



Idaho Farm Update

Volume 20, No. 4

May 30, 2008

Northern Idaho

Ornamental tree nurseries in Boundary and Bonner counties still are planting, digging, and sorting trees. In the next couple of weeks most workers will leave. The remaining workers will mostly be weeding and irrigating as the weather becomes drier and hotter. At hops farms in Boundary County, some crews are still putting string along wooden frames to support hop plants while others have started to train young plants along the string frames. By mid-June, stringing and training should be completed. Some crews will leave until harvest begins in mid-August. The rest will be weeding and irrigating. If the weather remains relatively dry, haying may start at lower elevations in a couple of weeks, and some farms will be hiring workers. Most hiring will not occur until harvest in late August. Wages for agricultural workers in northern Idaho typically range between \$7 and \$9.50 per hour.

Southwestern Idaho

Area farms are hiring general farm laborers for tending livestock, spraying weeds and operating farm equipment. Pay ranges from \$6.50 to \$10 an hour. Irrigators are still in demand to move hand lines, siphon tubes and wheel lines at \$7 to \$8.47 an hour. Some farmers pay \$4.85 to \$5.00 per wheel line. The first hay crop will be cut later than last year but is coming up fast. Last year farmers were already cutting hay in late May. Farmers are spraying fields with both fertilizer and herbicide. Recent heavy rains have helped ease the need for irrigation.

South Central Idaho

Some areas are finally seeing the first cutting of hay, which is behind schedule due to cooler temperatures and less sunshine. Fertilizer prices have soared this year so acres of corn, potatoes and beets will likely be down in favor of alfalfa, wheat and beans, which need fewer inputs. All commodities are expected to return favorable prices at or above last year. Cooler, damper weather lessened the need for irrigation in late May, but many producers are hiring irrigators at \$8.50 an hour to change siphon tubes in the Picabo and Wendell areas. Gravity-flow and siphon-tube irrigators are being hired in Twin Falls at \$12 an hour to change pipe twice a day. Turf farm workers are needed in Kimberly at \$8.76 per hour. Permanent general farmworkers in Twin Falls are getting \$12 an hour. The

successful applicant must be skilled in machinery maintenance and repair, fixing and building fences, spraying crops, irrigating and operating equipment.

Southeastern Idaho

Despite cooler-than-normal and moist weather conditions the past two weeks, farmers have their crops planted and livestock moved to summer range. The federal government reports 95 percent of spring wheat has been planted and 81 percent is in good to excellent condition. Potato planting is 95 percent completed, and about 98 percent of sugar beets have emerged. Because of the cooler weather and fewer days of sunshine, alfalfa growth is about two weeks behind schedule and the first cutting, which should begin in about two weeks. There is good demand for irrigators and general labor to help with fencing and equipment work. Operators throughout the area are paying farmworkers and general labor \$7 to \$8.76 an hour. Equipment operators and truck drivers are being paid \$7.75 to \$12 per hour depending on experience and the type of equipment being operated.

East Central Idaho

Planting is complete thanks to good, warm weather before the last week of constant rains that idled irrigators. The fields are greening up nicely, and potato plants should be visible within a week. Current demand for workers includes shepherders at \$750 per month plus room and board, farm laborers and irrigators at \$6.50 to \$9 per hour, ranch hands at \$8 an hour or \$1,200 a month plus housing and equipment and tractor operators at \$7.50 per hour.



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