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Local, Simple, Fresh: Sustainable Food in the Boise Valley

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Local, Simple, Fresh

sustainable food in the Boise Valley



U.S. War Administration/Library of Congress

The War Department promotes victory gardens, 1942.

local

simple fresh

- sustainable food
in the Boise Valley

Investigate Boise Student Research Series
College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs
Boise State University

2013

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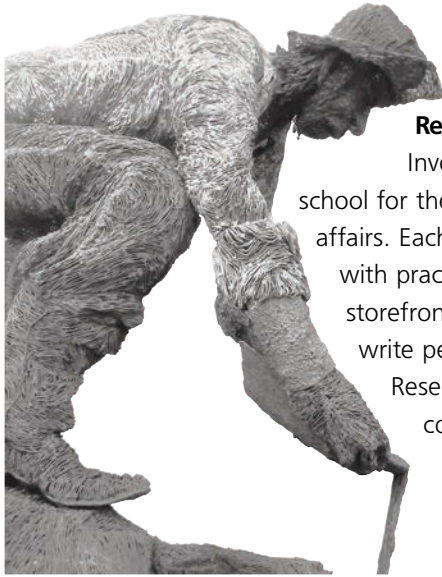
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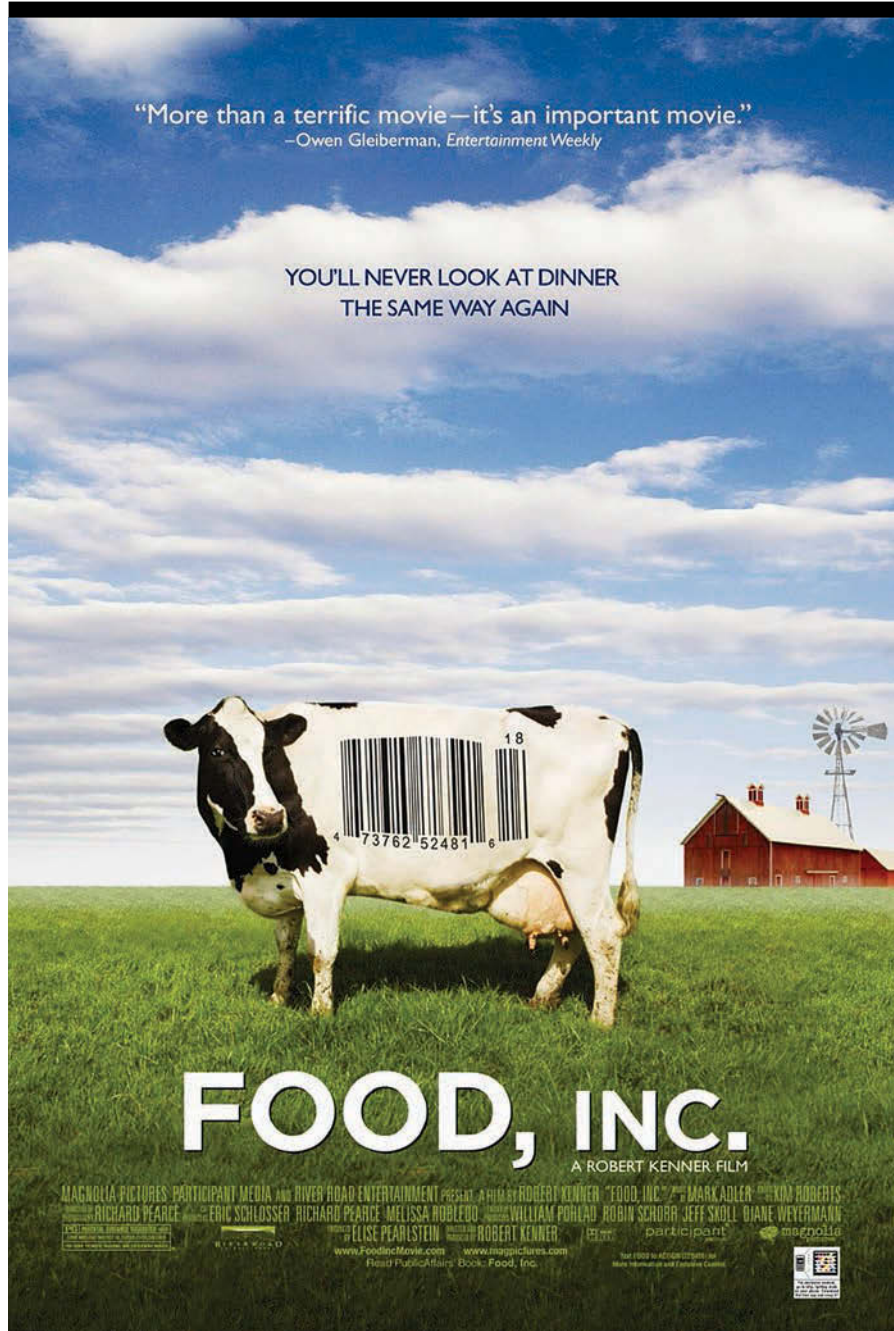


The Investigate Boise Student Research Series

Investigate Boise is a nine-credit field school for the study of municipal civics and urban affairs. Each summer, about 40 students interact with practitioners and public officials in a storefront classroom downtown. Top students write peer-reviewed essays for publication.

Research topics include history, commerce, conservation, transportation, social welfare and urban renewal.

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Magnolia Pictures

Fear of farmageddon feeds the hunger for farm-fresh food.

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Introduction

Eat local. Keep bees. Boycott feedlot livestock. Grow vegetables and sell them at public markets. Support your neighbors by buying their produce. Contain suburban housing by preserving green acres for farms.

Seeds of the “locavore” moment take root in a valley that once led the nation in irrigated agriculture. *Locavores*—like the *carnivore* natives who hunted big game during Boise’s Ice Age, like the *omnivore* Shoshone who once roamed southwestern Idaho, spearing salmon and digging roots—follow the seasons and forage within 100 miles of home. Coined by a chef in San Francisco, locavore was the *New Oxford American Dictionary’s* “word of the year” for 2007. In Boise it has come to describe a way of life. Local food tastes better, its proponents argue. It preserves biodiversity. Supports regen-

erative agriculture. Cuts greenhouse emissions from fossil fuels. "Food miles" has become the Idaho locavore's measure of globalization's impact. In Boise, locavores say, the average distance from farm to table is 1,500 miles.

At once nostalgia and economics, and strong enough to override suburban land-use zoning codes, the locavore movement pines for the barns



Benefits of buying local include fresher food, open-space preservation and support for the regional economy.

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Treasure Valley Food Coalition

The Treasure Valley Food Coalition proclaimed 2011 "The Year of Idaho Food." The coalition hopes that 20 percent of the food consumed in the valley will be valley grown by 2020.

and rail fences lost to suburbia's blight. "Agriculture is our heritage," said the Urban Land Institute in its 2012 "Sustainable Farming" report on the Treasure Valley. Yet agrarianism retreats before the advance of asphalt rooftops. USDA census figures show a 14 percent loss of farmland in Ada County, 2002 to 2007. Canyon County lost 4 percent. Population, mean-

while, boomed. "If we have no land for agriculture," the land institute continued, "we have no food. If we have no food, we have no long-term sustainability. For flat and irrigated land, agriculture may well be the highest and best use."

In Boise the movement proscribes a transformative diet of communitarian values. A school for Boise Urban Gardens offers a seven-week summer program on food "literacy" and "a deeper understanding of nature." An organic farm called Peaceful Belly credits "community" for its commercial success. The Treasure Valley Food Coalition, meanwhile, campaigns to end the tyranny of tasteless tomatoes. Stressing food security through food independence, the coalition promotes its "modest" ambition to double farming acreage. Its goal is to increase the valley's consumption of local food from 2 percent to 20 by the end of the decade. Posters advertise a 12-part local meal of food in healthy abundance, of milk, wheat flour, beef, dry beans, carrots, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, leafy greens, apples, strawberries and grapes. Twenty percent local consumption would add, says the coalition, 8,800 local jobs.

Not everyone accepts those numbers. Economist Steve Sexton of UC, Berkeley has argued that local food, being seasonal and small-scale, is inherently inefficient. Nationwide, says Sexton, if America's top 40 crops were consumed within 100 miles, farmers would need to plow 60 million more acres of cropland. It would require 2.7 million tons more fertilizer and 50 million more pounds of chemicals. Nutrient-rich produce would be more expensive. "Large operations are more efficient," writes Sexton in the book *Freakonomics*. "Implicit in the argument that local farming is better is an assumption that a 'relocalized' food system can be just as efficient as today's modern farming. That assumption is simply wrong."

The Idaho Potato Commission points out that some soils are better than others. Alabama, for example, yields 170 hundredweight of potatoes per acre. An acre in Idaho yields more than twice as much. To forsake that comparative advantage would be to destroy more habitats, use more chemicals and pollute more water and air. Economists wince at the locavore claim that food mileage is an obvious way to measure environmental impact. Trucking lettuce from California may require less fuel than heating an Ohio

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David Carter Brown vintageprints.com

Locavores focus on farm-to-fork “food miles.” Critics emphasize the comparative advantage of food imports from distant places with optimal climates and soils.

greenhouse. Potatoes travel by rail and sea in fuel-efficient containers. Small-scale farming relies more heavily on gas-burning vans and trucks.

Locavores brush back those free-market claims with the arguments that local food, being fresher, provides more nutrition; that free-range valley farm-

ers treat their animals better; that growth hormones and preservatives poison the food chain; that organic farming cultivates tastes for unique products; and that conscientious consumption promotes citizenship. Evaluating those claims and assessing those expectations are the research questions that guide this collection of essays. Published by the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs at Boise State University, the report emerged from a town-gown field school on the dynamics of municipal growth. Annually the program draws about 50 college students from six social science majors. Each class takes on a research query. Top students continue in fall, revising papers for publication. *Local, Simple, Fresh* collects the best of last year's research.

Food seems a logical sequel to our three previous investigations. *Making Livable Places*, published in 2010, presented case studies of land-use conflicts. *Growing Closer* (2011) showed how those conflicts played out in low-density housing sprawl. The rippled effects of unsustainable housing guided student research on the Great Recession called *Down and Out in Ada County* (2012). That dire story sent us looking for a future beyond, searching for Boise's next big thing. Food piqued our interest because it connected history to economics, politics to settlement patterns. Topics in the volume include farm subsidies, farm ethics, breweries, vineyards, public markets, refugee gardens, potato promotions, land-use patterns and locavore entrepreneurs.

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Russell Lee/Farm Security Administration

Peaceful Belly farmers Clay and Josie Erskine think real peace begins with a belly of healthy food. Their 60 acres on Dry Creek in Ada County grows mostly heirloom vegetables and shuns genetically modified seeds.

1 Return of the Family

FARM

by Todd Shallat with Angie Zimmer

Big Ag's corporate farming wreaks havoc on the safety of food. "Big Ag[riculture] will kill you to for a profit," writes Jane Smiley in *The Huffington Post*. "Seventy percent of the ground beef sold by super-markets includes 'pink slime,'" reports Dianne Sawyer. "Dog food is causing human illnesses." "U.S. food waste worth more than off-shore drilling." "Kellogg's recalls 28 million boxes of Fruit Loops." "Nitrate-contaminated water from fertilizer use linked to thyroid cancer in humans." "Argentina study links herbicide Roundup to birth defects."

Janie Burns of Nampa—farmer, free-range lamb rancher and a leading voice for sustainable farming in the Treasure Valley—likes to begin with those scary headlines in her PowerPoint warnings about the commoditization of food. "The farmers," Burns explained, "are captive into a large-scale commodity system in which they take the price that they're given. You take a cow to the auction to be sold and you don't really have a choice on what

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Russell Lee/Farm Security Administration

Caldwell's flour mill recalls the 1940s when Canyon County farms had easy access to nearby processing plants.

the auction price is that day. You're going to take what you get."

Burns was raised among row crops and Angus cattle on her family's Ontario farm. "But don't hold it against me," she smiled. An English major at the College of Idaho, she also studied geology and began asking questions. Why, she wanted to know, were there so many vegetables listed in the seed catalog yet so few vegetable choices in the supermarket? How, she wondered, did farmers manage weeds before pressurized tanks of Roundup? And why, in a valley so rich with farmland, was so little food locally grown? Questions led to experimentation with an organic garden in Murphy. In 1991, she found 10 acres south of Nampa and branded it Meadowlark Farm. Today, she raises mostly chickens and sheep. A hay barn leans into a pasture with a ram and 55 ewes. Lambs lounge among the chickens in clover. Martha the sheep dog stands guard. "Our philosophy is that healthy



Nampa farmer Janie Burns is a pioneer of the locavore movement. “I’m selling more than the meat,” said Burns. “I’m selling the values.”

soil grows healthy grass, which grows healthy animals. We try our very best to provide an environment that gives the animals optimum health. They have clean water, fresh air, shade and shelter, nutritious food and exercise. We never use growth hormones.” Burns and a business partner also promote responsible farming at their energy-smart poultry processing plant in New Plymouth, the first of its kind in the state. Soon, with USDA approval, chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese will be sold nationwide.

“I’m selling much more than the meat,” said Burns. “I’m selling the values—the managing the vegetation, the integration with the whole farm.” The London-based World Society for the Protection of Animals has twice lauded Meadowlark Farm for its treatment of livestock. “Animals that are treated well just pragmatically are better,” Burns continued. “I think [humane treatment] speaks to our soul. There’s a very fine line between feeding animals poorly and treating humans poorly. There’s something emotional perhaps we can’t measure that’s important to me in this.”

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Meadowlark Farm

The Western meadowlark, yellow-breasted and perched on a fence post, embodies the organic values and methods of Janie Burns and her small-acreage farm.

What is good for the soul, said Burns, is also sound economics. At Meadowlark Farm she pioneered a wholesale marketing service called the Idaho Organic Cooperative. Gradually she prospered by precisely labeling meat with her logo and contact information and by answering questions and giving tours. Active in the Idaho Pastured Poultry Association, she is also a founding vendor of Capital City Public Market. Via the Treasure Valley Food Coalition, where Burns serves on the board, kindred spirits promote community gardens, community kitchens,

preservation of farming landscape and the valley's unique sense of place.

"Local food is more than just local food," according to the coalition's promotional video. "Local food is about stewardship of local resources and building a community that's prosperous and resilient." The Treasure Valley Food Coalition is also about statistics. "The average distance from food to plate is 1,500 miles," says Burns in her PowerPoint presentation. "It takes 10 calories of fossil fuel to produce 1 food calorie. There are three days of food supply in grocery stores; 63 percent of the Boise metro population is overweight or obese."

The obvious solution, for Burns and her coalition, is a return to the decentralized farming of the 1950s when the bulk of the valley's food was locally grown. From 1950 to 2007, said Burns, the number of farms in Idaho decreased by nearly 40 percent. The number of farms for Idaho's signature crop, the potato, had a 94 percent decrease. What used to be thousands of small potato farms in Idaho is now merely a few hundred very large farms. Statewide trends were exaggerated in the Treasure Valley as suburban hous-



Russell Lee/Farm Security Administration

Teenagers line up to work in the pea fields, Canyon County, 1941.

ing competed for land. In 1950, for example, Canyon County supported 57 acres of strawberries on 54 small-scale farms. Only one farm remained by 2007. Eighteen farms in Canyon County grew 60 acres of carrots. All that remains some 60 years later is a single acre of carrots on four struggling farms. With the decline of small farming came the loss crop diversity. As farmers sold out to subdivisions and Simplot, crops became pesticide-laden commercially engineered monocultures—less diversified and more vulnerable to whims of the global market and agricultural blight.

Once in a valley of diversified farming there were multiple streams of income: corner neighborhood dairies, gristmills, local markets for local produce, butcher shops connected to farms and small food processing centers. No longer. Fewer farms in the credit pool have globalized food and increased the risk for community bankers. Farming's purchasing power shifted away from Main Street. Now some 98 percent of the food consumed in the Treasure Valley is trucked in from other places. Locally raised cattle and poul-

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modeldude0/flickr

Technology increases the yield of farming. More farming on less acreage displaces the family farm. Pictured: a turn-of-the-century Idaho barn.

try are rare. Little if any country-grown food reaches the nation's tax-subsidized school lunch programs.

With the monoculture of crops comes the deterioration of the valley's small-farming infrastructure. "The packing houses, the processing facilities for the meat, for vegetables, storing those things, the canneries, the flour mills—all those things that used to support our economy and feed ourselves have vanished," said Burns. "See the kind of hollowed out towns. You don't have to be a genius to see that there's just no money in rural Idaho. Those rural economies that once depended on agriculture, their money is somewhere else."

The goal for Burns is not to ban long-distance farming. More fundamentally, she wants to see a shift in values and with it a healthy return to

organic methods and community pride in healthier food. Open-air public markets bode well for the valley's future of local food coalitions. In Idaho since 2006, the number of public markets has more than doubled from 26 to about 60. None has been more successful than Boise's downtown farmers market where Burns sells most of her lamb. There on Saturdays, discriminating consumers want to learn as much as they can. How was the animal treated? Where was it processed?

Burns applauds the questions. "We should think about what we're eating," said Burns, who prefers informed consumers. "Everything we put in our mouths makes a statement about our values and what we want our world to be like. So if we are eating junk, well, maybe that's the kind of world we want, but if we make conscientious choices about paying fair wages to the people who grow that food for us or making sure the environment is well taken care of, we start making the right choices." Through the lens of local, said Burns, we learn to value the organic connection between the health of our bodies and the health of our farms.

• • •

Angie Zimmer has a degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Math and Science. She currently teaches English in Japan.

