Hatch Act

Hatch Act-Supported Agricultural Research in Idaho

The University of Idaho (UI) College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) conducts research critical to Idaho’s agriculture, an important foundation for the state’s economy. CALS is home to the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station, which was founded in 1892 to help the state’s farmers and ranchers benefit from research focused on resolving problems and discovering new opportunities.

Hatch Act funding provided $2,742,323 to support agricultural research at UI in FY15. The 68.6 research FTE positions receiving Hatch Act funding produced 90 journal publications, filed five variety patent applications, received two plant variety patents and generated nearly $31.8 million in research project expenditures. Funding from additional federal, state and other sources totaled $26.3 million.

The college and the experiment station work closely with Idaho’s 17 commodity commissions and a broad range of stakeholder groups from the farming and ranching communities. Experiment station researchers address issues related to yields, production efficiencies, markets and many other facets of crop and animal agriculture.

Background

The Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station was formed and began operations in 1892, using federal appropriations under the Hatch Act. The station began operations before the first classes met at the University of Idaho.

Recent Accomplishments

- UI researchers help Idaho’s potato growers combat pests including the pale cyst nematode, potato virus y and potato psylldis. Psyllids are tiny insects can transmit the bacterium that causes zebra chip, which causes fried potato products to darken and renders them unsaleable.
- An international potato cyst nematode project led by UI seeks to find effective ways to eradicate pale cyst nematodes from Idaho. Researchers also seek to develop nematode-resistant russet potato varieties suitable for Northwest growers and markets.
- CALS researchers won the opening phase of the George Barley Water Prize, a multi-year, $10 million competition sponsored by the Miami-based Everglades Foundation. The prize is intended to attract the world’s best scientific minds to find new solutions to nutrient pollution of vital freshwater supplies and uncontrolled growth of toxic algae that result.
- McDonald’s approved the use of two new potato varieties, the Clearwater russet and the Blazer russet, for use in its french fries. The selection process is rigorous and has implications in the millions of dollars for potato growers in Idaho and elsewhere. The new varieties were produced by the Tri-State Potato Breeding Program. The new varieties reduce growers’ production costs and have enhanced consumer benefits. The Clearwater russet, for example, requires less nitrogen fertilizer and water, reducing costs and environmental impacts, and contains a third more protein than the russet Burbank, which is the gold standard for potato processing qualities but is a century-old variety that is challenging to grow.
Upcoming Goals

- Expand expertise and collaboration focused on plant and animal genomics. A new Genome Editing and Transformation Laboratory is being established in concert with expanded capabilities within the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Enhance genomic investigations to support Idaho’s dairy and sheep industries while providing educational opportunities for students who will pursue careers as scientists and industry leaders.
- Pursue enhanced livestock and rangeland research opportunities through collaboration with The Nature Conservancy and the Wood River Land Trust at Rock Creek Ranch near Hailey, Idaho.
- Generate support and contribute to planning for the Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (CAFE), a $45 million research and education enterprise to support Idaho’s dairy industry, agriculture and the associated food processing industry.

Projected Impact of Continued and Increased Funding

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station contribute to agriculture and society through research that promotes a safe food supply, supports efficient agricultural production and provides healthy foods to consumers at affordable prices while protecting the environment.

Accounts: Agriculture Appropriations, Department of Agriculture, NIFA
FY17 Funding: House $243.7 million; Senate $243.7 million

For more information, please contact:

Janet E. Nelson, Vice President for Research and Economic Development
vpresearch@uidaho.edu  208-885-6689  www.uidaho.edu/research/federal-relations