

CHAPTER 10

AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION

Agriculture and food processing are very important industries in Idaho's economy. Most of Idaho's agriculture products are shipped outside its borders with about 1/4 of all of Idaho's crops, livestock and processed foods exported internationally. Idahoans cannot possibly consume all the products produced. If we did, then each Idahoan would have to consume 65 potatoes; 286 slices of bread; 29 glasses of milk, 4 beefsteaks or 8 quarter-pounders daily. In 2001, the value of food and agriculture exports from Idaho exceeded \$820 million according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Idaho ranks first in the U.S. in the production of potatoes, small white beans, Austrian winter peas, garbanzo beans and trout. The state produces 144 different commodities, ranking in the top 10 in the nation in over 30 categories.

A little over 51,000 people work directly in agriculture and food processing in the state. With the many linkages of Idaho's agricultural industry with other business sectors, the impact in terms of jobs and income is further multiplied throughout the state's economy. (Sources from the Idaho Department of Agriculture, the US Department of Agriculture, the Idaho Department of Labor, and the Idaho Department of Commerce.)

County extension programs, generally headquartered in county courthouses, play an important role in aiding Idaho's agricultural and natural resource-based industries. Other agricultural programs toward which counties contribute support include county soil conservation districts and weed and predator control.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

The purpose of the county extension program is to supply educational information and assistance concerning agriculture, family and consumer science, 4-H club work, and related fields. It is a cooperative program involving the United States Department of Agriculture, the University of Idaho, and county governments. Idaho counties are authorized by state law to appropriate funds for demonstration work in agriculture, family and consumer science, and related subjects (31-826 through 31-839). The federal and the state governments also pay part of these programs.

State law authorizes counties to employ county extension educators(s) in cooperation with the University of Idaho and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (31-826). Extension educators are members of the faculty of the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Service and are assigned to particular counties. The county extension faculty is responsible for the total extension program in a particular county.

Extension educators are headquartered in all Idaho counties except Boise and Shoshone. Boise County receives service from the Gem County Extension Office and Shoshone County receives assistance from the Kootenai and Benewah County Extension Offices. Some counties have only one educator, but most counties have two or more. Most counties employ extension educators with specialized skills and all of the counties have specialist support available to them in

such areas as crops, livestock, business and family management, marketing, 4-H/youth development, foods, and nutrition.

The extension educator provides a vital link between farmers and research conducted at the University of Idaho research and extension centers. In countless ways, extension educators help raise the level of agricultural practices and production by keeping farmers abreast of new research developments.

Agricultural extension educators advise farmers, ranchers, and agricultural businesses on the best ways to grow, market, process, and use farm products. They suggest how to adapt scientific methods to individual needs and to adjust farm businesses to changing economic conditions. Educators help farmers solve every day problems of crops and soils, livestock and dairy, farm machinery and buildings, forestry, business management, and the use of pesticides. Householders are provided information on problems of lawns, gardens, landscaping, and insect control. Extension educators also assist farmer cooperatives and the wholesalers, processors, and transporters of farm commodities, as well as leaders of communities in improving their business and social climate.

Environmental quality is also a concern of extension programs. Extension faculty assist farmers and communities with reducing air, water, and soil pollution, and show them how to use natural resources to save and improve the environment for coming generations. A major emphasis is on water quality.

County Extension educators work extensively with adult volunteer leaders of 4-H clubs as well as with the 4-H members themselves. They provide them with materials and guidance for projects ranging from livestock to family and consumer science and specialized projects such as health, electricity, geology, and computer science. They also work with youth leaders, judging teams, and 4-H radio and television programs. County educators organize and direct county 4-H camps and fairs. In addition to education, youth development is an important component of the 4-H program.

Most counties have one or more extension family and consumer science extension educators residing within their county, or share the services of a family and consumer science extension educator with one or two other counties. The family and consumer science extension educator conducts educational programs relating to foods and nutrition, clothing and textiles, and family economics. Training is provided for leaders who, in turn, pass this information on to local extension homemakers clubs. The family and consumer science extension educator also works closely with 4-H club members and leaders, and provides educational literature and service to everyone in the county who requests help on a wide spectrum of subjects.

COUNTY FAIR

A county fair provides a means for farmers, 4-H youth, future farmers, and future homemakers to show their livestock, products and projects and to learn from exhibits of other farmers, equipment dealers, and county business and service organizations. It is usually held after

harvest has begun and it provides recreation as well as education. County fairs are administered by county fair boards. A county fair board is created by an order issued by the board of county commissioners (22-202). Before issuing such an order, the county commissioners must have received a petition favoring the establishment of a county fair board signed by five to ten qualified electors; they must have published their intent to create a county fair board (22-201), and they must have conducted a public hearing (22-202). Two or more counties may group together to form a fair district (22-301).

