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# Idaho

## Wine industry gears up for launch of pending AVA

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

LEWISTON, Idaho — Idaho's wine industry and a coalition of economic development groups, cities and counties are gearing up to promote the pending Lewis-Clark Valley American Viticultural Area.

An AVA is a specific wine grape growing region that is federally designated because it has certain growing conditions, boundaries and history.

It's anticipated the proposed AVA will be approved early next year.

It's critically important that the AVA be promoted and marketed heavily and correctly from the get-go, said Idaho Wine Commission Executive Director Moya Shatz-Dolsby. The IWC is using part of an

\$88,000 specialty crop grant it obtained from the Idaho State Department of Agriculture to organize a media tour of the AVA once it's approved.

"You need to make sure you do it right because as soon as that AVA goes live, you're going to get a huge splash in the media," Shatz-Dolsby said. "You want to make sure it's executed well because you have one chance to look good."

IWC will coordinate its efforts with Clearwater Economic Development Association, which received a \$67,000 specialty crop grant from the ISDA to promote and market the AVA.

CEDA will use the funds to implement a marketing launch to introduce the AVA's grape growers and vintners to consumers, tourism operators and

potential markets.

The funding will help ensure the AVA "gets a bang-up launch," said CEDA Economic Development Specialist Deb Smith.

"You really do only have one chance to do it right," she said. "You can't launch year after year. You have to do it right the first time."

CEDA will also create a five-year marketing plan for the AVA.

"You can't just market it for year one and then stop," Smith said. "We're trying to approach this much like a business."

The proposed 306,658-acre Lewis-Clark Valley AVA includes parts of five counties in Idaho and Washington and is centered around a 40-mile long strip of canyons surrounding the cities of Lewiston

and Clarkston.

The area was a premier wine grape growing region in the early 20th Century but that disappeared after Prohibition.

Evidence of the region's former winemaking history, including hundreds of acres of abandoned vineyards, are all around the region, said Melissa Sanborn, owner and winemaker for Colters Creek Winery, which is included in the AVA.

In the early 2000s, wine grapes started to make a comeback in the region and the proposed AVA now includes four wineries and 12 grape growers.

"It's definitely coming back and it's coming back strong," Sanborn said. "We're looking forward to promoting the heck out of the AVA once it's finalized."

## Idaho farm personal income drops 18 percent in first quarter

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — A sharp drop in Idaho farm income was a major reason the state's personal income total dropped slightly during the first three months of 2015.

Total personal income in the state's farming sector was \$2.8 billion on a seasonally adjusted basis during the first quarter of 2015, an 18 percent decrease from the \$3.4 billion total recorded during the fourth quarter of 2014.

Personal income is an individual's total earnings and includes wages, investment earnings and government transfer payments such as unemployment benefits.

Those totals, which were reported by the Idaho Department of Labor, are based on U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data.

Idaho farm profits — the proprietor's profit — totaled \$2 billion during the first quarter, a 23 percent decrease from \$2.6 billion during the fourth quarter of 2014.

Statewide, total personal income dropped by a tenth of a percentage point to 62.76 billion during the first quarter.

Large gains in farm income have helped drive the state's personal income growth the past several years. For example, total Idaho personal income increased 5.3 percent in 2014, in large part because of a 19.7 percent increase in farm income.

But that role was reversed during the first three months of 2015.

According to an IDL news release, several sectors of the economy showed gains in personal income of more than 2 percent during the first quarter "but it was not enough to offset a seasonal decline in farm earning of 18 percent, followed by significant declines in durable goods at 10 percent and mining at nearly 3.8 percent."

Farm personal income in Idaho grew from \$2.37 billion in 2012 to \$2.77 billion in 2013 and \$3.32 billion in 2014.

The drop in farm income didn't surprise University of Idaho agricultural economists. After four straight years of record cash receipts, Idaho agriculture is slowing somewhat, said UI economist Garth Taylor.

**'We're looking at soft prices for every crop in the state basically, except for beef.'**

— Garth Taylor  
Agricultural economist,  
University of Idaho

"We're looking at soft prices for every crop in the state basically, except for beef," he said. "Cash receipts will be way, way down this year."

UI economist Ben Eborn said Idaho cash receipts could be down significantly from last year's record \$9.7 billion total.

"I'm estimating that for all of Idaho agriculture, cash receipts this year will be down about 20 percent," he said.

Dairy accounts for a large share of the state's farm receipts, he said, and milk prices are 28 percent below last year's record level.

Based on the average Idaho milk price of \$16.50 so far in 2015, Eborn said Idaho dairy receipts could be down \$800 million to \$1 billion this year compared with 2014.

## Public learns about ag research at Twilight Tour

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

ABERDEEN, Idaho — USDA researcher Michael Gines is working to discover the mechanism plants use to produce a heart-healthy fiber found in barley and oats, called beta glucan.

Gines, science technician in the oat laboratory at USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Aberdeen, was among several scientists to display details of their research during the July 29 Twilight Tour.

University of Idaho hosts the tour and rotates it annually between its Aberdeen Research & Extension center and its research facility in Kimberly. USDA, which partners with UI on several research projects, is also invited to participate.

