonline.org through the National Agricultural Safety Database.

Following a wet 2014 Ida-

ho grain harvest with widespread quality problems, Bill Harp, owner of the Michigan-based Safety and Technical Rescue Association, said this could be a bad summer for grain engulfments. Harp said poor quality grain tends to stick to side walls in storage, prompting growers to enter bins to break it up.

Nationwide, Harp said, there have already been five engulfment fatalities in 2015.

His company has trained farm and grain elevator staff, including in Idaho, in proper procedures for entering grain bins — including wearing lifelines monitored by another person and locking out and tagging augers. The business trains fire departments and emergency responders in engulfment rescues.

Large Idaho agricultural businesses have begun installing more modern equipment to prevent employees from falling on the job, said Heath Mann, a sales asso-

ciate with SafeRack LLC. Mann said most farmers still view such equipment as cost prohibitive.

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, which oversees farms of all sizes, reported nine agricultural fatalities in 2014, up from five in 2013, and has had two farm fatalities in 2015. Staff offer training and free safety consultations to farms.

Oregon workers' compensation insurers paid benefits for four agricultural workplace deaths in 2014, three of which involved logging. That's down from nine agricultural death claims — including six in the logging sector — in 2013. Oregon OSHA recently launched an online ATV training program for farm workers at orosh.org/educate/view/ATVSafety.html. The department notes four Oregon workers were killed and seven hospitalized during the past decade from ATV injuries.

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