

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

Bear Lake County  
208-847-0344, Fax: 208-847-0344  
21620 Montpelier, Idaho 83254

## Idaho Ag Outlook seminars empower producers in decision making

### AT A GLANCE

**Idaho's Ag Outlook seminars empower agriculture producers, lenders and managers in making critical decisions during the growing season.**

### The Situation

Agribusiness is the number one sector in Idaho's economy. In 2014 agriculture was responsible for generating \$27.8 billion in sales (20 percent of Idaho's total), 128,200 jobs (approximately one in every seven jobs in the state), and \$10.3 billion in value-added (16 percent of Idaho's GSP) according to an economic base analysis study conducted by the University of Idaho. Agriculture plays an even stronger role in Idaho's rural communities. The economic health of Idaho depends on a healthy agricultural sector.

By nature of the volatility in the commodity markets, agriculture is inherently subject to severe risk and 2016 was no exception. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, national net farm income in 2016 had declined as much as 50 percent since the record highs of 2013. It was the third year of decline and 2017 is forecasted to be down nearly nine percent from 2016.

Confronted with these difficult circumstances, more than ever, Idaho farmers, ranchers and agriculture lenders seek access to up-to-date commodity market and input cost information that will help them make profitable planning, marketing and investment decisions.

### Our Response

In 2014 University of Idaho Extension educators teamed up with industry experts and university spe-



Idaho Ag Outlook participants receive important commodity market outlook information. Photo courtesy of Ben Eborn.

cialists to provide the first Idaho Ag Outlook seminars. The seminars have been offered in at least two locations per year in southern Idaho for the past four years.

Understanding the difficulties producers had experienced in 2016, the outlook team was intent on providing farmers, ranchers, agriculture lenders and other industry professionals with information that would assist them in navigating through these turbulent times. The program provided commodity outlook, break-even price estimates, and challenges and opportunities producers may face in the coming year regarding marketing, planting and long-term investment decisions.

The topics and presenters for the seminar included the following:

- Global & U.S. Outlook – Ryan Larsen, Ph.D., Utah State University

- Weather Outlook – Ron Abramovich, USDA-NRCS
- Water Outlook – Terrell Sorensen, University of Idaho
- Grain Situation & Outlook – Kelly Olsen, Idaho Barley Commission
- Dairy Situation & Outlook – Rick Naerebout, Idaho Dairy Association
- Potato Situation & Outlook – Ryan Larsen, Ph.D., Utah State University
- Hay Situation & Outlook – Reed Findlay/Joel Packham, University of Idaho
- Cattle Situation & Outlook – Hernan Tejeda, Ph.D., University of Idaho

### Program Outcomes

Twenty-seven participants from Burley and 42 from Idaho Falls attended the 2017 Idaho Ag Outlook seminars. Prospects about the near future were not nearly as optimistic as they were during the 2014 seminars. Results included the following:

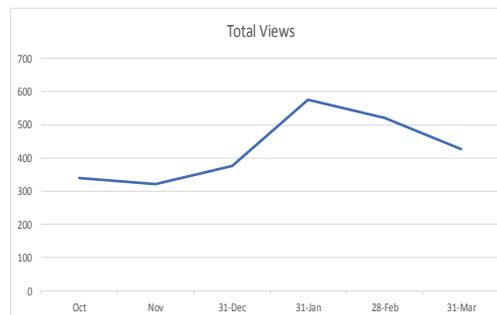
- 81 percent of all participants rated the quality of the Idaho Ag Outlook seminars as “very good” or “excellent.” No participant rated the program less than good.
- 100 percent said they would recommend the program to a friend.
- When asked which topics would assist them with decision making in the future, participant responses were:

Global & U.S. Agriculture Outlook	84 percent
Weather Outlook	61 percent
Water Outlook	78 percent
Grain Situation & Outlook	84 percent
Potato Situation & Outlook	52 percent
Beef Cattle Situation & Outlook	71 percent
Hay Situation & Outlook	72 percent
Dairy Situation & Outlook	46 percent

Idaho AgBiz website – On a high note, producers were introduced to the Idaho AgBiz website as a resource and an aid in preparing various agriculture production budgets. Initial feedback from participants was very positive in regards to the AgBiz website information.

Webpage analytics suggest there was a substantial increase in web page views following the seminar. The following graph

is a representation of the change seen before and after the seminar.



As indicated by the graph there was a 53 percent increase in traffic to the website in the first month following the seminar. There was an average increase of 46.5 percent in the three months after the seminar as opposed to the three months prior.

Summary – Continued development and implementation of the Idaho Ag Outlook seminars has provided Idaho agriculture producers valuable information to assist them in forecasting best production practices. The knowledge gained helps producers manage costs and improve marketing strategies.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Les Nunn**, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension, Bear Lake County  
21620 US Hwy. 30  
Montpelier, ID 83254  
Phone: 208-847-0344  
Fax: 208-847-0344  
Email: lnunn@uidaho.edu

**Ben Eborn**, Extension Agricultural Economist  
University of Idaho Extension, Bear Lake County  
21620 US Hwy. 30  
Montpelier, ID 83254  
Phone: 208-847-0344  
Fax: 208-847-0344  
Email: beborn@uidaho.edu