

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, January 28, 2025

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Raymond, Representatives Cannon, McCann, Ehlers, Garner, Nelsen, Pickett, Sauter, Miller, Beiswenger, Dygert, Leavitt, Mendive, Shirts, Mathias, Achilles

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Cannon

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Andrus called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Shirts** made a motion to approve the minutes of January 20, 2025. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Zach Patterson, President, Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association, emphasized the sugarbeet industry is vital to Idaho's agriculture, with the state ranking second in national production. Sugarbeets, grown in 11 states, are planted in late March and harvested in late September/October. They make up 54% of domestically produced sugar. The industry aims to promote efficient, profitable production, support legislation related to sugarbeets, and advance research on growing practices. Key legislative priorities include labor, water, infrastructure, farmland preservation, and crop protection tools.

Christina Hardesty, Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, Amalgamated Sugar, said Amalgamated Sugar is a grower-owned cooperative of 700 sugarbeet farmers across Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, producing over 181,000 acres of sugarbeets, primarily in Southern Idaho. It operates three processing facilities and produces about 12% of the sugar consumed in the U.S., contributing over \$1 billion annually to Idaho's economy. The cooperative processes 7.25 million tons of sugarbeets annually, producing white, brown, and powdered sugar, as well as feed products. In addition to sugar, Amalgamated produces by-products such as 800,000 tons of sugarbeet pulp for cattle feed, 350,000 tons of molasses for animal feed and fertilizer, and high-protein CSB used in feed and as a road de-icer. Sugar also has important uses in pharmaceuticals and as a preservative. Legislative priorities include securing more funding for the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) to address staffing shortages, supporting Idaho LAUNCH to help the labor market, and advocating for tort reform to protect businesses from liability related to labeling compliance.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:09 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Jayne Feik
Secretary