

Capital Press

The West's **Ag** Weekly

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2018

★ VOLUME 91, NUMBER 43

WWW.CAPITALPRESS.COM

\$2.00



new state



IT'S ABOUT THE BRAND

Commission CEO bullish on state's most famous crop

When is a potato more than just a potato? When it's an Idaho potato.

Just ask Frank Muir, president and CEO of the Idaho Potato Commission for the past 15 years. As the commission's top executive, his job is to convince consumers from Savannah, Ga., to Seattle, Wash., and beyond that the Idaho potato is special.

"Were these potatoes grown in Idaho? That is what we want people to ask," he said.



Idaho grows excellent potatoes for reasons that include warm days and cool nights; volcanic, mineral-rich soil; and mountain-fed streams that tumble into a sophisticated reservoir system, Muir said. "Our marketing that makes a mystical place of Idaho, across the world, for growing potatoes."

Many Idaho potatoes also contain a higher percentage of solids, which can be advantageous for processing, he said.

When Muir tells you potatoes are worth getting excited about, it's based on the 37 years he's spent helping to turn around some of the country's best-known brands.

Higher profile

The Idaho potato's higher profile during the past 15 years has contributed to an 80 percent jump in farm-gate revenue over the period, thanks in large part to the commission's sizable investment in national marketing.

Potato organizations in the state say the brand-building is a success worth maintaining.

"There is more brand recognition for Idaho potatoes than for almost anything in the country," said Potato Growers of Idaho Executive Director Keith Esplin. "If they would quit that, in a few years potatoes would be a generic product."

Idaho is the nation's leading potato producer, accounting for about 33 percent of the fall crop each year, according to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center.

for Idaho potatoes than for almost

Keith Esplin, Potato Growers of Idaho Executive Director



placed



en

lease announcing the

tired as president of the Oregon Farm

tion in part because of his respect for

"I've always been a big believer in

"This was an ideal opportunity for

increase

ating loans, microloans for small and

"I think the programs are useful,

Among other features, FSA

volved in farming, according to the

"When you spend that much time

ple that supported you, sure it is hard to

tunities for change there that may not

"There are a lot of young, bright

the capabilities and more than I had,"

In addition to serving as Oregon



Fish and

ago.

tensive damage.

"I'm frustrated, really frustrated,"

there'

Fish and

