Spanish sessions at the University of Idaho Potato Conference — 17 years of success

AT A GLANCE
Spanish-speaking students receive potato production training.

The Situation
In 2000 a small group of Spanish-speaking farm workers began attending the University of Idaho Potato Conference. These farm workers were hired to make day-to-day decisions on the farms and were in need of basic potato production education. Due to language barriers they experienced difficulty in understanding the technical instructions in English. There existed a real need for technical training in Spanish for farm laborers.

Our Response
Workshops covering basic potato production were developed and offered by University of Idaho Extension educators at the University of Idaho Potato Conference from 2001 to 2018. Personnel from the Idaho Department of Agriculture, as well as field managers from the potato industry assisted in the workshops over the years. Workshops included bruise management, soil moisture and irrigation management, insect and disease recognition and management, pesticide safety, drift management and tractor safety.

Program Outcomes
In 2001, 40 Spanish-speaking students attended the Spanish sessions. This number grew steadily to 180 students in 2018. Over the years these students were given pre- and post-tests to evaluate their increase in potato production knowledge. Their average pre-test score over the years was 5.69 percent compared with average post-test scores of 70.33 percent. Student’s behavioral changes were also evaluated over the years. It was found that these students put their learning into practice in meaningful ways. They became more responsible in the areas of pesticide use, irrigation equipment maintenance and other areas.

Farm managers gave input and assisted educators in the development of future lectures. Because of this the
schools were adapted to current needs. Farm managers valued the Spanish sessions and were willing to absorb the costs and effort needed to ensure their farm workers attended potato school each year. Lectures were developed with hands-on learning activities.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Reed Findlay, Extension educator • University of Idaho Extension, Bannock/Bingham counties • 208-236-7310 • rfindlay@uidaho.edu
Wayne B. Jones, Extension educator • University of Idaho Extension, Bonneville County • 208-529-1390 • jones@uidaho.edu

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