

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Website: www.idahopotato.com

President's Report By Frank Muir

The IPC has been working with many industry groups to resolve the complexity of the GAP audit requirements. I'm pleased to share with you what we're doing to date. Please feel free to contact us with your thoughts as we move forward on this process.

Government Affairs Report By Pat Kole

John Keeling, from the National Potato Council, has been involved along with the IPC in the effort to harmonize the Good Agricultural Practices Standard for many years. Here is a report on the efforts of the NPC.

As you are aware United Fresh Produce is leading an effort to create a single GAP standard that would replace the many GAP audits including the USDA GAP audit. I am on the Steering Committee of the effort, and individuals from the potato industry have participated at a variety of levels in the development process. I think the effort has a real opportunity for success in developing a harmonized standard and a similarly good chance at getting the standard adopted by USDA and other certifying organizations. If so, this will limit growers' exposure to multiple standards and multiple audits. At the same time NPC is continuing our efforts to develop a potato specific food safety guidance document based on a scientifically sound risk assessment for the all sectors of the potato supply channel. The information gained through our activities to conduct a complete risk assessment and the development of a food safety guidance document will allow us to provide input to the requirements in any GAP audit or food safety plan developed by FDA that make those plans potato specific.

Included below is a memo from Pat Kole who is currently attending the GAP Harmonization Technical Working Group Meeting in Philadelphia. His insight into the process and the prospects for progress will be of interest to you.

I am presently in Philadelphia at the United Fresh GAP Harmonization meeting. Let me outline how the process is proceeding and what we can realistically hope to accomplish. The meeting is being attended by a broad cross spectrum of parties who produce, pack, distribute, sell, purchase, consume, regulate, and inspect a wide range of produce. United has pulled together many of the several GAP manuals and synthesized them into a working draft of 70+ pages. Over the course of the last almost two year period of time, a group of volunteers has attempted to forge a consensus from the various existing standards, as well as deal with the multiple perspectives of those at the meeting. As you would imagine, there has been a lot of discussion, education, negotiation and word smithing that has gone into this effort.

United has a formal structure in place to support this effort. There is an overall steering committee that has set up smaller subcommittees to work through the multiple issues an effort like this encompasses. The group that has been working on harmonizing the manual is the Technical Working Group. Recently, an Operations Committee has also been formed. Essentially, once the TWG produces an acceptable standard, the Operations group will be charged with implementing, maintaining and amending the manual.

It's only after the Harmonized Manual is produced that the potato industry can seriously begin to take that work product and look at developing a specific industry standard. However, that doesn't mean that work on this isn't already underway. The NPC and John Keeling have taken specific steps to gather material, undertake surveys, work with other groups developing standards and will be ready to take action as soon as possible. However, we can always use your help as outlined by Todd Cornelison in his report below.

Industry Relations Report By Todd Cornelison

IPC and NPC working toward Potato Specific GAP program

Recently, I have had numerous discussions with growers about the need for a potato specific GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) audit. In order to qualify to sell their potatoes to certain customers, i.e. processors and dehydrators, Idaho growers are faced with passing a GAP audit. Most of these growers are required to pass the USDA version of GAP (there are multiple versions); this is because processors have to be USDA certified to sell their products to schools and other government food programs. The USDA version of GAP has many regulations that don't seem to fit potato growers. This is due to the fact that the USDA version was actually created for leafy greens and not for potatoes. We have met with the USDA multiple times on the issue and they are very open to "adjusting" the current program to make it more potato friendly and, to date, many adjustments have been made. But in the end, even they concur that we are trying to force a square peg in a round hole: the real answer is a potato specific GAP program. Growers need to be aware that any potato specific program must fit the entire United States; we can't just have a program for Idaho because the USDA governs the whole nation. So with this in mind, we are using the United Fresh GAP harmonization program as a basis and starting point for us to begin to develop our potato specific program. Part one of this effort is scheduled to be released in September. It is a collaborative effort involving multiple groups including consumer/conversation groups and is chaired by a McDonald's employee, so we believe it has a good chance of gaining broad acceptance. The IPC is currently attending a meeting of this group in Philadelphia. We will be bringing the potato perspective to the table. As a part of this effort, we are constantly looking for volunteers to participate in surveys, responding to drafts, etc. Once the fundamental principles for the underlying audit are accepted, it will be extremely difficult to make major changes to the program. Now is the time for growers to take part in the process.

If you would like to be a volunteer, please contact Todd Cornelison at (208) 559-4792.

For more information on the GAP harmonization process, go to http://www.unitedfresh.org/newsviews/gap_harmonization

For a look at the draft of the harmonized standard, go to http://www.unitedfresh.org/assets/GAPs2010/Harmonized_Standard-pre-farm%20gate_072810.pdf

Please be aware that the standard is 70 pages long and not at all a potato specific standard. Remember, we will use this standard and mold it into our potato specific standard which we will then take to the USDA for acceptance. We realize that some of the standards that you are being asked to meet seem ridiculous. We continue to try to change these standards to make them more potato friendly, but in the end we will all have to pass GAP standards because our customers are demanding it and recent food borne illnesses in the news, i.e. eggs, are only solidifying that fact.

Calendar

September

- 1-3 IGSA Sun Valley Convention, Sun Valley, ID
- 1 IPC Marketing Committee Meeting, 8:00-9:15 a.m., Limelight Room Salon A, Sun Valley Inn
- 1 IPC Ag Affairs Committee Meeting, 1:45-2:45 p.m., Continental Room, Sun Valley Inn
- 1 IPC Sponsored Tetonia Research Center Meeting, 1:45-2:45 p.m., Lupine Room, Sun Valley Inn
- 7 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID
- 10 NASS Report: Summer Potato Acreage and Production, Percent of Fall Acreage by Variety
- 10 NASS Report: Final Acreage and Production Report
- 14-16 NPC Public Policy Conference, Washington, DC
- 23 NASS Report: Potato County Estimates Idaho Field Office Release
- 23 NASS Report: Disposition and Annual Potato Summary
- 23-24 AG Attaché tour of South Eastern Idaho
- 28-30 USBP State and National Assoc. Workshop, San Diego, CA

October

- 5 United of Idaho Board Meeting, Idaho Falls, ID
- 8 NASS Report: Winter Potato Acreage and Production
- 15-18 PMA Fresh Summit, Orlando, FL
- 26-27 IPC Meeting, Eagle, ID

November

- 9-11 IPC Annual Whistlestop Tour, TBA
- 9 NASS Report: Fall Potato Acreage and Production, Percent of Fall Acreage by Variety

December

- 14-15 IPC Meeting, Eagle, ID

January

- 5-7 Potato Expo 2011, Las Vegas, NV
- 7-9 NPC 2011 Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, NV
- 7-9 USBP Winter Meeting, Las Vegas, NV
- 25-26 IPC Meeting, Eagle, ID