The county fair boards consist of five (5) or seven (7) members appointed by the county commissioners (22-202). They are selected as nearly as possible to represent the differing industries and areas of the county (22-202). The county fair board members serve terms of three (3) or four (4) years depending on the number of people appointed (22-202). In counties with more than a 200,000 population, the board of county commissioners may provide, by ordinance, that the fair board be an advisory board to the commissioners (22-202). The commissioners then retain and exercise the powers and duties of the county fair board (22-202(A)). The board must employ a secretary who is granted the powers of a general manager (22-205). County extension educators have frequently served in this capacity. The board also appoints a treasurer or designates the secretary to act as treasurer (22-205). The members of the board are paid their actual and necessary expenses out the funds provided for fair purposes by the board of county commissioners (22-208).

One of the responsibilities of the county fair board is the care and custody of all property belonging to the county that is used for fair purposes (22-204). The board has the power to employ labor, award prizes, make exhibition contracts, fix and charge admission fees, get contracts for the operation of concessions and services, and do all other things necessary for the holding of the fair (22-204). The board meets at times and places deemed necessary and in compliance with Idaho's open meeting law (22-204). It must publish a detailed statement of money received and expended in connection with the operation of the fair within 90 days after the conclusion of the fair (22-204).

For the purpose of determining what funds must be raised by taxes for county fair purposes, the county fair board must meet annually to prepare a budget (22-206). This budget includes the estimated cost of the fair, less the estimated income from the fair and the balance in the county fair fund. The board of county commissioners may approve or amend the county fair budget and set the tax levy for operating the county fair (22-206). In no case may this tax levy exceed one hundredths percent (.01%) on each dollar of assessed market valuation (22-206). Money remaining on hand after a county fair has been conducted may be retained in the custody of the treasurer of the county fair board for use in the conduct of future county fairs (22-207).

In addition to establishing a tax levy for operating the county fair, the county board of commissioners may levy a tax of one hundredths percent (.01%) for purchasing a site for the fair, erecting buildings, and maintaining these buildings. The funds from this levy can be accumulated until sufficient funds have been raised to purchase a site or construct buildings (31-822).

WEED CONTROL

County government is given the primary responsibility of providing for weed control, a

particularly important function in the area of agriculture. The director of the Department of Agriculture has the duty to enforce the provisions of title 22, chapter 24 (22-2403). It is the duty and responsibility of all landowners to control noxious weeds on their land and property and also for paying for the control of the weeds (22-2407).

The board of county commissioners of each county has responsibility for establishing a coordinated program for the control of noxious weeds within its county (22-2405). Each county must employ a county weed superintendent who may be a superintendent for more than one county and who is qualified to detect and treat noxious weeds (22-2405). The county weed superintendent is responsible for ensuring that the land in the county meets with the law, compiling data and submitting reports, implementing enforcement action, providing direction on effective and practical methods of control, aiding investigation and prosecution, meeting certification requirements and making recommendations on special management zones (22-2405(6)). Counties may engage in cooperative weed management agreements to develop integrated weed management plans with other agencies or counties for a designated cooperative weed management area (a county, portion of a county, or portions or several counties or states), in order to control and eradicate noxious weeds (22-2402, 22-2405).

State law requires certain weed control notices must be published by the county, and provides for enforcing compliance with such notices (22-2405). Owners of private land who have neglected to control weeds after due notice, may have their land quarantined and have the weeds eradicated at their expense (22-2406). The board of county commissioners of each county may levy an annual tax for the control of noxious weeds which shall not exceed six hundredths percent (.06%) of assessed market value (22-2406(f)). The county commissioners also have the authority to establish a weed control advisory committee (22-2410).

PREDATOR CONTROL

The board of county commissioners may levy a tax not to exceed two hundredths percent (.02%) of assessed market valuation for the purpose of exterminating predatory animals, such as coyotes and wildcats and other agricultural pests, such as gophers and jack rabbits (25-2618 and 25-2619). The board may employ persons to hunt predatory animals and other pests (25-2622). They may create special extermination districts in the county for the extermination of pests, appoint commissions for the extermination districts, and levy an annual tax, or they may require landowners in these districts either to exterminate their own pests or pay the cost of extermination by the district (22-2621). Counties may be required to work with the Department of Fish and Game on wolf reintroduction (36-715).

