
The logo for UNITED POTATO GROWERS OF AMERICA features the word "UNITED" in large, bold, blue capital letters with a slight shadow effect. It is flanked by stylized red and white stripes that curve upwards and outwards, resembling a banner or wings. Below "UNITED", the words "POTATO GROWERS OF AMERICA" are written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a white background with a blue and red horizontal bar above and below it.

UNITED POTATO GROWERS OF AMERICA

Do Process Growers Need UNITED?

Guest Editorial

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“I don’t see how joining UNITED will ever benefit me?” (*Translation: I don’t need any help, I’m doing great...see my new pickup!*) Many process growers will say this when asked to join UNITED; they try to dismiss any relationship between a strong fresh market and increased contract prices from processors. (*That’s what my field rep tells me, and he’s a great guy...knows a lot too.*)

During a recent United of America meeting held in Salt Lake City, Utah, Bruce Huffaker of `NAPMN presented some historical data that showed a direct relationship of fresh market prices to contract price trends. (*Could that be possible?*) Mr. Huffaker explained that when open prices for fresh potatoes are consistently below contract prices, it is difficult to get fryers to adjust contract values upward. It usually takes two consecutive years of strong fresh market prices to convince processors that the fresh market offers their growers attractive alternatives to their processing contracts. (*How could he know that... has there ever been two good fresh years in a row?*) He stated that when growers have viable options other than the contract being offered, their ability to negotiate increases. (*This might be a good time to grow a few extra spuds for next year-- I know my neighbor is going to cut back, and what are a few more acres going to hurt anyway?*)

While working together to increase negotiation power seems so logical, for individual growers, it is very hard to achieve. This is where UNITED can and does help. One of the major components for price success is information and supply control -- and that is just what UNITED provides. Made up of close to a thousand “independent” growers throughout the United States and Canada, UNITED has created a forum for information gathering and assimilation. (*Who reads all that stuff anyway?... Our customers!*)

In the past, growers seemed to prefer sharing their yield, size, quality, and price goals only with buyers, but heaven forbid they tell their neighbor anything that would resemble the truth. (*Sounds familiar doesn’t it?*) Unfortunately, this has created a very unfavorable negotiating position for process growers. In order for growers to receive a fair return, all growers must work together -- fresh and contract growers alike. Information is power, and if we don’t obtain it ourselves, our customers can and will use it, and us, against each other.

In all seriousness, our customers have not been the problem. The problem lies within our past philosophy of doing business. There are really only a few customers left, whether in the fresh or process market. However, there are *still* many growers and shippers trying to sell to them. It’s time that growers begin to utilize all of our tools, including the Capper-Volsted Act, which provides grower protection against antitrust regulations. In order for us to receive a fair return for our potatoes (and that is all we are asking for), we must learn to work together. So join UNITED and ask how you can participate.

UNITED we stand -- Divided we fall.