

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 02, 2017

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Boyle, Vice Chairman Dayley, Representatives Bell, Miller, VanOrden, Burtenshaw, Kerby, Troy, Stevenson, Amador, Armstrong, Hanks, Zito, Erpelding, Toone

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Rep. VanOrden

GUESTS: Dennis Tanikuni, Idaho Farm Bureau; Brent Olmstead, CALS; Kevin V. Osborne, IEOSA; Travis Parrish, IEOSA; Aaron Phillips, IEOSA; Laura Johnson, ISDA; Regina Lohnes, IEOSA; Kirk Whittig, IEOSA; Brett Lolley, IEOSA; Mitch Coates, Food Producers; Roger Batt, IEOSA

Chairman Boyle called the meeting to order at 2:21 p.m.

Roger Batt, Idaho Seed Council, said Idaho's seeds ship to every continent except Antarctica.

Brett Lolley, IEOSA, explained, the Treasure Valley is perfect for growing corn due to the high desert climate and the high percentage of furrow irrigation which creates an excellent grower base and reliable production. He said approximately 70% of global sweet corn seed is grown in the Treasure Valley. There are more than 10 companies in the region with estimated total of 6,000 acres of production, producing a total of 8.5 million pounds of seed.

Travis Parrish, IEOSA, said the production of carrot, onion, radish, turnip, lettuce and miscellaneous brassica seed are all grown in Idaho due to the optimal growing region and the established irrigation system in place for watering of production fields. He said some of the challenges seed growers face include urban sprawl, increased world population, EPA pressure on canceling chemical label registrations, challenges brought against established irrigation water rights and pollinator availability.

Kirk Whittig, IEOSA, said approximately 17,500 acres of Idaho alfalfa seed were produced in Idaho in 2016. He said total seed production is estimated to be 15,750,000 pounds of alfalfa seed. He stated the total value of this seed production to the growers is estimated to be around \$37,800,800. He said the USDA estimates total Idaho alfalfa acres to be around 1 million or 4.5 million pounds of seed. He said most of the hay is fed to Idaho dairy's which constitute Idaho's largest dollar value in agriculture. Only 1/4 of the seed produced in Idaho is used here with the remaining seed shipped across the United States or abroad to many of the large alfalfa producing countries.

Regina Lohnes, IEOSA, said in 2015, the state harvested 119,000 acres of dry edible beans. There was 35,440 acres of dry bean seed inspected and accepted by Idaho crop improvement in 2015. She said Idaho has a great reputation for growing good, quality bean seed.

Aaron Phillips, IEOSA, explained peas are a cool season annual crop that adapt well to the geographies and microclimates of Idaho. He said peas and other legumes are desirable in crop rotations because they break up disease and pest cycles, provide nitrogen, improve soil microbe diversity and activity, improve soil aggregation, conserve soil water and provide economic diversity. He explained the four growing regions within the state.

Kevin Osborne, IEOSA, explained the benefits of cover crops which are; nutrient cycling, weed suppression, compaction reduction, increased organic matter, erosion control, improved water infiltration and penetration, pollinator attractant, nematode control and bio-fumigation. He explained the research now being conducted using radish and mustard to help in eradication of nematodes.

Roger Batt said there are four areas of concern for the seed producers. Loss of production ground is significant due to urban sprawl. He said they are working with local governments on zoning standards and comprehensive planning to see if they can keep production in those areas without infringing on property rights. He explained they are working to keep current pesticide labels with the EPA. A Council was established in 2009 to preserve some of these labels as well as get new ones approved for the industry. He said they are always monitoring noxious weeds and updating the list. He said they are working now through negotiate rule making to put a moratorium on soy bean production because of several diseases transmitted. He stated their goal is to keep beans disease free.

In response to a committee question, **Mr. Batt** said they do receive competition from other countries. If they are not able to keep the production ground, companies will look outside the area for better suppliers. He stated at the present time they do compete well on the global market as Idaho is now in the top 5 producers globally.

Brett Lolley, returned to the podium to answer a committee question concerning the research being done with radishes. He described the process of the nematode feeding on radishes causing a reduction of live nematodes in the ground.

In response to a committee question concerning what the legislature could do to help the seed industry, **Mr. Batt** said help preserve production land. He explained as the population grows closer to production land, there is a greater chance of cross pollination.

Chairman Boyle turned the gavel to **Vice Chairman Dayley**.

Brett Lolley, in response to a committee question, said Monsanto has producers in several different regions around the globe where they are able to produce cheaper than here, but where this region gains a lot is in their reliability of production. He said because seeds have a shelf life and must be tightly managed, it is important to be able to rely on stable production.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Representative Boyle
Chair

Joan Majors
Secretary