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# Idaho

## Idaho farm cash receipts drop \$290M from 2015

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — Total farm gate cash receipts in Idaho during 2016 were down an estimated \$290 million, or 4 percent, from 2015.

Total cash receipts for six of the state's top eight farm commodities decreased in 2016 when compared to 2015, according to the University of Idaho report, "The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2016."

"Last year wasn't a rosy year for just about all" of the state's top ag commodities, UI Agricultural Economist Garth Taylor told lawmakers Jan. 5 while presenting the report's highlights. "Sugar beets is really the only bright spot we had in the ag economy in 2016."

In their annual report, Taylor and UI Extension Ag Economist Ben Eborn project that farm cash receipts totaled \$7.17 billion in 2016, down from \$7.46 billion 2015.

That follows a 15 percent decline in 2015 that stopped a four-year streak of record farm cash receipts in Idaho that began in 2011. Cash receipts peaked at a record \$8.77 billion in 2014.

Yield records were broken for several of the state's main crops in 2016 and total production was up significantly for many crops, Taylor said.



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Dry beans are harvested near Nampa, Idaho, last September. Farm cash receipts in Idaho totaled \$7.2 billion in 2016, down 4 percent from 2015, according to projections by University of Idaho ag economists.

"The fault is prices," he said.

According to the report, the dairy industry brought in \$2.3 billion in milk cash receipts in 2016, a 1 percent

decline from 2015. Milk production increased 4 percent over 2015 but prices averaged 5 percent lower.

Cattle and calf prices were off 37 percent in 2016

but the beef cow inventory was up 11 percent and cattle and calf cash receipts totaled \$1.7 billion in 2016, down 11 percent.

Potatoes remained the

state's top cash crop with an estimated \$851 million in cash receipts during 2016, a 2 percent decline from 2015. Potato production was up 7 percent thanks to record

yields of 430 hundredweight per acre but the average price in 2016 was down 4 percent to \$6.80 per hundredweight.

Wheat revenues totaled \$412 million, off 11 percent from 2015, as a 14 percent increase in production (102 million bushels) was offset by prices that averaged 24 percent lower (\$4.33 per bushel).

Cash receipts for hay last year are projected at \$403 million, an 8 percent decrease from 2015. Production increased 11 percent to 5.4 million tons but the average price dropped 20 percent to \$139 per ton.

Barley revenues increased a projected 16 percent to \$304 million. Average yield of 107 bushels per acre was up 10 bushels over 2015 and the average price was 2 percent higher.

Sugar beet revenues are projected at \$284 million in 2016, up 2 percent from 2015.

Beet prices averaged \$42.67 per ton, down 6 percent, but production was up 1 percent to 6.7 million tons thanks to record yields that averaged 39.2 tons per acre.

Dry bean cash receipts in Idaho totaled \$68 million in 2016, a 9 percent decrease from 2015.

Adjusted for inflation, 2016 farm cash receipts in Idaho are 35 percent higher than the 37-year average.

## Study will develop model of Treasure Valley aquifer

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — The Idaho Department of Water Resources is teaming up with the U.S. Geological Survey to create a detailed flow model of the aquifer system that underlies the rapidly growing Treasure Valley.

The five-year project will

provide water managers with a tool they can use to help ensure the valley's urban and agricultural areas continue to receive the water they depend on in this desert climate in southwestern Idaho.

"We're trying to figure out how much water we have and where it's going," said IDWR Hydrology Section Manager Sean Vincent.

The Treasure Valley is home to 38 percent of the state's 1.63 million people, as well as 8,000 farms.

The region's population has expanded rapidly, to 650,000 people, and shows no signs of slowing.

COMPASS, a southwestern Idaho planning organization, projects the Treasure Valley population will top 1

million by 2040.

Creating a detailed and reliable aquifer flow model will be "a way to help water managers allocate the water so that everyone gets their water," Vincent said.

The model, which will evaluate how groundwater and surface water interact, will help ensure there is enough water for the hundreds of thousands of new residents expected in the valley over the coming decades, said USGS Hydrologist Jim Bartolino.

But there are also more than 350,000 acres of irrigated farmland in the Treasure Valley and those landowners need to continue to receive the water they have the rights to.

"Groundwater is used for irrigation in the Treasure Valley as well," Bartolino said. "By getting a better handle on what the groundwater supply is and how it's moving ... that will help agricultural supplies as well. I think it's something we're going to get a lot of use out of when it's done."

There is a significant amount of existing data about the Treasure Valley aquifer, Vincent said, but



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

The Boise River in June. Idaho Department of Water Resources and the U.S. Geological Survey will develop a detailed groundwater flow model of the Treasure Valley aquifer. The state will contribute \$2.5 million toward the five-year project and USGS will provide federal matching funds.

the aquifer is a complex one and more information is needed.

One of the data gaps the study will fill is how much shallow groundwater is discharged from the aquifer through several agricultural drains along the Boise River from Eagle to Parma.

To measure that, the USGS this fall installed 10 new stream gauges on the drains.

Knowing how much water is coming out of the drains and into the Boise River "is going to be one of the biggest improvements in this model," Bartolino said.

The Idaho Water Resource Board will provide

\$2.5 million over five years toward the study and USGS will provide federal matching funds for a portion of the work.

The model, which is expected to be completed in 2021, "will provide water users, the (IDWR) and planners with an additional tool to evaluate where water is available in the Treasure Valley, how deep wells need to be and where there are limitations on the supply of groundwater," IWRB member Albert Barker said in a news release.

IDWR and USGS will create a technical advisory committee to gather input from stakeholders and share information.

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