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Idaho FFA raffling tractor

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — Students involved in Idaho FFA hope to raise \$50,000 by raffling a 1975 Massey-Ferguson 275 tractor.

The tractor, which Canyon County farmer Sid Freeman displayed outside Idaho State University's Holt Arena during the recent 2016 Ag Expo, is fitted with a farm-hand loader on the front and a rear blade. Raffle tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased from any Idaho FFA member or online at idffafoundation.org.

Freeman is founder of the Idaho FFA

Foundation's annual tractor raffle. He said 60 percent of the raffle revenue goes toward scholarships for FFA members. The remainder of the funding supports Idaho FFA Foundation programs, such as the state convention in April, a leadership program for underclassmen in February and career-development competitions hosted in June in Moscow, Idaho.

Freeman said the drawing will take place during the state conference, and he offered to deliver the grand prize to any winner residing within a reasonable distance of his farm.

Freeman said FFA students hope to break their current record of selling 3,750 tickets.

"The previous tractors have all been antique tractors," Freeman said. "The agricultural education advisers said if we had a little newer model type of tractor, maybe we could sell more tickets and we could reach that goal this year."

Freeman said his organization purchased the tractor for \$5,000 from an owner in Marsing, Idaho. The owner gave FFA a good deal and will be allowed to write off on taxes the difference between the sale price and the tractor's book value of about \$6,500.

The tractor has new tires, and Massey-Ferguson agreed to be a sponsor, providing replacement parts and mechanical work.

Idaho grower to head NPC

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

AMERICAN FALLS, Idaho — Southeast Idaho grower Jim Tiede has been elected as the National Potato Council's president for 2016.

Tiede, who was elected during NPC's annual meeting Jan. 14-15 in Las Vegas, is a past chairman of both the U.S. Potato Board and the Idaho Potato Commission. Tiede has also served as vice president of legislative and governmental affairs and vice president of grower relations with NPC.

NPC's mission is to provide a unified voice for U.S. potato growers on regulatory, legislative and trade issues.

Tiede is encouraging potato growers to register for the upcoming Potato D.C. Fly-in, scheduled for Feb. 22-25. Growers from around the country participate in the annual Fly-in in Washington, D.C., for the opportunity to tell regulators and lawmakers about the challenges they face, and actions they would like to see taken to help their industry.

"Help us deliver the message to lawmakers," Tiede said. "That direct impact is really important. I'd encourage everybody to go online and register and come to D.C."

Tiede said he'll be focused on five main issues when he meets with lawmakers and officials from federal agencies such as the USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Increasing truck weights on federal interstate highways in states where limits remain low to make agricultural shipping more efficient will be a top priority. Idaho recently succeeded in get-

ting authority for its own interstate truck limits.

Tiede said NPC will support a uniform, national standard for voluntary labeling of genetically modified organisms in food to avoid a patchwork of statewide standards.

NPC will continue lobbying against the federal change to the Waters of the U.S. policy. Tiede considers the revision to be an EPA overreach, allowing the agency to expand its authority to include "every pothole and ditch in the country."

Tiede said NPC will continue requesting stable funding for potato breeding programs, having received a 40 percent increase in that category in the most recent budget.

Tiede said his organization will also continue its battle in Mexico's court system to restore access to fresh U.S. potatoes beyond a 26-kilometer zone from the U.S. border with Mexico. Fresh potato trade with all of Mexico was briefly allowed in 2014, but was closed after Mexican potato growers filed several requests for temporary injunctions and constitutional lawsuits.

"The USDA has absolutely been a champion for us in that regard," Tiede said.

As president, Tiede will be tasked as president with hosting NPC's summer meeting July 13-15 in Park City, Utah.

Also in Las Vegas, Britt Raybould, of St. Anthony, Idaho, was elected as a new member of NPC's Executive Committee and will serve as vice president of the Legislative and Government Affairs Committee.

Cully Easterday, of Pasco, Wash., also remains on the Executive Committee.

Lawmakers approve new rule on cottage foods

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho lawmakers have approved a new rule designed to provide cottage food producers with the consistency and legal certainty they have been seeking.

The House Health and Welfare Committee voted unanimously Jan. 21 to adopt a pending rule that spells out what cottage foods are and exempts them from the state's food establishment regulations.

Cottage foods are products produced in home kitchens and sold directly to consumers.

Though the state's seven health districts have allowed cottage foods to be sold without regulation for at least two decades, the industry was never before specifically addressed in state laws or rules.

Cottage food producers told lawmakers last year that left them in legal limbo and was holding the industry back. They also said the districts' handling of cottage foods was inconsistent.

A bill that would have set state standards for cottage food producers in state law was withdrawn last year after facing tough scrutiny from some lawmakers and opposition from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare,



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Members of the Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, which represents cottage food producers, speak with Rep. Caroline Troy, R-Genesee, second from right, on Jan. 21, after she and other lawmakers approved a new rule that addresses cottage foods. Cottage food producers have been pushing for state recognition of their industry since last year and Troy has backed that effort.

which argued that addressing the issue through rules was preferable to passing a new law.

The Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, which represents many cottage food producers, helped lead the push for state recognition of the industry.

Cottage food producers were seeking a clear definition of cottage foods, the right to sell their products directly to consumers and consistency across the health districts, IORC board member Julia

Page told committee members.

"The rules you are considering today accomplish these goals and will help our members avoid the delays, uncertainty and cost they have experienced in the past when the health districts had different ... requirements that differed from place to place," she said.

She said the rules "will unlock entrepreneurship and vitality across the state, by making this home-grown, small-scale business model available all over Idaho."

UI launches new potato websites

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — The University of Idaho launched two new websites promoting Idaho potatoes during its recent 2016 Potato Conference, hosted Jan. 20-21 on the Idaho State University campus.

One new site, uidaho.edu/potatoes, will highlight UI's efforts to aid growers, as well as career opportunities for students interested in the industry. The other site, doceocenter.org/node/539, includes a potato-centric curriculum for sixth- and seventh-grade teachers to utilize in their classrooms.

The sites were developed as part of the university's efforts to emphasize its potato research as part of a Program of Distinction, which provides special funding opportunities and

seeks to get researchers across several disciplines to work together toward common goals.

uidaho.edu/potatoes will be updated regularly and will include the latest pest alerts, updates on UI potato research, UI potato news and publications, current potato psyllid numbers and zebra chip recommendations, storage data, variety news, details about upcoming potato conferences and meetings and other information of importance to growers.

Amy Calabretta, marketing and communications manager with UI's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, said the website will feature several videos, including one by UI's Pale Cyst Nematode program director Louise-Marie Dandurand, and has been designed to function well on a tablet or smart phone.

For students, Calabretta said

the new site will include information on career opportunities and features on program graduates in the industry to show potential students "if they include in UI, there will be a career waiting for them."

Calabretta has requested that industry sources offer ideas for good career-profile candidates. The site will include a feature for users to offer their feedback that will remain live for a few weeks.

"We need more students in plant sciences," Calabretta said. "What we want to do here is give them a place to go and see all of the careers available in the potato industry."

UI's new junior high school curriculum offers four interactive potato lessons that meet Idaho standards for science, technology, engineering, math, history, agriculture, geography, nutrition and health.

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