

Ecosystem Services and Idaho's Farmers

Interview Six

I: All right, let's begin with a little bit of background information. Please tell us a little bit about how you got into the farming business.

R: I was born into it. I am a fourth generation potato farmer. So I started at a young age, about the age of 12 or so. I would go out with my dad in the mornings and do whatever a twelve-year-old could to help, usually get in the way I'm sure. By the age of 14, though, I had a daily routine and jobs that I was doing every day throughout the summer anyway. Just evolved from there. After college moved back to the farm full time, not just as a summer occupation, I guess. It turned into my livelihood. So here I am twenty some odd years later.

I: And how long have you or your immediate family been farming in this area?

R: Since 1903. My great grandfather purchased this farm in 1903 from the homesteader Frank. He homesteaded here I believe in the late 1870s. My great-grandfather purchased this place from him with all the water rights. So there are two main tributaries that come off the mountain that carry water. It is not a great deal of water by today's standards; but it is a little supplemental water that we use. Anyway, he started farming potatoes in 1910. Except for a couple of years 1950 to 1952, it had been in continuous potato production for almost 115 years.

I: Do you grow potatoes exclusively?

R: When you have potatoes, you have to have rotational crops. So we use alfalfa and wheat. We are on a three to four year rotation. So on a three year rotation it will be two years wheat and the potato crop. On a four year, it will be three years grain and then potatoes. The rotation a little bit depends on the economics, how potatoes are going. They are supposed to be our mainstay, our bread and butter. If the potato economics are not that great then plant a few extra acres of grain and have a four year rotation in some of those fields. The alfalfa, if you start getting a field that is not producing the wheat and the potatoes like I think it should, we look at putting alfalfa in there and giving the soil a break from potato production for a few years.

I: And how many acres do you farm?

R: About 1,200 acres irrigated. Total farmland is about 2,000 acres. We lease out some grazing to a cowboy that grazes on our place in the spring and fall.

I: Have you changed any of your farm practices or decisions in recent years?

R: The longer rotations as far as practice goes has been one of the biggest. We have started not using a mold board plow as much in some of the areas where we have highly erodible lands. The mold board plows are really nice in that you take a grain crop off and you have all the stubble, which is wonderful organic matter, and you want to be able to put it back in the soil. The mold

board plow will essentially turn the ground over and you have a clean slate. The downside to that is in some of our hillier ground where we get a lot of fall rains and spring runoff and there is no residue to hold the water necessarily and so the water will run off the high spots into the low spots. So we use like a disc and a chisel plow to try to help incorporate the residue back into the field. It does not do as good of a job eliminating residue on top; but it makes it manageable. You still get the organic matter. You do lose a little bit of it because it is not physically going back into the soil. Some of the stuff that is left on top will break down a little quicker through the course of the winter and so a little bit of that is not as available. It is still there, but on the other hand it helps prevent some of the runoff so you are not losing. On the high places you will have valuable nutrients. If you lose some of that to runoff, then so you gotta weigh what's good for you and what's not. You lose soil on top from plowing or do you lose little nutrients from the stubble. What do you do?

I: As far as the rotation, you mentioned those are sort of.

R: We have lengthened those out a little bit. We used to be two to three years. Now we are three to four year rotations.

I: Is that market driven or is it because of something else?

R: A little bit market driven, but more impact to the soil fertility is what we are after. We are trying to put more organic matter back into the soil. So by lengthening out those rotations and having more grain and more of that stubble available to put back in the soil for organic matter is beneficial.

I: In what ways, if any, has urban expansion or any nearby construction affected you and your farm?