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Russell Lee/Farm Security Administration

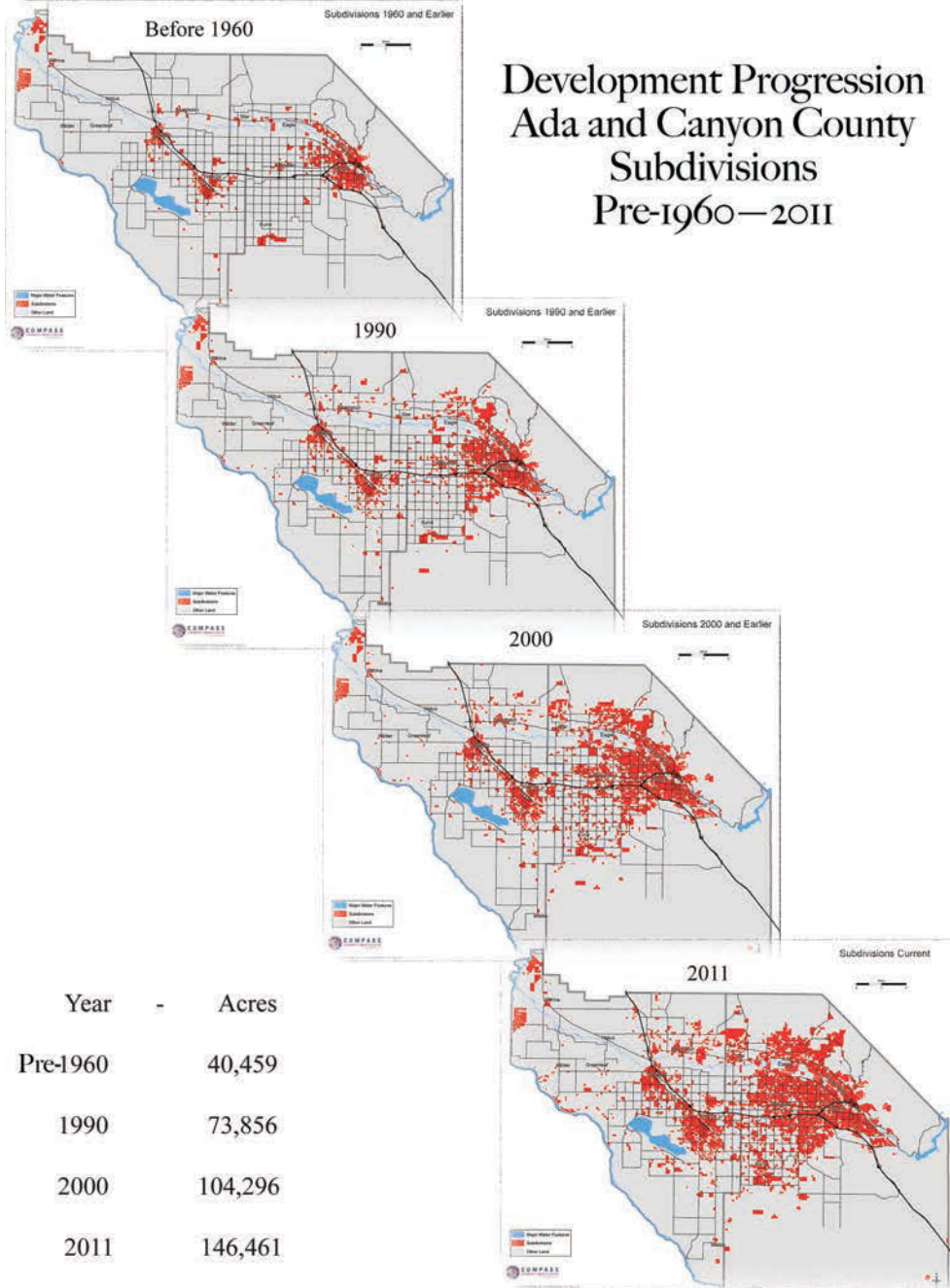
Harvesting peas near Nampa, 1941.

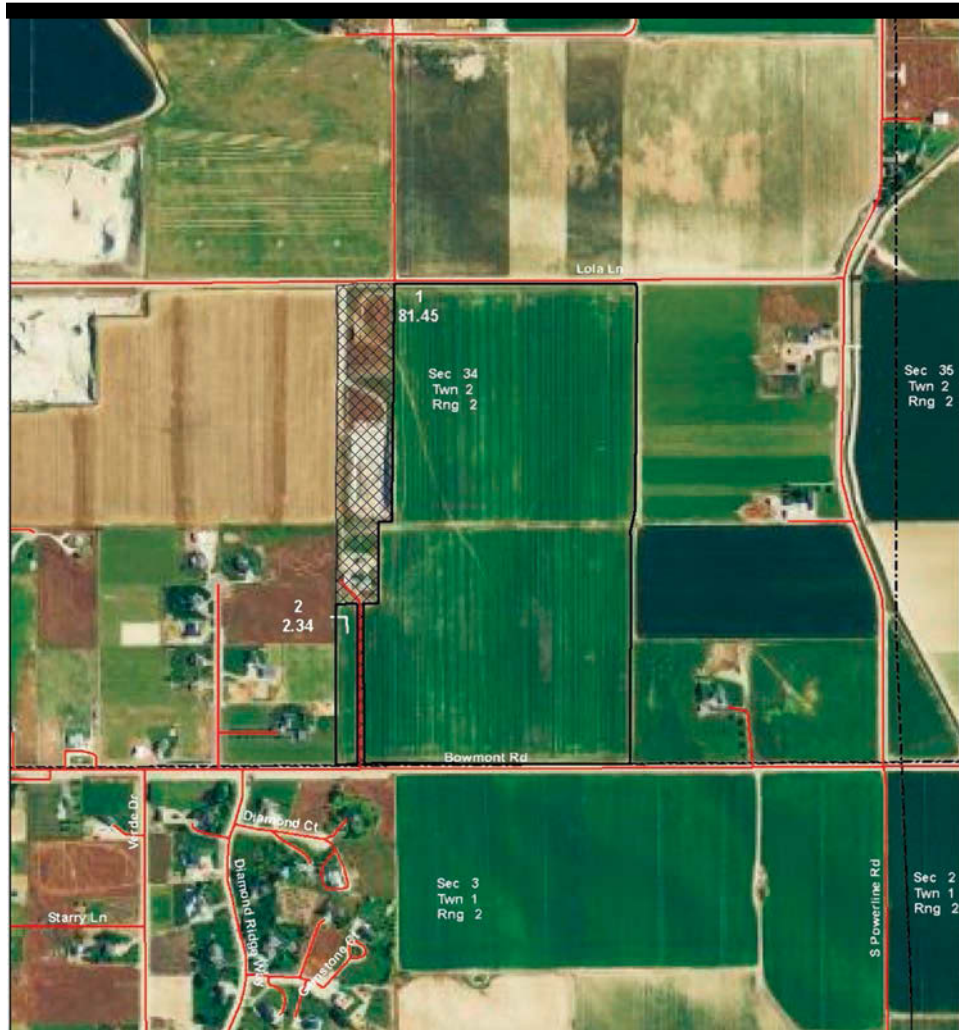
2 Vanishing LANDS

by Bryce Evans

A The V.V. Sparks acreage borders the busy Highway 55 that bisects the heart of Canyon County's rich farm country. Nearby, rooftops and asphalt have replaced onion and beet fields as real estate development creeps south of Nampa. But the Sparks farm won't suffer the same fate. Rather than someday disappear under a developer's bulldozers, the Sparks acreage will remain forever untouched, protected by a conservation easement arranged by the late Evelyn Craig, V.V. Sparks' daughter.

"She saw Nampa growing out and eating up farmland. She didn't want anything to happen to her property," explained Tim Breuer, director of the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley, which holds the voluntary conservation agreement placed on the land. "We don't own or control it ... we just assure that it will never be developed." The Sparks property remains a farm to this day, more than 10 years after the agreement was established.





Canyon County's population grew by about 40 percent, 2000-2010. Pictured: farmland for sale near Nampa.

While the Sparks farm provides an encouraging example to those who lament the loss of local farmland, it is an exception to a pattern that has seen Ada County lose 14 percent of its farmland between 2002 and 2007 as rural housing developments popped up to accommodate anticipated population growth. Canyon County, with more acres in agriculture, lost 4 percent. Alarmed by the loss of cropland, a handful of organizations—the Coalition

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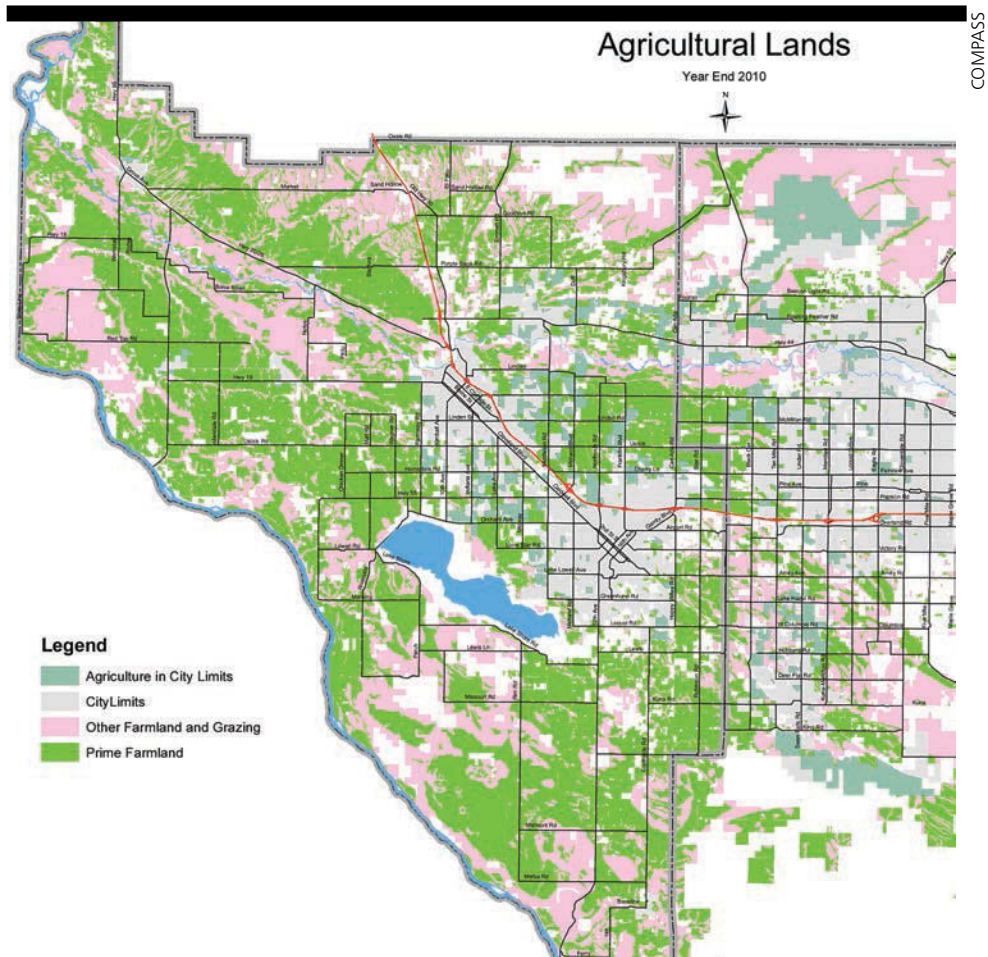


Nicholas DiPietro

Homedale fronts the Snake River in the receding checkerboard sea of Owyhee County farmland.

for Agriculture's Future, the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley, Idaho Smart Growth, the Urban Land Institute and others—are working to preserve the valley's farms and the heritage they represent. "We are not anti-development. But we do want to preserve the agricultural traditions that have forged the values of Idaho's people for generations," said George Crookham, part owner of the Crookham Seed Company in Caldwell and chairman of the Coalition for Agriculture's Future.

Agriculture has played a key role in the region's economic and cultural life ever since the canal systems were put into place throughout the valley in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The new irrigation systems allowed early farmers and ranchers to convert more than 400,000 acres of high-desert shrub ground into productive farmland, turning the Treasure Valley into the agricultural powerhouse that it has been for a century.



Boise Valley Agricultural Lands, COMPASS 2010. Exurbs leap to the rural outskirts, fragmenting farms.

But in recent years that agricultural heritage has slowly eroded. Inexpensive, low-density land that is converted to high-density uses can reap large profits for developers, making the land far more valuable than the crops planted on it. Farming acreages on the fringes of urban areas are especially vulnerable. Rising land prices, which lead to higher property taxes, often make it too hard for farmers to resist the temptation to sell. Thus, subdivisions and commercial developments have taken farmland out of produc-

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tion, due largely to urban or suburban sprawl that overextends residential housing into previously undeveloped areas. Fueled by a booming economy, the Treasure Valley's population steadily grew until the recession began in 2008. Boise added 20,000 people between 2000 and 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Meridian and Nampa each added 30,000. Janie Burns, the owner and operator of Meadowlark Farm near Nampa, has seen first-hand the growth that has taken place. "When I first bought my farm I was several miles outside the city; now my farm is considered to be in the area of impact zone for Nampa," she said.

"The single largest harm resulting from loss of farmland is its resulting impact on the local economy, the effects of which will then influence every other element of local life," said Crookham. He explained that when 10 acres of cultivated farmland are lost, the economic impacts are the loss of \$158,340 in base sales, \$33,790 in base wages and one job. Crookham added that agriculture-related industries provide nearly 20 percent of all jobs in the state, which equates to approximately 130,000 Idaho workers producing paychecks totaling \$2.8 billion. So losing farmland also means losing jobs and a higher rate of unemployment in an already tough economy. "Anything that reduces or retards the agricultural economic engine will reverberate throughout the local area. Look at the public attention given to the impact when a company closes or moves out of the area. Yet that is what is happening every time agricultural land in the Treasure Valley is lost to development," said Crookham.

Farmland fuels to the economy both in terms of raw capital and jobs. But which really adds more to the economy: farmland or subdivisions? Subdivisions add construction jobs and commercial centers include businesses that hire workers. Yet, Deanna Smith, the project coordinator at Idaho Smart Growth, points out the boom and bust nature of construction work. "When you're going through a housing boom you can produce a lot of construction jobs, but that's not a permanent industry," she said. Crookham added: "Certainly, skilled craftsmen can earn substantial wages in construction compared to those in the agricultural sector. However, Idaho's construction industry, along with high-tech and the service industries, profusely hemorrhaged jobs at unprecedented rates during the most recent recession while employment in the agricultural sector not only remained stable, but actually added jobs."

Is the public better served with high-paying jobs of short duration or with more moderately paying jobs that provide long-term stability and reliability? Crookham said large-scale loss of farmland would directly translate



Idaho-Office-of-Refugees-International-Rescue-Committee

Compensating, in part, for the decline of family farming, the City of Boise has loosened zoning restriction on small-scale urban agriculture

into the loss of stable jobs that can be lifesavers during economic conditions like Idaho faced during this recent recession. More than 10,000 construction jobs left Idaho from 2008 to 2009 alone, according to the Idaho State Department of Labor. On the other hand farming jobs remained consistent and sustainable.

The rapid encroachment of subdivisions into farmland not only leads to the loss of those acreages, but it also can lead to conflicts between the remaining farmers and residents in newly built subdivisions. Idaho Smart Growth's Smith explained: "Some land uses are compatible and some are not; farms and residential should not cross. When you have houses surrounded by farmland, there is conflict. You have farmers who, because of their lifestyle and how they make their living, are up at odd hours of the day. They run noisy and loud machinery, and there are animals that make smells." Factor in the need for some farmers to crop dust and the dusty conditions surrounding unused farmland and even more conflicts are possible when farmland is close to residences. Added Smith: "You create these conflicts and

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then suddenly people are saying we don't want these guys [farmers] to be able to do X or Y or Z. So if you are not thoughtful about your land use development, then you create these conflicts—and we have created these all over Idaho.”

Small-farm owner Burns said these sorts of issues can frustrate farmers. When all of the neighboring farms turn into subdivisions, then it is more difficult to attain equipment used for specialized projects. “You can't just borrow a piece of farm equipment from your neighbors if you are surrounded by subdivisions,” she explained. This is not only a conflict of use but also puts further economic strain on farmers because they may now have to purchase or rent equipment that they previously borrowed. These clashes of use can often not only frustrate both parties, but might also force farmers off of their lands. “Conflict of use is just one more reason for someone to sell; it's also a reason for someone to not start a new farm,” said Smith.

Local governments often favor subdivision construction because it grows the tax base by increasing the area's population. While growth isn't necessarily a bad thing, uncontrolled growth is, said Smith, who calls it an issue of “thoughtful vs. random” sprawl. The issue is not that the region is growing, but rather how it grows. “If an area is to grow, then residential housing is crucial,” explained Crookham. “The issue is one of proper management of that growth process so that it does not unduly impact the agricultural sector of the local economy. Growing outwards from existing residential areas provides a means to accommodate growth. But spot zoning or dropping residential developments into the middle of agricultural lands should be avoided because of the long-term uncontrolled growth cycle it feeds,” Crookham said.

Agricultural land loss has slowed since the recession began five years ago. But in some cases land was already taken out of production or rezoned before the crash hit. Infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer systems were installed but then abandoned or left for repossession. Now much of that land is unusable for agriculture. The economic slowdown had a significant impact on development, said Breuer of the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley. “Platted subdivisions are now back to alfalfa ... or turned to weed patches. Lots of projects that started when farmland prices were sky-high have been shelved. Some have been sold back for dimes on the dollar.”

While the issues associated with farmland loss are familiar, the solutions are more vague. Money and private property rights are at the center of a complex set of relationships. Both the Urban Land Institute and the Coalition for Agriculture's Future say land use decisions need to put more



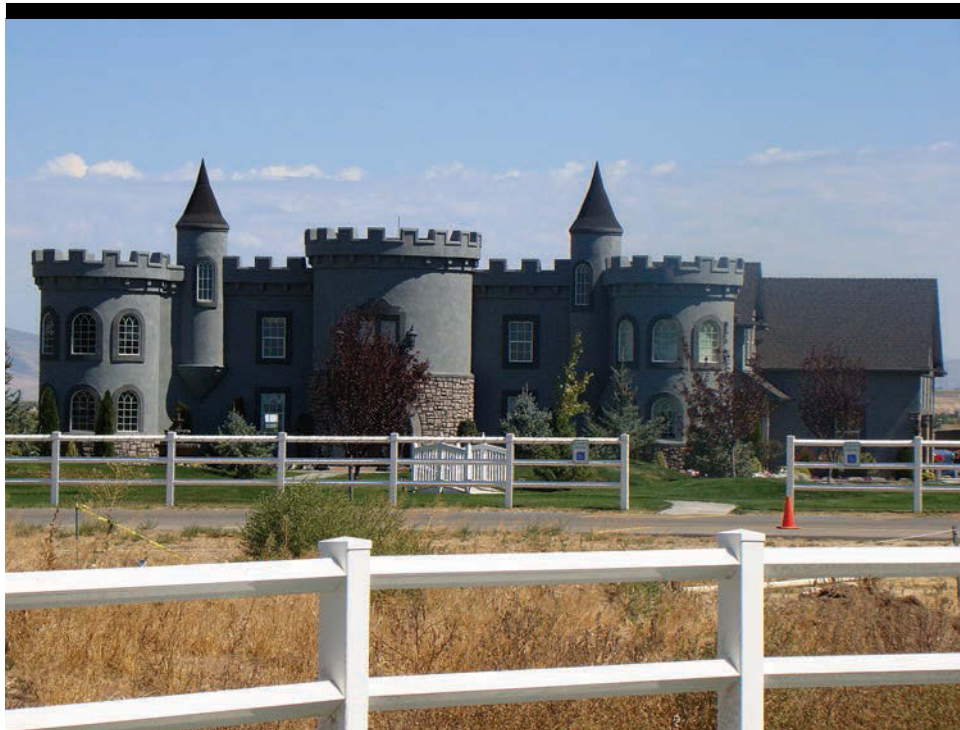
Gerry Slabaugh

Gothic arched turn-of-the-century barns are fast disappearing. Pictured: Gothic barn flanks the farmhouse on Nampa's Madison Avenue, 2012.

emphasis on the value of agriculture. "Agriculture may add \$3 billion to the Treasure Valley economy, but that holds little weight when our governmental bodies allow irresponsible urban development of historical lands," wrote Crookham in a letter to the Coalition's membership.

In a 2012 report titled "Sustainable Agriculture: Measuring Success," the Urban Land Institute stated, "In many ways, the issue is not if we can avoid developing agricultural land, but rather how we manage developing responsibly." The report went on to urge decision makers to include agricultural interests in land use discussions. "Agriculture must have a seat at the land use planning table. We do not need to convert more farmland for housing and developments, but we do need to properly integrate agriculture into the planning process," the report said. Farmland preservation groups can point to some successes. The 2011 Idaho Legislature passed a bill mandating that planning and zoning policies must adhere more closely to existing com-

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Susankinidaho/Flickr

A castle rises on farmland, Kuna, 2008.

prehensive plans and must consider the role of agriculture in zoning decisions. Canyon County eliminated its planned-community conditional use permit provision that previously allowed residential subdivisions to be dropped in the middle of agricultural land.

