

# Idaho's 2nd district a farming powerhouse

By Sean Ellis

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Idaho's 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District is a national powerhouse when it comes to agriculture.

The state's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District is also big in agriculture but the 2<sup>nd</sup> district is one of the nation's mega districts when it comes to agriculture production.

Idaho has two congressional districts.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> district includes all of Eastern Idaho and extends southwest and includes much of Boise city limits. It is represented by Rep. Mike Simpson.

The Republican congressman appreciates the huge role agriculture plays in the district and state, said Lexi Hamel, Simpson's communications director.

"We're a very, very ag-heavy office," she told Idaho Farm Bureau Federation recently for this story. "Even today, we were in a meeting and he was talking about dairy and how big it is in Idaho."

Simpson is very much aware that agriculture is a big chunk of the state's economy, as well as its way of life, she said.

"Idaho's ag industry is truly remarkable and that's something Mr. Simpson says all the time," Hamel said. "Mr. Simpson is an avid advocate for Idaho agriculture."

According to a University of Idaho study, agriculture was responsible for \$37.5 billion in sales, or 17 percent of the state's total economic output, in 2022.

It was also responsible for one in every nine jobs in Idaho and 13 percent of the state's total gross state product.

A sizable chunk of that economic output is due to the 11,825 farms located in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District.

According to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, \$8.5 billion worth of farm-gate revenue was generated by farmers in that district in 2022.

That ranked the district No. 11 overall among the nation's 435 congressional districts in total farm-gate revenue.

The 2nd district also ranked very high nationally in several separate agriculture categories.

At \$2.85 billion, the district ranked No. 2 nationally in total value of sales of milk in 2022, according to NASS.

With 561,000 milk cows in the 2<sup>nd</sup> district in 2022, the dairy industry played a major role in the district's overall ag sales ranking. But other commodities also did their part.

At \$1.02 billion, the district ranked No. 2 in total value of sales in a category that included hay production.

The second district ranked No. 3 in the nation in barley acreage, with 509,000 acres in 2022. The 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District ranked No. 9 in that category with 29,000 acres.

Idaho leads the nation in total barley production because farmers in the state achieve much higher barley yields than farmers in other major barley producing states.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> district ranked No. 4 in the nation in total sales in a category labeled "vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes," with \$1.39 billion in sales in 2022.

That ranking was achieved largely because of the huge amount of potato acreage in the state's second district.

Idaho is the nation's top potato-producing state.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> district ranked No. 3 and the 1<sup>st</sup> district ranked No. 9 in sugar beet acres, though NASS did not provide acreage numbers for those districts to protect producers' privacy.

With 1.06 million acres, the second district ranked No. 7 nationally in 2022 in land used for all hay production.

It ranked No. 10 in total value of cattle and calves, at \$1.6 billion in 2022, and was also No. 10 in total sales of livestock and poultry, at \$4.9 billion.

With \$62.3 million in sales, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District ranked No. 9 in the nation in the aquaculture category.

The district ranked No. 11 in the nation in wheat acreage, with 708,000 acres in 2022.

With \$158 million in total sales, the 2<sup>nd</sup> district ranked No 14 nationally in sales of organically produced commodities.

The average size of a farm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> district was 631 acres in 2022, larger than the statewide average of 505 acres.

The state's 1st Congressional District also swings a big stick when it comes to agriculture.

There were \$2.4 billion worth of ag commodities sold in Idaho's 1st Congressional District in 2022, ranking it No. 65 in the nation in that category.

The district includes the norther portion of the state and a good chunk of the southern part as well. It includes Meridian and Eagle and part of Boise.

Agriculture plays a major role in that district also, as Rep. Russ Fulcher, who represents it, knows very well, said Marisa Melton, the congressman's communications director.

Fulcher is a fourth-generation dairy farmer.

"Agriculture is huge for him," Melton said.

NASS data shows there were 11,052 farms in that district in 2022 and 4 million acres of land in farming.

The 1<sup>st</sup> district ranked No. 9 nationally in the "other crops and hay" category, No. 24 in milk sales, and No. 26 in a category that includes sheep and goats.

"As a fourth-generation Idahoan who grew up on a dairy farm, I am incredibly thankful for all the hard-working farmers, ranchers and producers who feed and fuel our nation," Fulcher told IFBF.

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