COLLEGE—UI CALS celebrates a century of research while battling new crop threats

POTATO PRODUCERS—who for the first time in 2011 faced prospects that a tuber disease called Zebra chip might affect their crop’s value—benefitted. So did refugee farmers in the Treasure Valley.

The Aberdeen Research and Extension Center celebrated its centennial, as is UI Extension 4-H Youth Development this year. These efforts reflect hard work by students, researchers, staff, and faculty from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) and University of Idaho Extension.

Zebra chip poses no health issues for consumers. But the insect-borne virus can cause dark bands to appear in potato chips and French fries, reducing their appeal and value. After discovering it in the Magic Valley in 2011, CALS scientists worked with growers, the Idaho Potato Commission, and Idaho State Department of Agriculture to determine Zebra chip’s potential threat. More monitoring and management strategies are underway.

Student interns spent their summer working with the Idaho Office for Refugees in Boise helping market gardeners grow and sell their crops in the Treasure Valley.

Corn maze lessons. Farther north, students gained valuable experience operating a growing business in a partnership with the Lewiston Roundup Association and Kaufman Farms of Lewiston at the popular Clearwater Corn Maze. Attendance during the maze’s second year grew nearly 20 percent, and proceeds netted nearly $20,000 for student club activities and scholarships.

Finding students jobs. CALS’ innovative student programs office will pioneer another route to network students and communities during spring break with a bus tour. Plans call for students to visit Boise, Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, Salmon, and Coeur d’Alene to meet with potential employers and learn about internships during the March trip.

Happy 100, 4-H & Aberdeen R&E! Today’s students draw upon a rich heritage of the college’s involvement across the state. One example is the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program that took root a century ago with boys’ and girls’ clubs. They evolved into 4-H, noted for helping young people gain interest in science, leadership, citizenship, and other important skills.

Also, in July, some 500 well-wishers joined UI’s Aberdeen Research and Extension Center faculty and staff in celebrating a 100-year history of agricultural innovation. Now a key location for the USDA scientists and crucial small grains research. The center began when community leaders invested their time and money in the college’s agricultural research that still benefits their community and state.

Bumper profits projected for 2011 Idaho ag reflecting its importance to Idaho’s economy

Idaho’s farmers and ranchers posted a record year in 2011 with a projected $7.4 billion in cash receipts, up 29% from the previous year, according to University of Idaho Extension economists in The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2011 projections.

 Agricultural producers’ net farm income in 2011 fared even better, soaring 88% more than in 2010 to $2.6 billion, according to UI Extension economists Ben Eborn, Paul Patterson, and Garth Taylor.

“This annual report shows the strength and diversity of Idaho agriculture and its importance to the state’s economy,” said CALS Dean John Hammel.

Both cash receipts and net income beat Idaho’s record set in 1974. Cash receipts rose 68% above the 42-year average. Net farm income of $2.64 billion was 93% above the 10-year average.

 The livestock industry yielded $4.06 billion in projected cash receipts with dairy producers leading the way at nearly $2.5 billion, a 28% increase over 2010. Cattle and calves followed closely with $1.47 billion, up 23% over 2010.

 Crops generated $3.32 billion in cash receipts, a 33% increase from 2010, according to the projections. Potato sales led the way with $912 million, up 32%. Wheat followed with $766 million, up 42%. Hay sales ranked third with $665 in projected cash receipts, a whopping 70% jump from 2010.

4-H renews science focus in 100th year

MORE AT www.uidaho.edu/extension/4h

AS IDAHO’S CHILDREN face more opportunities (and distractions) than ever, University of Idaho Extension’s 4-H Youth Development Program launches its second century in 2012 with even more focus on encouraging youthful engagement with science.

National 4-H has always been about science. As our nation faces shortages in people with engineering and math skills, 4-H bumps those interests to top priorities and is striving to recruit future scientists through their after-school programs and summer camps, as well as through 4-H club programs.

“Our many programs include dozens of great science curricula,” says Tim Ewers, who co-leads 4-H science programs in Idaho with Carrie Stark. Both are Moscow-based UI Extension 4-H youth specialists.

“What we need are more volunteers with skills to guide them,” says Ewers. He pours much of his energy into K-12 robotics-building programs and competitions to make math and science more engaging and, hopefully, “as fun as sports.”

“We’re refocusing science principles back into all 4-H animal science projects, too,” adds Stark. Animal projects remain popular, with more than 9,200 Idaho youth entering animals they raised in 2011 county fair competitions.

“Science, for them, includes learning about genetics, diseases, and reproduction, as well as animal husbandry,” said Stark.

DID YOU KNOW?

$22 MILLION

Amount of grants and contracts secured by CALS and UI Extension faculty in 2011 to help Idaho solve problems—from crop pests to building businesses—and stretching food dollars.

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND LIFE SCIENCES OVERVIEW 2011