R: A little bit. In a few ways. Immediate impact would be at harvest time in particular with the grains trying to get our wheat to town to the elevator. It seems like every year one of the major thoroughfares that we use to get to town. We don't use the freeway system. We just use the county roads. For me to get to the elevator, I have to go through town. A lot of times there is construction there. So when a truck should take maybe an hour to go to town and unload and come back, it might be an hour and a half or two hours cause they are waiting. Or we have to re-route them to avoid the construction and the long delays. In another area, it has impacted the land values. It has kind of taken me out of the marketplace maybe to buy more crop land to keep the farm growing if you will. Instead of paying twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago, the last piece of land that we bought I think we paid \$4,000 an acre. Today you would pay \$8,000 to \$10,000 for that same ground. Unless you have a lot of cash to put up front, you can't just go borrow the money on \$8,000 to \$10,000 an acre and make it work.

I: That is a big difference it seems like.

R: Yes.

I: Do you have any current plans to sell or lease part of your farm in the future?

R: No. No plans.

I: Do you have any idea what you will do with your farm when you stop farming it yourself?

R: Hopefully it will go to the next generation.

I: Keep it in the family?

R: Keep it in the family. My daughter is going to study ag business at a regional university. It looks like it might continue. I have warned her.

I: How important would it be to you that your farm remains an agricultural operation?

R: You know, with our farm, it is such a unique piece of property with the two creeks that come in. We are right against the foothills. Some of our land goes into the foothills. In our mind, it is somewhat irreplaceable. Yes, we could probably sell this piece of land and maybe move somewhere there is more ag land available and have a larger farm to farm; but then you are just out there with square fields. It is really unique. It lends itself to our hobby, which is aviation, and we have got our own runway here and our hangar is here, one of our hangars. To us it is a really unique piece of ground that would be really hard to replace.

I: As far as in this area, have you noticed any environmental changes in the last few years?

R: There is one thing that really sticks in my mind. I have mentioned our creeks that come into this place. One creek is spring fed and it runs year round. In the last twenty years I don't think the flow has changed that much. We don't measure it or anything; but you can kind of tell and gauge what is going on with it. The other creek, which is more of a runoff, for when my dad was young and farming it was very seasonal. It would start probably whenever the runoff would begin, sometime in March probably or late February. You could count on having the water in that creek until maybe the first of July. Then I kind of noticed that same trend myself. Then for about ten years it dried up. We might get a little bit of water; but there were about three or four of those years where there was nothing. Now it is back. For about two or three years, it ran all year. The last couple years it has not. This year it has not made it all the way to our farm. We have some busy beavers. They have made a series of dams in the creek that are maybe a mile from where we would utilize that source of water. They have it kind of blocked off and it is dammed up quite a bit. It is not quite making it to our farm. It is actually beneficial to the gentleman that leases the ground for grazing cause he can keep his cattle in there a lot longer. The ground he grazes is up a little higher.

I: Have you noticed, was there any cyclical changes? Did runoff start occurring earlier was there water in it or later?

R: Typically, it is always about the same time. There is always a big flush in the late winter, early spring, when you get a big. You always have that week or five days at the end of winter

where it warms up and then, whoo, the creek will run. Then it cools back down and the creek slows to a trickle or nothing.

I: What do you think is causing that change to vary like that?

R: You know I was kind of attributing it to better snow in the winter back here. I think what happened was maybe we weren't quite getting the snowpack we had been getting and so there is a little bit of a spring effect up there. There is a part of that stream that will run year round; but it never makes it this far cause it will just go into the aquifer. So I think some of that what you would call a spring would recharge and continue to let the creek flow through the season.

I: Have you noticed any other changes?

