

Idaho ag export value up 2 percent in first half of 2022

By Sean Ellis

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POCATELLO – During the first six months of 2022, the total value of Idaho agricultural exports increased 2 percent compared with the same period last year.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, Idaho set a record for total agricultural export value in 2021, at \$1.02 billion.

Laura Johnson, who manages the Idaho State Department of Agriculture’s marketing division, said Idaho’s first-half ag export value numbers were pretty good considering last year was a record year.

“It may ‘only’ be up 2 percent but that’s a really good performance considering last year was a record,” she said.

According to the Census Bureau data, \$544 million worth of farm products from Idaho were sold to other countries during the first half of 2022, up from \$532 million during the same period in 2021.

Soaring inflation and higher ag commodity prices had a lot to do with that number being up from last year but that total would be even higher if not for the ongoing supply chain disruptions, such as the container situation at West Coast ports, Johnson said.

“Our exports are still being hampered by the container situation at the ports,” she said. “Our exports could be stronger if our transportation infrastructure was working more effectively.”

A strong U.S. dollar also is a current headwind for U.S. exports since that makes U.S. products less competitive on the global marketplace.

Another factor that prevented Idaho’s ag export value total from being even higher during the first six months of 2022 was the lingering impact of last year’s severe drought in the state, which kept yields of most crops well below average and resulted in less total production for many of the state’s main crops, including wheat, barley and potatoes.

The recent Census Bureau data shows less barley and wheat from Idaho was exported during the first half of the year.

Idaho is the nation’s No. 1 barley producing state.

The tight barley supply that resulted from last year's harsh growing climate "necessitated keeping more barley at home," said Idaho Barley Commission Executive Director Laura Wilder. "There wasn't (as much) for export. It was needed here."

Idaho's 2022 barley crop is looking much better, she added.

"We're optimistic about this year's barley crop," Wilder said. "I'm hearing of record yields in some areas, the quality looks good and we have more acres this year. It's shaping up to be a good crop."

During the first half of 2022, Canada remained the No. 1 destination for Idaho agricultural products, as \$182 million worth of farm products from the state were sold there, a 6 percent increase over the same period last year.

Mexico was the No. 2 destination at \$73 million, a 33 percent decrease from last year's total. A lot of that decrease had to do with less barley malt from Idaho being sold there.

China ranked No. 3 at \$49 million, a 35 percent increase over last year, Japan was No. 4 (\$30 million, 14 percent increase) and South Korea was No. 5 (\$29 million, 19 percent increase).

During the first half of 2022, dairy was the state's top agricultural export. A total of \$210 million worth of dairy products from Idaho were exported during the first half of the year, a 33 percent increase over the same period last year.

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