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# Idaho

## East Idaho quinoa processing facility opens

Facility will allow growers to seek out buyers, add acreage of exotic crop

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS — A Driggs, Idaho, farmer has found the funding he needs to launch a locally based, commercial-scale quinoa processing facility, enticed by the promise of a new crop in his challenging growing area.

The processing facility — which the owner, Jeremiah Clark, believes to be the first operation in the U.S. to process quinoa for commercial sale — opened on Oct. 21.

Farming in a cool area at 6,400 feet, Wyatt Penfold has relied on a crop rotation of mostly seed potatoes and barley. For the past two years, however, he's had good luck with raising quinoa for Clark.

"It's a great crop for cooler climates like we have," Penfold said. "We're just trying to support it because it's a great opportunity for people in our part of the world to have another crop to grow."

Native to the Andean region of South America, quinoa is a gluten-free grain touted as a "super food" due to its



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Jeremiah Clark looks over quinoa plants he's raising to produce his own varieties fit for Eastern Idaho conditions. Clark opened a new quinoa processing facility in Idaho Falls during late October.

nutritional content.

According to trade figures cited by Clark, the U.S. imported 55 percent of the 2015 global quinoa production, which totaled 108,000 metric tons.

Clark is now processing quinoa raised in Eastern Idaho during this season and 2015. With a couple of growing seasons under his belt and a processing facility in place, Clark — who contracted for 600 acres from seven growers

in 2016 — said he's ready to aggressively pursue more and larger contracts with customers, and then to potentially expand his acreage with his current grower base. He also hopes to find new organic growers, as customers have assured him they'll buy as much organic quinoa as he can produce.

"Having the quinoa facility going, now we'll be able to go out and start looking for buyers," Clark said. "We

wanted to make sure we can consistently do what we want to do."

About three years ago, Clark made his own "laboratory-scale" equipment to clean quinoa for seed. It cleaned about 100 pounds per hour. His new system, housed in a 60- by 40-foot building, can clean up to 1,000 pounds per hour.

"I kind of feel this system could be a pilot system," Clark said, envisioning he'll

eventually need to expand again to a facility capable of processing 10,000 pounds per hour. "I think we'll outgrow this facility pretty fast."

Clark, who had roughly \$300,000 to invest in the plant, built his de-bearder, aspirator and sizer from scratch and retrofitted an existing seed cleaner for quinoa to keep his costs down. Still, he couldn't meet his budget, until Penfold invested an unspecified amount.

"Penfold made it happen now," Clark said, adding details of the partnership are still being worked out.

Clark is developing his own quinoa variety, Kailey, which he said should mature earlier, produce larger seeds and increase grower yields by up to 300 pounds per acre. University of Idaho plans to increase his Kailey seed in greenhouses this winter, and he'll further expand the seed in growers' fields next season.

In the meantime, his commercial growers will raise a blend of shorter quinoa varieties. Clark has enough seed to plant up to 6,000 commercial acres.

Clark is also supplying quinoa to a California business that plans to open another commercial quinoa processing plant early next year.

## Idaho Legislature gains several new farmers, ranchers

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — The 2017 Idaho Legislature will convene in January without a handful of farmers or ranchers who either retired or lost in the May primary.

But farmers and ranchers will continue to make up about 20 percent of the state's 105-member legislative body next year because of several new pickups during the Nov. 8 election.

"We gained several farmers and ranchers," said Rep. Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, one of at least 21 Idaho legislators who are farmers, ranchers or agribusiness owners.

Those include Carl Crabtree, a North Idaho rancher; Megan Blanksma and Christy Zito, both southwestern Idaho farmers; and Karey Hanks, an East Idaho grower.

Missing when the 2017 session starts will be Rep. Ken Andrus, a Republican rancher from Lava Hot Springs, the long-time chairman of the House Agricultural Affairs Committee who is retiring.

The session will also be without Rep. Merrill Beyeler, a Republican rancher from Leadore who lost during the primary, and Rep. Gayle Batt, R-Wilder, who served on the ag committee and is retiring.