R: Environmental changes. Well, in this immediate nine months or whatever, almost a year, we have had the unusual rains that we have had. Last August, I was very fortunate that my grain crop almost went unscathed. There were a lot of farmers that were affected by that August rain. Probably over 90% of the malt barley crop that is up here, actually clear down to Twin Falls, all sprouted in the head before it was harvested. We had that same just throughout the whole valley, from the lower valley to the upper valley. Somehow. I raise hard red spring wheat. There is not a lot of that grown around here. There is some. It seemed to escape that problem. It is more of a variety thing than anything. That rain was pretty unusual, very unusual. Then these rains that we had here last month. It is not uncommon to have a wet week or ten days, but for three and a half weeks, oh my goodness. Which was nice, you know. We had our pumps off so we saved a lot of money there. The reservoirs are recharged again. The Palisades, Jackson, all those were going into the summer in really good shape. Up until those rains, if you looked at the usage charts that they have and what they had on hand leading up to the rains, it was looking pretty bleak. We were going to make it through the irrigation season, but there was not going to be a lot left. That whole picture changed now. We should go into the fall with some seasonal reserves. I don't know what do you attribute that to. I don't know. It is just Mother Nature. In my mind as a farmer and a guy that is out on the land observing, cause I live in nature, there are cycles that we probably don't understand. I don't necessarily think that man has all the blame for all of this. It seems to be there is a lot of blame on the human impact on earth. I think the earth is a lot more resilient than we think it is. I don't think we can really understand all the cycles that the earth goes through and puts us through. Our timeframe on this earth compared to what the earth, how long it has been here, is pretty minimal. That is my two cents.

I: What is your opinion of climate change?

R: I don't know if that helped cover some of it or not. Like I said, I don't think man is entirely to blame. The thing that rubs me a little bit about some of the ways things are passed down from the federal government to us to be more green or whatever I don't understand. Now the farmer's tractors. Probably in California, now you have to have a new tractor to meet emission compliance and all this stuff. Same with the over-the-road trucks and things like that. If you took a truck ten years ago that was probably fairly fuel efficient even though the emissions coming out did not meet the standards of today, say that truck was getting maybe 6-7 miles to the gallon hauling 80,000 pounds. Then you take a new truck today and it is maybe getting 3-4

miles to the gallon but it is not leaving any emission. We are using up twice as much fuel to transport that same product but we are being cleaner. Is that really an effective use of our natural resource that we are worried about having around in hundred years or whatever. I don't know. I think as far as climate change, there has been too much blame on man per se. Yes, there is some good that has come out of it. You look at big cities. You look at thirty years ago and you look at their layer of smog or whatever could be in a large city, like Salt Lake even. You see the smog that can come up from there. Yes, that has improved. The things we did there were probably good or are good. But let's not hinder what we are trying to accomplish for the good of mankind try to save the whole earth; because I think earth is much more resilient than we give it credit for.

I: How much does it concern you, the prospect of climate change?

R: Farmers have experienced climate change since they've been farmers, however far back you want to go from when they sowed the first seeds. So you just adapt to it and manage what you have and do the best you can with what you have. That's all you can do. If it is going to be a short water year you do what you can to conserve. If you have an abundance of water, then fill in the gaps and water a little more land. I don't know if that really answers your question.

I: What would you say is the most valuable natural resource needed for farming?

R: There are two: dirt and water. If you are talking to an irrigated, cause that's I'm all irrigated. There are dry farmers and they could probably just say dirt. For me, to stay competitive I have to have water; cause I couldn't farm this in a dryland situation. It just wouldn't work.

I: Are you worried about the health or availability of those natural resources, soil quality and water?

R: Soil quality is something that we can control through our tillage practices and our cultural practices of things. As far as that, that is not a huge concern because we have such a grasp on it. The water, you know, it is like our weather. It is cyclical. There are years you have abundant water and years you don't. I don't know how to answer that really. Water would probably be more of a concern than the soil, cause we will always have dirt. He's not going to ever have any farming practices that don't keep the dirt quality to the best that he can. He is not going to over-farm it or anything that would. You know, just like anyone else's business, you take care of what you have. You gotta take care of it.

I: Do you rely on bees to pollinate any of your crops?

R: I have. I am involved in a program. On my level, it is a fairly small scale. Cargill raises some of the beginnings of their seed trials. Their new varieties start here with their canola. So I have been involved with them for close to ten years now. Where about every four out of five years I will do a five-acre seed plot with them. So in four years I will do five-acre plots. They take care of it. All I have to do it prep the ground and fertilize it and water it. They plant and manage everything else and harvest it. They use bees for the pollination. That is really the only time I need bees around. They handle it. They bring in. They have caretakers, the beekeeper. They bring out. On that five acres, you will probably see ten or twelve hives.

