

Sugar beet harvest mostly on track in challenging weather

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Hazelton, Idaho, farmer Randy Grant on Oct. 21 had about two-thirds of his beet crop out of the ground, and counting.

“We expect to conclude around Oct. 25 barring any major weather issues,” said Grant, the Idaho Sugar Beet Growers Association board president.

Beet growers in southern Idaho said the crop looks good but probably won’t match that of 2018, a banner year. The ’19 season was wetter, slower-starting and cooler. A hard freeze occurred Oct. 9-10.

“On our farm, yield is going to be average this year, probably slightly less than last year,” Grant said. He expects his crop’s sugar content to be about average. Yield and sugar content last year were above the long-term averages.

A cool spring proba-

bly slowed growth, he said, though “sugar beets don’t like it extremely hot. We didn’t have any really hot weather, so we probably fared pretty well through summer.

“It’s a pretty typical year,” Grant said.

American Falls farmer LaMar Isaak on Oct. 22 said the beet harvest at his American Falls-area farm was around 60% completed, close to average for the time of year.

“We are pushing really hard, trying to do the best we can,” he said.

“It’s a good crop,” Isaak said. “Maybe not the best, but it looks good and the quality seems good.”

Wet, cold conditions last spring delayed planting on the farm by 10 to 14 days. The cooler summer curtailed peak-season heat units, which can reduce beet size.

“We dodged a bullet on that cold” Oct. 9-10, he said. “It would have been nice if it never happened, but I think



Amalgamated Sugar

Sugar beet harvest is in full swing in southern Idaho and parts of eastern Oregon.

the crop is OK. It’s not going to grow anymore, that’s for sure. It’s time to get them out of the ground.”

Isaak said he expects a crop that is good, but not to the level of 2018. “Last year was a great crop.”

Harvest can start later in the lower-elevation western Treasure Valley, near the Oregon border, because hard freezes typically don’t come as early and farmers first harvest other crops such as onions and silage corn.

the growing season’s additional moisture produced a bit more fungal pressure in parts of the Treasure Valley.

Grower-owned cooperative Amalgamated Sugar through Oct. 21 was about 62% through harvest, a day to a day and a half ahead of 2018 and on track with the long-term average, said Vice President of Agriculture Pat Laubacher.

“This is a little surprising given that many growers were delayed starting their sugar beet harvest because they were still harvesting onions, potatoes and other temperature-sensitive crops,” he said. “Growers have persevered under difficult conditions this October.”

Amalgamated expects yields to be around the four-year average — 39.8 tons per acre, which trails 2018 by 1.8%, Laubacher said. Yields since 2009 have been steadily increasing.

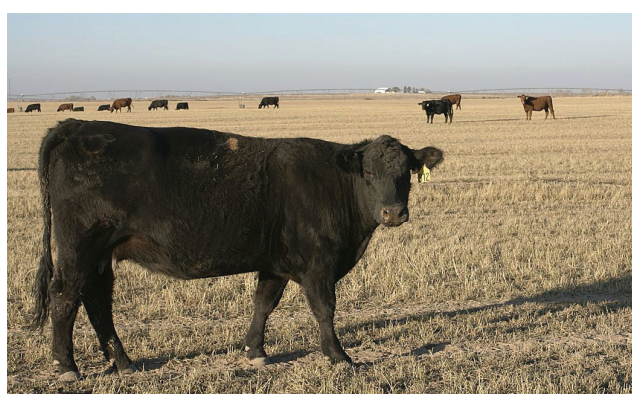
Sugar content “continues

to develop,” he said, “and we expect to be near 17.75% when harvest is completed in early November.” That would be the third-highest in company history, behind the record 2018 crop and 2016.

May’s cold, wet conditions reduced growing-degree days, and much of the crop in south-central and southeastern Idaho is feeling that impact, Laubacher said. But the cooler summer helped crop development in the western region that includes southwest Idaho and part of Oregon.

The 2019 crop is just over 177,000 acres, a typical size, he said.

