

USDA report shows Idaho farmers' planting intentions

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POCATELLO – According to a USDA survey, Idaho farmers intend to plant a little more wheat and hay in 2022 and a little less barley, sugar beets and corn.

The survey also shows Idaho farmers plan to significantly reduce the amount of chickpeas and dry beans they plant in 2022.

The National Agricultural Statistic Service's Prospective Plantings Report, released March 31, is the first early season estimate of what farmers plan to plant this year.

NASS' June 30 Crop Acreage report is more accurate because it's based on actual plantings while the prospective plantings report is based on growers' planting intentions.

But the March 31 report does offer an early glimpse of what farmers intend to plant in 2022 and the report shows no signs that Idaho or U.S. farmers plan to leave a significant number of fields fallow this year due to much higher farm input costs.

The report shows Idaho farmers intend to plant a total of 4.01 million acres of principal crops in 2022, in line with the 4.04 million acres planted in the state in 2021.

Nationwide, U.S. farmers plan to plant 317.4 million acres of principal crops this year, up slightly from 317.2 million acres planted last year.

The surveys for NASS' 2022 planting intentions report was conducted during the first two weeks of March from a sample of nearly 73,000 farm operators across the United States.

Approximately 1,900 Idaho producers were surveyed.

The report shows that Idaho farmers intend to plant 1.265 million acres of wheat during the 2022 growing season, up slightly from 1.227 million acres last year.

The report shows that Idaho farmers expect to harvest 1.26 million acres of hay in 2022, up slightly from 1.24 million acres last year.

The report estimates Idaho farmers will plant 510,000 acres of barley in 2022, down 2 percent from 520,000 acres in 2021.

Idaho leads the nation in total barley production.

Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director Laura Wilder said the prospective plantings report tends to conservatively estimate Idaho barley acres and based on conversations with industry leaders, she expects Idaho barley acres to actually increase this year.

“I believe the (NASS) numbers are low and that we will be 5-10 percent above where those estimates are,” she said.

When the surveys were being conducted for the report, Wilder said, many farmers were still making final planting decisions and those decisions in Idaho largely come down to water availability and fertilizer costs.

Farmers in Idaho’s main barley growing regions had not received letters from their canal companies informing them of how much water to expect when the surveys were being conducted and since that time, it has become apparent most farmers in Idaho will have less water than normal this year, Wilder said.

Plus, she added, fertilizer prices are significantly higher this year.

Compared with a lot of the other major crops grown in Idaho, “Barley is a good choice this year because it requires less water and fertilizer than those other crops,” Wilder said.

“We need to keep in mind that this is an early season estimate,” she added. “We’ll have a lot better information when the June report comes out.”

The NASS report estimates that Idaho farmers intend to plant 58,000 acres of chickpeas, also known as garbanzo beans, in 2022, which would be a 27 percent decrease compared with the 79,000 acres planted in 2021.

Idaho ranks second in the nation in chickpea production, behind Washington, and most of the state’s crop is grown in North Idaho.

Dirk Hammond, manager of George F. Brocke and Sons, which processes garbanzo beans, peas and lentils in Kendrick, expects Idaho chickpea acres to be down 20-25 percent this year.

Most of those lost chickpea acres will go into spring wheat because of much higher wheat prices, he said, and some of the lost chickpea acres will also be planted to canola because prices for that crop are up 30-35 percent compared with last year.

“That’s where a lot of those chickpea acres are going – to spring wheat and canola,” Hammond said.

He said the chickpea market is quiet right now due to supply chain issues linked to the congestion at West Coast ports.

“They’re all plugged. It’s difficult for us to get new bookings to guarantee shipments,” Hammond said. “Buyers are sitting on the sidelines until the congestion gets taken care of. It’s an absolute mess.”

NASS expects chickpea acres nationwide to decrease 18 percent, from 369,000 acres last year to 304,000 acres this year.

According to the NASS report, Idaho farmers plan to plant 350,000 acres of corn in 2022, down 8 percent from 380,000 last year.

Idaho producers intend to plant 170,000 acres of sugar beets, down 1 percent from last year’s 172,000-acre total.

Idaho dry bean acres are expected to total 47,000 in 2022, down 19 percent from 58,000 last year, and dry edible pea acres are expected to total 37,000 acres in 2022, up 28 percent from 29,000 last year.

Based on the NASS survey, Idaho farmers intend to plant 35,000 acres of oats in 2022, down 30 percent from 50,000 last year.

Lentil acres in Idaho are expected to remain level at 20,000.

Estimates for Idaho’s most iconic product – potatoes – won’t be released until June. Idaho potato acres typically hover a little above 300,000.

Idaho leads the United States in potato production – the state’s farmers produce a third of the nation’s total potato crop – and the June potato acreage estimate will be closely watched by industry.

The NASS prospective plantings survey shows that U.S. farmers intend to plant a record 91 million acres of soybeans in 2022, up 4 percent from last year. U.S. farmers also plan to plant 89.5 million acres of corn, down 4 percent from last year.

Total wheat acres in the U.S. for 2022 are estimated at 47.4 million, up 1 percent from 2021 but, according to NASS, this would represent the fifth lowest all wheat planted area since records began in 1919.

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