



## Oregon Potato Commission

# Newsletter

### POTATOES HIGHLIGHT PACIFIC NORTHWEST TRADE MISSION TO ASIA

For the third time in five years, the directors of agriculture in Oregon and Washington teamed up to help promote Pacific Northwest potatoes to growing markets in Southeast Asia. The 10-day trade mission included Katy Coba of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Bud Hover of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the potato commissions from both states. They held informative presentations and conducted government meetings in the Philippines and Vietnam in an effort to expand opportunities.

“It’s all about the continued effort to tap the market potential of Oregon agriculture in the Philippines and Vietnam,” says Coba. “We have paired up with our neighbors to the north before with great results. Having that dual presence makes the mission more impactful. So much of what we grow in both states is similar. We are just basically separated by a big river—the Columbia.”

The first joint trade mission in 2009 took the Oregon-Washington delegation to the Philippines, Taiwan, and Macau. In 2011, the destination was Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

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### GROWERS HAVE THE TASTE OF YOUR POTATOES EVALUATED BY PRO CHEFS OREGON

Entries are due December 8, 2014 for the 4th Annual Oregon Gold Medal Awards with Potatoes Goodness Unearthed. All entries include 5 pounds of fresh potatoes delivered to the OPC office at 9320 SW Barbur Blvd. Suite 130, Portland, OR 97219, in person or by UPS/FedEx.



Professional tasters are called upon from the chapter of the ACF Chefs de Cuisine Society of Oregon (AKA Pro Chefs Oregon) and the judging takes place in the professional kitchens of le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Portland.

All the potatoes will be prepared in a simple manner according to the variety submitted. Criteria for winners are based on: appearance in raw form, aroma after cooked and cut up, taste and texture. Judges are not informed of where in Oregon the potatoes are grown. No condiments are allowed and only non-carbonated water to wet the palate is permitted.

The winners will be announced at the Oregon and Washington Potato Conference in January. If you haven’t received your entry application contact the OPC office 503-239-4763. Only Oregon grown potatoes are eligible for entry.



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**USPB Long Range Planning Meeting**

Oregon  
**POTATOES**

## 2015 WA-OR POTATO CONFERENCE

# January 27, 28 & 29

THREE RIVERS CONVENTION CENTER

7016 W Grandridge Blvd Kennewick, WA 99336

[www.threeriversconventioncenter.com](http://www.threeriversconventioncenter.com)

### MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATIONS NOW

Red Lion, Kennewick, (509) 783-0611; Conference Rate Code: Washington Oregon Potato Conference; [www.redlion.rdl.com](http://www.redlion.rdl.com)

Red Lion, Pasco, (509) 547-0701; Conference Rate Code: Washington Oregon Potato Conference; [www.redlion.rdl.com](http://www.redlion.rdl.com)

Hilton Garden Inn, Kennewick, (509) 735-4600; Conference Rate Code: Washington Oregon Potato Conference

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#### *Pacific Northwest Trade continued*

Even though potatoes were the main entrée of this mission, representatives of Oregon's onion and blueberry industries were also a part of the delegation.

Officials from the two states met with several high level government officials in both countries and discussed not only opportunities, but challenges that need to be overcome so that both Oregon and Washington can export more products into these key markets. That includes opportunities for reduced tariffs and elimination of non-tariff barriers on US products. Funds allocated through USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program included money for the trade mission to Asia. For the Pacific Northwest potato, the hope is that a premium spud can bring a premium price.

Oregon shipped 7,780 metric tons of fresh potatoes to the Philippines between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. That is more than 72 percent of all potatoes shipped from the US to the Philippines over that same time frame. Access to the Philippines for processed potatoes was granted about the time the first bi-state trade mission took place in 2009. Access for fresh potatoes was granted only last year. Vietnam has started slow but is filled with potential. Two containers of US potatoes were shipped to Vietnam in 2012— both from Oregon. In 2013, that number had grown to 16 containers, with 14 coming from Oregon— approximately 350 metric tons. High hopes for even more potatoes this year have been

tempered by competition with lower priced imports from other countries.

“Oregon and Washington State are perfectly positioned with product and location to supply the Pacific Rim with fresh potatoes,” says Bill Brewer, President CEO of the Oregon Potato Commission. “The major challenges in these markets include high tariffs, competition from cheap product, inferior product, and imports from countries without tariffs. The US product must also be promoted and advertised, so the consumer understands the many uses and great taste available.”

Consumers in both the Philippines and Vietnam are very interested in Pacific Northwest potato varieties. In most cases they have never seen the type of potatoes Americans grow and consume. Customary potato uses are different, so methods of preparation are important to be demonstrated. Award-winning Oregon chef Leif Benson, a veteran of trade missions to Asia, was once again on hand to conduct cooking demonstrations for representatives of restaurants, wholesalers, retailers, and the culinary community in both countries.

