

United Potato of the Klamath Basin Update

I hope everyone's harvest went well this season. If anyone needs any dirt, go by any of our cellars. It's been almost a year since we decided to form UNITED Potato Growers of the Klamath Basin. Since then, many changes have taken place that have benefited the industry.

Membership is the key to the continued success of UNITED. Membership is still expanding around the country with growers from Nebraska and Kansas joining. There are also growers from other areas who are interested and need to be pursued this winter. Canada is setting up a membership very similar to United of America's where each potato growing province is interested in forming a supply management organization.

United of Idaho's leadership from last year's diversion of 7 million cwt. of potatoes helped the Klamath Basin two-fold. It helped push up the average price for last season for those who still had potatoes. Additionally, without the huge carry-over of old crop potatoes from Idaho, the market has been the best since 1995 for September and October.

The 2005 Bid Buy-Down program also provided success. Even though economics played a big part in 2005 acreage reductions, it has been determined that UNITED'S voluntary Bid Buy-Down contributed to 36,400 acres or 54% of all fall acres cut. These cuts are allowing the fresh potato market to be profitable this year. Your \$27 per acre payment has and will help make this a good year for the potato industry.

But as we have said all along, now is the time to see if UNITED can be successful in 2006 after a profitable year. We all know that acreage needs to be controlled again for a positive year. That is why the board will recommend the use the Bid Buy-Down program again this year along with the rest of UNITED. We can tailor the program for our area depending on everyone's point of view and majority acceptance. At our 1st annual meeting, we will spend some time discussing this program.

UNITED of AMERICA has been taking applications for the CEO position. So far I have been impressed by the candidates, but we haven't found that one individual that is needed to run this cooperative. Think about it, anyone who can lead a bunch of potato farmers from all across the USA must really be a special talent. We hope to find a new CEO before the end of the year. UNITED of AMERICA is having the 1st Annual Meeting in Dearborn, Michigan on December 7th. An agenda is available on U of A website at www.unitedpotatousa.com. If you are interested in going give me a call on further details (541-892-5263 cell).

Locally your UNITED board has been meeting monthly. We are scheduling our First Annual Meeting Tuesday, December 13th at 12:00 noon at Mike and Wanda's. We will update you on everything that is going on locally and nationally. **REMEMBER:** This is a grower led cooperative and we need your participation in helping shape the future in the potato industry.

Sincerely,

Ed Staunton