

Subscribe to our weekly Idaho email newsletter at [CapitalPress.com/newsletters](mailto:CapitalPress.com/newsletters)

## Idaho

# Lamb Weston launches 'Idaho Grown' frozen potato line

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

EAGLE, Idaho — A major manufacturer of frozen potato products has launched a product line made exclusively with spuds grown in Idaho.

Lamb Weston's new Grown in Idaho brand of frozen potato products will include seven potato varieties — crispy potato puffs, super crispy crinkle-cut fries, hand-cut style fries, thick-cut hash browns, super crispy steak-cut fries, crispy hash brown dice and super crispy shoestring fries.

The Grown in Idaho label is trademarked by the Idaho Potato Commission but offered to any food manufacturer willing to source and promote only Idaho potatoes for a product line.

IPC President and CEO Frank Muir said he pitched the concept several years ago to all of the frozen processors and has been working ever since to get one of them to adopt it.

"This is a pretty significant message to our growers about the importance Lamb Weston has in regards to the Idaho brand," Muir said. "They have done their research, and clearly there's a strong message that Lamb Weston is committed to Idaho potato farmers and the Idaho brand."

Matt Cardon, senior brand manager with Lamb Weston, said the Winco supermarket carries the product locally, and it's also available through other retailers nationwide, including Jewel in the Chicago area.

Cardon said Grown in Idaho

has been one of the most successful launches in the company's history, garnering "tremendous" acceptance from retailers.

"We anticipate distribution to grow for the next six months such that most, if not all, major retailers will be carrying the new line by the end of October," Cardon said.

Lamb Weston will manufacture the product at its Twin Falls plant using existing production capacity, according to the IPC.

"Future line extensions and new products are part of our growth plan," Cardon said.

Cardon believes using the Idaho brand provides transparency about the source of the ingredients and lends the products a premium reputation.



Courtesy Idaho Potato Commission

Lamb Weston has launched a Grown in Idaho brand of frozen potato products in partnership with the Idaho Potato Commission.

## SIPCO hires new executive director

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

CALDWELL, Idaho — The Southern Idaho Potato Cooperative's new executive director, Chuck Stadick, is a veteran at negotiating frozen potato contracts.

However, he previously sat opposite growers at the table, working as raw product procurement director with a major processor, J.R. Simplot Co., until his retirement in 2009.

Now that he's serving Idaho farmers who raise spuds for processing, Stadick said he's emphasizing improved communication with organizations representing Washington and Oregon growers in negotiations. He's also started a dialogue with past contacts from fast food restaurant chains, hoping the restaurant industry and his growers will develop a better understanding of each other and their needs.

SIPCO's previous executive director, Dan Hargraves, of Pocatello, intends to remain with the organization, crunching numbers that will help Stadick in his negotiations. Stadick joined SIPCO in time to aid Hargraves in negotiations with Lamb Weston and McCain Frozen Foods.

A chief concern for Stadick is the roughly 7 percent drop in processed contract prices paid to growers during the past few years. This season's contract continued the decline, cutting grower payments by 2.5 to 3 percent, depending on the contract and the variety.



Courtesy Valli-Hi Angus Ranch

Hi-Gest 660 alfalfa, developed to have low levels of lignin, is harvested at Valli-Hi Angus Ranch in Caldwell, Idaho.

## Experts see promise in expanding production of low-lignin alfalfa

By JOHN O'CONNELL  
Capital Press

CALDWELL, Idaho — Bill Jenkins had to delay his first alfalfa cutting by nearly two weeks this season due to rain, and consequently, much of his crop didn't make dairy grade.

However, the Caldwell farmer and rancher said the 115 acres of hay he'd planted in Hi-Gest 660 — a new variety bred by Alforex Seeds to have lower levels of an indigestible fiber called lignin — tested well above minimum dairy quality standards despite the late harvest.

Forage industry experts predict new low-lignin varieties will be the next big craze in the industry, boosting hay quality and providing growers with a wider window to harvest and still make dairy grade. Lignin, a component of cell walls that lends rigidity to plants but limits its digestibility of fiber, comprises about 7 percent of alfalfa. Alfalfa is nearly a quarter fiber, so gains in fiber digestibility can have a major impact on nutrition.

Alforex, a division of Dow

Agrisciences, has released several conventionally bred Hi-Gest varieties since 2014 — claiming they reduce lignin by 7 to 10 percent — and recently received its first variety patent for Hi-Gest 660 about a month ago. The other player in the low-lignin market, Forage Genetics International, has released HarvXtra, a variety developed with biotechnology with resistance to glyphosate herbicide and 12 to 20 percent less lignin.

