

MINUTES  
**HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Thursday, January 22, 2026

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room EW42

**MEMBERS:** Chairman Raymond, Vice Chairman Shirts, Representatives Cannon, McCann, Garner, Nelsen, Pickett, Sauter, Miller, Beiswenger, Dygert, Leavitt, Mendive, Hall, Healey, Mathias, Haws

**ABSENT/  
EXCUSED:** Rep. Healy

**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 Raymond** called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**MOTION:** **Rep. Haws** made a motion to approve the minutes of January 20, 2026. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

**RS 32944C1:** **Rep. Crane (12)** presented **RS 32944C1**. He stated that Idaho is one of the nation's leading sugarbeet producers and that sugarbeets are a natural source of sugar. The memorial urges Congress to support efforts to reduce the use of artificial sweeteners in school lunches in favor of natural sugar sources, consistent with the "Make America Healthy Again" initiative. The memorial will be read into the congressional record and entered into the journal.

**MOTION:** **Rep. Leavitt** made a motion to introduce **RS 32944C1**. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

**Samantha Parrott**, Executive Director, Snake River Sugar Association, introduced **Zach Patterson**, owner of Patterson Farms and President, SRSGA. Mr. Patterson testified that Idaho farmers are facing severe financial pressure as they renew operating loans and project the coming year. Commodity prices across multiple crops have dropped sharply—sugar beets, corn silage, hay, and wheat—while input costs such as seed, water, power, equipment, and land rent continue to rise. For sugar beets specifically, revenue has declined by roughly \$1,000 per acre compared to recent years, pushing many operations below break-even, even after aggressive cost-cutting. Farmers are being forced to delay equipment replacement, reduce maintenance, and scale back investments, which will ripple through rural economies. Mr. Patterson emphasized that the greatest risk is to small and multi-generational family farms and stressed that current sugar market conditions are driven by federal policy, warning that if not addressed at the federal level, sugar production and processing capacity could permanently leave the region.

**Nathan Garner**, owner of Garner Farms, Chairman of the Board, SRSGA, provided an overview of regenerative farming practices. Regenerative farming is an agricultural approach focused on improving soil health through reduced soil disturbance, ground cover, increased plant diversity, living roots, and livestock integration, with the goal of regenerating degraded land and improving long-term system resilience. Considerations discussed included increased water use and costs associated with cover crops, reliance on precision equipment, GMO seed, and glyphosate for no-till and strip-till systems, as well as a planned 25% reduction in synthetic fertilizer use by 2026.

**Jake Hancock**, Vice President of Commercial and Supply Chain for Amalgamated Sugar, presented an overview of the grower-owned cooperative representing approximately 700 sugarbeet farmers in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, which operates three processing facilities and contributes over \$1 billion annually to Idaho's economy. He noted Amalgamated represents about 9% of the domestic sugar market and highlighted challenges including weakened demand, high inventories, excessive imports, and prices near forfeiture levels resulting in grower losses, along with industry efforts to work with USDA and the Administration to better align demand estimates, limit imports, update high-tier duties for inflation, and modernize the federal sugar program to protect domestic producers and food security. The 2025 sugarbeet crop was the largest Idaho has ever produced. Sugar imports that are lower in cost than can be grown here are devastating sugarbeet farms in the United States. Farm prices are low so there's nothing that is going to replace this crop.

**ADJOURN:** There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:16 p.m.

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Representative Raymond  
Chair

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Jayne Feik  
Secretary