

Testimony for House Agriculture Field Hearing on 2012 Farm Bill  
May 3, 2010, Nampa, Idaho  
Presented by Doug Gross

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the key issues for the 2012 Farm Bill from the perspective of a specialty crop producer and potato grower. My name is Doug Gross and I grow fresh market and processing potatoes and small grains on a 1300 acre family farm near Wilder, Idaho. I have been actively involved in the potato industry for more than 35 years.

The 2008 Farm Bill included historic changes in federal farm policy as it relates to specialty crops. For the first time our nation's farm policy included programs that acknowledged the needs of specialty crop growers. Such a change was long overdue since it now commonly recognized that specialty crops represent nearly 50 per cent of the total farm gate value of all agricultural products produced in the United States.

During the consideration of the 2008 Farm Bill potato growers were directly involved in developing the policy options that became part of the legislation. As active members of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA) potato growers worked actively to support policies that maintained market based decision making for specialty crops and provided federal support for increasing the competitiveness of specialty crop producers.

Members of the SCFBA support federal farm policy for specialty crops that is not based on any direct income support for individual farmers but that provides support for the industry's efforts to exclude and manage pests of concern, conduct research relevant to growers, expand export markets and increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables. The federal commitment to those goals has made a very positive difference during the tenure of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Currently the SCFBA is reviewing the existing programs relevant to specialty crops in the 2008 Farm Bill to document those successes and to identify possible avenues for improvement. The potato industry will be actively involved in this effort. We look forward to the opportunity to provide the results of that work to the House Agriculture Committee to assist in their deliberations.

At this time I would like to provide the Committee with a broad overview of my thoughts on a few of the key items that are being watched most closely by potato growers in the 2008 Farm Bill:

**Planting Flexibility Restrictions**

It is clearly evident from the price debacle facing potato growers this year that small increases in supply can have devastating impacts on grower returns. It continues to be clear that it is disruptive to markets when acres that receive direct or other federal payments are allowed to plant non subsidized crops. The allowances made for individual states to plant fruits and

vegetables on program crop acres provided ample opportunity for growers to meet the demand for processing fruits and vegetables. I believe that the potato industry would strongly oppose any additional relaxation of the current planting restrictions.

### **Specialty Crop Block Grants**

The enhanced funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grants has been positively utilized by growers at the state level. As a result of the local decision making on these grants it offers State Departments of Agriculture the opportunity to more directly address the needs of local grower groups. While in some states there are undoubtedly ways to improve the operation of the granting process to ensure that funding goes to new, innovative grower requested and developed programs it appears that the block grant program is meeting the goals established by Congress.

### **Pest and Disease Management**

The introduction of an exotic pest or disease can have devastating effects on a grower's ability to produce and sell his crop. The funding provided to APHIS in the 2008 Farm Bill to take a more comprehensive approach to pest exclusion and management provides the opportunity to develop a more effective approach to address quarantine and other pests. The program encourages a more effective partnership between APHIS and the state departments of agriculture on pest and disease issues. The time has come to look at developing an insurance program for growers, similar to what exists in the livestock industry, to help when federally quarantined pests are discovered on their farms.

### **Specialty Crop Research Initiative**

Research continues to be the key to both crop production and consumer preference related issues. The Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) provides the opportunity for specialty crop researchers to access significant multiyear funding for multidisciplinary, multi-institutional research projects. The potato industry has worked to encourage the multistate collaborations envisioned by the program. Competition for the grants is intense. Grower input prior to proposal submission is a critical component of identifying relevant projects.

### **Over Coming Phytosanitary Barriers to Trade**

Potential exports of specialty crops are impacted by both phytosanitary and structural barriers to trade. The current farm bill provides funding to address the phytosanitary barriers through the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crop (TASC) program. The TASC program has a successful track record in providing funding for projects to remove phytosanitary barriers to trade. The increased funding provided by the 2008 Farm Bill for TASC is important. Additional education is necessary to familiarize the industry with the type of projects that can be completed with this funding.

### **Market Access Funding**

The potato industry has successfully used Market Access Program (MAP) Funds to develop new markets for fresh and processed potatoes. The 2008 Farm Bill provides \$200 million in funding for MAP. The potato industry continues to support this level of funding for MAP. There are many more positive aspects of the 2008 Farm Bill. In short, it provides a solid foundation upon which further progress can be made. We thank the chairman and committee for their past efforts and look forward to working together in developing the 2012 Farm Bill.

# DOUG GROSS

## BIOGRAPHY

---

Doug is the President and Owner of:

**GROSS FARMS, INC.** ~ a 1,300 acre farm located in Western Canyon County Idaho, growing both fresh and processed potatoes.

**GROSS SEED CO.** ~ a business focused on procuring, marketing, transportation, and processing potato seed.

Doug acquired a BS from the University of Idaho in 1975 in Ag Economics.

As Vice President of the Southern Idaho Potato Cooperative, he is actively involved in potato process contract negotiations.

In 1997, Doug was appointed to the Idaho Potato Commission and served as Chairman in 2003. He currently serves on the IPC Ag Affairs Committee, and continues to be a resource and voice for others in the community.

Doug has been involved in the Idaho Potato Industry for more than 35 years, and has extensive knowledge in the business.

He was raised in Wilder, Idaho, and has been married for 36 years to his wife, Judy (Uranga) Gross. They have two children and two grandchildren.

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2007.

Name: Doug Gross  
Address: PO Box 241~Wilder, ID 83676  
Telephone: 208.482.7206  
Organization you represent (if any): Gross Farms, Inc.

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: 0

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: 0

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.