“Chef Leif Benson has been very important to the introduction of our potato products in every country we have visited,” says Brewer. “He not only brings a life long history of very practical uses of potatoes, but some of the most unique preparation methods anywhere in the world.”

Chef Benson prepared food for an audience in Manila that included several high-end restaurant chefs. Similar seminars were held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City directed at a Vietnamese culinary school students who desire to be on the cutting edge of new food presentations.



*Chef Benson signing autographs in Vietnam*

“Visual demonstrations are important,” says Benson. “Our audience likes seeing things they can experience themselves, including a potato's taste and texture. You can't taste a container of potatoes on a ship.”

The trade mission included exploratory meetings involving the Oregon Blueberry Commission, which is interested

in getting new markets opened for fresh product. Oregon onions were also represented with the hope of increasing sales in the Philippines— where a small amount is currently exported— and gaining access to the Vietnamese market.



Relationship building continues to be a key for all Asian markets. The Philippines and Vietnam are no exception. Multiple visits to those markets reinforce the value of trade relations.

“In Asia, the presence of our growers is important,” says Coba. “Having the presence of state government in partnership with the industry is even more impressive. Government participation can open critical doors for the industry and be an important part of the negotiations for reducing trade barriers. The industry commitment to display and demonstrate the product completes that great partnership and creates success.”

The agenda in the Philippines included a meeting of directors Coba and Hover with US Ambassador Philip Goldberg. There also was a high level meeting with the Philippine equivalent of USDA’s Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. One topic of discussion— reducing barriers for Oregon commodities that face phytosanitary burdens such as required fumigation for Oregon Christmas trees, which decreases shelf life and adds cost to Philippine consumers.

As is the case with all trade missions, measurable results of the trip— including sales— may not be known for months, if not years. But having two states once again send their agriculture directors and marketing staff— not to mention key industry folks— should pay off in both the short term and the long run.

*Courtesy of Bruce Pokarney ODA*

**Joe Howard will be representing Oregon at the 2015 Potato Industry Leadership Institute**

## **OREGON GROWER DINNER AND LONG RANGE PLANNING MEETING** **JANUARY 28, 2015**

Blair Richardson, President CEO of the U S Potato Board wants to engage as many growers as possible in the USPB FY17-FY21 long range Planning process. To achieve this objective, all Oregon Growers are invited to a Dinner Meeting January 28, 2015 in Kennewick Washington. The restaurant requires a somewhat accurate head count so it is important to RSVP before January 19th.

“Our goal is to engage as many growers/grower leaders as possible, while minimizing logistics and travel costs” states Blair Richardson in an industry email trying to arrange as many meetings within annual winter meetings and trade shows as possible.

**RSVP 503-239-4763 before January 19th.** If you call in on evenings and weekends, please leave your name, whether or not you are attending the meeting and a phone number you can be reached on the OPC voice mail.

## **KLAMATH BASIN POTATO FESTIVAL** **RECENTLY DESIGNATED AN** **OREGON HERITAGE TRADITION**

The 77-year-old festival held October in Merrill, Oregon was honored by the Oregon Heritage Commission because the tradition helps define the state; it is a distinguished event that is part of Oregon’s heritage, according to David Lewis, the commission’s chair.

The 2014 festival included a parade, football games, a barbecue, live music, bed races and exhibits. In leaner years during WWII the festival was down-sized to a dance with proceeds going to charity. An Oregon Heritage Tradition event must be in continuous operation for more than 50 years, demonstrate a public profile and a reputation that distinguishes it from more routine events.

The Klamath Basin Potato Festival is the 11th event designated as an Oregon Heritage Tradition. The others include the Oregon State Fair, the Pendleton Round-Up, the Cannon Beach Sandcastle Contest and the Linn County Pioneer Picnic. *Courtesy of Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept*

**Phone: (503) 239-4763**

**Fax: (503) 245-5524**

Upcoming Events

December 8, 2015	Deadline for Potatoes Goodness Unearthed Best 2014 Potato Contest Entries
January 7-9, 2015	Potato Expo 2015—Orlando, FL
January 27-29, 2015	WA/OR Potato Conference—Kennewick, WA Three Rivers Convention Center
January 28, 2015	Long Range Planning Meeting and Dinner— Kennewick, WA

**Oregon Potato Commission**

**Members:**

*Chairman Dan Chin, Klamath Falls*  
*Vice Chairman Mark Ward, Baker*  
*Jeff Urbach, Handler Member*  
*Lon Baley, Grower Malin*  
*Leif Eric Benson, Public Member*  
*Mike Macy, Grower Culver*  
*Marty Myers, Grower Boardman*  
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*Rob Wagstaff, Grower Nyssa*  
*Dan Walchli, Grower Hermiston*

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*Bill Brewer, President and CEO*  
*Jennifer Fletcher, Administrative Director*  
*Judy Schwartz, Administrative Assistant*

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