Gines explained high levels of beta glucan are ideal for nutrition in oats and barley varieties bred for human consumption, but low levels are preferable in malt barley.

"There are reasons to have high levels, but there are also reasons to have low levels within the plant, and we don't know how it's made yet," Gines said. "We need to determine what makes more and what makes less."

His lab has confirmed a specific gene found in oats and barley is associated with beta



Brian Schneider, a USDA agricultural research technician involved in the Aberdeen, Idaho, potato breeding program, takes the test to guess the potato variety during the July 29 Twilight Tour in Aberdeen. The tour is intended to share the facility's research with the public.

John O'Connell/Capital Press

glucan expression by introducing it into an Arabidopsis plant. The resulting cross produced beta glucan, which normally isn't found in Arabidopsis.

"We know this gene has a large responsibility in the production of beta glucan, but we still don't know how the synthesis works," Gines said.

To solve the puzzle, Gines is seeking to identify proteins that may play a role in beta glucan production. He's also studying other genes that may also be expressed simultaneously with beta glucan production.

Gines said his study is one of many being conducted around the country targeting beta glucan levels in cereals.

Jeff Stark, superintendent at

UI's Aberdeen facility, estimates 200 people attended the Twilight Tour to learn about such research efforts, and to enjoy a free barbecue and games for children. While other field days at the facility are geared toward crop advisors and producers, Stark said the Twilight Tour fosters "social interaction with people in the community so they're more familiar with us."

The event included tours of research programs, such as North America's largest potato breeding program, involving both UI and USDA, and native plant research. UI weed scientist Pam Hutchinson gave samples of a potato salad she made with an edible common weed, purslane. USDA aquaculture researchers

served smoked rainbow trout.

Aberdeen potato farmer C.J. Harris, who brought his Boy Scout troop to the Twilight Tour, visits the facility frequently to inquire about diseases and other crop issues.

## Committee reviews PCN program

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Members of an Idaho State Department of Agriculture advisory committee are mulling eight alternatives to the state's current pale cyst nematode eradication program.

Options considered during a July 24 meeting ranged from completely deregulating potato cyst nematodes, including PCN and golden nematode, to establishing a "generally infested area" surrounding known infested fields, with special restrictions on crops and equipment leaving its boundaries.

Idaho has the only known PCN infestation in the U.S. It was first detected in 2006 and is confined to 10,316 total regulated acres, including 2,897 infested acres. The 26 infested fields are confined to a 7.5-mile radius of Bonneville and Bingham counties.

Associated fields can be released from the program following two negative surveys after host-crop production. Infested fields require a series of tests and three host-crop plantings without PCN detection to be deregulated. This season, the program had its first infested field returned to commercial production for evaluation. Half of the infested fields have undetectable PCN levels, seven infested fields have undergone at least one treatment and six infested fields await their first treatment.

Regulated growers have complained the current program — which imposes special sanitary restrictions on equipment and crops from regulated fields and restricts potato production

in infested fields — is overly restrictive. Some regulated growers have filed a lawsuit alleging PCN treatments with methyl bromide have compromised the quality of their alfalfa, contrary to USDA assurances.

"I can't do anything with my soil because of that methyl bromide," regulated grower Bryan Searle told program officials at the meeting. "You've lost our trust."

Jonathan Jones, national policy manager with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, emphasized APHIS isn't proposing the options, which have been offered solely for discussion purposes.

"We're very comfortable with how the program is progressing," Jones said.

Strategies suggested by an APHIS technical working group of experts included:

- Offering a single APHIS-funded field treatment and requiring growers to wait 30 years for viable cysts to die before planting spuds in infested fields.

- Implementing a four-year rotation with a resistant European variety or a resistant Russet yet to be bred, also including a "trap crop" to stimulate cysts to hatch in the absence of a viable host.

- Utilizing a six-year rotation with a resistant variety, a susceptible variety and a trap crop.

- Establishing a "generally infested area" encompassing infested fields in which free movement of equipment would be allowed without sanitary and testing, but equipment and crops leaving the area would be treated as com-

ing from an infested field.

Strategies suggested by a group of regulated growers included:

- Having APHIS regulate all of Idaho as infested but allowing the unregulated movement of commodities within the state.

- Allowing growers to plant susceptible crops in infested fields but to suppress PCN populations with chemical applications and trap crops.

- Deregulating PCN, including all of the Idaho acres and nearly 313,000 acres infested by golden nematode in New York.

- Having the government purchase infested fields and restrict potato production.

Jones explained many of the options, such as regulating the entire state or deregulating PCN, would likely lead to lost relationships with trade partners. Establishing one or more "generally infested areas" would rope in many growers who aren't currently regulated without suppressing the PCN population, he said.

Jones said it could take several years to develop a resistant Russet, and the resistant European variety already approved for planting in North America, Innovator, is susceptible to bacterial ring rot and has yellow flesh, which is less popular among U.S. consumers.

He said buying fields would likely require an act of Congress.

Jared Wattenbarger, who heads the group of affected growers, believes compensating growers and "locking down those fields" is the best option.

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