

Empowering sugar beet farmers with sustainable practices

AT A GLANCE

The 2024 Idaho Sugar Beet Conference shared sustainable practices to improve sugar beet farming outcomes, impacting 176 growers and industry representatives.

The Situation

Sugar beet farmers in Idaho face challenges such as disease and insect pest management, invasive weeds, and efficient pesticide application. These issues threaten crop yields, economic stability, and environmental sustainability. To address these concerns, a collaborative effort by University of Idaho faculty, growers, and industry representatives aimed to equip farmers with innovative, sustainable solutions tailored to modern agricultural demands.

Our Response

The conference, held on Dec. 3, in Burley, brought together experts and stakeholders to present actionable strategies. Topics included integrating beneficial insects, using drones for precise pesticide deployment, managing Cercospora and invasive weeds, and encouraging regular checks of EPA bulletins for pesticide compliance. These efforts provided attendees with tools and knowledge to address pressing agricultural challenges effectively.

Program Outcomes

Surveys were deployed immediately following each presentation, with approximately 50 respondents per



Attendees watch a presentation at the 2024 annual sugar beet conference held in Burley.

survey. Using the survey data and extrapolating it to the full group of 176 attendees (assuming the sample was representative), our program had the following impacts:

- Cercospora practices: 27 attendees plan to implement new Cercospora management practices, complementing the 115 already doing so.
- Weed management: 147 attendees reported a better understanding of integrated approaches and planned to implement them.
- Beneficial insects: 88 attendees plan to integrate beneficial insects into their pest management plans.

impact University of Idaho Extension

- Drones for Pesticides: 73 attendees plan to explore drone applications for pesticide application, with 56 already using them.
- EPA Bulletin compliance: 99 attendees are committed to checking EPA bulletins regularly, with 62 still hesitant.

These changes have significant implications for financial and environmental sustainability.

Increased adoption of precision technologies, such as drones and integrated weed management, will reduce unnecessary pesticide use, cutting input costs and improving profit margins. Better disease management and compliance with EPA guidelines will prevent costly penalties and crop losses.

Practices such as integrating beneficial insects and checking EPA bulletins foster responsible pesticide use, preserving biodiversity and reducing chemical runoff. Drone technology ensures precise application, minimizing environmental impact while maintaining effectiveness.

The conference's outcomes illustrate how education and collaboration can drive meaningful changes, positioning Idaho's sugar beet industry for a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Amalgamated Sugar Company

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Jason Thomas, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Minidoka County • 208-436-7184 • jasont@uidaho.edu

Albert Adjesiwor, Extension Specialist • U of I Kimberly Research and Extension Center • 208-423-6616 • aadjesiwor@uidaho.edu

Erik Wenninger, Extension Specialist • U of I Kimberly Research and Extension Center • 208-423-6677 • erikw@uidaho.edu

Desiree Wickwar, Program Manager • U of I Kimberly Research and Extension Center • 208-423-6688 • desireewickwar@uidaho.edu

Grant Loomis, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Blaine County • 208-788-5585 • gloomis@uidaho.edu

17-25-jthomas-sugarbeet-conference • 6/25