

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Website: www.idahopotato.com

President's Report

By Frank Muir

You have probably read in various agriculture magazines/newspapers that Produce for Better Health (PBH), whose executive director is Elizabeth Pivonka, is formally requesting that a new national fruit and vegetable research and promotion board be approved by the industry and eventually by the USDA. This would result in a 0.046% assessment on FOB market value of all first handlers and importers of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables. The estimated revenue would be \$30 million. After reviewing the proposal and seeking Idaho potato industry input, the IPC (which currently holds a board member seat on PBH) has expressed it is opposed to the formation of this national board. We expressed support of PBH's current effort to encourage consumers to eat more fruits and vegetables, but believe participation in their programs should be voluntary, not mandatory. We have also heard many Idaho potato growers express that any additional money they spend on marketing, should be focused specifically on promoting Idaho® potatoes. I felt you should be made aware of the position we have taken and welcome any feedback.

Government Affairs Report

By Pat Kolec

This week state representatives from New York, Maine, Colorado, Washington, Oregon and Idaho were on the Hill in Washington D.C. briefing Senators, Representatives, their staffs and committee staffs about potato related issues. The new administration has announced major initiatives ranging from Food Safety, Energy Policy, Transportation, and Child Nutrition, all of which will impact potato growers substantially. There is so much that the people shaping our future just don't know about what we do and how we do it. We had a chance to get the door opened to our point of view about how to make the new proposals workable. But there will be a lot of heavy lifting yet to come. We also met with the new Deputy Secretary of USDA, Kathleen Merrigan. On a day to day basis, the Deputy Secretary pretty much runs things at USDA. She is a bright and engaging person with deep ties to both the Department and the Obama administration. During the Clinton years, Kathleen helped develop the Organic standard for USDA.

Perhaps the biggest issue of immediate concern is the 20% retaliatory tariffs put into effect by Mexico. We were advised that there will be a shift of production to Canada if a solution to this problem isn't put in place quickly. We briefed every possible person we could of how this would damage the industry, and believe that there is a compromise that can be found in the near future.

Industry Relations Report

By Todd Cornelison

Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI)

One of the most discussed issues during the recent United Fresh Convention in Las Vegas was the Produce Traceability Initiative or PTI. The PTI is an effort put together by United Fresh Produce Association, Produce Marketing Association and the Canadian Produce Marketing Association to standardize and enhance the speed and efficiency of traceability systems for the produce industry. Most opponents claim that there are already traceability systems in place in the industry and they are very efficient. That is very true; however, these systems are internal traceability systems not external traceability systems. What is the difference? An internal system is one you keep inside your operation and when called upon by a customer or the FDA, you can quickly use this system to trace your product back to its origins. These systems by their very nature have your own unique tracking codes that are probably made up by the user. Imagine if you will that you are a repacker somewhere on the East coast. You bring in hundreds of different produce items each day; in some cases you remove those items from their original package to repack them for certain customers. Is this repacker supposed to have knowledge of every traceability lot numbering system from every shipper he buys from? How about the retailers and the foodservice companies? Are they supposed to personally know how every internal lot system works from every customer? The answer is, it would be impossible for our customers to track all of that data. Enter the PTI, what if the system began by each packer using the same lot numbering system? If the numbering system were the same nationwide, the whole system could be computerized making trace back as simple as

scanning a barcode. Every unit would be scanned out of every operation and scanned back in when it was received at a different location. What about the repackers? They would need to scan each unit into their operation and then create a new number for any new units they create. This new number would link back to all the original numbers it took to create the new unit. This system could help reduce the time frame between a possible food borne illness and a recall that can decimate an entire industry. For more information you can visit the following website: <http://www.produce.traceability.org/index.cfm>

Calendar

April

27-29 NPC State Managers meeting, Washington, D.C.

May

5 United Potato Growers of Idaho Board meeting, Idaho Falls, ID

8 IEOPC Meeting, Twin Falls, ID

14-15 IPC Commission Meeting, Boise, ID

16 IPC Marathon, Boise, ID

15-19 NRA Show, Chicago, IL

19 IPC Marketing Committee Meeting, Red Lion Hotel, Idaho Falls, ID starts at 1:00pm

20 IGSA Marketing Luncheon, Idaho Falls, ID starts at 12:00

20 IGSA Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID starts at 3:00pm

June

2 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID

4 American Potato Trade Alliance (APTA) meeting, Washington, D.C.

8 IEOPC Board Meeting, Twin Falls, ID

9 (Change) IGSA Board Meeting, Twin Falls, ID

17-19 NPC Summer Board of Directors meeting, Richland, WA

23-24 IPC Commission Meeting, Boise, ID

28-30 S.W. Foodservice Expo, Dallas, TX

July

7 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID

9 IGSA Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID

21-22 IPC Commission Meeting, Boise, ID

24-26 PMA Foodservice Show, Monterey, CA

31 Registration opens for 2010 Potato Expo to be held in Orlando, FL. January 4 -6, 2010.

August

4 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID

17-19 FMI Sustainability Summit, San Francisco, CA

September

2-4 IGSA Annual Convention, Sun Valley, ID

3 IPC Commission Meeting Breakfast, 7:30am, Sun Valley, ID

14-17 USBP 2009 State/National Workshops, Location TBA