SOIL CONSERVATION

Almost all Idaho counties are wholly or in large part contained in soil conservation districts. These districts, which are established by petition of the landowners and a referendum, are governed by supervisors who are elected to four-year terms (22-2719 and 22-2721). The supervisors have the responsibility for providing for conservation of soil and soil resources (22-2716 and 22-2722). The

commissioners of any county which is wholly or in large part contained within a soil conservation district may provide funds or employees to the district, but such funds may not exceed \$5,000 per year (22-2727).

Most Idaho counties provide such support, and many counties have entered into written agreements with soil conservation districts which stipulate the services to be performed by the county and by the district. In Latah County, for example, the commissioners and the soil district have a written agreement which includes a provision that the district conservationist shall serve as an advisor to the Latah County Planning and Zoning Commission. The soil conservation districts generally aid counties in matters such as planning, zoning, sanitary landfills and pollution abatement. In addition, the soil surveys provided to the soil conservation districts by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service are often used by county assessors in evaluating property.

The Idaho OnePlan is a computer-based system developed to improve efficiency and effectiveness of natural resource planning and is administered through the State Soil Conservation Commission and can be used as a resource by soil conservation districts (22-2717).

LOCAL OPTION SWINE FACILITIES SITING ACT

Owners and operators of swine and poultry facilities are required to obtain a permit from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) but this does not preclude counties and cities from creating more stringent regulations (39-104A) and communicating those decisions to DEQ. The ordinances and regulations enacted by local governments may not deprive any owner of complete use of that agricultural land for agricultural purposes (67-6529). County commissioners are given the option of regulating construction or expansion of large swine facilities through a site approval process (39-7904). Regulation of these sites can include proximity to neighboring residences, setback distances, and distance from bodies of water (39-7907). The site approval process also includes public hearings in the county in which the site is located, and if the site is adjacent any neighboring county or city, they should also be included in the process (39-7910, 67-6529).

SITE ADVISORY TEAM SUITABILITY DETERMINATION ACT

Counties may require that applicants for concentrated or confined animal feeding operations, or CAFOs, submit an odor management plan as part of their application (67-6529D). The term “odor” is defined in 25-3803. A board of county commissioners may request that the director of the Department of Agriculture form a CAFO advisory team, comprised of representatives from the departments of Agriculture, Environmental Quality, and Water Resources, to provide a suitability determination for the site (67-6529C, 67-6529D).

The Idaho Department of Agriculture is authorized to regulate odors from agricultural operations and shall promulgate rules as necessary (25-3802). The Department’s designee reviews and approves operation plans for those operations found to be in compliance and additionally issues monetary citations, if necessary, to be placed into an agriculture odor

management fund. The Department's designee shall also respond to all odor management complaints, inspecting the property if necessary. The appropriate board of county commissioners shall be allowed to attend that inspection, if they so choose (25-38).

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANS

Dairy farms are required to have a nutrient management plan approved by DEQ before a milk permit will be issued for the dairy and are subject to inspection and regulation by the Idaho Department of Agriculture (37-401). Nutrient management plans must include names and addresses of the recipients of the dairy farm's livestock waste, the number of acres upon which the waste is applied, and the amount of waste received, and is made available to the county in which the waste will be located (37-401). (If the waste is converted to compost before it leaves the dairy farm, only the first recipient of the compost needs to be listed in the nutrient management plan (37-401).) A condition of permit granting is a letter from the board of county commissioners certifying that the dairy farm is in compliance with county livestock ordinances (37-401). County commissioners may request copies of any findings or conclusions from inspections for the purpose of issuing or revoking permits (37-403).

The Department of Agriculture and DEQ implement the Beef Cattle Environmental Control Act, which regulates beef cattle feeding operations to protect natural resources, including ground and surface water (22-4903). Beef cattle feeding operations must build wastewater storage and containment facilities (22-4905). Beef cattle feeding operations must also submit nutrient management plans (22-4906).

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The Department of Environmental Quality was created in 2000 to protect "environmental values," including:

"...clean air, water and soil, reducing or eliminating environmental pollution arising from human activities, ensuring the proper treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous wastes and ensuring the proper cleanup and restoration of existing natural resources [and to] carry out programs to protect human health and the environment, to enforce environmental laws and develop pollution prevention, compliance assistance, and other environmental incentive programs"(39-102A).

Previously these duties were housed within the Department of Health and Welfare as the Environmental Protection Division (39-104). The powers and duties of this agency are described in 39-105.

NOTES