Some localities manage farmland loss by creating growth boundaries that in essence cap outward sprawl and create infill to more efficiently use space. This ensures that farmland stays farmland and that development remains separate. Smith said that urban growth boundaries allow growth to occur in a rational, logical pattern that protects farmland or other open spaces. "The benefit is they [growth boundaries] really help a community from an infrastructure viewpoint to really plan for and build in a manner that economically makes sense," she said. Oregon has been successful in using urban growth boundaries, especially in the Portland area, where the concept

has saved thousands of acres since its inception in the 1970s. But there is another side to the growth boundary issue. In addition to the potential clashes with private property rights, some believe boundaries cause housing costs to increase because they reduce land available for new development.

Smith cites Latah County as a model for what can be done to prevent sprawl and the destruction of farmlands. "What is unique about Moscow is that in effect it has almost the equivalent of an urban growth boundary and the reason they do is because their farmers almost demanded it in a sense because the farmland in the area is so valuable." She pointed to Moscow as an example of where community activists such as local farmers can hold significant sway if they band together. Idaho's land use planning and zoning rules should feature a measured approach when it comes to projects that will result in the loss of agricultural lands, said Crookham. "This does not mean that commercial growth and development should be restricted. It does mean that government must honestly and factually weigh the gains against the losses when making a decision as to converting agricultural land to other uses."

"It's not like there are bad guys and good guys," Breuer said. "Thing is, if you are sitting here in urban Boise and want to protect farmland, you are telling someone else not to develop their land. In some cases, it might be their 401(k). It is important to recognize political realities. While a number of studies have shown it makes economic sense to keep development within existing communities, it is not always easy to convince local officials that turning down development and reducing sprawl makes sense as an economic development tool."

Many farmers sell to developers because of simple economics. If farmers can't make a profit, they are more likely to sell their land. "One of the biggest barriers in the area today is that farmland has become less valuable as farmland than as development," explained Smith. "As people get into retirement age and they want to quit farming, they have developers saying, 'I'll pay you X millions of dollars for your ground.' And the kids don't want the farm, so they're saying, 'Sure why not?' This imbalance in property value can drive people off of the land and it's justifiable for the farmers." Added Breuer, "If you can make farming profitable, you are going to have farmland. If it's more productive to grow houses, that's probably what's going to happen."

In addition to regulatory approaches like zoning restrictions, preservationists are searching for financial incentives to encourage farmers to preserve their land. Smith suggested the possibility of a public fund that would

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tsarchitect.nsfianagan.net

Freeways stretch housing through cropland. The Boise Valley ranks first in the Pacific Northwest for auto-dependent, low-density sprawl.

be used to preserve threatened farmland. Economic incentives such as income tax benefits associated with conservation easements is a tool that might encourage owners to voluntarily protect their farmland. Incentive-based approaches such as land trusts, easements or development rights transfers do save farmland, as the preservation of the Sparks farm illustrates. Property owners or their heirs can place their land in a trust that ensures it will never be developed. In most cases the land remains in private hands, but is restricted to remain a farm, nature preserve, open space or other public use.

But Crookham urges caution when using government to provide further incentives to farmers to keep them from selling their land to developers. There is a fine line between protecting farmland while also protecting the

property rights of farmers, he explained. "As a matter of individual property rights, it would be wrong for government to interfere with the willing seller/willing buyer element of land transactions. Government subsidies or financial incentives to not sell would also constitute unwarranted governmental interference with the free market."

Another preservation strategy is to promote agritourism, a commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors to a farm, ranch or other agricultural business. Agritourism projects such as corn mazes, farm stands, scenic byways, bed-and-breakfasts and greenhouses can be a way to not only bring extra income to farmers but also inform the public about agricultural issues. This has been an especially effective strategy in the wine industry.

Promoting local food production is another means to help small-scale farmers stay on their land. Only a fraction of what farmers grow in the Treasure Valley is sold locally, but that is changing as local food markets, restaurants and grocery stores embrace local producers. The Treasure Valley Food Coalition estimates that area farmers could expect \$118 million in new income each year if Ada and Canyon County residents just bought 15 percent of their food each year locally. That could translate into 1,000 new jobs and \$13 million in labor income, the organization said. "If we have more pride in our local agricultural lands and products, we will do more to protect them," said Burns from Meadowlark Farm.

One of the major hurdles to farmland protection is the lack of public awareness. Said Crookham: "Not only the general public, but community and government officials need to be better educated on the actual beneficial impact of agriculture on the area. Ultimately, an agricultural economy cannot exist without land. Farmland lost is farmland lost forever. The real question is whether or not our leadership can fully grasp that fact before it's too late."

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Bryce Evans is a senior studying Communication. He plans to pursue a graduate degree in Community and Regional Planning and begin a career in public service. He came to Boise State from Orange County in Southern California.

36 local simple fresh



Guy Hand

Microbrews thrive in the Pacific Northwest. Portland's Deschutes Brewery inspires Boise favorites like Tablerock, Sockeye and Payette.

3 Back to CRAFT

by Guy Hand with research by Greg Randleman

Kevin Dinius cocked his head to one side, as if trying to slide all the brewery names into a neat row before he spoke. “We’ve got Wallace Brewing from Wallace, Idaho,” he began to the distant thump of a Lynyrd Skynyrd cover band. “We’ve got Payette Brewing from Boise, we’ve got Sun Valley, Von Scheidt out of Twin Falls, Table Rock, The Ram, Portneuf Valley Brewing out of Pocatello and Laughing Dog from Sandpoint.”

Including his own Crescent Brewery in Nampa, 13 Idaho breweries were dispensing beer at the first ever all-Idaho Brewers Festival at Nampa’s Lakeview Park on a sunny July day in 2011. “There’s no Bud Light here; there’s no Coors,” Dinius said with a smile. “It’s all Idaho beer, all craft beer.”

When this first-of-a-kind, all-Idaho beerfest was described to Idaho beer historian Herman Ronnenberg a few days later, he called it “magical.” For decades, Ronnenberg has researched the Idaho beer industry; he’s written numerous books on the subject from *Beer and Brewing in the Inland*

Northwest to The Beer Baron of Boise. Not surprisingly, his friends call him “Doctor Beer.” Yet, on the phone from his home in Troy, Ronnenberg seemed truly taken aback by the notion that Idaho now contained enough commercial beer brewers to pull together what could actually be called a “festival.”

At the time, there were 19 commercial brewers in Idaho. Although that number paled compared to the hundreds of breweries operating in Oregon and Washington, compared to none at all in Idaho—which is Ronnenberg’s baseline—that number was remarkable. In 1978, when Ronnenberg came to Idaho to work on his Ph.D., “there was no brewery in the state of Idaho,” he said. “I was beginning to research breweries and it was completely a dead subject at that point.” From 1960 to 1985—for a full quarter of a century—not a single Idahoan commercially brewed beer. “So an Idaho Brewers Festival,” Ronnenberg said, “to me it’s still like magical that there is such a thing.”

It seemed a little magical to the brewers who were actually participating in the festival. Crescent City brewer and festival organizer Dinius said it was the first time that Nampa had permitted a beer festival of any type within its city limits. “I think it’s a sign of the changing times,” he said. The brewers, who often work in isolation from their peers, seemed pleasantly stunned to simply be standing next to other Idaho brewers. “We are working with the Huckleberry Cream Ale today,” the Laughing Dog brewer said as he hoisted a pint. Sockeye Brewing was pushing its Wooley Bugger Wheat; Wallace Brewery, its Jack Leg Stout; Von Scheidt, its Sour Mash Corn Porter.

Ronnenberg said the recent surge in local brewing reminded him of Idaho’s original beer-brewing heyday. Back in 1889, he said, Idaho had dozens of breweries scattered across the territory, but the excitement then was fueled not by cream ale and Wooley Bugger Wheat, but by gold fever and the unquenchable thirst of gold miners. Ronnenberg said Idaho’s very first brewery started in Lewiston in 1862, a stepping-stone to the mining camps in Orofino, Pierce and Elk City. “As the miners move down into the Boise Basin,” Ronnenberg explained, “you get breweries there and as they move into Silver City, there, and very soon you get breweries in Boise and little places that you don’t think of like Rocky Bar.”

Idaho City had several breweries during those gold rush days (but the number had less to do with demand than the town’s bad luck. In 1865, 1867, 1868 and 1871 Idaho City had massive fires and each time rebuilt much of the town from scratch, including its breweries. Boise, functioning as the in-between town for the mines of Silver City and Idaho City, had several breweries. By 1889, there were approximately 25 Idaho cities with one or



Idaho State Historical Society

Germans pioneered beer-making in Boise. Czech-style pilsners followed the railroad-era Bohemian migration to Boise's South 8th Street. Pictured: advertising beer in the 1930s.

more breweries for a total of 33 statewide. Only very recently has the state approached that number again.

Before the Civil War, Ronnenberg said American brewers often followed British brewing traditions; much like modern craft brewers, their saloons served dark pints of ale, porter and stout. The mining camp brewers were different. Most were immigrants from German-speaking countries steeped in the love of lager. Ronnenberg estimates that "over 90 percent" of the beers served in the mining camps "were lager, lager, lager." That's one sharp distinction between Idaho's 19th century brewers and today's lager-shunning craft beer makers. But both—separated by over a century of time—believed fervently in the value of one thing: small-scale, locally produced beer.

Back then brewers didn't have much of a choice. Beer was about as perishable as milk and brewers had to brew close to the mining camps they

served. When those camps moved on, so did the brew masters. When the gold rush began to ebb, brewers settled into the farm towns. Along with the bakeries, hardware stores and jailhouses, breweries became local institutions.

By the 1870s, change began to threaten Idaho breweries. Large

Eastern and Midwestern brewers had perfected a method of pasteurizing their beer. With a far longer shelf life, those brewers could then ship that pasteurized beer to the far corners of the country in railcars cooled with block ice.

Idaho brewers soon felt the heat of outside competition and reacted by advertising the virtues of local Idaho

beer. In an echo of today's local food movement,

a Boise beer baron named John Lemp declared his beer "honest beer" made with

"Idaho hops and barley" and reminded his customers that "the money you spend

helps to employ Idaho labor." In the northern Idaho mining town of Wallace, an ad

urged citizens to "patronize home industry by drinking Wallace beer." That was in the 1890s. "You

start seeing these 'support local industry' ads early on," said Ronnenberg, but the term "local" was often as hard to define then as it is today.

Lewiston's brewery had to have its barley shipped by river steamer from the Pacific Coast. Idaho farmers didn't begin producing enough barley to supply local brewers until the early 1900s. In 1907, a barley-malting factory was constructed in Idaho Falls. A few years later, Idaho brewing-barley production received national recognition: The Nov. 3, 1911, *Idaho County Free Press* reported that William Von Berge, a brewer and farmer in Grangeville, won the National Brewers and Hop Growers Association's prize for the best brewing barley in the United States.

Hops, another fundamental ingredient of beer making,

were also imported from outside

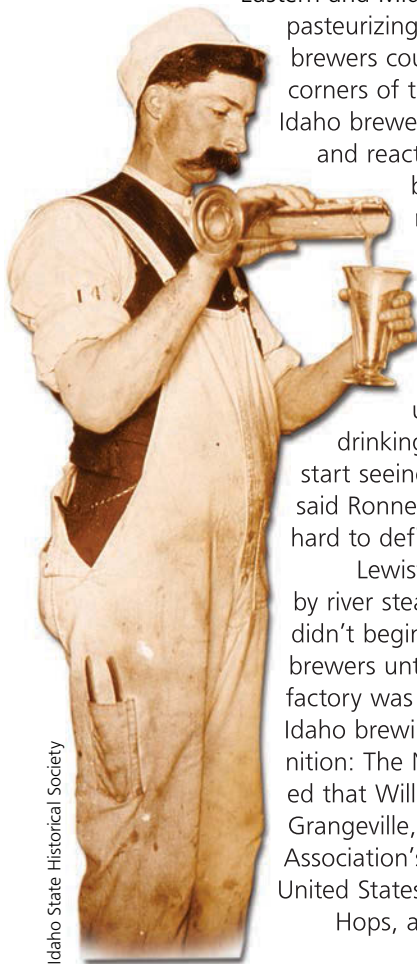
Idaho in the early days. Before 1894,

hops were shipped from Puyallup,

Washington Territory, but in 1887 mites

devastated the Puyallup crop, forcing

growers to move production to eastern



Idaho State Historical Society

Boise brewers fought pasteurized imports in the 1870s by promoting local hops and "honest beer."

Pictured: a Boise brewmeister.

Washington and Idaho. In 1894, Idaho growers began experimenting with hop varieties around Mountain Home, Payette, Moscow and Juliaetta—but with mixed results. Moscow’s first crop consisted of one plant yielding about half a pound of hops; Juliaetta produced a single bale, Mountain Home’s crop failed altogether, but Payette grew 33 acres of top-quality hops. The Sept. 4, 1894, *Idaho Register* reported that about 100 pickers and several spectators were drawn to the novelty of Idaho’s first real commercial hop crop. By 1899, Idaho was reported to be one of the few states with a notable increase in hop production.

Still, Idaho’s increasing ability to grow its own beer-making ingredients didn’t insulate it against outside competition any more effectively than it does today. By the late 1800s, mega-brewers like Schlitz and Pabst were shipping large quantities of pasteurized beer to any Western town with a rail line. “You’re making 600 barrels a year,” Ronnenberg said of Idaho’s small brewers of the time, “and you’re trying to compete with a guy who is making 600,000.”

Historians frequently cite the post-World War II era as the point when industrialization and consolidation began to dominate America’s food system, but Idaho’s local beer industry began to falter under the pressure of outside industrial competition a half century earlier, in the 1890s. Then came Prohibition. “Of course, it’s the great knockout punch for American brewing,” Ronnenberg said. Idaho went dry in 1916. During the ensuing 17 years of Prohibition, owners of local breweries retooled their facilities to produce other goods, mothballed them or simply left them to rot. Idaho’s first brewery in Lewiston burned down. The breweries in Coeur d’Alene and Moscow began producing vinegar. The Nampa brewery turned to a non-alcoholic fruit drink. Others were



Idaho State Historical Society

Beer King John Lemp toasted German unification at Turnverein Hall on Boise’s Sixth Street in 1871.



Payette Brewing Company

Boise's Payette Brewing Company, founded in 2010, runs a 15-tank brewing system. The Garden City brewery is the first in Idaho to can beer.

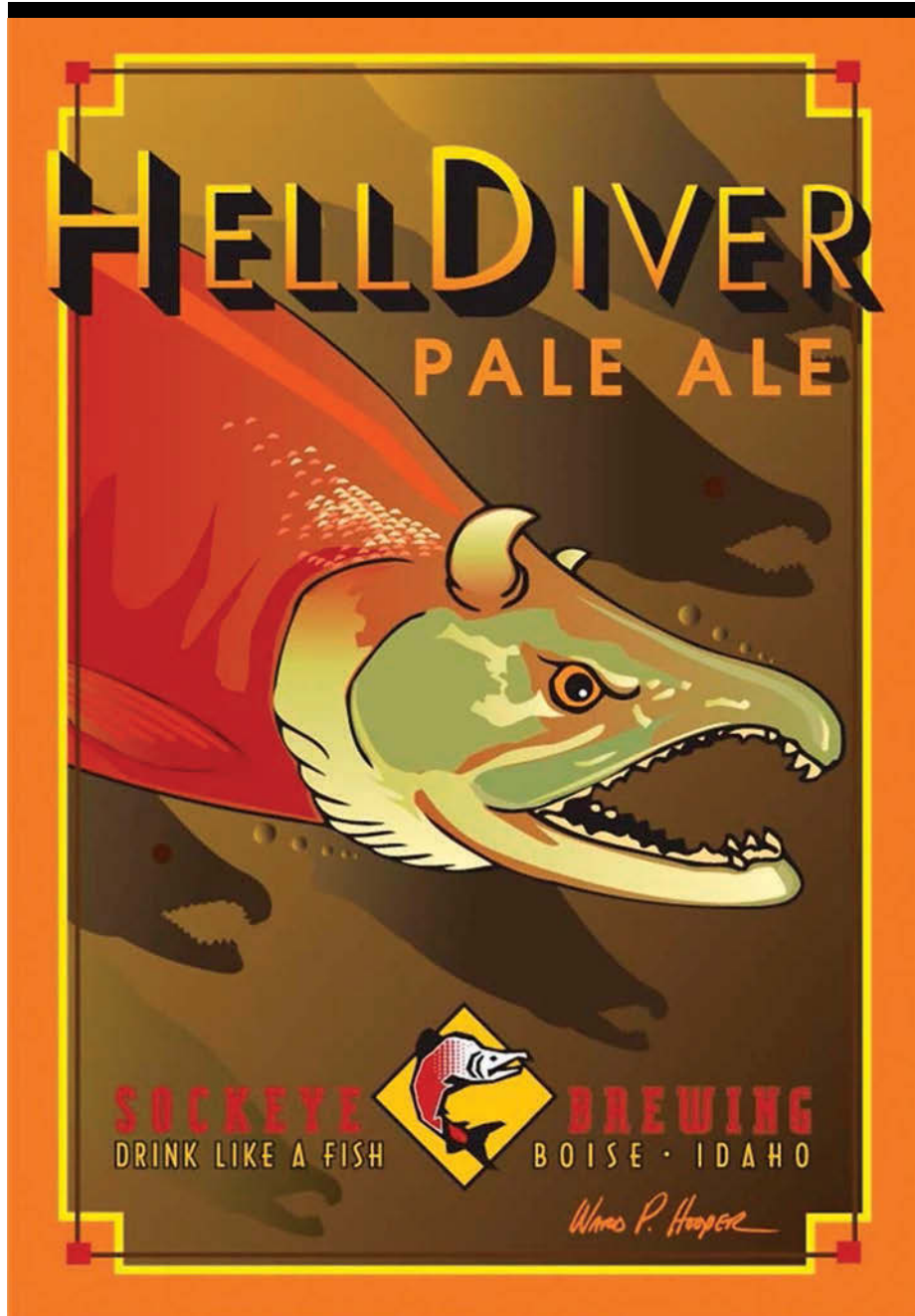
converted into storage stations and auto body shops.

After Prohibition's repeal in 1933, Lemp's brewery was quick to reopen. Its owners were now out-of-state. Also in 1933, Bohemian Breweries Inc. reopened a Boise brewery. Overland Beverage Co. began brewing beer again in Nampa and the town of Wallace reopened its brewery in 1934. In 1935, Pilsner Brewery opened in Idaho Falls and East Idaho Brewery opened in Pocatello.

Yet, said Ronnenberg, "It wasn't easy for small brewers to come back." Unable to have brewed beer for nearly two decades, brewers had to relearn the craft. "They can't find a man who knows how to run the equipment,"

Ronnenberg said of Idaho's reopened breweries. "The market is down, they start up but they don't do well and these little places just start closing in droves." The first to go was Pilsner Brewery in 1939, then Overland Beverage in 1950 and East Idaho Brewery in 1954. The longest lasting brewery was in Boise, but it only outlived the rest by six years. Bohemian Breweries closed its doors in 1960. The vacuum created first by Prohibition, then by the demise of local, post-Prohibition breweries was quickly filled by Schlitz, Pabst and Budweiser. "The big guys," as Ronnenberg called them, "who have the capital to do everything they need. So you look at the percentage of beer brewed by the top 10 brewers in America and it goes from like 30 percent to like 90 percent of the market. They just take over because they have the capital, the expertise, the distribution network."

