

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 12, 2019

TIME: 1:30 pm or Upon Adjournment

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Boyle, Vice Chairman Troy, Representatives Dayley, Kerby, Stevenson, Zito, Andrus, Giddings, Goesling, Marshall, Nichols, Raymond, Erpelding, Toone, Abernathy

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) Zito, Giddings

GUESTS: Logan Nedrow, IEOSA; Roger Batt, IEOSA; Jessica McAnally, Amalgamated Sugar; Melinda Merrill, Amalgamated Sugar; Brad Smith, IEOSA; Stuart Smith, IEOSA; Gina Lohnes, IEOSA; Aaron Phillips, IEOSA; Brett Lolley, IEOSA; Craig Nuthak, IEOSA; Brad Griff, ISGA; Randall Grant, ISGA; Lynn Tominaga, IEWA; John McCreedy, Amalgamated Sugar

Chairman Boyle called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Abernathy** made a motion to approve the minutes from the Monday, March 4, and Wednesday, March 6, 2019 meetings. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Melinda Merrill, Amalgamated Sugar, introduced **John McCreedy**, President and CEO of Amalgamated Sugar.

John McCreedy, President of Amalgamated Sugar, explained the company was founded in 1897 and now has three operating factories in Idaho. He stated the company is a grower-owned cooperative, purchased by the Snake River Sugar Company in 1997. He said they are the second largest sugarbeet processor in the United States with over 730 growers on approximately 182,000 acres across Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Mr. McCreedy explained with the help of genetic engineering in combination with other technological advances, the growers have produced 63% more sugarbeets per acre and 75% more pounds of sugar per acre since 1996. They use fewer, safer pesticides and about 60% less diesel fuel to raise a crop than they used 20 years ago. He said the industry is committed to continue making improvements in these areas.

In response to a committee question, **Mr. McCreedy** said to increase sugar content they use improved seeds, manage fertilizer and water practices.

Randall Grant, President of Idaho Sugarbeet Growers, said they are the second highest producer of sugarbeet sugar in the nation just behind Minnesota. He said one of the benefits to the Idaho growers is their ability to control water through proper irrigation. He reported farm loans are the highest they have been in 8 years indicating future sustainability.

In response to a committee question **Mr. McCreedy** said, sugarbeets were not included in the new NAFTA agreement therefore have not been affected.

Roger Batt, Executive Director Idaho Eastern-Oregon Seed Association, stated they grow 50 different species of seeds across the state, shipping them to 120 countries world wide.

Brett Lolley, President, explained the benefits of low humidity creating a favorable environment to produce seeds. He said the long growing season along with the ability to irrigate and control water makes it perfect for growing corn. He said approximately 70% of the Global Temperate Sweet Corn seed is produced in the Treasure Valley of Idaho. He stated urban sprawl has made growing corn more difficult due to pollination being less controllable.

Brad Smith, Kimberly Seed International, spoke about pea production, explaining it is not a major crop but there are three different types of peas grown in Idaho. He explained the difference between the three types and the main usage for each of them. He reviewed the average acres planted and the value in dollars.

Stuart Smith, IEOSA, stated Idaho is the 2nd largest producer of alfalfa seed in the Northwest just behind Washington state. He explained the biggest challenge for the growers is insect control and balancing the beneficial with the destructive. He said Idaho wheat is shipped all around the world.

Gina Lohnes, Treasure Valley Seed Company, said Idaho is ranked 5th in the nation in bean production. She noted since 2016, bean consumption has markedly increased due to health conscious people looking for alternative sources of protein. She said they are leaders in the nation for seed crop as well because of the favorable circumstances of our climate, watering abilities and the quarantined process limiting bean seed coming into the state.

Craig Nuthak, IEOSA, stated if you want to have a good crop you start with good seeds. He explained different seed treatments, their uses and the benefits to the plants treated. He stated without the use of neonicotinoids there would be reduced yields, higher insecticide use, less pest control and increased operation costs.

Roger Batt, explained the issues facing the seed industry which threaten the viability of farm land as urban developments continue to grow. He said the industry continues to work with the EPA as they develop new and better products that are safe for the environment as well as effective for the purposes used by the growers.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Representative Boyle
Chair

Joan Majors
Secretary