I: As far as just like on your land, have you noticed any changes in the bee population? They like alfalfa too, right?

R: They do like alfalfa. It is hard to say. We somehow had a colony of bees that moved into one of our trees down here by the shop. I don't know how or why or where they came from. They thrived there for about five years. We had a beekeeper actually come in and remove them. They were domestic bees, I guess, gone awry. He was able to somehow capture them. The tree would just be alive. I mean just hear this constant hum around that tree. It was really cool. As far as, we don't, there are not a lot of bees kept right here. I do have a good friend that is a beekeeper; but I haven't really asked him how his bees are doing. Don't have a good answer for you.

I: Have you implemented any conservation practices into your farming operation?

R: You know, we do have some ground that is in the conservation reserve program; which has recently been re-enrolled. We are doing. Instead of just doing you know just kind of a broad spectrum CRP program, we are doing the safe program; which is a sage grouse habitat. We are just kind of in the beginning phases of getting that going. We are going to start working the ground in the next week and then plant the grasses and legumes this fall. Then I have been helping the Pheasants Forever people do small food plots for pheasants. I started planting pheasants on our place about, what is it, ten years ago. For about three years in a row, we released about forty or fifty birds cause they kind of, like I say, everything goes in cycles. We had a lot of pheasants when I was a kid and then throughout my kind of young adult life they kind of disappeared and then we had all these foxes around. Then the foxes died off and the pheasants tried, they were coming back, but not to the level that I remember as a kid, you know. It's not like going to South Dakota or anything where there are thousands of them that will fly off. Used to see them all the time. Need more pheasants around, so we started releasing pheasants. I'd help the Pheasants Forever people set up their traps and things. They wanted to capture wild birds and relocate them to some of their other habitat programs they were doing; so we have done that. Now this year we actually did a small couple-acre food plot where we planted sorghum and sunflowers and corn. Then I agreed to leave about two acres of standing grain through the winter for food and kind of a habitat. The farm has good habitat. They just need a little help in the food department.

I: You mentioned your soil practices?

R: Switching, not plowing as much, using a disc and chisel to try to maintain some residue on top so you don't get erosion. That has been the biggest thing probably. There's that and the wildlife conservation kind of stuff.

I: So, the use of GE (genetically engineered – also sometimes referred to as GMO) seeds has been in the news a lot recently, but the coverage only rarely discusses how American farmers are being impacted – either positively or negatively – by this technology. Has the use of GE seeds affected you as a farmer, and if so, how?

R: I wouldn't say it has affected it. I do raise some alfalfa that is GMO, if you will. There was kind of an economic reason for me to do it. We can use to control weeds in the alfalfa Roundup. It is inexpensive. To do another form of weed control in alfalfa is really expensive if you use traditional non-GMO alfalfa in particular. So if you can look at kind of a Roundup application is probably \$5 for the product and \$6-\$7 to have it applied if you don't do it yourself per acre. So you are \$11-\$12. As opposed to the other stuff, which the product alone is maybe \$35 an acre plus the application. So it was kind of an economic. It is small impact I guess you would say economically for me. At the time when I planted it, which was a year and a half ago, the Roundup had gone away. If you had it, you could harvest it. Then it went away for a short time because of the push back of GMO products. Now it's back again. But we kind of hear rumblings of you can't have that. If you are asking my opinion about GMO stuff. If you look at the world population, it is seven billion or whatever now plus. By 2040, or whatever 2045, there are supposed to be nine billion people. We gotta feed another couple billion people with the same amount of farm land, maybe even a little less by then. We are doing everything we possibly can with normal, non-GMO products. You can only really take that so far I think. I think with the GMO stuff you will be able to do more with less. With everybody having a variety of a corn, or whatever it is soybeans or potatoes. You can plant it on the same acre and you might get another 10, 20, 30% more per acre yield wise. In that aspect, I think it is good. There has been so much awareness around it that the people are developing these things. I think they are going about it in a smart fashion. Used to be when they said GMO they might take a ... introduce a peanut gene introduce a strawberry and the kid eats the strawberry and has a reaction because he is allergic to peanuts. That's kind of gone away. To where they are just using the genes that are within the plant by moving them or deleting a gene or something to have it resistant to Roundup or whatever, make it grow better, bigger, faster, whatever.