That's why Ronnenberg found it so remarkable that in the 1980s, the national craft beer movement began to challenge the domination of ever larger, more distant beer makers. Decades before the *New Oxford American Dictionary* named locavore its 2007 word of the year, microbrewers across



Sockeye Brewing Company

Hell Diver Pale Ale is one of six beers handcrafted at the Sockeye Brewing Company on Cole Road in Boise.

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Treasure Valley Food and Wine Blog

Bracing for the thirsty mob at Boise's 2011 Beerfest. A dispute with park officials has since forced the festival to Meridian.

the country were again touting the virtues of local beer, echoing the chant of their 19th century brethren. What they didn't share with their pioneering kin was a love of lager. Modern, small-scale brewers nearly all rejected the uniformly pale brews typical of those former mining camps and the current big-name brands for dark, often extra hoppy "anti-lagers"—beer varieties that were reminiscent of those favored in pre-Civil War America.

Ronnenberg says Idaho caught the micro-brewing bug in 1985. That's when Snake River Brewing opened in a hop field near Caldwell. A new brewery in Coeur d'Alene opened in 1987. Both are gone now, but they were soon followed by Table Rock, Sun Valley Brewing and a slow, but steady trickle of others who opened and are even flourishing.

Idaho has meanwhile increased hops and barley yields. Idaho grows about 10 percent of the nation's hops and is No. 1 in barley. That doesn't mean, however, that those basic brewing ingredients are any easier for Idaho beer makers to procure locally than they were in the late 1800s.

Although Idaho is home to numerous hop producers—including the 1,600-acre Elk Mountain hop farm near Bonners Ferry, perhaps the world's largest—Idaho hops are overwhelmingly sold to the large national brewers. Elk Mountain, for instance, contracts nearly all of its hop harvest to the Budweiser-Michelob and Natural Light behemoth Anheuser-Busch. Southern Idaho hop farmers sell most of their crop to an international broker, not individual brewers.

Grower Diane Hass said that she and other hop growers would be happy to cater to Idaho's budding craft-brewing industry, but explained it isn't large enough yet to order hops in quantities that are profitable for growers. It's much easier, Hass said, for hop farmers to build relationships with craft brewers in states with a higher concentration, like Washington and Oregon. "There are some farms that that's all they do in Oregon and eastern Washington," she said.

Idaho-grown barley is also difficult for the state's relatively small number of craft brewers to procure. Although local barley is mostly malted in Pocatello, it's then shipped to Vancouver, Washington, mixed with other barleys and packaged for nationwide distribution. Nevertheless, Idaho craft brewers are continuing to grow and as they do, their ability to procure the raw materials they need—whether Idaho-grown or not—will also grow.

When the first annual Idaho Brewers Festival was held in Nampa in July 2011, participants were proud to say that Idaho had 19 breweries up and running. By January 2013, that number had jumped to 32, according to Sheila Francis, president of the recently formed Idaho Brewers United, a non-profit whose stated goal is strengthening Idaho craft beer. "It's a huge jump," Francis wrote in an email—and just one brewery shy of Idaho's 1889 brewing heyday. That historical highpoint will be surpassed soon as Idaho enters what is clearly a new heyday of commercial beer making. "I know of at least six other breweries in planning," Francis added, "and that's just in the Boise area."

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Greg Randleman is a Fruitland native and Navy retiree. A History major, he plans to attend graduate school.

Guy Hand is an award-winning writer, radio producer and photographer who specializes in the subjects of food and agriculture.

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Paul Budge

Capital City Public Market, founded in 1994, crowds 150 vendors into six blocks of Boise's downtown. Sixteen of the original vendors have since split off to a nearby farmers market exclusively focused on local food.

4 Market to MARKET

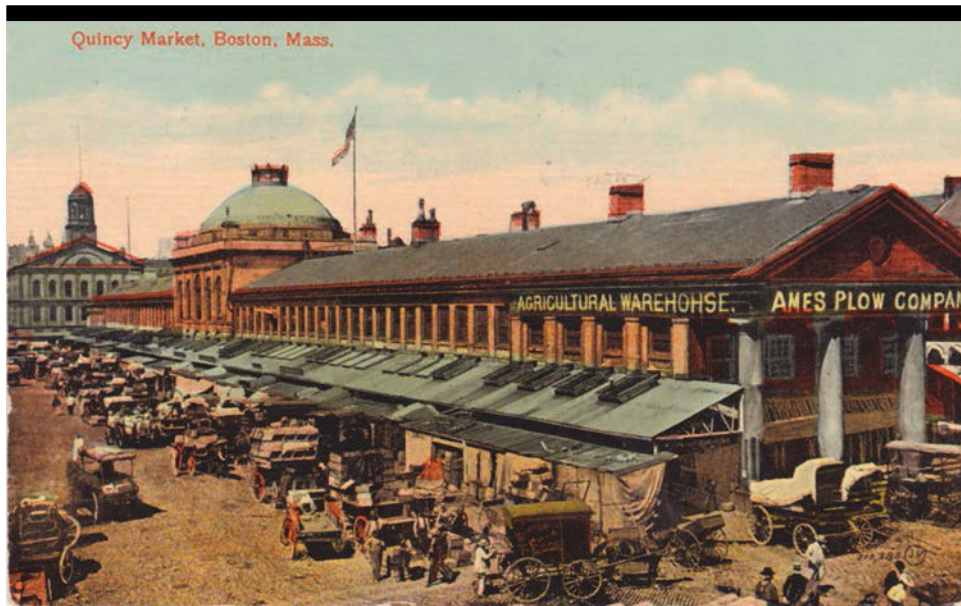
by Jennifer Shelby

Early on a Saturday morning, you'll likely find a whirl of activity in downtown Boise centered on clusters of produce, baked goods and handcrafted items. People lose themselves in the scent of a ripe and juicy heirloom tomato, the sun-kissed sweetness of fresh raspberries or the peppery crispness of kale. The lively music of a fiddler grows clearer as the sound of folk singers fades into the distance. Shoppers catch up with each other, plan their market strategy or receive a bit of culinary wisdom from those supplying their goods. Restaurants and shops on the periphery benefit from this surge of activity too. It all blends into a grand medley of music, conversation and urban buzz.

Amidst the vibrancy of Boise's Capital City Public Market, it's hard to imagine why farmers markets—one of humanities oldest, most fundamental institutions—nearly disappeared from the American landscape.

The first market of record in the English colonies was established in Boston in 1634 by an order of Gov. John Winthrop. In 1658, a wooden

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Quincy Market with its palatial indoor pavilion opened at harbor's edge in Boston in 1826.

building was erected on the designated site. All early American markets followed Old World precedent. They were established by political authorities with the goal of providing a means of trade. By the early 19th century, markets had been established in New York, Philadelphia, Lancaster, Cincinnati and Cleveland. Yet, by the end of that century, as the Industrial Revolution revved up and those markets began to decline, locals increasingly obtained their wants and necessities from specialized, full-time shops, groceries and centralized wholesalers. Farmers markets became less relevant. Jane Pyle, in an article published in the *Geographical Review* in 1971, quoted the Cincinnati mayor from this period as saying that "markets were decadent and that demolishing them would be no great loss." Despite the overall decline in markets during the 19th century, many remained strong in the South and Northeast. In the Midwest, markets flourished in young towns and declined in old ones. In the newly developing West, markets were never as well established as those in older parts of the country. As the 20th century dawned, markets continued to decline overall.



Wikipedia Commons

Cincinnati's Findlay Market, opened in 1855, pioneered iron beam cage construction. The market once anchored a German brewery district.

During World War II, the U.S. Department of Agriculture saw an opportunity for farmers markets to fill a gap in the produce market and provide low prices for consumers. The USDA did not anticipate the dominance of larger-scale agricultural systems made possible by irrigation and expanding transportation networks. By the late 1960s, markets had transformed into more specialized businesses. Accelerating industrialization and consolidation of America's entire food system dramatically increased output and efficiency, further leading to a focus on foreign rather than local markets. Contact between consumer and farmer became increasingly rare. According to Allison Brown in a paper for the American Geographical Society titled "Counting Farmers Markets," by 1970 only approximately 340 markets remained, with even fewer dominated by local producers. Writer Jane Pyle surmised that with technological advances that allowed travel and expanded trade, one might have imagined a complete demise of local markets as the



Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food is a \$65 million USDA campaign to promote urban markets and local foods.

20th century progressed. Instead, the last decades of that century defied expectations as farmers markets rebounded in popularity.

But why? The reasons appear to be as diverse as the produce found at today's revitalized farmers markets. Rick Bayless, host of the PBS TV show *Mexico One Plate at a Time*, said, "to find a local market is to find local flavor. Food here is kind, flavorful and inexpensive." Others say markets serve essential social, economic and political functions in growing communities by attracting tourism and encouraging interaction between rural and urban areas while broadening the diversity of both. The increased traffic in an urban area also creates opportunities that reach beyond the sale of produce.

Farmers markets are also often said to be lifesavers for small-scale local farmers who have struggled to survive in the shadow of industrial agriculture. Many consumers now champion those local farmers and are willing to pay higher prices for their products, believing that market distortions have unfairly left conscientious farmers out of the agricultural equation while fos-



David R. Day/American Photography Source

McClaskey's Glads near Caldwell sells cut flowers, eggs and cherry tomatoes at public markets in Nampa, Eagle and Boise.

tering an industrial food system that they say overuses chemicals and antibiotics while diminishing diversity and flavor.

Frequent market shopper Misti Selman argues in favor of farmers markets, despite the perceived higher prices, stating that "many farmers markets are not government subsidized, so that is why they are priced a bit higher. If our government didn't subsidize those who grow for the supermarkets, we would see their prices jump as well. Many people do not understand that about the farmers markets, and judge them unfairly because of it. It's nice to see the support it brings to the farms that choose to grow at a higher standard than what our government requires."



Guy Hand

Market shoppers expect to pay more for certified organic. Pictured: valley-grown parsnips.

Market advocates like Selman say that shopping at a farmers market is one way consumers can cast their votes for local flavor, local production and sustainable practices. However, not all considered this affordable. One Boise market-goer, Sarah Radican, states that she "loves the idea of the farmers market," but rarely buys anything when she goes because of the cost. "It all looks wonderful, and I might get something to try just to justify the trip downtown and the parking, but honestly, it doesn't work with our grocery budget. It's more like something we have to budget entertainment dollars for," she said.

Still, Brian Halweil in his book *Eat Here* argues that the "cost of market meat and produce is comparable to or less than supermarkets, when making a fair comparison of goods." Industrial farming has trapped many farmers with increasing costs and decreasing profits. The majority of the profits in the agricultural industry go to other parts of the production process and little goes to the farmers. Farmers markets are one way to put cash directly

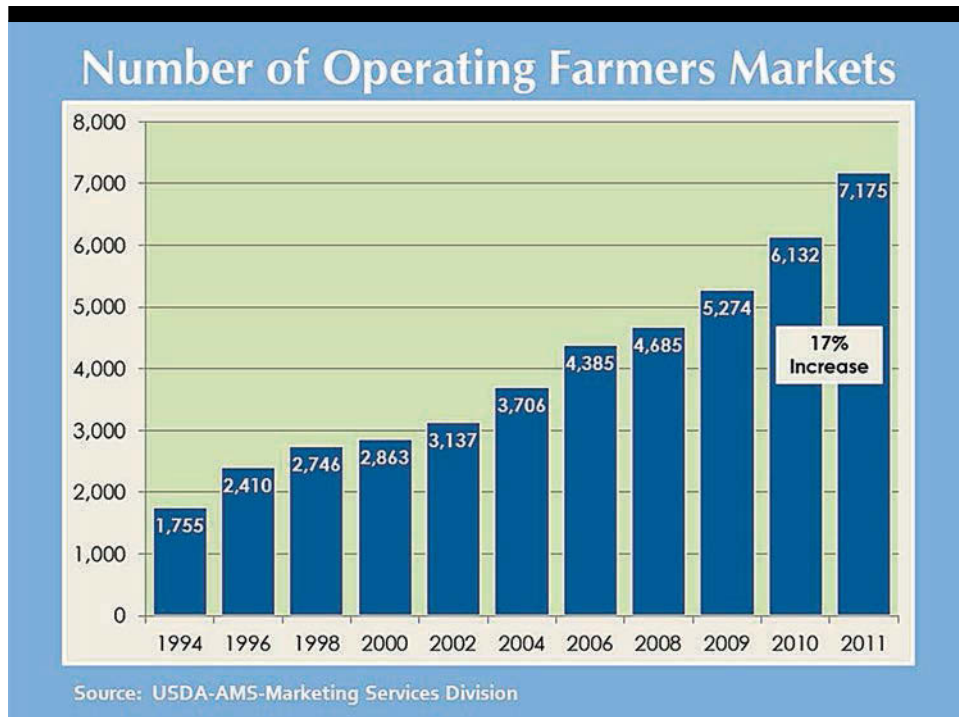
into the hands of the farmers. The success of the markets is intricately tied to the success of small farms and local food systems. According to Halweil, farmers markets offer an opportunity to support those committed to local farming and sustainable practices and provide the most visible form of support to local agribusiness.

As proof of the increased popularity of farmers markets since the 1970s, Halweil cites approximately 300 weekly markets being held across the nation in the 1970s compared to more than 1,700 in 1994 and nearly 3,100 in 2004. However, Allison Brown in *Counting Farmers Markets* cautions that data concerning market trends are often incomplete and do not always point upward. A 2006 study on market failures by Oregon State University titled “When Things Don’t Work: Some Insights into Why Farmers’ Markets Close” warns that figures estimating the growth in the number of markets are somewhat misleading because they do not represent net totals and therefore do not reveal the number of markets that fail, only how the totals change over time. Brown stresses that effort must be made by interested researchers to capture the data before they disappear in the midst of market flux and the waxing and waning of public interest.

Experts say that modern farmers markets fail for numerous reasons. The Idaho Department of Agriculture states that when a market is too small to attract customers, it is also likely too small to attract vendors. A critical mass of vendors is essential to a successful market and a loss of vendors may lead to its failure. A diversity of foods also is essential. The OSU study found that the failed markets needed more fruits and vegetables, signaling market demand for agricultural goods over other kinds of products. Researchers felt that if these markets added a more varied mix of products—more fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, cheese, bakery items or cut flowers—their chances for survival would improve.

How markets are administered is also key. Historically, market management varied, from control by royalty to the church to specially appointed boards. Today, larger markets usually have full-time staff, while volunteers typically manage the smaller ones. One hypothesis suggests that volunteers are only willing to exert a certain amount of energy for free. Creating a balance and satisfying both consumers and producers to the greatest degree possible is the job of a market manager. Also, managers and board members must be able to mediate and resolve internal issues because conflict on market day may deter businesses from participating or consumers from purchasing.

Manager turnover is also related to market demise. Younger markets often lack the prowess of an experienced manager to help them navigate



Demand for local food has steepened the rise of urban farmers markets. In 2012, the USDA reported a 9 percent annual increase.

the marketplace when they are most vulnerable. According to the OSU study, community support is key to the success of a market. In Idaho, the Department of Agriculture offers resources for new markets to assist them make community connections, establish bylaws, understand laws and taxes pertaining to the sale of goods and build connections with others in the farmers market community. The department reported that in Idaho the number of weekly farmers markets has grown from the first in the early 1990s to 24 in 2006 to 55 today.

Despite the perceived value to the local community; the success of a farmers market takes commitment at every level, from farm to table. Before a market ever sees opening day, someone with vision and commitment must make connections with local civic, agricultural and political organizations; media; local government; members of the community; and farmers. Behind



infohans/Flickr

The Capital City Public Market with support from the City of Boise hires musicians, dancers, actors, magicians and puppeteers. Pictured: Saturday bluegrass on Idaho at Eighth.

the scenes, taxes, insurance, organization, marketing, ordinances, permissions and legalities must be dealt with. Tax issues involved with selling directly to consumers can make many growers back away from participation because of the paperwork and administration that goes along with it. Building relationships with farmers and community members is key. Convincing people to engage in something unconventional and uncommon takes patience and compassion.

Karen Ellis, the founder and former manager of the Capital City Public Market, was one of Idaho's first market managers to succeed at those skills. Ellis said that the beginning of the Market was really a "cosmic coming together of events." Inspiration struck her when she first visited Pike Place Market in Seattle. Upon returning home she shared the idea with her hus-



Guy Hand

Certified organic greens lead the nationwide locavore trend. Pictured: garden-fresh Boise broccoli.

band, who encouraged her to put in a proposal when the opportunity came up for the empty Eighth and Main street lot once known as "The Hole" in downtown Boise. Despite being selected as a finalist, she backed away from that property as she was up against major local corporations such as Simplot and Russell Corporation.

She continued making connections, eventually meeting Al Marsden, who shared her dream of a Pike Place-style market. At that time Marsden worked for the S16 Corporation, formed by the 16 grandchildren of Idaho potato mogul J.R. Simplot.

Their conversation started in late 1993; S16 hired her in January 1994 to promote the market. She knew they needed to start by connecting with agricultural producers. S16 purchased green and white tents for the farmers to set up their produce. They had, maybe, 15 vendors in an Eighth Street Marketplace parking lot on opening day. Eventually, Pug Ostling of Grape

Escape and Dave Krick of Bittercreek Alehouse jumped in to help. The two went to the Capital City Development Corporation, the Boise's redevelopment agency, and proposed that the stretch of Eighth Street between Bannock and Main directly in front of their two restaurants be closed on Saturday mornings for the market. When the market moved to its new location in 1998, it had grown to around 25 vendors. "The focus was to support, recruit and educate people on food and the point of the farmers market," said Ellis. "The desire was to make this an urban market that would help the downtown area flourish."

Oregon State included the Capital City Public Market in its analysis several years in a row. This data, along with a form from the Project for Public Spaces, made it possible to estimate the market's economic impact in the community, which in 2011 was approximately \$4.8 million. Considering the limited number of days and hours the market operates in downtown Boise, this is a considerable impact. Keeping profits at home multiplies the local economic impact significantly more than money spent at a chain store. Profits spent locally circulate through the economy, creating benefits that reach far beyond the initial dollars spent. When money is spent at a large chain, by contrast, the profit leaves the area.

Despite obvious benefits, farmers markets face the challenge of making fresh, local produce available to a broader range of consumers. To encourage participation by those on restricted budgets, many farmers markets in Idaho have expanded their reach by adding Electronic Benefits Transfer as a method of payment. EBT is a means of providing fresh, local food to needy families and can comprise a large percentage of sales. However, according to the Idaho Department of Agriculture, it requires thought and planning to implement. Although an effort in the right direction, distortions remain that leave the poor and much of the middle class shopping at the supermarket.

Despite those challenges, the rebirth of farmers markets has changed the American food and agricultural landscape. They are something old made new again—retracing our roots as we look to the future. A return to simplicity and quality, a love of good food, artisanal bread, grass-fed meat and handmade crafts—all flourishing in the midst of our microwaved, drive-thru culture.

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Jennifer Shelby of Star graduated with a B.A. in Economics and a minor in Visual Art in December 2012. Now enrolled in Boise State's graduate program in Community and Regional Planning, she plans to work with communities to achieve economic development goals.



Amy Hopkinson

Marilyn Monroe, it was said, would look sexy even in a potato sack. In 1952, years before “Idaho potato” were the fighting words in trademark litigation, her publicist proved the point.

