



Idaho Congressmen ask USDA to purchase surplus potatoes

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Washington, DC. Jan. 15. After harvesting a record potato crop in 2009, growers now find themselves with an abundance of supply and low prices. Idaho's Congressional Delegation wants USDA to help.

In a letter sent to USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Administrator, Idaho Senators Mike Crapo and Jim Risch and Representatives Mike Simpson and Walt Minnick are asking USDA to give favorable consideration to a pending request for purchase of fresh surplus potatoes for federal nutrition programs under the Section 32 program.

The Delegation detailed the considerable potato market challenges. "The growing conditions for the 2009 Idaho potato crop were almost perfect resulting in record yields and excellent quality. Therefore, the percentage of saleable potatoes is above average this year, and currently Idaho potato stocks on hand are nearly 13.5 percent more than last year's stocks, despite Idaho shipping 4.5 percent more than 2008 volumes. This situation has caused prices to drop, and prices have continued to be low for quite some time," the Delegation wrote.

Further, the Delegation emphasized the difficulty potato producers are facing nationwide. "Potato growers are struggling right now with their returns, which are quite low. Without action, the combination of a high supply and low prices will drive many growers in the State of Idaho and throughout the country to go out of business. In today's financial market, trying to get financing for next year's crops could be quite difficult when producers present the returns for this year's crop," the Delegation wrote.

A link to the full letter can be found here: <http://crapo.senate.gov/issues/ag/ag.cfm>