

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 06, 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:** Mathias, Pickett, Ehlers, 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.

Roger Batt, Executive Director, Eastern Oregon and Idaho Seed Industry, said the seed industry is vital to agriculture, much like microchips are to technology. The U.S. is the leader in global seed production, accounting for 34.5% of total production, followed by China, the EU, South America, and others. Idaho is one of just six major global seed production regions, alongside California, China, France, Chile, and Australia, and is known for producing high-quality seed, especially in sweet corn. Idaho's seed industry, valued at \$800 million, contributes \$1.5 billion in economic activity across the state, with a strong vertical integration from seed production to research. The state's unique high desert climate, abundant water supply, and advanced irrigation practices make it ideal for seed production. Despite challenges such as smaller fields due to topography, Idaho has thrived through major historical events, from wars to recessions. The industry faces several issues: loss of farmland, maintaining pesticide labels, ensuring water supply, and supporting farmers and companies. The industry remains resilient, with consistent growth even during economic downturns.

Dr. Ron Bitner, PhD, a leading entomologist and bee biologist, emphasized the importance of native bees in agriculture. Idaho hosts over 700 bee species, with 76 identified in the Treasure Valley with 90% of which are ground nesters. Research on native pollinators examined their role in specialty crops and their attraction to colors like blue, yellow, and white. The Logan Bee Lab, the world's largest bee research facility, has documented significant bee losses due to land development. A major event in February 2025 saw 1.1 million honeybees die during almond pollination in California, with causes still under investigation. Dr. Bitner stressed the need for immediate conservation efforts, urging farmers and workers to better understand soil health and protect vital bee populations in Idaho's agricultural hub.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Jayne Feik
Secretary