

MINUTES  
**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Tuesday, February 08, 2022
- TIME:** 8:00 A.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW53
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Burtenshaw, Vice Chairman Bayer, Senators Patrick, Den Hartog, Blair (Johnson), Zito, Nelson, and Semmelroth
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Ricks
- NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.
- CONVENED:** **Chairman Burtenshaw** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.
- WELCOME:** **Chairman Burtenshaw** welcomed the University of Idaho Agricultural Economics Public Policy Tour to the Committee.
- PRESENTATION:** **Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture, 2021.** **Dr. Garth Taylor**, Economist, University of Idaho, introduced himself and his co-authors, Dr. Rita Du and Ben Eborn, to the Committee. **Dr. Taylor** gave an overview of statistics pertaining to Idaho farm incomes, exports, gross domestic product (GDP), and employment (see Attachment 1). He discussed factors influencing the 2022 agriculture industry forecast.
- DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Bayer** asked about the impact on farm income by the loss of farm land to development. **Dr. Taylor** responded that farm income rose because of price increases. He observed that a very small amount of total agricultural land is lost. He added that dairy herds are growing despite less acreage. **Dr. Taylor** noted that high value crops such as hops, mint, and seed are entering the Treasure Valley market. He said he expects that trend to continue.
- Chairman Burtenshaw** asked Dr. Taylor to explain GDP. **Dr. Taylor** replied that a better term is "value added," or the increased return after paying for seed and fertilizer. He said GDP is comparable across industries. He observed that technology and innovation help increase GDP.
- INTRODUCTION:** **Chairman Burtenshaw** recognized Rudy Soto, newly appointed Idaho Director for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development. **Director Soto** gave a brief overview of his background and experience. He described the history and mission of USDA Rural Development.
- PRESENTATION:** **Precision Agriculture: A Practical Overview.** **Senator Robert Blair**, District 6, explained the various ways he uses technology to operate his farming business more efficiently (see Attachment 2). **Senator Blair** described his research to develop new technology to improve farming sustainability.
- ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Burtenshaw** adjourned the meeting at 8:58 a.m.

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Senator Burtenshaw  
Chair

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Jeanne Jackson-Heim  
Secretary