I: You mentioned alfalfa, potato. I know Simplot is doing the new seed. I know a while Monsanto did have their Roundup ready potato. Did you ever?

R: Yes. I grew it for about three years. It wasn't Roundup ready though. They were almost ready to release the Roundup potato; but they had one that was resistant to the potato beetle. So the potato beetle would come into the field and would say I don't recognize this as a potato plant and move on. They wouldn't. Back in the 1990s, we had a real problem with potato beetles. You could go out in the field one day and you would see a few larvae here and there. Things would look okay. Then a week later, you'd have an acre or two that would just be stripped, the vines. The leaves would be gone if you didn't react and get a product out there to control it. In that sense, now you are eliminating that insecticide; which people don't like insecticides either.

I: What sort of pesticides/herbicides do you currently use?

R: On all the crops? In my grain crops, we watch for insects. There is really only one kind of major threat for us and that is the cereal leaf beetle. For several years, I had to just kind of do a broadcast on all my grain ground because they were so prevalent. Now for the last three years leading up to this year, I didn't have to use it at all. This year I had two fields that were close to the dryland out here that for some reason they've moved in. So I didn't have to spray everything but just those two fields.

I: What does it do, the cereal leaf beetle?

R: It weakens the plant. What they will do is they just sit there and get their slime all over the leaves and stuff. The leaves will start to streak. That wouldn't necessarily hurt it that bad; but what it will do is allow other inoculum into the plant like fusarium that might be in the soil. So it weakens the plant to the point where it now can be susceptible to that disease that is the natural pathogen in the soil. Grain wise, herbicides, all this stuff kind of, you listen to media and everything. It all seems it gets a bad rap. Farmers are savvy business people. When you look at a product and say okay I've got this spectrum of weeds out there. I might have six or eight different kinds of weeds. So there is two products I need to use. If I use this one plus this one instead of using the full rate of this one and the full rate of this one to control them, if I put the two together, I can probably use this much of it. So you look at your wheat thread and go gosh I can use these two products, saves me money, and I'm not putting it all out there. The other thing with them is you are not using a whole lot of product per acre. It might be some products you're like 0.25 ounce of something to the acre. It is added to water. So when you see the big tanks on the sprayers they are not full of chemicals. They are full of water and you might have whatever amount of product you need in there. So if you had a sprayer that was capable of spraying 500 acres, say 200 acres at a time and you are using ten gallons of water. It might be a 2,000 gallon tank. There is 2,000 gallons of water in there. If you are doing that 200 acres and you are using 0.25 ounce of product an acre, that is not a lot of product. It is mostly water. We are pretty careful about how we use those products because they are not cheap for one and if you don't need to use more than you have to then you don't. That's how I am and a lot of guys are. You rely on your field man, the guy that makes recommendations to you. You learn every year about new products and different ways to use them and so you say that's fascinating. You might try a field of this cause maybe it might be a little cheaper. If it works, that's great, switch to that. Kinda on a soap box there. Potato-wise, the insecticides we use on potatoes anymore it goes in furrow when we plant. That's usually about all I need. There is an insect that lives in the soil, a worm, wire worm, that will cause damage to the potato. So you use a product for that. Then a product for beetles and aphids; which gives you almost season long control. It goes right where the potatoes are planted perfectly. A teeny bit, right where you need it. Then that will usually last me through the season. Once in a while, you might have. There has been the psyllid threat that has been in the state of Idaho for a while; which causes what is called zebra chip in the potatoes. So what will happen is you will cut the potato open and they will have these dark circles in the potato. Which doesn't necessarily hurt it. You can cook it still. But over time if it is in storage it will allow the potato to break down and your cellar will turn to liquid, smelly, and not fun. Then you lose a lot of money. Then herbicides with potatoes, it is kind of the same thing. With the wheat, you look at what threat is there and what do I need to do. This year, I used completely different products than I have ever used in the past. We went back to some really old chemistry that has been around a long time and haven't used. You kind of have to do that. Cause the weeds get smart. They get resistant to certain products. So every few years you have to change things up and throw the weeds a curve ball.

