

Idaho Potato Commission Industry Relations Newsletter - June 20, 2008



Sustainability

I recently attended the Food Marketing Institute's (FMI) Food Industry Sustainability Summit in Minneapolis. Although the summit was mainly attended by retailers, it gave me a wonderful opportunity to observe their thinking and progress in the area of sustainability. Without a doubt, retailers believe that sustainability is being pushed by a more eco-conscious consumer and their studies show that consumers want to buy products that are part of the "solution" rather than part of the problem. Examples include the increased demand for products that are marked "earth friendly" or "sustainably grown." So from the retailer's point of view, this doesn't appear to be a short term fad and that translates into a decision for the potato industry. Are we going to lead this effort and put together a program for ourselves, or are we going to have that program dictated to us as our customers start demanding sustainable products? I am happy to say that we are on the leading edge of sustainability, with our Idaho Sustainability Committee, our involvement in the PNW Sustainability Task Force and the work of John Keeling and the National Potato Council (NPC). As I sat in the meetings in Minneapolis, I couldn't help but wonder; is this new breed of consumer willing to pay for the increased costs that come along with sustainable products? Potato growers here in Idaho know that with more standards come more costs. Who is going to bear that burden? Certainly not us alone. These are the things that must be answered by the committee prior to approving any standard. I will close by leaving you with a thought from the Summit by Gene Kahn, Global Sustainability Officer at General Mills Inc.: If every retailer and food supplier in the nation became 100% sustainable, they would amount to less than 15% of the total energy use of the food sector. To truly become sustainable, as a nation, we must get agriculture on board.

If you are interested in the expanded notes from the summit, please e-mail a request to tcornelison@potato.idaho.gov.

Taiwan fresh shipments

If you're interested in shipping fresh potatoes to Taiwan from this summer's crop, a late blight inspection is still required. The inspection must be performed by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, and the field must still be growing and approximately two weeks from harvest. Due to staffing needs and scheduling, ISDA would like testing applications to be submitted by July 1 of this year. The cost of a field inspection is \$3.50/acre. A shipping point inspection and the application of a sprout inhibitor are also required. Once all of the inspections have passed a phytosanitary export and sprout inhibitor certificates can be issued.

Calendar of Events for July

- July 8-11: NPC Summer meetings, Idaho Falls
- July 9: United of Idaho Board meeting, Idaho Falls
- July 8-9: Vegetable Research Tour
 - July 8: 1:30 p.m. - Potatoes, Onions and Sweet Corn), Parma R&E Center
 - July 9: Malheur County Experiment Station field day
- July 14-15: United of America Board Meeting, Pasco WA
- July 18: United Potato Growers Summer meeting, Red Lion Inn, Pocatello, ID
- July 22-23: Idaho Potato Commission Meeting, Boise, ID
- July 24: Twilight Research Tour, Kimberly R&E Center, 5 p.m.