

Big Idaho Potato Truck to hit the road again

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

The Big Idaho Potato Truck will take to the highway again this year, after last year's national tour was cut short as COVID-19 closures began.

This year's tour is tentatively slated to start July 1.

"That is just in the exercise of caution to allow us time to see how the pandemic sorts out," Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Frank Muir said. "We are gauging the start based on that, and we will still evaluate as we get closer."

The commission will delay the



Idaho Potato Commission

The Big Idaho Potato Truck makes an annual promotional tour around the U.S. It's part of a national marketing campaign to set Idaho potatoes apart from others.

tour's start further if conditions warrant, he said. Various safety protocols are to be followed at tour stops.

The event lineup is not finalized. Muir said venues and event organizers have shown strong

interest in hosting the truck, which has been missed.

The flatbed truck and its giant potato payload a decade ago began annual tours, typically from early March to early September. The truck last year was at a strawberry

festival in Florida when the commission called it back March 13; Muir cited safety and well-being of fans and crew.

The average full-length tour costs \$700,000 to \$800,000, he said. The commission last year

saved nearly \$700,000, which it put into its reserve account, by stopping the tour in March.

The commission this year expects to save about \$300,000 by starting later, Muir said. The commission board March 24 voted to spend it on national advertising, including on television streaming service Hulu, web-based grocery pickup and delivery service Instacart, and recipes.com.

Commissioners discussed putting the money into in-store promotions, as potentially getting money into the hands of producers sooner. They instead approved spending it on national advertising.

EU monopolization of common food names a key focus for USTR

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The U.S. Trade Representative's office on March 31 released the 2021 National Trade Estimates Report, noting tariff and nontariff barriers impacting U.S. exports of goods and services.

Among its top concerns for agricultural trade is "restrictions on the ability for U.S. producers to use the common names of products that they produce and export."

The U.S. "remains highly troubled by the EU's over-broad protection of geographical indications, which adversely impacts both protections of U.S. trademarks and market access for U.S. products that use common names in the EU and third-country markets," USTR said in the report.

The European Union's aggressive and growing misuse of geographic indications in its trade agreements blocks U.S. exports of products with generic food names and wine terms, such as feta, bologna and chateau. "USTR's recognition of GI misuse as a means of confiscating market share is an important step toward proactively addressing this problem," Jaime Castaneda, executive director of the Consortium for Common Food Names, said in a statement on USTR's report.

"We are encouraged that CCFN members' persistent work alongside the U.S. government on this issue has elevated the concerns surrounding GI abuse from a relatively obscure issue just a decade ago to a priority for the agency," he said.

"It is imperative that USTR and its interagency partners work to ensure common names are not further restricted by the European Union's blatant attempts at monopolizing generic terms that consumers around the world have come to know and love," he said.

The consortium continues to work alongside USTR to build on the precedent set in the recent U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement negotiations on the inclusion of a list of common cheese names to be protected from GI restrictions in perpetuity. Similar proactive measures are necessary to ensure that products with common names can continue to be sold around the world without unfair limitations.

Castaneda also serves as senior vice president of trade policy for U.S. Dairy Export Council and National Milk Producers Federation, which have also raised strong concerns over the issue — as well as other barriers in key dairy markets such as Canada, China, Mexico and the EU.

Several of the groups' concerns were incorporated in USTR's report.

"Exports are extremely important to the U.S. dairy industry, which shipped more than \$6.5 billion of product to destinations worldwide in 2020," said Krysta Harden, president and CEO of U.S. Dairy Export Federation.

"Obstacles to those exports negatively affect



Wikipedia

Feta cheese

the economic well-being of America's dairy farmers and jeopardize dairy processing jobs and workers throughout the supply chain who support our industry. These barriers must be removed," she said.

Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of National Milk, said "we need USTR to continue pressing our trading partners to eliminate tariffs and nontariff barriers that restrict our dairy exports. The best way to do that is by implementing new free trade agreements and enforcing existing agreements."

USTR's 570-page report examines 65 trading partners and country groups, highlighting significant barriers to U.S. trade. It can be found at: www.ustr.gov.

USDA: NW wheat acres stable, more corn, soybeans nationwide

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The USDA forecasts more corn and soybean acres nationwide, but expects a stable wheat crop in the Pacific Northwest.

If growers' intentions are realized, the agency said in its prospective plantings report, Idaho and Oregon farmers will plant the most corn on record.

"Certainly stronger corn prices have helped provide support to wheat prices as has good demand," said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission.

Idaho farmers are projected to plant 400,000 acres of corn, up 2.6% from 390,000 acres in 2020. Oregon farmers are projected to plant 120,000 acres, up 20% from 100,000 acres in 2020.

Washington corn acres are likely to decline 8.3%, from 180,000 in 2020 to 165,000 this year.

The largest increases are expected in the Dakotas, where producers intend to plant a combined 8.9 million acres, an increase of 2 million acres from 2020. Producers across most of the Corn Belt intend to plant fewer acres than last year, according to USDA.

Soybean growers

intend to plant 87.6 million acres in 2021, up 5% from last year. If realized, this will be the third highest planted acreage on record, according to the agency.

Squires expects numbers will change due to demand.

"There has been some good demand, particularly with China," he said. "We hope that it continues."

In the Northwest, wheat acres are expected to remain relatively stable.

Washington farmers are expected to plant 2.33 million acres, down 0.4% from

2.34 million acres in 2020.

Idaho growers are projected to plant 1.27 million acres, up 2.4% from 1.24 million.

Oregon wheat farmers are expected to plant 720,000 acres, down 2.7% from 740,000 acres in 2020.

"Not much change for PNW as is often the case," Squires said. "Exact same planted wheat acres from last year. Just some reduction in winter wheat offset by increase in spring wheat."

"With such a large

amount in dryland production, it provides a good deal of continuity," Oregon Wheat CEO Amanda Hoey said.

Harvest outlook will be dependent, in part, on needed moisture, she said.

"We did not have any major reports on winter kill as it was fairly mild and while the wheat looked small coming out of winter, we did get snowfall in much of the state thereafter and now just require those essential spring rains for finishing," she said.

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