Amalgamated processing started Sept. 5 at Twin Falls and Paul, and Sept. 26 in Nampa. Laubacher on Oct. 22 said the company had sliced about 20% of the total crop, and expected the slice (processing) campaign to conclude in mid-February in Nampa and around April 1 at Twin Falls and Paul.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press File

The USDA is putting on hold its plan to require RFID tags on cattle that is moved between states.

USDA puts animal ID mandate on hold

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

USDA has decided not to implement its requirement for radio frequency ear tags for cattle and bison over 18 months of age that are shipped across state lines.

In April, USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service posted a fact sheet stating RFID ear tags were critical for modernizing animal disease traceability and would be required beginning Jan. 1, 2023.

Last week, the agency stated it would reconsider whether or when to put the new requirements in place.

The decision is the result of feedback from the livestock industry and two recent executive orders from President Trump highlighting the need for transparency and communication before placing any new requirements on farmers and ranchers, the agency stated.

“While the need to advance a robust federal-state-industry animal disease traceability capability remains an important USDA-APHIS objective, we will take time to reconsider the path forward and then make a new proposal, with ample opportunity for all stakeholders to comment,” the agency stated.

USDA’s goals to enhance disease traceability have not changed and APHIS will continue to encourage the use of electronic identification for animals moving between states, the agency stated.

Current regulations permit brands and tattoos as acceptable identification for interstate movement if the receiving and shipping states agree, APHIS stated.

In early October, R-CALF USA and four of its member ranchers filed a lawsuit against USDA alleging the requirement violated current traceability regulations and was adopted without a formal rulemaking process.

Traceability regulations finalized in 2013 were designed for “maximum flexibility” and “low-cost technology” and allowed the use of metal ear tags, brands, tattoos, group/lot identification and back tags, the lawsuit states.

USDA’s plan to prohibit

the use of anything other than RFID “substantially impacts the management and operation of every single cattle producer who currently uses those identification methods approved by the 2013 final plan,” the lawsuit states.

“When we filed our lawsuit, we said we were drawing a line in the sand telling USDA that our industry will no longer stand for the USDA’s blatant overreach,” Bill Bullard, R-CALF CEO, said in a statement.

“We are pleased that the president of the United States recognizes this as a serious violation of the rights and privileges of U.S. citizens, particularly American cattle ranchers,” he said.

Idaho cattle operation settles with EPA

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

East Valley Cattle of Declo, Idaho, and owner Bill Millenkamp have agreed to pay a \$17,500 fine and perform restoration work in a settlement agreement with EPA.

EPA alleges East Valley Cattle filled an approximately 425-foot-long meander and erected a 114-foot earthen dam in the Raft River, a tributary of the Snake River, without a permit. The activity requires a Section 404 permit under the Clean Water Act, according to EPA.

In conjunction with a local groundwater recharge district, Millenkamp was building a large groundwater recharge pit adjacent to the Raft River, Mark Ryan, Millenkamp’s attorney said.

“He just didn’t understand he needed a permit,” he said.

The Raft River flows through Millenkamp’s farmland at Declo where he also has a feedlot operation. The river is only about 10 feet wide at the site and looks like a ditch, he said.

“It’s pretty common for farmers to reroute rivers and creeks running across their land, and they don’t think they need a permit,” he said.

Millenkamp erected an



The Environmental Protection Agency has reached a settlement with an Idaho ranch.

earthen dam in the river to divert water for a short time to the recharge pit, with the overflow reentering the river. He built the diversion dam and filled an oxbow in the river with fill material from the project, he said.

Millenkamp did the work himself and got a little aggressive with the bulldozer, he said.

He stopped work immediately when EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers showed up and told him he needed a permit, he said.

“He’s a pretty law-abiding guy; he just didn’t know,” he said.

Millenkamp plans to put in a new diversion dam under a permit. The Raft River is high in sediment, and the project will be able to trap a lot of silt — which will be good for everyone

downstream, he said.

Under the terms of the settlement, East Valley Cattle will implement an EPA-approved technical restoration plan to repair the damaged river bed and banks.

The case was referred to EPA by the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers, said Mark MacIntyre, senior public information officer with EPA Region 10.

The takeaway is that farmers need to double check if they need a permit when doing projects involving water, Ryan said.

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