5 Potato POLITICS

by Jeweldean Hull

The Potato. That unassuming little tuber has turned the rich soils of Idaho into the Potato State, with a product known around the world. Wherever you go, people recognize Idaho for its “famous” potatoes and likely imagine potato fields rolling endlessly across the state.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, potatoes are the leading vegetable in the country and Idaho ranks first, selling nearly 13 billion pounds each year. The state, realizing early on that promotion is often as important as production, designed the first graphic license plate with a picture of a large Idaho spud in 1928. Today, Idaho license plates are still stamped with the “Famous Potatoes” slogan and although some residents would like to highlight the state’s numerous other assets, the Idaho State Legislature has declared those spud-centric plates here to stay.

On the other hand, license plates alone have not made Idaho potatoes a global phenomenon. For three-quarters of a century, the Idaho Potato



James Neeley/Flickr

About 300,000 acres grow Idaho russet potatoes. Annually, Idahoans produce about 11 billion pounds. Pictured: an eastern Idaho potato field.

Commission has successfully promoted, produced and researched Idaho potatoes. In 2012, sensing another promotional opportunity, the IPC announced it was celebrating its 75th anniversary "in a big way." According to Frank Muir, chief executive officer of the IPC, for seven months "The Spud Truck," a 72 ft. flatbed trailer, traveled 15,000 miles hauling a six-ton con-

crete Idaho potato across America. The drivers, known as the Tater Team, made stops from major retailers to farmers markets around the country. The gigantic spud—which the IPC says would take 10,000 years to grow if it were real—seemed to have achieved its goal: reminding the world, once again, of its iconic Idaho potato.

The unquestionable success of the IPC has, however, come with challenges. As it stretches its potato empire around the world, the organization has had to defend itself against fierce competition, fight legal battles and recently grapple with an unlikely foe: the local food movement.

In the late 19th century, when pioneers were still settling Idaho, nearly all agriculture was local. Thanks to new irrigation projects and rich volcanic soil, it soon became obvious that a specific area of southeastern Idaho had farming conditions suited to growing potatoes. To this day, the bulk of Idaho's potato growers are located there. The Russet Burbank potato variety was established in the late 1800s in Idaho and travelers who passed through were often in awe of the size of those spuds. Between 1866 and the early 1920s, production and acreage increased, reaching 3.9 million planted acres in 1922. Soon, individual growers found they were having trouble managing the volume by themselves. They turned to the governor and state legislature for help. In 1937, officials formed the Idaho Fruit and Vegetable Advertising Commission. The growers willingly paid a tax and in turn the commission oversaw the grading, quality control and marketing of Idaho potatoes. Later, it became known as the Idaho Potato Commission.

Not long after, Idaho surpassed all the other states in potato sales. In the 1950s and '60s, dehydration and processing brought a new era to the potato industry, thanks to entrepreneurs like J.R. Simplot, who built a vast and lucrative empire on frozen french fries and other potato products. With big money being made in the potato industry, the IPC had to work hard to maintain its national and international dominance.

One recurring issue, according to the IPC, was potato fraud. In the 1950s the IPC designed unique potato bags and directly stamped Idaho potatoes as a way to distinguish them from the competition. Yet, no matter how they tried to differentiate Idaho's tubers from others, scammers managed to duplicate the bags and stamps. Finally, in 1966, the IPC went to court to legally secure the trademark for Idaho potatoes and slogans like "Grown in Idaho" and other associated names and symbols.

Defending the Idaho brand took constant vigilance. According to the Idaho Potato Commission, in 1975 neighboring Washington tried to plant Idaho's icon on its side of the border, advertising that, "Idaho potatoes grew better in Washington." The IPC decided to confront the issue legally and

took the case to court to have the Washington Potato Commission cease any and all advertising of Idaho potatoes. Had it not stopped WPC's ad campaign, the IPC believes it would have opened the doors for anyone and everyone to abuse the Idaho potato trademark.

That is why, the IPC said, it so swiftly took action in 2009 when a tiny burger joint, the Idaho Fry Company, prepared to open its doors in Boise and begin hyping its wide variety of gourmet french fries. Although the small startup had registered its name, the IPC argued that the Commission itself legally controls any name that includes the word "Idaho" in relation to potato products.

The news media responded with several articles, often declaring it a matter of the big potato picking on the little potato. The *Boise Weekly* asked in one article, "Aren't enough local businesses struggling these days without nitpicking from the head potato heads?" Many locals commented online that the IPC was merely "bullying" the fry company.

Despite much bad press, the IPC steadfastly demanded that the Idaho Fry Company change its name, charging it didn't exclusively sell Idaho-grown potatoes. According to IPC legal representative Pat Kole, upon certification as an Idaho potato retailer, one has to guarantee that only Idaho potatoes will be sold, abide by the certification process and pay an annual fee of \$100. Although the Idaho Fry Company offered a unique variety of mostly Idaho fries with the slogan "fries as a main dish, burgers on the side," owner Blake Lingle admitted in a recent interview that "it is hard to buy Idaho potatoes all 12 months." Lingle buys his organic variety from Heath Farms out of Buhl, but they are only available during certain times of the year. Lingle acknowledges buying potatoes out of state the remaining months. "Customers do not notice a change," said Lingle, "when the potatoes are not from Idaho." For that reason, the IPC would not certify the Idaho Fry Company as a "Grown in Idaho" business and demanded the company change the name. Eventually a settlement was reached when the restaurant agreed to rename itself the Boise Fry Company.

Kole is quick to point out that the IPC had no intention of hurting the BFC business and in the end assisted with all costs associated in changing the business logo. Business for BFC has since flourished with two locations now open in Boise. Although the IPC and BFC refuse to give details about the name change today, owner Lingle stated in an interview regarding the controversy, "at the time it was not pleasant, but life has since moved on."

As life moved on for Lingle and the BFC, the IPC confronted what it saw as a new, and perhaps more threatening challenge to its brand: the



Boise Fry Company

Idaho Fry Company became Boise Fry Company after a trademark challenge from the Gem State's potato commission. BFC perseveres despite a disputed trademark claim to the name of the city as well.

local food movement. In 2007, the *New Oxford American Dictionary* named locavore the word of the year as the local food movement—with its belief that a fresher, more sustainable food system requires shortening the distance between farmers and consumers—gathered momentum. An exploding national interest in farmers markets, “farm to fork” dinners, locally-crafted artisanal cheeses and endless other expressions of the “keep it local” philosophy

combined with increasing consumer outrage over the perceived abuses of long-distance, industrial agriculture as expressed in numerous food recalls, taped abuses of factory-farmed animals, the use of pesticides, antibiotics and

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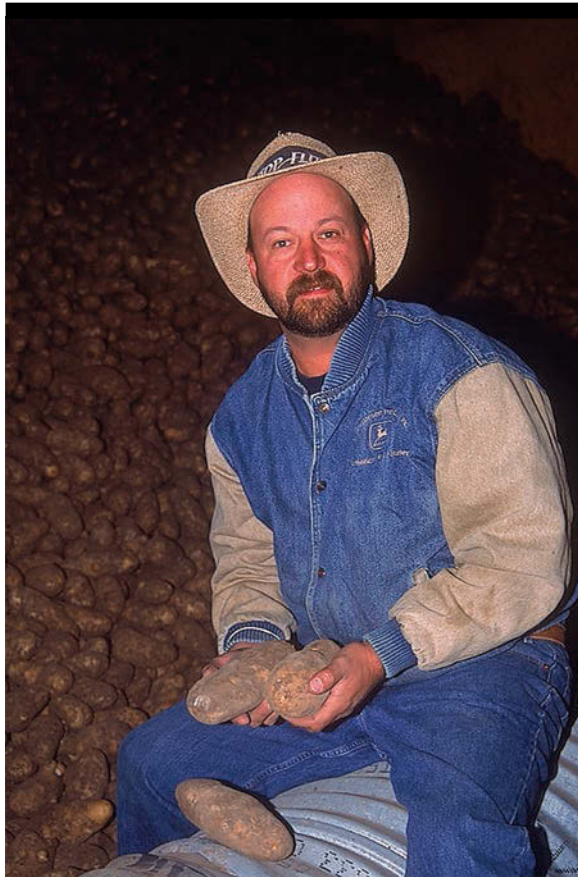


Guy Hand

Sunny days and nutrient-rich volcanic soil grow more than 25 varieties of Idaho potatoes, although russets are the most commonly known. Pictured: Boise-grown round reds.

genetically-modified organisms, and the often low quality of food that travels, on average, 1,500 miles before arriving in American supermarkets. The local food movement put conventional agriculture, with its focus on large-scale production aimed at distant markets, in its crosshairs and the Idaho Potato Commission soon felt like a target.

Wal-Mart, a major distribution center for the IPC, was feeling the pressure to buy from local farmers and as a result dropped the IPC from five distribution centers in favor of potatoes grown nearer each store. The decision shocked the IPC because it never thought the local "trend," as the IPC's Frank Muir called it, a threat until Wal-Mart took action. Fearing other retailers would follow Wal-Mart's example, the IPC acted quickly and was able to convince Wal-Mart that by not selling Idaho potatoes the mega-company would experience a decline in potato sales in general. Wal-Mart agreed and decided to sell both local potatoes and Idaho potatoes in their stores. Wal-



Idaho Potato Commission

Idaho Potato Commissioner Jim Tiede still farms his grandfather's homestead.

Mart is currently the only big-box store that dropped the IPC as a result of the local food movement, but its attempt to go local sent a shockwave through the Commission.

Muir pointed out that while the IPC supports local farming and buying local food in Idaho, he says it is doubtful Idaho's 1.5 million residents will purchase 13 billion pounds of the Idaho potatoes each year—an inescapable disparity that comes when any lightly populated state produces high volumes of agricultural commodities. "I want everyone in Idaho to buy Idaho potatoes," Muir said in a PBS televised interview with local food advocates, "as well as the rest of the world."

Selling to the rest of the world puts the Idaho Potato Commission squarely at odds with the

local food movement. Back in 2007, Muir clearly acknowledged that as he stood in front of the Idaho State Legislature addressing the economic threats posed by the locavore movement to conventional Idaho agribusiness. Muir warned that if the State of Idaho formally supported the local food movement through a seemingly innocuous declaration that local food advocates had drafted for passage, Idaho would then be indirectly signaling support of local food movements in every state, therefore suppressing Idaho's ability to

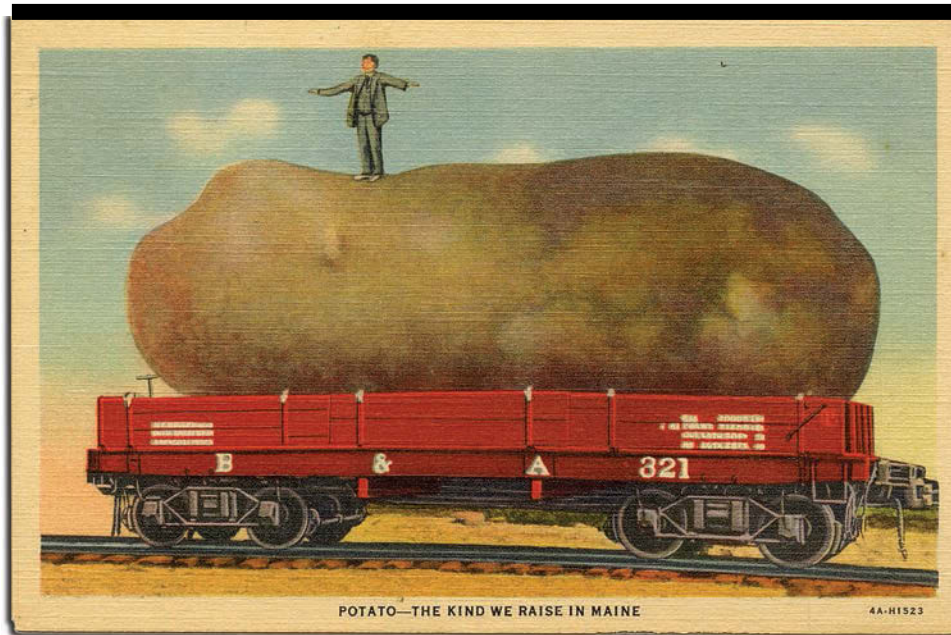
export agricultural products to those states. It was a variation on the Wal-Mart problem.

Proponents of the declaration argued that small-scale farmers who sell their products locally also generate revenue for the state and should be recognized and supported by the state as vigorously as are Idaho's export agriculturalists. According to the Farmers Market Coalition, the Capital City Public Market in downtown Boise generated an estimated \$4.5 million in economic activity for the local economy in 2011. That is indeed small potatoes by agribusiness standards, but the hustling and bustling Eighth Street farmers market draws more than 20,000 visitors in the summertime, attracted largely to the fresh produce grown by small-scale, locally focused farmers in Boise and the surrounding area.

Not surprisingly, that popularity has attracted interest from Idaho's agricultural commissions. One summer afternoon in 2012 it was brought to the attention of the Bean Commission that possible mail order beans were sold as certified Idaho beans. That incident raised questions about the certification process of all produce, according to Pat Kole from the IPC. However, Kole and Muir point out that the IPC does not tax farmers who grow less than five acres of potatoes and they normally "turn a blind eye" as Muir indicates, to small-scale farming and those selling at the CCPM. After the issue arose, though, one farmers market merchant decided to take matters into her own hands by looking into licensing potatoes sold through the CCPM.

Like many small farmers, Josie Erskine from Peaceful Belly farm sells local produce at the CCPM. Josie and her husband Clay have been farming organically for the last 10 years, the last three in Dry Creek Valley located near Hidden Springs. Selling to restaurants, retailers and markets, Erskine follows state guidelines to keep their business licensed. However, Erskine realized that none of the potato vendors at the market were legally licensed, as the Idaho Department of Agriculture requires through the IPC. According to Kole, Erskine approached the IPC and wanted to work with them on getting local vendors at the farmers market legally certified. And although Erskine was essential in helping license those vendors, many small farmers quietly chafed at what they saw as another example of the IPC pushing the little guy around. Still, the IPC claims licensing is nothing new and if a farmer grows potatoes in Idaho with intent to sell, he or she must take legal steps. When asked why she finally decided to go through the IPC, Erskine pointed out, "Rules are rules and it was time to get up to speed."

The cooperation between the IPC and members of the Capital City Public Market to sell locally grown potatoes signaled an attempt by large



Idaho railroads have freighted Boise Valley potatoes since the Oregon Short Line reached Nampa in 1883. Valley-grown potatoes are still shipped by rail. Pictured: a vintage Idaho postcard.

agribusiness interests and small-scale farmers to find middle ground when it comes to licensing. But the philosophical differences that divide groups like the Idaho Potato Commission and the local food movement might be too wide to bridge with good intentions alone.

Michael Pollan, in his 2002 book *The Botany of Desire*, used the Idaho potato as a way to compare two vastly different agricultural paradigms: the industrial paradigm, which favors high production, vast single-variety monocultures (mostly Russet Burbanks), inorganic fertilizers and pesticides and distant markets versus the local-food-inspired farmers market paradigm, which favors small-scale, diverse crop varieties, organic and sustainable farming practices and a focus on nearby markets.

In his book, Pollan described an industrial Idaho potato grower he visited as standing "in the middle of a bright green circle of plants that have



Aggressive marketing lures busloads of tourists to the stone depot in Blackfoot that houses the Idaho Potato Museum.

been doused with so much pesticide that their leaves wear a dull white chemical bloom and the soil they're rooted in is a lifeless gray powder." Some studies indicate that more pounds of pesticide are poured on Idaho potatoes than on any other crop in the state. Later that same day, Pollan visited Mike Heath, the same organic potato grower that the Boise Fry Company uses, who Pollan said "grows a dozen different varieties of potatoes, on the theory that biodiversity in a field, as in the wild, is the best defense against nature's inevitable surprises ... instead of the uniform grayish powder I'd assumed was normal for the area, Heath's soil was dark brown and crumbly. The difference, I understood, was that this soil was alive."

Pollan concluded that Mike Heath's type of agriculture "simply can't be reconciled to the logic of a corporate food chain." In turn, Frank Muir of the

Idaho Potato Commission has said he can't reconcile his mandate to sell Idaho potatoes around the globe to the goals of the local food movement. From the Idaho Potato Commission's perspective, it may not matter. At the end of it all the IPC managed to reach agreements with the Boise Fry Company and the Capital City Public Market while convincing Wal-Mart that Idaho potatoes should stay. A potato icon itself, the IPC continues to celebrate the success story of the Russet Burbank potato taking root in the volcanic soils of Idaho. The commission has fought from one end of the U.S. to the other to preserve its trademark and has succeeded thus far to stay at the top of potato sales. While not everyone would agree with the IPC's methods, for the last 75 years it has accomplished its goal of making Idaho the potato state.

As the 2012 potato harvest comes to a close in southeastern Idaho, the Capital City Public Market in Boise quietly slows down until next spring as shoppers replace local Saturday produce with Boise State football. Millions of Americans watch a commercial of Idaho's six-ton tuber traveling across the country with its Tater Team while continuing to imagine an Idaho awash in potato fields. Meanwhile, the Idaho Potato Commission gears up for the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl and does what it knows best: promoting and protecting Idaho's iconic "Famous Potatoes."

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Jeweldean Hull recently graduated with degrees in both History and Spanish. She has traveled extensively outside of the U.S and studied in Spain. She currently works full time at the Bureau of Reclamation and plans to attend graduate school in the near future.

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visitidaho.com

Tourists follow the Sunnyslope wine trail through a rolling patchwork of farmland. More than a dozen Idaho vineyards have wine tasting rooms on the trail.

6 Wine STATE

by Alyssa Johnson

Tim and Helen Harless searched every nook and cranny in the wine meccas of the West to find the perfect spot for their dream vineyard. Then they discovered Idaho. The rich farming country between Homedale and Caldwell featured the perfect combination of weather, soil and community—just what they couldn't find in the more tony wine regions of California, Oregon or Washington.

"This place is world class. It has all this potential; it is off the charts good," exclaimed Tim Harless. The couple opened the HAT Ranch Winery in 2011 on ground that had been farmed since 1902. Today they sell wines ranging from merlot to riesling. The small number of vineyards in Idaho was an important factor in their decision. Even though the wine industry in Idaho is growing, it still doesn't compare to the sheer volume of wineries in Oregon, Washington and especially California, which is home to more than 40 percent of the total wineries in the United States. A winery in Idaho has

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more opportunities to be recognized for its accomplishments rather than getting lost in the crowd. That, along with lower land and business costs, gives Idaho an attractive edge, Harless explained.

In a state known for its mountains, deserts, whitewater, forests and of course, potatoes, one might not expect Idaho's wine regions to attract much attention. But the wine industry is coming of age according to Moya Dolsby, executive director of the Idaho Wine Commission. The industry enjoyed steady growth in its infancy, with 11 wineries established by 2002. Then interest skyrocketed over the ensuing 10 years, with 50 wineries doing business by 2012 as new growers like HAT Ranch were attracted by affordable land, ideal soils and a favorable climate. Thirty-two of those wineries are within 40 miles of Boise.

A Boise State University economic impact study in 2008 found the wine industry added \$73 million to the state's economy, including \$19 million in employee wages. Those numbers have likely increased because more wineries have come on line since the study was done. There are now approximately 1,600 acres of vines planted in the state. Those produced 3,000 tons of grapes and 200,000 12-bottle cases last year. Dolsby predicts even more growth in the future. "I see a lot more media exposure and more vineyards being planted. We're going to see some big investment coming into Idaho ... a big wine company come in and plant," she said. Five new vineyards are now in the early planting stages.

