



Idaho Barley joins National Barley Improvement Committee in D.C. to advocate for Barley Research Funding

The National Barley Improvement Committee (NBIC), which represents the U.S. barley community of growers, researchers, processors, users, and allied industries, completed its first fully in-person trip to Washington D.C. since 2020 in March. Four Idaho barley industry representatives joined the team of over 30 barley enthusiasts from across the country who completed over 90 Hill visits advocating on behalf of federal research funding for the barley industry. Participating from Idaho were Mike Wilkins, Idaho Barley Commission Chairman; Laura Wilder, Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director; Dr. Juliet Marshall, University of Idaho Plant Sciences Department Head and Endowed Research Professor, Cereals Pathology and Agronomy; and JC Olson, Program Manager for Scoular based in Twin Falls.

NBIC’s priority ask sought an increase to the appropriation for the Barley Pest Initiative (BPI). The BPI is an effort to strengthen research capacity to address over 20 insects and diseases that impact barley yield and quality through development of new resistant varieties



New NBIC member JC Olson of Scoular based in Twin Falls, provided an invaluable industry perspective while visiting key Idaho Congressional offices.

and management strategies. In the most recent spending bill, the BPI received \$3 million in support, but the NBIC team is actively working to secure an additional \$2.3 million to bring the total in FY24 to \$5.3 million annually. Already, in just two years of partial funding, the researchers working on the BPI have made great progress. You can read more about this work on the American Malting Barley Association website at www.ambainc.org.

Coming off a successful hybrid fly-in in 2022, the NBIC team wanted to get their members back into Congress, especially given so many new Congressional members that had not been exposed to the Barley Pest Initiative. The reopening of buildings and offices was welcomed and allowed for a nice mix of NBIC veterans and many new members to interact and engage in advocacy efforts. In addition to the BPI, support was also vocalized for other initiatives and agencies within the USDA that are critical to the barley industry as outlined in their legislative priorities.

“There was great energy in D.C., both from our NBIC members and throughout the halls of Congress,” said Ashley McFarland, who serves as executive secretary of the NBIC. “Although I’m grateful for the virtu-



Idaho barley representatives participating in National Barley Improvement Committee hill visits in Washington D.C in March. (L to R) JC Olson, Scoular; Dr. Juliet Marshall, University of Idaho; Laura Wilder, Idaho Barley Commission; and Mike Wilkins, Idaho Barley Commission Chairman.



al options we had to interact with Congress over the past few years, there's nothing like being on the Hill and engaging in the process of advocating for your industry in-person."

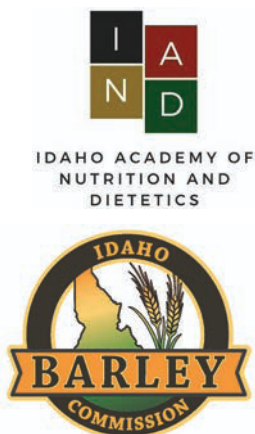
The work of the NBIC seeks to secure both funding and favorable agricultural policies at the federal level. In recent history, its work has focused on the dominant end use of barley for malting purposes, although increased interest in barley as a pet and human food ingredient prompted the addition of two new members that will represent their respective industries including JC Olson of Scoular. JC's participation in NBIC's hill visits in March provided an invaluable industry perspective while visiting key Idaho Congressional offices. ■



Idaho Barley Commission Chairman Mike Wilkins of Rupert, discusses federal barley research funding priorities with congressional staff during the National Barley Improvement Committee's March advocacy efforts.

Idaho Barley Commission Presented 2023 Gem Award by Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

The Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics honored the Idaho Barley Commission during their annual meeting in Boise in April with the Gem Award. The Gem Award recognizes nonmembers of the Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that have promoted and/or encouraged good health, emphasizing sound nutrition habits through efforts to educate the public. Recipients of this award are selected for their contributions to the mission and vision of the Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.



The Academy recognized IBC for ongoing support and contributions to their members. The Academy specifically called out the value to their organization and members from IBC's financial support for speakers at their annual meetings.

The Academy noted they were especially grateful for the sponsorship of the following annual three presentations and speakers which provided excellent knowledge and value for their members:



The Idaho Barley Commission was presented the Gem Award by the Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at their annual meeting. IBC Chairman Mike Wilkins, right, and IBC consultant Liz Wilder, left, received the award for the Commission from Charlene Byington, Past President and Awards Chair for the Academy.

- 2019 – Cardioprotective Dietary Patterns – Review of the Current Scientific Evidence and Tips for Practical Application | Carol Kirkpatrick, PhD, MPH, RDN, CLS, FNLA, Pocatello, Idaho

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Idaho dietitians enjoyed the opportunity to ask questions about farming during round table chat with IBC Chairman Mike Wilkins.

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- 2022 – Grains and Your Inner Ecosystem: Refreshing Updates on How Grain-Based Dietary Fibers Influence Cardiometabolic Health | Corie Whisner, PhD, Phoenix, Arizona
- 2023 – Diet-Microbiota Connections to Health | Hannah Holscher, PhD, RDN, Urbana, Illinois

Besides supporting presentations and speakers that discuss the benefits of consuming whole grains, including food barley, IBC has been a regular annual meeting trade show exhibitor with samples and information about food barley, as well as other meeting involvement.

At this year’s annual meeting, IBC hosted a table during the round table lunch with the topic being, “Ask A Farmer.” IBC chairman Mike Wilkins, and IBC Food Barley and Communications Consultant Liz Wilder, participated and entertained questions from the attendees on farming practices, as well as preparation and nutritional qualities of food barley. The session was a hit and facilitated good discussion with accurate information to help clear up misperceptions about farming practices. Wilkins is now a “celebrity farmer.”



IBC Chairman Mike Wilkins of Rupert talked farming with Idaho dietitians during their annual meeting “Ask a Farmer” round table session.

IBC uses Idaho grower dollars to partner with health influencers like dietitians and the Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to provide information and resources on food barley and help strengthen marketing opportunities for Idaho growers. ■