

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Government Affairs Report By Pat Kole

The Annual Meeting of the US Potato Board is being held in Colorado Springs this week. Idaho is well represented and well organized at this meeting. After extensive input, the board members will vote on a new Five Year Plan that will guide the Board's staff in their activities. There will also be committee reports, election of officers and reconstituting board committees for the upcoming year. Our industry owes a hearty "Thank You" to the individuals who have volunteered their time to serve on the Board. In particular, Cheryl Koompin deserves recognition and thanks for the time she gave this past year in serving as Chair of the USB.

Industry Relations Report By Todd Cornelison

News from the National Potato Council Public Policy Conference



Each year, a contingent of growers and industry representatives from Idaho join the National Potato Council in Washington DC to help make legislators around the country aware of potato issues. This year we were met with success and challenges.

Success! Agreement to End Trade Dispute with Mexico Announced (From NPC Insider)

On Thursday, March 3, an agreement in principle between the US and Mexico was announced by President Obama and Mexican President Felipe Calderon to end the trade dispute that has plagued the potato industry for nearly two years. The NPC strongly supports the

agreement. Since March 2009, US potato growers have seen revenues from frozen potato exports to Mexico decline by more than \$68 million, or nearly 50 percent.

"This agreement in principle represents an enormous step forward to restoring the strength and vitality of the US potato industry," said NPC President Justin Dagen of Karlstad, Minnesota. "The potato farmers of the US applaud the diligence and persistence of President Obama to make this agreement possible and stand behind him to ensure a full and open implementation of the plan."

Mexico is the third-largest market for US potatoes. In 2008, the most recent year unaffected by the dispute, US potato growers exported more than \$83 million in frozen potatoes to Mexico. In response to Congressional action to prohibit funding for a cross-border trucking pilot program, Mexico levied \$2.4 billion in retaliatory tariffs in accordance with an arbitration panel's decision in 2001. US frozen potatoes were initially subject to a 20 percent tariff level on March 23, 2009. The tariff was reduced on August 17, 2010, when the tariff list was rotated to include other agricultural and manufactured goods.



School Nutrition Continues to be a Challenge (From NPC Insider)



On January 13, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a proposed rule that would change nutrition standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. In the proposed rule, USDA wants to expand the consumption of fruits and vegetables among students, but limit the amount of starchy vegetables they eat to one cup per week per student. Starchy vegetables include sweet corn, lima beans, peas, and potatoes. This would be a crushing blow to our industry, as parents and growers we need to do all we can to make people aware that this is

happening. Please contact your local school lunch program supervisors, make them aware of the issue. Explain to them that this change will not only increase the cost of school lunches but actually reduce the nutritional value of the lunch. Potatoes are a nutritious staple in our lunch programs, and kids love them, let's make sure they keep getting them.

Calendar

March

- 8-10 Practical Food Safety & HACCP Workshops for Potato Packers, Twin Falls, ID
- 8-11 USPB Annual Meeting, Colorado Springs, CO
- 12 NASS Report: Stocks and Processing to March 1.
- 15-16 IPC Meeting, Eagle, ID
- 22-24 Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Workshop, Boise, ID

April

- 5 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID
- 6-8 IGSA Spring Swing, Mesquite, NV
- 15 NASS Report: Stocks and Processing to April 1.
- 12-13 IPC Meeting, Eagle, ID

May

- 2-4 United Fresh Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA
- 12-13 IPC Meeting, Eagle, ID
- 13 NASS Report: Stocks and Processing to May 1.
- 14 Annual IPC Marathon

June

- 10 NASS Report: Stocks and Processing to June 1.
- 22-24 NPC Summer Meeting, Grand Forks ND