The recent boom in the wine business belies the fact that Idaho has a long wine-making history that dates back to the 1860s. Some of the first grapes planted in the Pacific Northwest were grown in northern Idaho. The original grape-growing center began in the Clearwater Valley near Lewiston in 1864 when French and German immigrants planted more than 200 acres. The first wineries in the Pacific Northwest also started in northern Idaho. Idaho's nationally renowned wine industry won awards around the world before state and later federal Prohibition brought production to a halt in 1916. The vineyards were ripped out and the state lost its growers. Prohibition ended in 1933, but Idaho's wine industry didn't come back until almost four decades later. Wine grapes were finally planted again in 1970, this time in the southwestern part of the state near the Snake River. For many years, only state-run liquor stores could sell a limited selection of wine. That diminished the market and discouraged investment in the local wine industry. But the legislature ended the state monopoly in 1971 by allowing the sale of wine in grocery stores. That obstacle lifted, Ste. Chapelle, Idaho's first modern-day winery, opened its doors in 1976. Founded by the Symms



David R. Day

Koenig Winery on Grape Lane in Caldwell distills vodka from famous potatoes. Apricots, cherries and pears distilled into brandy open a market for local fruit.

family, the winery, now under different ownership, is still producing wine on its hillside near Marsing. In the ensuing years other wineries sprung up as vintners discovered the advantages of planting in Idaho.

The Snake River country's combination of rich soil, low humidity, high altitude and sunny weather creates conditions perfect for growing a variety of wine grapes. Cool nights and warm summer days are ideal to produce the right balance of grape acids and sugars. Even the cold winters, which might seem like a disadvantage, work to the growers' favor because the vines go dormant, allowing the plants to rest and conserve important carbohydrates for the coming season. The harsh weather also rids the plants of bugs and discourages disease.

Southern Idaho's unique soil and climate, or *terroir* in wine terminology, was recognized in 2007 when the Snake River Valley was named Idaho's first American Viticulture Area (AVA), which denotes it as a unique grape-

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Wineburg Wine Notes

Ron Bitner of Sunnyslope helped pioneer the 1980s Snake River wine revival. In 2013, his winery was named Canyon County Family Farm of the Year.



Bitner's award-winning wines.

Guy Hand

growing region. There are about 200 AVAs in the country administered by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, including more than 10 in Washington alone. An AVA requires an extensive federal

approval process, including a geological study of the region. "An AVA puts you on the map and means 'you have arrived ... good for you.' When an AVA is approved there is huge national attention in the wine world. Again, it proves that Idaho is a good place to grow grapes," Dolsby said.

The AVA encompasses a large area in southwestern Idaho and eastern Oregon, as defined by the boundary of the now dry, four-million-year-old Lake Idaho. The Snake River is the backbone of the territory and the soils contained within the old lakebed make up the unique terroir that earned the AVA designation. With more than five million acres, the Snake River Valley AVA covers 8,263 square miles that stretch west from Twin Falls to include 12 counties: Ada, Adams, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Gooding, Jerome, Owyhee, Payette, Twin Falls and Washington, along with Malheur and Baker counties in eastern Oregon. That makes it one of the largest AVAs in the country.

The great Bonneville Flood that carved out the Snake River Canyon some 14,500 years ago was the geological event that endowed the AVA with its special characteristics. The boulders, silt and sand that cascaded through southwestern Idaho left a legacy of sandy loam that makes the region an ideal place for orchards and vineyards. Like most of the great wine regions in the world, especially in cool climate countries like Germany, France

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Guy Hand

The Snake River Valley American Viticulture Area, designated in 2007, encompasses 14 arid counties from Jerome to Baker, Oregon. Twenty-four vineyards span 1,800 acres.

and Italy, Idaho's AVA is located along the banks of a great river. The commission is currently working toward another AVA in central Idaho near Lewiston and Clarkston, Washington, where there are 20 vineyards and five wineries.

Last year the wine commission completed a three-year mapping project of the Snake River Valley AVA led by Greg Jones of Southern Oregon University. The study matches grape varieties to their ideal combination of soil, sun, elevation, slope and climate. Future growers can use the data to identify the right sites for the right grapes, critical information as the state stands poised to attract new investment. Slightly more than 74,000 acres in the Snake River Valley are suitable for wine grape production, the study concluded. That is almost 50 times more ground than is planted in grapes today. "We don't even know where the best grapes can be grown yet. There is so much potential, so many opportunities," said Dolsby.

Ron Bitner, owner of Bitner Vineyards and the main research coordinator of the study, told the *Capital Press* newspaper that site selection for new growers is critical. "We are a new industry here in Idaho and the ability to pinpoint ideal growing sites here in the high-desert country is essential to know before spending \$12,000 an acre or more to plant wine grapes. Site selection and varietal selection are the keys to the growth of our industry."

Bitner, called the "godfather of the Idaho wine industry" by Dolsby, planted his first vineyard 32 years ago in the Sunnyslope area.

He bought a plot of land overlooking the Snake River Valley in 1979. "I bought it for the view. As it turned out, it is a world-class site for growing wine grapes because of the south-facing slopes," Bitner said. There were no



Guy Hand

The Idaho Wine Commission estimates a \$73 million impact on the state's economy. Director Moya Dolsby, pictured, sees enormous potential for growth.

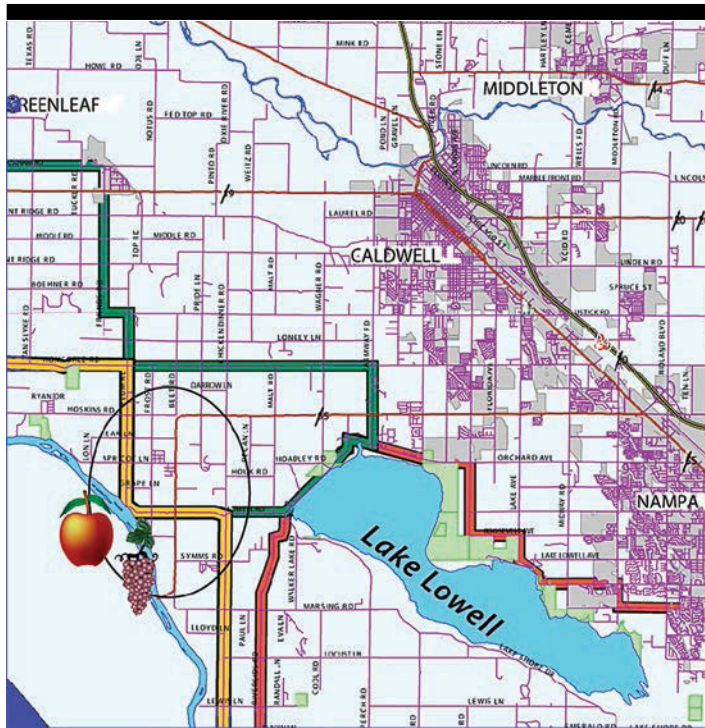


Guy Hand

Start-up wineries line state scenic byways that follow the Snake River Canyon from Kuna to the Apple Valley. Opposite: two Snake River scenic byways cross vineyards west of Lake Lowell.

vineyards in the area at that time and Ste. Chapelle, which had just moved from Emmett to south of Caldwell, was in the process of being built. Bill Broich, Ste. Chapelle's winemaker, told Bitner his land had potential. "I was scratching my head one day wondering what I was going to do with these really steep slopes. Bill said, 'Well, you have a world-class site for chardonnay.' And I said, 'That's cool ... what's chardonnay?' I really didn't know a thing about wine grapes," said Bitner. Those first 1981 plantings of riesling and chardonnay make his land some of the oldest blocks in Idaho.

Bitner and his wife Mary have come a long way since then, now producing 1,000-plus cases of hand-harvested and hand-crafted wines from their



Snake River Valley Scenic Byway

16 acres of estate-grown grapes. Bitner, a professional entomologist with a Ph.D. from Utah State University, calls himself a “bee biologist,” and his work with the insects has allowed him to travel extensively nationally and internationally, including nine trips to Australia. As the Intermountain representative

to the Wine America Board and president of the National Wine Grape Growers Association, Bitner provides a national perspective on the Idaho wine industry. “People are wanting to put new vineyards in here in Idaho,” he told a writer from *Wine & Vines* magazine in August 2012. “We don’t have a lot of acreage here yet, but I think in the past 10 years we’ve really laid the groundwork for people to come in and take a look.”

The Idaho Wine Commission is the focal point of Idaho’s marketing and promotion efforts. Supported by a portion of the tax on wine and by member assessments, Dolsby said the commission helps growers with legislative issues, provides education to consumers, media, sellers and distributors and spreads the word about Idaho wine. The commission is trying to erase the stigma that Idaho is in the great white north, a place too cold, too high and too deep in the mountains to grow good vines. To counter that, the commission markets the success that Idaho has enjoyed and helps prospective buyers understand that the state’s wine industry can stand alongside



Idaho Wine Commission

Working the Sunnyslope harvest, 2013.

those from other states. "There has been a big improvement in our image, but you still get skeptics. Over all, I think the consumer has become smarter and more willing to try something new," added Dolsby, who makes 5-6 annual trips to promote Idaho wine at out-of-state wine events. "We want them to try Idaho wine, but we also want them to come here to see our wineries ... to see that we have a thriving industry that is producing award-winning wines."

The commission is now making a push to promote Idaho wines to consumers in their own backyard. Only 6 percent of Idahoans drink local wine. To increase that percentage, the commission launched an "I Support Idaho Wines" campaign that includes billboards on Interstate 84 and banners in downtown Boise. "Why not focus on our 1.5 million customers right here in this state? There's a huge growth opportunity right here with our own residents," commission board member Gregg Alger told the *Capital Press* in December 2012.

Idaho's wine industry is changing rapidly and the list of new wineries is sure to grow. A commission study projects that Idaho will have 75 wineries by 2015. While the number of producers is expanding, production still remains limited. Each winery specializes in just a few varieties and all are working to find the best grapes possible through meticulous vineyard management. But the recent success of Idaho wines and the small number of wineries results in a "bad news, good news" scenario. Increasing demand and limited production means many of the best Idaho wines sell out quickly. That's one of the drawbacks of success, but as vineyards expand and Idaho attracts more start-up wineries, this too will change.

One of the biggest challenges facing the industry is that the supply of grapes hasn't kept pace with demand as wine becomes more and more popular. It takes 3-5 years for grapevines to mature, said Dolsby, so the gap in Idaho production will remain in the short term. "It's expensive ... you need a lot of capital up front before you can recoup that investment. But there are opportunities out there. Idaho has a lot more room for vintners."

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Alyssa Johnson, Twin Falls, graduated in December 2012 with a degree in Political Science.



Capital City Public Market

Red Feather's Dave Krick rings the opening bell at the Capital City Public Market, 2010. The eco-restaurateur is Boise's Worm-Herder-in-Chief.



Serving
LOCAL

by Dennis O'Dell

Boise restaurateur Dave Krick was merely an interested bystander at a 2006 conference about local farming when he had a life-changing revelation. "What really hit home was the struggle of the American farmer. Many are living in poverty to raise healthy, nutritious food. I realized, oh gosh, we are part of the solution," he said. Thus was born a new *raison d'être* for his Bittercreek Alehouse: support local farms whenever possible. "If we can provide an example for other restaurants, we can actually make a difference in our local food system. That became the mission of the restaurant ... that was the point when we said, 'This is who we are,'" he explained.

Krick, who founded the Bittercreek Alehouse in 1996, and his business partner Kevin Kelpé have since integrated the "local" mantra into every phase of their business, which includes the neighboring Red Feather Lounge added in 2006. "We have a connection to everything we use ... we get to know the farmers, or at least know where their food comes from. We do

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this for our customers,” explained Krick. In the early days he went on foraging trips to seek out local farmers for particular produce. “At one point we even employed a full-time forager because we struggled to get enough local food.”

The restaurants no longer have to contact farmers; instead they have a steady stream of local farmers contacting them. Now they use some 20 local farmers to supply everything from greens to beef. “We realized over time that we were not doing anyone any favors by splitting our business, so we concentrated it in the hands of those who were designing their operation to work with our restaurant. It has worked out well for both them and us ... we are starting to see some farmers do really well,” he said. The purchase of local foods allows farmers to eliminate the middleman, which means they receive full retail price for the product rather than the normal 10 cents on the dollar through food brokers and retailers. This alone gives the farmer a much better opportunity to not only stay on the farm but also earn a living. The two restaurants serve between 130,000 and 150,000 meals a year. They use 200,000 pounds of potatoes and 60,000 to 70,000 eggs a year. Combine that with salad greens, cheese, meats and other products and there is a noticeable impact on local farms. “Restaurants like ours are markets that didn’t exist for local farmers 6-7 years ago,” explained Krick.

“They helped us out several years ago by ordering and buying our product [pork and beef] on a regular basis and we have had a good relationship since,” said Ed Wilsey, owner with his wife Debby of the 11,000-acre Wilsey Ranch south of Marsing. The ranch is Global Animal Protection-certified, which guarantees that livestock are treated humanely. They age their beef for 25 days prior to slaughter to ensure it is tender, with good texture and flavor. They use a local USDA-certified family-owned processing company for the final product, all in keeping with the restaurants’ requirements. “We let our animals live in a normal or natural environment; they are grass fed for the most part and then we supplement them during the winter with hay that we grow ourselves on the ranch. We never give them any other animal byproducts, hormones or anything that is not natural.” For their efforts, the Wilseys received the Conservationist of the Year Award in 2011 by the Owyhee County Conservation District.

“In the beginning, we were saying ‘yes’ to buy from almost every producer or farmer because it was very cool and we were excited to work with the community,” said Kelpie. “So, anyone who came into the business with produce, we told them to just bring it until we found ourselves with hundreds of pounds of produce on the floor—and the worst part is, no one really knew what to do with it all.” The result was unnecessary waste.



Boiseans dine al fresco at the Red Feather Lounge and Bittercreek Alehouse, home of the urban worm.

The definition of the word “local” must be flexible, Kelpie added. “We prefer to think of local as about a 250-mile radius, which puts us into eastern Oregon. Political boundaries don’t really mean too much to us. If we feature seafood, it will come from Puget Sound rather than the Gulf of Mexico. We consider lamb local if it comes from anywhere in Idaho rather than from northern California. Avocados, on the other hand, we have to buy from California rather than Mexico—unfortunately that is about as local as we can get.”

Their rapport with farmers is an asset. “Now, if we want a product that no one has readily available, such as chicken, we can contact our farmers and simply ask if they would be interested in raising this product exclusively for us. There are farms that grow particular types of lettuce and



Claire Walter at culinary-colorado.com

Vermont red wigglers do the on-site composting below the Bittercreek/Red Feather. Worms compost table scraps and even the paper menus.

greens for our menu salads. Fortunately, farmers are very accommodating to our requests and go out of their way to provide us with the product," said Kelpé.

Krick says they must know the source of every product they serve. And they require that their food come from sustainable sources. "Beyond knowing where the food is coming from, we want to be able to go there and talk to them about it." Most of their food comes from "direct relationships"—that is, from farms they have vetted for quality. Even if there is no direct connection with the supplier, the restaurant uses local distributors. And local vendors supply other products that come from outside the region, such as coffee. Only a handful of products, mostly seafood, come from suppliers or vendors who are not local.

Adhering to these standards can be difficult. Unlike some restaurants that use local products only when it is convenient, Krick and Kelpé hold fast. "It is easy to do local a little bit; the hard part is doing a lot. That's been the challenge for us ... to be authentic. We've changed our menus at times because of our principles," Krick said. "Seafood is complicated because we want to have a food style that reflects our region and obviously there is not a lot of seafood available in our area," explained Kelpé. "We get trout and sturgeon from Hagerman and we can get salmon during the runs from the Columbia Valley. But we think it would be fun to serve shellfish too because the pub format of Bittercreek goes well with oysters and shrimp. At times, we have to go without featuring seafood."

That means a customer looking for a bowl of clam chowder will come up empty at the two restaurants. Krick said they gave up on clams years ago because they couldn't verify their origin. As with salmon and other seafood, they want to know the source of the clams to ensure they are receiving quality produce that is fished using sustainable methods. "We've had a lot of complaints over the years because of menu changes. Clam chowder was a big one. People literally walked out because they couldn't have clam chowder. But we aren't a coastal town ... we think potato chowder is more fitting anyway," he said.

Produce such as tomatoes is another challenge in the winter months. "We try to buy during the winter from organic farms in California or simply not put them on the plates. But our customers wouldn't understand if we didn't have them (tomatoes) at all," said Kelpé. Chicken remains a challenge. Most restaurant customers prefer white meat and breasts, which leaves a large portion of each chicken with little or no use. "You need a lot of individual birds, and each one ends up being very expensive by the time you feed it

88 local simple fresh

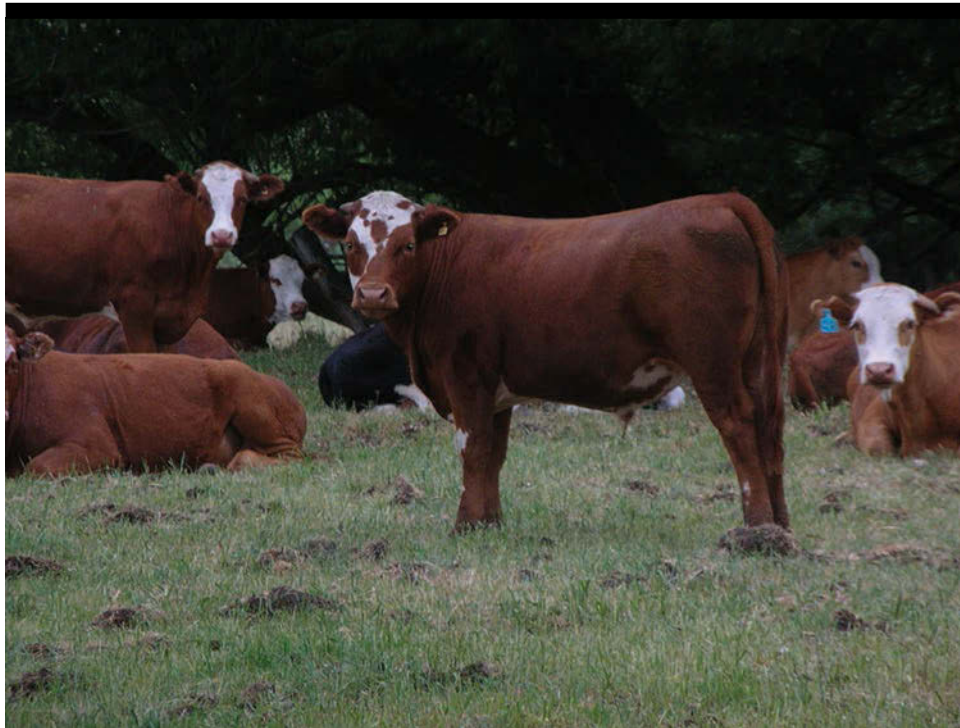
properly without pumping it full of hormones,” said Kelpé. “Our customers’ demand for white meat and chicken breasts is relentless. We continue to find uses for the rest of the meat since we have to pay for the entire bird.” Until a few years ago local chicken was hard to come by because there was no state-certified processor in Idaho. Now there are a handful of local chicken producers, but those don’t provide enough to meet the restaurants’ demand. Krick said about 60 percent of the chickens they use are raised locally.

The supply side for local foods is another challenge. Distribution is still an issue because it is very difficult for small farmers and producers to justify the expense of a delivery truck and driver. Idaho’s Bounty aggregates local supply and serves as a local distribution hub. “If more restaurant customers would ask for local foods, we believe larger distribution companies such as SYSCO and FSA would deliver more local foods,” Kelpé said. Added Krick: “When we decided to go down this road, one of the goals was to develop a normalized local food system that several businesses could use. Having a distributor like Idaho’s Bounty helps a lot.”

