



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Maine's Steve Crane to Serve as NPC's 2012 President

Maine growers Buck, LaJoie and McCrum elected to Board of Directors



Washington, D.C. – At the National Potato Council's (NPC) 2012 Annual Meeting, held January 6-7, 2012, in Orlando, Fla., Steve Crane of Exeter, Maine, was elected to serve as NPC's president for 2012 and to lead the Executive Committee. Maine's Brent Buck (Buck Farms, Chapman), Dominic LaJoie (LaJoie Growers, LLC, Van Buren) and Darrell McCrum (County Super Spuds, Mars Hill), were also elected to serve on NPC's Board of Directors. NPC's leadership is comprised of U.S. potato growers, nominated by their state organizations, and elected by their peers.

Crane is the co-owner of Crane Brothers, Inc., where he and his cousin, Jim Crane, are third generation farmers. Crane Brothers farms approximately 3,000 acres of land, 1,300 acres of which are planted for chipping potatoes, while the rest is dedicated to corn and small grains. The farm was started by Crane's grandfather in the 1950s, passed down to his father and uncle, and it continues to be worked by generations of the Crane family, including Jim's sons, Ryan and Andrew. Crane Brothers has a long history with Frito-Lay, contracting with it since 1962.

Crane became involved with NPC when the farm won the organization's 2002 Environmental Stewardship Award. "I attended NPC's Annual Meeting to receive the award. While I was there, I participated in some of the meetings and became very interested in the council's public policy work. I decided to get more involved to try to help our industry," Crane said.

Crane served on NPC's Board of Directors for two years before being elected to the Executive Committee, where he was Vice President of the Grower and Public Relations Committee as well as the Finance and Office Procedures Committee. Crane also serves on the Maine Potato Seed Board and the Maine Potato Growers Board of Directors, has been a local school board member for 16 years. He and his wife Becky have three children: Megan (21), Chelsea (19) and Matthew (16).

Crane's top policy priorities for the upcoming year include modifying the proposed Women, Infants and Children (WIC) rule that bans participants from using WIC vouchers to purchase fresh white potatoes – the only vegetable excluded from the program.

Referring to the 2011 USDA proposal to limit potatoes in school meals, Crane said, “Last year, our industry was successful in beginning to shift public perception of the role of potatoes in federal feeding programs. Through our research, grassroots and communications efforts, we were able to get the message out that potatoes can be a part of healthful diets. Over the next 12 months, we must seize the opportunity provided by our success on fixing USDA’s school meal plans in order to achieve a similar result on the WIC issue.”

The 2012 Farm Bill will also be an area of significant focus. “Our efforts on the 2012 Farm Bill will be critical if we are to ensure the continuation of long-term pest and disease research funding levels. This funding is important if we are to address new production challenges, whether they are caused by Zebra Chip, late blight or acrylamide,” Crane said.

Other 2012 policy priorities include:

- Increasing interstate truck weight limits to allow growers, packers and shippers to consolidate goods and reduce their number of shipments;
- Ensuring that the rural wireless broadband expansion will coexist with existing GPS technologies;
- Shielding growers from burdensome environmental regulations; and,
- Providing full fresh potato access to the Mexican market.

As president, Crane will host the NPC Summer Meeting being held July 11-13, 2012, in Bar Harbor, Maine.

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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. Potato growers, along with the U.S. potato industry as a whole, directly benefit from involvement in the National Potato Council. 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. The National Potato Council is a voluntary organization supported by quota assessments from state organizations, allied industry memberships and sponsorships, and directly by potato growers through membership dues.