Idaho agriculture’s strong economic showing mirrors college’s collaborations, outreach

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IDAHO AGRICULTURE wasn’t the only economic winner in 2012. The year had its upside, too, for the University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) in new partnerships and professional recognition.

In July, Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station Director Donn Thill emceed a celebration of a collaborative wheat research and breeding agreement between the college and Limagrain Cereal Seeds. The pact unites the strength of one of the world’s largest seed companies and the college’s resources and expertise to help Idaho growers.

Both the Limagrain Cereal Seeds initiative and an earlier $2 million Idaho Wheat Commission initiative also will help the college bolster its education efforts to train agricultural professionals.

Entomologist Nilsa Bosque-Perez embodied both research and teaching expertise. The American Association for the Advancement of Science selected her as a fellow, the university’s seventh researcher so honored. Two students in the international doctoral studies program she directs won prestigious Borlaug Fellowships.

Elsewhere, CALS supported Idaho agriculture by helping growers battle zebra chip, bacterial ring rot, and potato virus y. Cattle specialists held workshops to help producers cope with higher feed prices.

A big change for the college came when nine-year veteran Dean John Hammel chose to return to teaching and research. Agricultural economist John Foltz, who has served for eight years as the college’s associate dean for academics, will serve as interim dean.

2012 cash receipts, net income rise 5 percent


ECONOMIC DATA show 2012 was a year to celebrate for Idaho agriculture, according to the “Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2012.”

The report by University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences economists projected cash receipts from Idaho crops and livestock for farmers and ranchers set a record of $7.7 billion.

Receipts gained 5 percent, nearly $400 million, from 2011 projections. Idaho ranks as the West’s fourth largest agricultural state.

The report also projected the third consecutive year of gains for net farm income. It rose 5 percent, reflecting that strong crop and livestock prices outstripped the rising expenses agricultural producers faced.

“The report shows the strength of Idaho agriculture and its importance to the state,” said John Foltz, CALS interim dean.

Milk again rose to the top of Idaho agriculture’s money leaders, generating $2.4 billion. Cattle and calf sales generated $1.7 billion.

Livestock receipts overall rose 8 percent to $4.3 billion and represented slightly more than half, 56 percent, of the state’s cash receipts. Crops generated $3.4 billion, a 2 percent increase.

Idaho’s top five crops included: potatoes, $957 million; wheat, $796 million; hay, $526 million; sugar beets, $355 million; and barley, $306 million.

Statewide presence reflects land-grant university mission

THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO and its College of Agricultural and Life Sciences demonstrate the breadth and reach of the land-grant university’s teaching, research and extension mission.

The college and its associated Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station and University of Idaho Extension provide educational and research programs statewide and employ more than 300 faculty and staff.

The college’s undergraduate enrollment totalled 1,031 last fall, buoyed by large freshman and senior classes.

The Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station began operations in 1892 and oversees research at research and extension centers at Moscow, Aberdeen, Tetonia, Idaho Falls, Kimberly, Twin Falls, Caldwell, Parma, and Salmon.

University of Idaho Extension faculty offer programs statewide through county, state and federal funding. District offices are located in Coeur d’Alene, Caldwell and Idaho Falls. Extension’s 4-H Youth Development Program last year enlisted 4,000 volunteers to serve 38,000 youth.