Their local food-buying procedure starts with a mandatory visit to the producer, which is one principle they will not compromise. If a producer or farmer refuses to allow a field visit, then they won’t do business. Food buyer Stacey Hines visits and inspects the farms and ranches to ensure the quality of both the product and the operation. The cleanliness of their suppliers is a major concern. For example, animals must be separated from gardening or crop spaces, and employees must have access to restrooms and hand-washing facilities.

Restaurant managers and the kitchen’s creative team of chefs and sous-chefs hold weekly meetings to discuss incoming products and how they will be used and prepared in the kitchen. If the staff and clients accept a new item, it is added to the menu and restaurant personnel are educated about it. This last step ensures that staff can inform customers about the product. Most restaurants use the same menu for long periods of time, changing primarily due to price increases or different products. But Red Feather and Bittercreek print new menus 3-4 times every week because available products change frequently. “We have to be highly flexible and agile with our menu,” explained Krick.

Krick has been described in national publications as an “eco-restauranteur” because of his green ventures, most notably two worm beds in the restaurants’ basement. As particular as the restaurants are with their food sources, they are equally as focused on where the leftover food goes. So



Wilsey Ranch

Wilsey Ranch in Owyhee County, a Red Feather supplier, takes pride in grass-fed cattle "as natural as a cow can get." In 2011, the ranch won the county's conservation award.

instead of landing in the back-alley dumpster, the leftovers become a free meal for more than 200,000 Vermont red wiggler worms, who in turn produce a rich mulch that Krick uses to fertilize patio flowers and plants in his home garden. The eventual goal is to eliminate garbage entirely.

Krick heard about organic farms that used worms for waste, but he couldn't find any information about composting in a restaurant setting. So he adapted what he learned to his restaurant business. Now the worms take care of 200 pounds of the compostable food created by the two restaurants. In addition to leftovers, the worms also enjoy paper and cardboard boxes, keeping more trash out of the dumpster or recycling bin. The two Boise restaurants were the first in the country to use on-site worm composting,

90 local simple fresh



Guy Hand

Red Feather/Bittercreek wins national acclaim for an inventive menu with local specialties such as potato chowder, lamb sausage and turnips with kale.

according to the Green Restaurant Association.

With a \$12,000 price tag on each bin, the startup cost was expensive. But the internal recycling system has worked so well that they are now selling mini-worm units for home vermicomposting at less than \$100 each. "It's not about getting our initial investment back, which we probably won't; it's more about the elimination of our garbage, so it fits our business objectives," Krick said.

Krick gives credit to his wife Jami Adams as the force behind the environmental changes the restaurants have made. "My wife grew up on a farm in Minnesota where the family had to stretch resources. She was appalled at the food waste in the restaurant," said Krick. "She was the general manager of the business at that

time and did not like our mentality of just 'use-use-use' while not really thinking about how we use. It was in every area—energy, waste and food. She pointed out example after example. I credit her for pushing us into the policies we have put into effect. If we are committed to the community in terms

of local food, we should also be committed to the community as to how we operate our business as a whole," he said.

Their recycling ethic extends to ketchup and other condiments. Commercial ketchup was available only in tin or plastic containers. Now they make their own ketchup, salad dressings and most other condiments to reduce waste, improve quality and use local ingredients. Pre-made products are less expensive, but Kelpo said the improved taste, lack of preservatives and reduction of waste is worth the added expense. Even used wine bottles fit the conservation mantra. They found a local company that could cut the tops off and grind the rims to make safe drinking glasses. Now, there are new companies that have opened in the valley to create various items from discarded wine bottles.

What is next for the Red Feather and Bittercreek enterprises? "Today there is much more energy-efficient kitchen equipment than when we built Bittercreek. Customization will also allow us to reuse things like water, capture heat and reuse it, and have energy-efficient lighting. Also, we plan to improve staff efficiency by having them take fewer steps between their job processes, basically with the floor plans and a system plans approach," said Kelpo. They also plan to brew local beers and spirits within the next year. Krick completed his diploma as a Master Brewer, a two-year process between the Siebel Institute in Chicago and continuing at Doemans in Munich, Germany.

Does the restaurants' devotion to local sources come at a financial sacrifice? Krick said they could have lower prices and higher profit margins if they used the usual commodity products. But their niche as restaurants that feature quality local food is a key element in their overall success. So, it could be a wash, he said. "We try not to think about it because we believe in our mission. I think a lot of our success as a restaurant is because we care about the products we use, and people trust us."

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Dennis K. O'Dell will soon graduate with a General Studies degree and a minor in Communication. A Vietnam-era veteran, he has produced several television shows on veterans' agencies for Treasure Valley Community Television.



Guy Hand

A plot of earth is a second chance for Ali Mbanda, a refugee from Somalia's war. More than 1,000 Somali Bantu have resettled in the Boise Valley.

8 Refugee GARDENERS

by Tonya Nelson

Dadiri Nuro leans over and picks a leaf off a small plant next to the path. "This plant is good for getting the irons back into your blood," he tells me. "I don't know how you say it in English but in my language we call it *mchicha*." To me it looks like a weed. I had pulled many of these small plants from my garden and helped grandpa do the same on the farm. Nuro eats them, sautéed in a little oil with lemon juice or garlic. This is when I realized how far apart our two cultures are. Nuro and I are opposites. Nuro is dark; I am not. He grew up in Africa and I grew up in Idaho. He had to run for his life; I never have. He eats what I consider weeds.

For Nuro, and many like him, gardening bridges the gap of two worlds and brings a sense of accomplishment and independence to people who have lived too often filled with displacement and uncertainty. Nuro's journey to America is typical of many refugees who fled their homes because of wars and genocide, leaving everything behind. They lived in harsh refugee

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Guy Hand

Cherry tomatoes, kale, green beans, cucumbers and an African leafy green called mchicha are among the mid-summer seasonal produce sold directly to Boise consumers via markets and subscription programs.

camp and waited to learn their resettlement destination from the United Nations. Poor security, meager rations and uncertainty in the camps created unstable living environments that often resulted in violence.

Once refugees arrive in Boise after a long bureaucratic process, there are many programs to help them acclimate to the new way of life—driving lessons, personal finance counseling and English lessons, to name only a few. Still, obstacles remain. Some have never used a flush toilet, cooked food on a proper stove range or driven a car. For many, it has been years since they held a job, if ever. Programs have to be navigated, children put into schools and clothes bought for winters they had never experienced—all of this on top of the trauma of their escape and life in refugee camps.

Yet, for many Idaho refugees, one activity is comfortingly familiar: gardening. Many have worked the land in their home countries and the opportunity to literally plant seeds in unfamiliar ground helps them connect the



Guy Hand

The Somali Bantu Community Farm, founded in 2003, reconnects refugees to the land on three lush acres in Eagle. About 15 Somali Bantu families work year-round at the farm.

past to the future and begin to heal. For many, tilling the soil, tending crops and harvesting food provides an emotional and physical outlet that other refugee resettlement programs—whether language, accounting or driving lessons—simply can not.

This is why Global Gardens, a local program sponsored by the Idaho Office for Refugees, plays such an important role in resettlement. Some refugees arrive having tended small gardens in the refugee camps; others come with degrees in agriculture. Global Gardens helps all of them get training in how to garden in Idaho's high-desert climate. Many refugees go on to maintain small plots and grow vegetables for their own consumption. Others go further, raising produce for farmers markets, community-supported agricultural (CSA) programs and restaurants around Boise to help supplement the income they make from their regular jobs.



adventuresofplainjane.com

"We are farming people," said Dadiri Nuro, a Somali who reached Boise via a refugee camp in Kenya in 2004.

Global Gardens guides refugee farmers in what to grow and how to grow it, as well as how to order seeds and use tools. Global Gardens also provides coolers to help transport produce from garden to market along with tables and tents to set up at the market. Since refugees often lack English language skills, the program helps them with marketing as well. When participants start to sell independently they may still need help with networking and marketing to recruit CSA members since they may not know people in the area with an income high enough to participate. Global Gardens stays networked with farmers to offer further assistance while supporting the refugees' independence.

Unknown to many, Idaho has been a refugee resettlement state since 1975. Former Gov. John Evans set up the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program to assist with the resettlement of Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian refugees. The program accepted Eastern Europeans during the reign of Soviet Communism and then Africans as war ravaged that continent in the 2000s. In 2011, 775 refugees from 17 different countries came to Idaho.

Dadiri Nuro is one of many Somali Bantu who came to Boise as a refugee in 2004. He lived in a refugee camp in Kenya for seven years after fleeing Somalia because of the civil war between the president and the militia. Of the more than 200 villagers who fled into the jungle, 80 made it to the Marafa refugee camp after 16 days. He later moved to the Kakuma camp and then to America. He spent almost 12 years in refugee camps before he arrived in Boise on Friday night, Sept. 24, 2004, a date he clearly remembers.

Nuro first noticed the food when he arrived in the U.S. All of it seemed to come in cans, he said. He found very few of the fresh foods he used to eat, like *ugali*, a traditional hard corn variety his people grew to make breads and staples. "Canned food is lazy people food," Nuro said. He, like many in Boise's Somali Bantu community, quickly embraced the Global Gardens pro-



Guy Hand

Refugee gardening programs assist more than 100 families in the Boise Valley. Congolese, Bhutanese, Burundians, Meskhetian Turks, Colombians, Ethiopians, Somali Bantu, Burmese and Bosnians all tend organic gardens in Boise, Eagle and Star.

gram. Once refugees like Nuro get involved in Idaho gardening, they notice benefits that go far beyond fresh produce. Memories of loss—loved ones, homes and a whole way of life—still persist long after the danger is gone. The garden helps them build new memories and new lives in Boise by using skills they had known from their old lives in Africa. It helps refugees become more self-reliant and build a sense of community between the host country and refugee community. Nuro says it helps people get out of their houses where they might think too much, referring to their mental state. People don't dwell as much on past lives, lost loved ones and all the traumas they went through when working in their new Treasure Valley gardens. The Bantus also use their garden to take care of people in their community who fall on hard financial times.



Guy Hand

Women, men and children both Hutu and Tutsi work the Saturday market. Shamsi Nurrow wears the traditional sash dango headscarf and gonfo wrap-around cloth.

Global Gardens has more than 10 gardening sites and helps 150 refugee families with gardening. Katie Painter, refugee agriculture coordinator at Global Gardens, said many refugees gain a sense of accomplishment while gardening, especially when they first get here and haven't found that first job. Painter said it helps them feel that they are contributing to their family and also helps seniors who still want something to do.

According to Susan Forbes Martin in her book *Refugee Women*, "The most immediate feeling experienced after leaving such a situation of constant danger is relief ... together with sadness and grief for those left behind. Confusion and frustration about all the new places, people and customs soon add further burdens. But then, slowly, the unfamiliar starts becoming familiar, daily events start blurring the intense feelings of the first few weeks and years, and life settles into a new routine." For many

refugees, gardening helps create this blurring of intense feelings, providing a routine and a sense of ownership.

In recent years, a practice called "horticulture therapy" has experienced renewed popularity with therapists who say it can help patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, the loss of loved ones or physical disabilities. Defined as "the use of plants and gardens for human healing and rehabilitation," horticultural therapy has become established at several universities and through organizations like the Horticultural Therapy Institute, a Denver non-profit that provides training in the practice. Rebecca L. Haller states in *Horticultural Therapy Methods: Making Connections in Healthcare, Human Service and Community Programs* that the participant suffering from depression or anxiety needs to have a different view of reality, and horticulture therapy can provide that. "Through competent performance of an activity," Haller wrote, "the individual can begin to improve self-concepts and break negative cycles of real or perceived abilities and control."

Horticulture therapy is seen by practitioners as a way to give clients a sense of pride in what they can accomplish, even after major losses. It gives those who have lost loved ones a sense of community again when they have community garden plots or work in a group. Painter of Global Gardens cited a prime example: Two groups who traditionally warred with one another in Africa, the Tutsi and the Hutu, work side by side in their Idaho gardens. Painter also said the gardens provide a place where families can talk and learn about the culture in which their parents came from. Children are often victims of the events that caused their families to flee and this time together helps open lines of communication that were once closed. Parents can also show their children that they are capable of more than the menial work of the entry-level jobs they often find here.

Success at gardening and farming not only improves a refugee family's self-image, but it can also improve their image within the host community. Often perceived as draining the welfare system and other public assistance programs, refugees can demonstrate self-reliance by growing food for themselves and selling their produce at public markets. This leads to more buy-in and a better understanding between the two communities.

As well as acting as an emotional salve and cultural bridge, gardening also provides practical, day-to-day benefits to refugees. Newcomers like Nuro had little education before they came to America. As Nuro said, "When your belly is not full, you do not care about learning, only getting food." Selling produce at markets teaches refugees to count change, practice English language skills and get to know the customs of the larger community. Many women in the program have mentioned to Painter that they learned to drive

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and have a reason for driving because of the farm program, a skill they might have otherwise gone without.

Gardening also helps children learn the importance of working hard, according to Nuro. Not just working your mind, but also how to work with your hands, he said. When you read a book, you get an idea of the thing you are learning—how corn grows, for instance. However, when that same person plants a seed, waters it, watches it grow into a plant, takes the bugs off of it and then picks it, husks it and eats it, then he knows about corn. Global Gardens helps refugees in numerous ways, but the program itself faces challenges. Like most non-profit organizations, funding is a constant problem. This year Global Gardens will be ineligible for certain funds earmarked for newer programs. Due to its longevity, Global Gardens can no longer be considered new; thus, the ongoing search for new sources of funding.

Land is another issue. Global Gardens always has more people who want to garden either as entrepreneurial farmers or as community gardeners than they have the land to accommodate the increasing demand. More land will be needed in 2013 to help keep the program running at its current level. Since the program leases the land it uses, often from businesses that might eventually develop it, the land is not always secure. In 2012, the program lost the use of two acres of land because of a change in ownership.

"It is not easy until you work hard," Nuro said. Many people told him he was going to love living in America because it is easy to live here. He talked to other refugees who did not want to move to Boise because the assistance programs did not provide enough for them. Nuro couldn't understand that. He said he works hard to provide for his own family and for his own people. He is now president of the Somali Bantu Zigua Community, a refugee organization, and an American citizen because, as he proudly states, he worked for it.

When Nuro speaks about his garden, his face softens. He smiles and becomes animated—the obvious pride welling up in his eyes. As he flexes his arm, he says that his garden makes him strong. He says he will die a strong man because he knows how to work—and he gets to work. I look around at the various plants in the garden and think about Nuro's strength in planting them, the strength of the plants as they grow and the strength of the community that succeeded in building a strong bridge between their two worlds. Nevertheless, only a couple of the refugee gardeners who worked their way through the Global Gardens program have gone on to full-time farming. For most, a full-time farm is not a viable financial option because of the upfront capital it takes to get acreage and equipment.



Ali Outadi and his son Abbas, both refugees from Iran, raise sheep for Muslims in Boise; they pasture 25 sheep on 10 acres near Boise. Word-of-mouth, they sell mostly to Muslims in Boise.

Dadiri Nuro has other plans. He hopes to eventually introduce Boiseans to food from his homeland by opening a Bantu restaurant, one supplied by produce from his community's garden. He wants to also teach Boiseans how to cook Bantu-style food and encourage them to eat more fresh (meaning fewer canned) foods. Nuro takes another bite of *mchicha*, that plant I thought was a weed. He says he believes providing good food is a major part of a good life and he wants to grow his food well. "The way you grow," he says, "is the way you live."

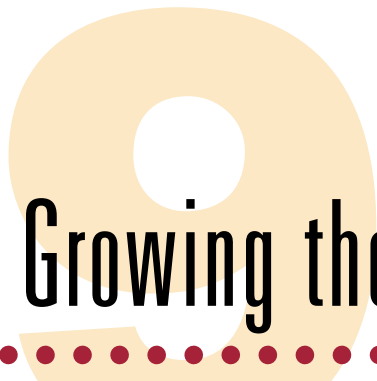
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Tonya Nelson grew up in the Boise Valley. She will graduate with a degree in History in May 2013 and intends to pursue a master's in Community and Regional Planning.



Idaho Wheat Commission

Idaho wheat farmers have received more than a billion dollars in federal farm subsidies since 1995. The state ranks fifth in wheat exports.



Growing the

FARM BILL

by Victoria Kazimir

Over the decades, the American food system has evolved from local farms that served the needs of their communities to primarily industrial-scale agricultural production. Agricultural policy also has changed with the times. Since the 1960s, these changes have been borne out by the federal government's primary instrument of agricultural policy, omnibus legislation collectively known as the farm bill. The legislation, renewed every five to seven years, is introduced as an amendment to permanent agricultural law established in 1949. The comprehensive bill authorizes and funds programs ranging from commodity subsidies and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps) to international commodity trade, rural economic development and agriculture research. The last farm bill, passed in 2008, authorized more than \$400 billion in spending over five years. The largest share of these monies (nearly 70 percent) was allocated to nutrition assistance, while farm and crop supports were second and conservation programs were a far third.

The 2008 farm bill expired on Sept. 30, 2012, and Congress was expected to produce a new bill for the next five years. Titled the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012, the bill passed the Senate with bipartisan support but languished in the House over disputes about nutrition assistance funding. As the year end approached, Congress increasingly focused on the impending “fiscal cliff,” a combination of sharp tax increases and spending cuts many feared would send the economy into recession set to take effect on New Year’s Day. With the new farm bill tied up in the House, at the 11th hour Congress passed a bare-bones extension of the 2008 farm bill as part of the fiscal cliff settlement, leaving few parties celebrating. The 2008 bill is now in effect until Sept. 30, 2013.

Nearly six months of work by the Senate Agriculture Committee were seemingly for naught when the 2012 farm bill languished in the House. With the extension of the 2008 bill, the 112th Congress essentially kicked the can down the road, leaving the passage of a new full five-year farm bill to the 113th Congress now in session. The 2012 Senate bill could serve as a basis for a new farm bill written by the Senate Agricultural Committee this year, but that remains to be seen. The mainstays of previous bills important to Idaho farmers—commodity supports, conservation programs and funding for a number of programs aimed at developing foreign markets for U.S. producers—are intact for the time being, while a number of smaller discretionary programs aimed at organic and specialty farmers and farmers markets were discontinued due to lack of funding. The estimate of the proposed savings is one thing that is certain to change when the new bill is drafted. In early March, the Congressional Budget Office downgraded the amount of savings in the 2012 Senate bill from \$23.1 billion over 10 years to just \$13.1 billion.

