



News Release

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POTATO GROWERS HOST FARM TOUR FOR EPA STAFFERS

Washington, D.C. – The National Potato Council (NPC) led a delegation of 6 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staff on a tour of Idaho potato fields during the week of August 14. The annual field event, held over 3 days, gives EPA staff the opportunity to see firsthand potato production, discuss pesticide utilization and interact with farmers on the site of their operations. Growers provide employees at EPA an in-depth look at their pesticide stewardship practices and the process of bringing potatoes from field to table. The 2017 tour, which was supported by the Idaho Potato Commission, was held in various locations surrounding Idaho Falls, ID.

"This tour is a unique way for EPA staff to see firsthand how pest management is conducted in real conditions and to better understand the challenges potato growers face on the field every day," said NPC CEO John Keeling, who attended the tour. "We believe it's vitally important for growers and policymakers to have this interaction to increase understanding on both sides."

Participants hailed from EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs, including members of the divisions that handle product registrations and risk management. They witnessed an aerial pesticide application demonstration at Hoff Farm and spoke to growers while touring Raybould Brothers Farm. Britt Raybould, a grower who helped lead that tour, emphasized that the interaction gives "both growers and EPA staff a valuable opportunity to learn from each other. As a grower, I benefit from gaining a better understanding of how to effectively and efficiently use the products we rely on. We appreciate the EPA's willingness to come to the farm."

The program included visits to Wilcox Fresh packing shed and SunRain Potato Varieties. While at the Idahoan Dehydration plant, the group learned about the variety of consumer products being made there. At the University of Idaho Research Center, researchers explained the details of sprout control, variety development and disease and pest management. The event concluded with a tour of Spudnik Equipment Company.

"Scientists and regulatory staff from EPA's Pesticide Program enjoyed the opportunity to visit with Idaho potato growers. The tour was enlightening, giving us a better understanding of the unique challenges of growing potatoes in a desert climate, the significant pests and strategies to combat them and when pesticides are needed. First-hand experiences like this tour are a great help to OPP personnel when

making regulatory decisions about pest management tools,” said participant Kyle Morford, Chemical Review Manager, Office of Pesticide Programs, EPA.



During an aerial pesticide application demonstration at Hoff Farm, pilot Leif Isaacson (second from right) conducted fly-overs to show participants the capabilities of the spray plane. EPA staffers learned how the spray can be carefully controlled so that drift concerns are minimized.

The National Potato Council is the advocate for the economic well-being of U.S. potato growers on federal legislative, regulatory, environmental, and trade issues. NPC supports the U.S. potato industry by monitoring issues affecting the strength and viability of the potato industry, influencing regulators and legislators on issues crucial to the industry's long term success, ensuring fair market access for potatoes and potato products, and bringing the unique issues and interests of diverse growing regions in the U.S. together on a national level.

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