

MINUTES  
**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 14, 2023

**TIME:** 8:00 A.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW53

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Hartgen, Senators Foreman, Hart, Schroeder, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Semmelroth, and Taylor

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Vice Chair Nichols

**NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

**CONVENED:** **Chairman Hartgen** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:02 a.m.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Appointment of Chanel Tewalt, Director, Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)**, for a term commencing January 2, 2023 and serving at the pleasure of the Governor. **Ms. Tewalt** stated she worked for the ISDA since 2007 while still in college. She had worked her way up through the ISDA in various positions to Director. **Ms. Tewalt** prided herself on her knowledge of the ISDA knowing the statutes, rules, programs, and most importantly the customers. As Deputy Director she focused on increased collaborations with industry partners, and responding to urgent issues that impacted agriculture.

**Senator Zuiderveld** asked what the biggest challenge as Director would be. **Ms. Tewalt** responded, the recession and the impact it might have on agriculture.

**Senator Hart** inquired if the ISDA collaborated with other state departments of agriculture, with the high cost of eggs, and whether the ISDA could address it. **Ms. Tewalt** answered the ISDA was involved with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). The association enhanced American food and agricultural communities through policy partnerships and public engagement. She stated the Avian Influenza was a devastating disease that impacted egg production which caused higher prices. Idaho did not have a large poultry population, yet with other states being affected, it affected Idaho's prices. She said the ISDA stood ready to assist poultry producers, although certain diseases were regulated by the USDA.

**PRESENTATION:** **Idaho Dairymen's Association Presentation. Rick Naerebout**, CEO, Idaho Dairymen's Association (IDA) described the association, they were dairy producers from across Idaho, governed by a board of directors elected by the members. The IDA staff were focused on environmental and sustainability issues, worker training, and safety.

**Mr. Naerebout** mentioned growth in the dairy industry were the 1,000 to 2,000 cow dairies. Milk production continued to grow in Idaho, it ranked third in the U.S. Idaho's dairy economic contribution represented 35 percent of the agricultural sector, and created 33,000 jobs. Dairy brought Idaho \$10.7 billion in total sales.

**Mr. Naerebout** highlighted the Idaho Cafe, Center for Agriculture Food and the Environment. The research center had received gifts, grants, and state funding.

It supported students and employed undergraduates as research assistants. He explained the Idaho Cafe would operate like a dairy with 1000 cows. For research purposes, it would be more spread out than a commercial dairy.

**Mr. Naerebout** reviewed CAFO Environmental Improvement Program. The project was new for 2023 with a total of 35 applications, 13 of the applicants had been awarded grants. The funded projects included, new runoff lagoons, lagoon pipelines, mechanical presses, centrifuges, sloped screens, distillation systems, and reverse osmosis systems.

**Mr. Naerebout** reviewed restricted driver licenses (RDL). The RDL program would generate revenue from titles and registrations. There would be limitations, the RDL could not be used to vote, or buy firearms. The expectation would be fewer traffic injuries, a drop in number of hit and runs, and a lower rate of uninsured. He cited the dairy workforce was largely without status, the RDL provided them the ability to obtain a license and insurance. **Mr. Naerebout** remarked the success of Idaho's dairy industry was not achievable without the contributions of a predominantly Hispanic workforce. The hardworking, family-oriented individuals have toiled beside our dairy farm families for generations. The IDA believed the most impactful initiatives revolved around promoting and protecting these talented employees and their families. (Attachment 1)

**Senator Foreman** inquired why most dairy workers came from other countries when the Idaho Department of Labor reported 30,000 Idahoans are on welfare. **Mr. Naerebout** responded domestic workers did not apply to the jobs. He believed it was not the wage structure, starting pay was \$15.63/hr.

**Senator Taylor** questioned Idaho's growth capacity for dairy cows. **Mr. Naerebout** responded Idaho could handle another 100,000 cows.

**Senator Zuiderveld** inquired about the size of the Idaho CAFE operation, would the milk be sold, and what was the percentage of undocumented workers employed by Idaho dairies. **Mr. Naerebout** responded the Idaho CAFE start up would house 1,000 cows, and a portion of the milk could be sold. The dairy cows were part of a research trial that did not have FDA approval, therefore a percentage of milk produced would be discarded. He stated 90 percent of dairy workers were foreign born.

**Senator Carlson** specified she needed clarification on insurance rates, and would they increase. **Mr. Naerebout** responded other states had a lower percentage of uninsured drivers and, rates had decreased. He expected the same for Idaho.

**DISCUSSION:** **Budget Report from JFAC. Chairmen Hartgen** asked the Committee if there were questions regarding the budget report, there were no questions.

**ADJORNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chariman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 8:54 a.m.

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Senator Hartgen  
Chair

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Melissa Price  
Secretary