The producer who faced the stiffest challenge Nov. 8 was Rep. Steven Miller, a Republican farmer and rancher from Fairfield, who won a nail-biter over his Democrat challenger with 50.7 percent of the vote.

Miller won a similar tight race two years ago against former Olympic high jump gold medalist and track and field legend Dick Fosbury.

His district includes Blaine County, a heavily Democrat county, as well as parts of rural Gooding, Camas and Lincoln counties, which are heavily agricultural and Republican.

"Miller lost Blaine County huge but he came on real big in the rural counties," said Milk Producers of Idaho Executive Director Brent Olmstead.

Because most Blaine County precincts were counted first, "I started down and stayed down until Lincoln came in," Miller said. "We were up all night" watching returns.

Farmers or ranchers who won re-election unopposed included: Sens. Bert Brackett, Steven Bair and Jeff Siddoway, and Reps. Scott Bedke, Clark Kauffman, Dell Raybould, Julie VanOrden, Marc Gibbs, Tom Loertscher and Van Burtenshaw.

Producers who won opposed contests included: Reps. Mike Moyle, John Vander Woude and Boyle and Sens. Jim Guthrie, Jim Patrick and Mark Harris.

## Idaho growers protest Gateway power line

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — An attorney representing Southern Idaho growers and Power and Cassia counties has formally protested the Bureau of Land Management's preferred route for the proposed Gateway West power transmission line.

The agency's preference for the 500-kilovolt power line, stretching 1,200 miles

from Glenrock, Wyo., to Melba, Idaho, would cross roughly 200 miles of private land.

According to attorney Doug Balfour's Oct. 31 protest, the BLM has reneged on its promise to reconsider alternatives crossing more public land upon completion of a permanent sage grouse management plan.

Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power, a division of PacifiCorp, proposed the high-voltage line in 2007. In

response, farmers in Power and Cassia counties formed informal organizations to support a legal defense for growers in its path.

Balfour said aerial applicators avoid fields with high-voltage lines, which also block pivots and complicate field work, significantly reducing land values.

"Many of the growers say, 'If I have a transmission tower in my field, it becomes (Conservation Reserve Program) because I can't work around it,'" Balfour said.

In November 2013, BLM approved a record of decision for eight of 10 sections of its preferred route, allowing time for the agency to address concerns about a stretch impacting the Morley Nelson Birds of Prey National Conservation Area in Western Idaho. The BLM's Oct. 7 approval of a final supplemental environmental impact statement encompassing a pathway through the refuge triggered a 30-day protest period.

Balfour explained BLM's preferred route sought to avoid sage grouse habitat on public land, based on interim guidelines restricting development in sage grouse habitat.

Balfour said he presented BLM with a grower-endorsed option passing evenly through



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Attorney Doug Balfour, who represents growers and county commissioners in Idaho's Power and Cassia counties, discusses his formal protest of the proposed Gateway West transmission line route.

public and private land — and the permanent sage grouse management plan BLM ultimately approved would allow for line construction on the public land within his route.

However, he said the agency has been reluctant to revisit the section affecting his growers due to a federal lawsuit filed by the State of Idaho alleging BLM made changes to the management plan without adequately considering public comment.

Balfour has requested a meeting with the head of the BLM in Idaho and has asked that plans be put on hold until Idaho's lawsuit runs its course.

Rockland, Idaho, dryland farmer Cory Kress, who heads the Power County grower group, said the line would pass near his home and spoil the aesthetics of fields that look the same as they did a centu-

ry ago, while making farming more "cumbersome." Kress said several area farmers who aren't affected by the line have contributed legal funding, concerned about the precedent the project could set.

"That's the biggest frustration — the BLM has put a handful of birds that ultimately get hunted anyway ahead of us," Kress said.

BLM project manager Jim Stobaugh said a record of decision on the two sections is expected before the year's end, and the preferred route was chosen to minimize impacts on private landowners.

Rocky Mountain Power spokesman Dave Eskelsen said his company is pleased the project is moving forward, and agreements are reached with private landowners without resorting to condemnation in the "vast majority of cases."

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