Jenkins, with Valli-Hi Angus Ranch, said the Hi-Gest seed costs about \$3 extra per pound, but it saves him roughly \$55 per ton when the reduced lignin means the difference between feeder and dairy grade. Last year, four out of his five Hi-Gest cuttings were dairy quality.

"I've been impressed with it," Jenkins said.

Don Miller, director of product development with Alforex, said his product's lignin reduction equates to roughly 2 pounds of extra milk per ton of forage.

"For years we looked at improving disease resistance and

yields, and now we're trying to improve alfalfa for forage quality," Miller said. "I think here in the next few years you'll see more and more low-lignin varieties."

FGI has a pending lawsuit against Alforex in U.S. District Court, alleging marketing claims about its low-lignin lines are exaggerated and that they're "only comparable to other conventional alfalfa varieties already on the market."

Miller said 10,000 acres of Hi-Gest alfalfa were planted in the year following its release. Neither Alforex nor FGI had acreage estimates for 2017 but both companies say sales are up sharply.

HarvXtra, developed over the course of 15 years, was released for limited commercial availability in 2016 and was made available throughout the U.S. in January.

"Farmers can maintain a normal harvest schedule and achieve higher forage quality than conventional varieties, or they can delay harvest for seven to 10 days for higher yield potential without sacrificing quality," told Capital Press via email.

## Cattlemen get update on traceability program

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

JACKPOT, Nev. — Beef producers during a recent meeting got an overview of USDA's animal disease traceability program and the impact renewed trade with China will have.

Idaho State Veterinarian Bill Barton told Idaho Cattle Association members the program requires that all beef cattle 18 months and older possess official individual identification and be accompanied by a certificate of veterinary inspection when crossing state lines.

Agreements between Idaho and surrounding states allow the use of common brands as identification. The certificate of veterinary inspection, however, must note that the animals have individual identification although it doesn't have to list them individually, Barton said.

All dairy cattle regardless of age have to possess identification, and those must be listed individually in the certificate of veterinary inspection.

In recent listening session to determine how the program is going, USDA made it clear it currently has no intention of requiring identification for beef cattle under the age of 18 months, he said.

"That will probably occur sometime in the future, however," he said.

A recent producer survey on traceability by a trade publication shows "the industry is buying into the need to have individual animal ID," he said.

As state veterinarian, he's glad to see that. Without individual identification, the traceability process is much more difficult when an incident occurs, he said.

Traceability is a big issue in renewed beef trade with

China, where U.S. beef had been banned since 2003. Before the ban, the U.S. supplied 70 percent of China's beef imports. Since that time, China has emerged as a major beef buyer, importing \$2.5 billion worth of beef in 2016, he said.

"There is huge opportunity in China — huge — but there are a lot of hoops to jump through," he said.

The export verification program is based on program compliant tags (PCT) that have to be applied under USDA's official program. PCT is a one-time, tamper evident tag. The certifying company must control their use.

If the tag is lost, secondary identification must be cross referenced for a new tag. That would include ranch specific tags, but brands will not qualify as they're considered group ID, he said.

"Exceptions may be granted, but I wouldn't rely on that," he said.

All records of the animals processed for export to China must be retained for one year beyond the date of export. That means cow-calf producers have to keep records for three years after the birth of the calf. Cattle have to be accompanied by documentation when they are shipped to an approved slaughter plant, he said.

Eligible beef products must be derived from cattle less than 30 months of age. Eligible cattle must be free of growth promotants and can either be born, raised and slaughtered in the U.S. or imported from Canada and Mexico for slaughter in the U.S.

Barton said there could be potential problems regarding cattle from Canada and Mexico if tags are lost and potential problems if U.S. beef is commingled with beef from other sources once it arrives in China.



Bill Barton

## INTRODUCING THE DAILY CAPITAL PRESS

AN EMAIL NEWSLETTER FEATURING THAT DAY'S AG NEWS FROM AROUND THE NORTHWEST

FREE WITH YOUR CAPITAL PRESS SUBSCRIPTION

You don't have to wait until Friday to get the latest Ag news and information. As part of your subscription, you'll receive the Daily Capital Press in your inbox each Monday through Friday.

It's easy to get this additional benefit for subscribers. Simply activate your account at [CapitalPress.com/cp/Activate](http://CapitalPress.com/cp/Activate) and you'll automatically receive the Daily Capital Press. Plus, you'll get unlimited access to the website — another subscriber benefit.

Capital Press  
The West's Ag Weekly

Have questions? Call  
800.882.6789