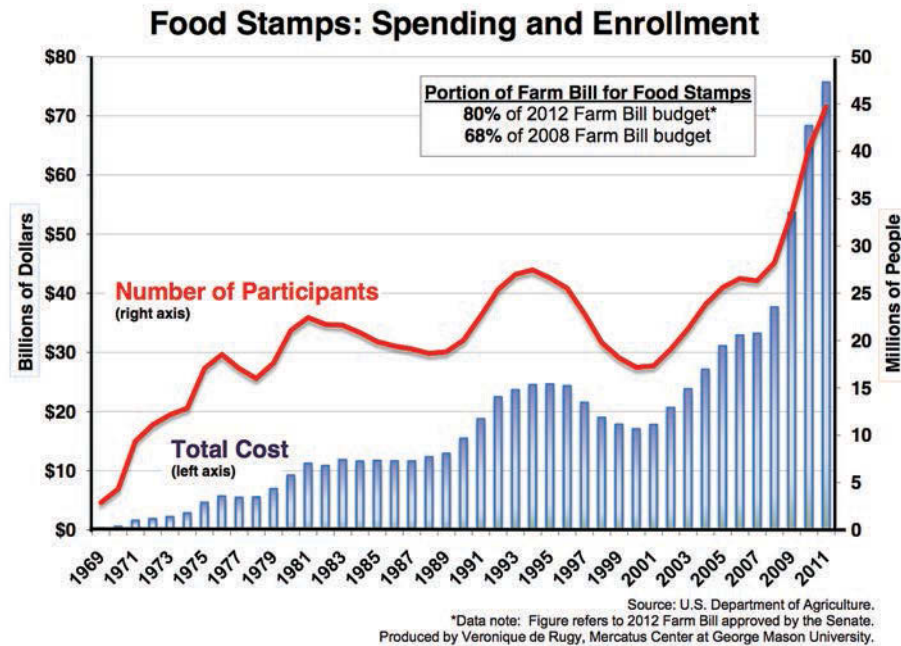
Because the 2008 farm bill provisions were temporary amendments to the permanent 1949 Agricultural Act, without a new bill in place by Jan. 1, 2013, agricultural policy was set to revert to the permanent law that authorizes federal price support levels from the 1940s, thus causing considerable disruption to the crop and food markets. That meant prices for dairy products and other commodities would soar and price supports for crops such as soybeans wouldn’t exist at all. The extension, however, prevented reversion to permanent law, thus avoiding the predicted market disruptions. But this temporary fix does little to address the need to provide farmers with longer-term certainty in regard to governmental price supports so they can make informed planning decisions about their crops. By the end of September 2013, the Congress must pass a new farm bill or once again risk reversion to permanent law.



Risch4Senate

Senator Jim Risch poses with his wife Vicki on his Boise-area farm. Although he voted to reject the Senate's 2012 farm bill, the Boisean claims to be one of the only members of Congress who actually owns a cow.

The desire to support the competitiveness of American farmers and ensure the domestic food supply has historically ensured bipartisan support for farm programs in Congress. But efforts to pass the 2012 farm bill faced significant political hurdles in the latter half of the year. Both the Senate and House agreed on the need to eliminate direct payments, reshape some commodity income supports, expand crop insurance, consolidate and reduce conservation programs, extend discretionary spending for many USDA programs and revise the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Key differences arose between the House and Senate over the proposed shape of the commodity income supports and the extent to which SNAP should be cut. The House pushed for considerably deeper cuts to SNAP funding than the Senate approved. With the fiscal deficit looming over Congress, the House sought approximately \$12 billion more in cuts than the \$23.1 billion reduction over 10 years proposed by the Senate.



Fighting over food stamps was the roadblock that helped to derail the Senate farm bill. The number of Idahoans on food stamps has more than tripled since 2008.

The 2012 bill highlighted differences in party ideology over the necessity of nutrition assistance, which comprises more than 70 percent of the spending authorized in the farm bill. While many Democrats in Congress worried about the impact of cutting nutrition assistance to struggling families in an uncertain economy, congressmen/women who ran on platforms of reduced federal spending were uneasy with passing a bill that authorized nearly a trillion dollars in spending over the next decade. The contentious political climate of the 2012 presidential election compounded these pressures. Both Idaho Senators Mike Crapo (R) and James Risch (R) voted against the 2012 Senate bill. According to Sen. Risch's Deputy Legislative Director Darren Parker, the vote was a difficult one. While Sen. Risch was supportive

of providing support and risk management strategies to the agricultural community in Idaho, "He could not in good conscience vote for \$80 billion in food stamps in light of our nation's fiscal deficit," said Parker.

Significant changes in agricultural policy were included in the 2012 Senate version of the farm bill. It would have significantly altered commodity supports by eliminating most direct subsidies and some disaster relief payment programs. Their elimination was set to provide the bulk of the proposed deficit reduction—\$15 billion out of \$23 billion. In their place, a new set of crop insurance policies called Ag Risk Coverage would have provided a revenue guarantee for farmers at a maximum 85 percent of average revenue from previous years. Currently, farmers may take out federal crop insurance policies on their production. Under these policies, farmers pay just under half of the cost of their insurance premiums. These insurance programs are managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency, which works with private contractors that in turn provide insurance policies to farmers. The 2012 bill would have expanded available insurance coverage options and provided funds to develop insurance policies for underserved crops such as fruits and vegetables.

The farm bill has considerable impact on Idaho farmers. According to the Washington, D.C.-based Environmental Working Group, the most significant programs in terms of monetary impact relate to commodity supports and conservation. Between 1995 and 2011, 36 percent of Idaho farmers received subsidies totaling more than \$3 billion. About \$1.69 billion of this sum was in commodity subsidies, \$713 million in conservation subsidies, \$376 million in crop insurance premium subsidies and \$247 million in disaster relief subsidies. Of these programs, crop insurance has by far the largest participation, with nearly 200,000 policies taken out in this period. The importance of crop insurance has grown as outlays for Idaho premium subsidies have steadily increased and outlays for direct payments have decreased. While commodity subsidies between 1995 and 2011 are four times those for crop insurance, crop insurance outlays are expected to exceed traditional commodity support outlays over the next 10 years by one-third, according to congressional reports.

Since the 2012 crop season was still covered by the 2008 bill and the mainstays that Idaho farmers depend on such as crop insurance were continued, the expiration of the bill didn't have an immediate negative impact on most Idaho farms in 2012. But the uncertainties produced by Congressional gridlock remain. Interestingly, the proposed changes in the farm bill, including the elimination of the commodity subsidies and the expansion of crop insurance, received little protest from area farmers. The farming community

was prepared for these changes and was satisfied by the expansion of crop insurance. “The idea was that if they eliminated direct payments they would provide crop insurance instead as a safety net in lieu of direct payments. The farmers I met with—not all, but 99 percent—were okay with losing direct payments. They understood that that was coming and preferred to have the other safety nets in the bill,” said Parker of Sen. Risch’s office.

On the ground, those in Idaho most impacted by the farm bill developments of last year were the dairy operators and grain producers. The restructuring of dairy supports proposed in the 2012 bill would have impacted numerous Idaho dairy operations. Idaho dairies are typically quite large in size, so they are not eligible for many of the federal dairy support programs under the 2008 bill. In past years, the United Dairymen of Idaho have not supported the federal programs because pricing in these farm bills was not helpful to large dairies. In a departure from the norm, the United Dairymen of Idaho supported the new income loss program and corresponding supply management program in the 2012 bill. “The pricing in previous farm bills has not been very helpful to the large dairies. They (United Dairymen) took a new approach to this farm bill and supported the reforms that were included in the House and Senate bills,” said Parker. This supply management program stirred some controversy because in exchange for receiving payments for a loss of income in one year, the government would get to dictate the following year how much milk product a farmer could release. The rationale is that in order for a farmer to receive income loss payments one year, he would have to participate in the supply management program to correct for oversupply the following year, thus allowing dairy prices to rise. While some were uneasy about introducing government supply controls, most came out in favor of the program. These hoped-for changes in dairy supports never came to fruition due to the extension of the 2008 bill.

Most Idaho grain growers wanted a new farm bill so they too could make farm management decisions sooner. “They (farmers) have budgets and bankers they have to answer to in order to get operating lines of credit, and the kind of crop insurance they get impacts what they plant and how much they plant. Having a farm bill provides them with financial certainty and direction, allowing them to plan what they’re going to do for the next five years. It’s very important to them,” stated Travis Jones, executive director of the Idaho Grain Association.

For Idaho wheat producers, the extension of the 2008 farm bill has been bittersweet. Because wheat producers export about 50 percent of their crop, the reauthorization and funding of the Foreign Market Development Program and the Market Access Program included in both the 2012 bill and



David R. Day

Farm worker immigration, both legal and illegal, is an unintended consequence of federal aid to Idaho farmers. Pictured: harvesting hops in Canyon County, 2008.



SCAFCO Grain Systems

Barley growers mostly favored the House version of 2012 farm bill with subsidies for crop insurance. Pictured: storing barley.

the 2008 extension was important. The expiration of the 2008 bill sparked worries that these programs would run out of funding, and global offices could be closed and jobs lost. Grain producers feared they could lose market share to competitors in crucial foreign markets, according to Jones. In addition, grain producers, particularly wheat and barley farmers, are the largest

recipients of commodity subsidies in the state, and some 81 percent of Idaho wheat acres and about 60 percent of barley acres are insured. With the extension, Idaho grain subsidies are intact. Still, the Idaho Grain Association felt that the commodity subsidies were not necessary and that the redirection of those funds for deficit savings and more important programs such as crop insurance would be best. "In Idaho, we felt that it (direct payments program) wasn't necessary and that we could probably get some deficit saving by eliminating it and possibly use that elimination as leverage to bolster other programs that were more important, like crop insurance," said Jones. In the end, the changes spelled out in the full five-year bill were not to be.

In contrast, local farms in the area geared toward local consumption remain largely untouched by the farm bill debate. Generally, they don't use crop insurance and most don't receive subsidies, although token grants for specialty crop farming are available. As the local food movement has gained traction, the competition for these grants has outgrown their modest scale. For locovore farms, programs such as school lunch initiatives that require certain percentages of local food to be included in meals are considerably more meaningful. Generally, local demand for food is what drives these smaller farms and informs their production decisions. Their production has very little to do with national policy. The 2012 farm bill included measures to expand insurance for specialty crops. Under the 2008 law, crop insurance is only available to farmers who raise a limited variety of crops. Farms with several crop varieties currently do not qualify for crop insurance because programs for diversified farms haven't been developed yet. "In the last few years, they have been trying to develop crop insurance for all types of farmers. At this point we have too many crops, but they are working on it," said Josie Erskine of Peaceful Belly farm in Boise. From the perspective of local farmer Janie Burns of Meadowlark Farm, "The best insurance is a having a local community that we can count on to buy what we produce."

Just as the local food movement provides an excellent opportunity to analyze values related to agriculture and the nation's vision for its food system, the farm bill debate provides an occasion to discuss the policy instruments to achieve that vision. The tools of choice in implementing agricultural policy have changed over time. To understand the defining elements of current agricultural policy and our food system, it is helpful to look at how they've developed. The farm bill has its roots in legislation introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the midst of the Great Depression in 1933 as an anti-poverty measure. American society was primarily agrarian and alle-

viating on-farm poverty was a national concern. A global glut in food production caused food prices to drop drastically. The resulting loss of revenues meant many farms couldn't service their mortgages. The bill introduced a nutrition program (the precursor of food stamps and the subsequent SNAP program) and a price support system in which the government would pay farmers to leave a certain percentage of their lands fallow in order to suppress supply and keep prices stable. In addition, the government established a program to purchase grain from farmers and release it periodically as a tool to keep grain prices propped up. Disaster aid and conservation programs were introduced to help those suffering from the effects of the Dust Bowl. Some form of the bill has been passed every five to seven years since about 1938.

Following World War II, monumental societal changes transformed the American food system. Agricultural productivity rose due to mechanization and the adoption of chemical treatments for soil and crops. The globalization of markets increased pressure for economies of scale. Decreased transportation costs resulting from the interstate highway system further concentrated food production to areas of lowest production cost. These changes resulted in expanded farming operations characterized by specialization in commodity crops such as wheat, grain, cotton, rice, oilseed and seed crops. Furthermore, an increase in food processing, partially resulting from consumer demand for convenience, also followed, further shifting consumption patterns away from direct farmer-to-consumer exchanges to processed supermarket goods. In addition, the access to education offered by the GI Bill expanded economic opportunities outside the family farm for those returning home from the war. As machinery began to replace farm workers, population gradually shifted to towns and cities. Farm policy further incentivized changes in production methods and crop choices by providing support for commodity crops, largely ignoring more perishable fruit and produce. According to Burns of Meadowlark Farm, "The farm bill has clearly dictated many of the policies that have helped this migration of food production into certain areas and also has fostered the overproduction of many foods."

The 1985 and 1990 farm bills reflected some undercurrents of the present-day push to reduce the role of government in agriculture. With the 1996 Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act, Congress completely did away with supply controls, dramatically reduced price supports and introduced crop insurance instead. By 1998, when commodity prices started to drop, Congress backtracked and introduced new farm subsidies, including controversial direct payments to farmers. The movement from supply and price controls to government payments has no doubt increased efficiencies in



The Community Alliance with Farm Families (CAFF) protested when the House leadership refused to hold a vote on the farm bill.

agricultural markets. Yet, as commodity prices have again risen and as, on average, farm income exceeds non-farm income, direct subsidies and other income supports have become difficult to justify.

The 2012 farm bill proposal to insure more crops and provide more comprehensive insurance policies was part of a greater trend away from traditional farm supports. The introduction of crop insurance was preceded by measures in previous farm bills to cut supply control programs such as the grain surplus program of decades past and replace them with direct payments. Since the authorization of crop insurance in the Federal Crop Insurance Act of 1980, subsequent farm bills have amended this act to provide greater and greater subsidies for insurance premiums to encourage farmer participation. They have also increased subsidies to insurance companies for taking the considerable risk associated with insuring farms against the market. With the movement toward crop insurance and away from tradi-

tional direct payments, the question arises whether these changes are beneficial. The case for crop insurance is a seemingly simple one. Farmers take out insurance on crop production to reduce their risks in case of unforeseen events such as hailstorms. They do not receive payments unless there has been a loss and even then these payments are to compensate farmers a maximum 85 percent of average revenue under the 2008 law. On the other hand, although crop insurance is partly funded by the farmer and payments only kick in for considerable losses, many have suggested that the extensive nature of the insurance has morphed the program from one of risk management to that of an income guarantee.

Diversifying farm products provides some risk mitigation because even if one crop fails, it is unlikely that all will. Ideally, according to Burns, "It should be a group of farmers that have a portfolio of crops that they rotate through and for which they have figured out the market so they are not over producing, and if one has a crop failure it is unlikely that they all will and so you diversify ... crop insurance may be providing guarantees to people making bad decisions." A 2012 paper by Vincent Smith at Montana State University and Joseph Glauber at the U.S. Department of Agriculture suggests that subsidized crop insurance has decreased the use of traditional risk management tools such as crop diversification, pesticide use, nonfarm income and saving and borrowing. In addition, crop insurance has been shown to increase soil erosion, expand crop production to environmentally sensitive lands and generally incentivize moral hazard behaviors. On the other hand, while direct payments are politically unpopular in times of high farm incomes, simple lump sum transfers with no strings attached are wealth transfers that distort markets the least. Thus, direct payments theoretically may distort markets less than crop insurance. Furthermore, the study finds that as a mechanism for income transfer, crop insurance is extremely expensive relative to other wealth transfers. For every dollar spent, the producer receives only 51 cents in benefit. This figure is high compared to federal crop insurance programs in other countries. Canadian federal crop insurance has about one-fifth the cost of administration that the U.S. has. This suggests there is room for improvement in efficiency. While no perfect policy instrument exists, so long as it is national priority to support American farmers, the various methods of aiding farmers need to be carefully evaluated.

The journey toward a 2013 farm bill provides a prime opportunity for local and national discussion of agricultural policy methods and goals. The self-sufficient family farms of decades long past seem a distant memory, yet a similar spirit motivates the independent nature of small locovore farms. Alongside these, family-owned commodity farms also seek to carve a place

for themselves in agricultural production. These different approaches to agriculture offer different models for the U.S. food system. The exact outcome of a farm bill without government intervention in price and revenue levels is as uncertain as it is unlikely. In all likelihood, the different types of farms will continue to coexist to serve their individual customers, even as the local food movement gains steam. As efforts to create a five-year bill ensue once more, policy for both traditional crops and specialty crops will come to the forefront. While industrial production may have its role to play in the food system and will likely see continued support—although perhaps more limited than in previous years due to budgetary pressures—a unique opportunity exists to analyze policy relating to the local food movement. The increasing public interest in the quality of our perishable crops will likely further open the debate over whether traditional price and revenue supports should be extended to local farms serving their communities.

Further, if the Senate chooses to include the expansion of crop insurance to specialty crops in its new 2013 bill, the benefits of such an extension will need to be considered. The questions of whether subsidies would be more beneficial to specialty farmers than crop insurance, whether these supports would allow local food prices to decrease and the extent to which the local food movement would grow with federal support are all concerns with no clear answers. Yet as the farm bill debate continues this year, Idaho farmers will be affected by the Congress' decisions relating to these puzzles.

Although more than half of Idaho farmers do not receive subsidy payments from the farm bill, it determines the competitiveness of American farmers in certain crop markets, and has considerable impact on food prices, farmer solvency and the extent of farming in the U.S. Ultimately, it outlines the way we incentivize society's approach to food. Although unknowns concerning the text of the new bill abound, its passage this year is of primary importance to both farmers and consumers.

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Pictured: Fatuma Mnongerwa at the Somali Bantu Community Farm.

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Nicholas DiPietro

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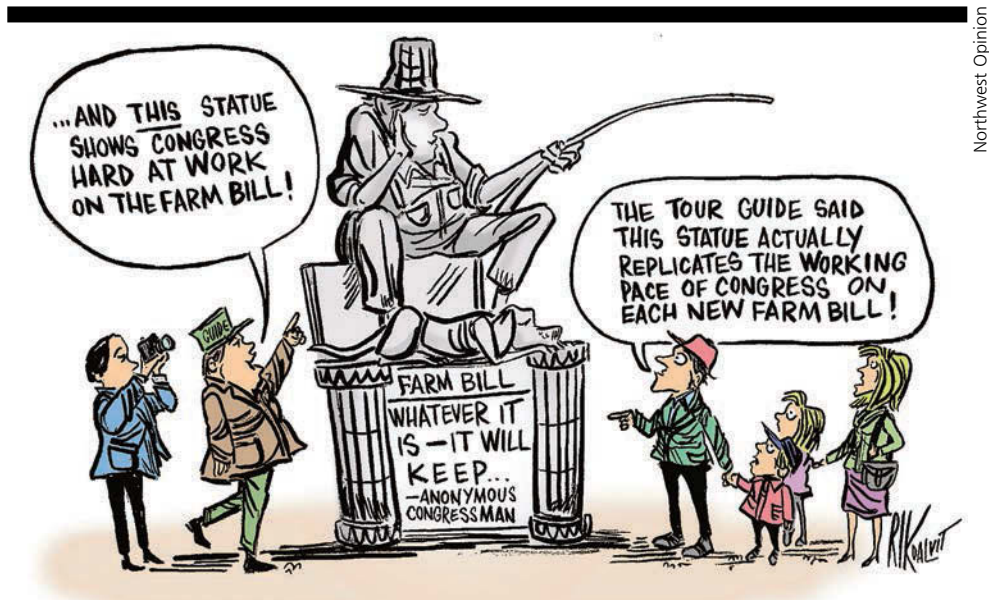
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Boise State University

Boise State University, with an enrollment of more than 19,000 students, is a progressive student-focused university dedicated to excellence in teaching, innovative research, leadership development and community service. Its students benefit from an emphasis on the undergraduate experience, including public affairs research as demonstrated by the student papers in this publication.

With record student enrollment, new academic buildings, additional degree programs and an expanding research portfolio, it is no coincidence that recently Boise State was ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* among the nation's "top up-and-coming schools." With Idaho's fastest-growing research program, Boise State is in the midst of a transformation that builds on its traditional teaching strengths while expanding its capabilities in research and scholarly activity. This evolution reflects the integral role that Boise State plays in contributing to the quality of life in the Treasure Valley and beyond.