I: What are the biggest challenges you see to farming in southeastern Idaho?

R: My biggest challenge has been the economics of it. Really, as far as cultural things and weather and all that, that is stuff you can kind of deal with. Sometimes the economics get pretty

difficult. You look at the last three years for me have not been very good years. So you rely on those one or two good years that come back around and, you know, fill your kitty back up a little bit. There was probably one year in there where it was, you know. Some of it was weather related. A few of those were starting off hot and dry here at the end of June. It was that way a couple years ago where it was just 95 to 100 degrees for five weeks. It is hard to raise a good quality potato crop in that kind of heat unless you keep the potato plants really wet. Right now that's what I'm doing. We are just keeping water on the spuds; cause we can see this weather coming and it will affect your quality something terrible. So that particular year my quality was pretty poor cause I kind of got behind with the water a little bit. I had contracts that would have been good. Maybe a third of my crop met the contract criteria. The other two thirds did not. So instead of getting \$7 contract price I got \$1.50. It takes almost \$7 to raise the potatoes. So if you are looking at 100,000 sacks of potatoes that you should have gotten \$7 for, that is \$700,000; where you get \$1.50 that is \$150,000. Those are pretty big variances there that you have to absorb somehow. Can't do that very many years in a row.

I: How are these challenges different from what they were in the past, if they are different?

R: It is always farming. It is like Mother Nature. It is cyclical. You just hope you can ride out the low spots and survive the high spots.

I: Any other challenges?

R: Employees can be challenging. Consistent good help. That has always been a challenge. Economically, for me, that's the big one. Everything else I can kind of keep my hands on. The price you can't control that.

I: What is your favorite thing about farming in southeastern Idaho?

R: Spring after you have planted everything. Everything is just coming up and its new and its fresh. That's my favorite. I love seeing all the new growth in the air.

I: We have all heard about drought in the United States lately. Do you worry about water availability or your water rights?

R: This year no. Water rights. Our farm has been here so long. A lot of the two canals that feed our farm, the home place anyway, they were put in a long, long, long time ago, almost specifically to get water to here. Those rights. The irrigation district that I'm with, even though sometimes they have a problem delivering it, they have the best water rights in the state of Idaho. The only ones that have better water rights are with the Native Americans. For myself. It is always a concern. You get in really tight water years, they start cutting flows back, and if you only have so much in reserve, you are allowed so much of the excess and when that is gone then they go off water rights. Sometimes those water rights, even though you still have water, there may not be a lot of water there. Usually when that happens it is later in the season so typically we are done with watering the grain. You might look at okay the potatoes are the value crop, we will just leave the water off the hay until we are caught up on the spuds so you can kind of manage it that way. Yeah. Drought is a concern. But it will come around.

I: You mentioned the creeks and that you primarily irrigate, right?

R: Yes.

I: And out of those canals.

R: The bulk of the water we use to irrigate with is canal water.

I: As far as your water allocation, what you have, how much do you typically use in a season.

R: On a potato crop, you will be looking at 20 inches of water in a season probably. Say probably say 2 acre feet of water for a potato crop. Grain crop is probably more like 1.5 acre feet of water. Alfalfa uses every bit as much water as potatoes do.

I: Where do you go to get news about weather, regulations, or other farming-related information?

R: Weather-wise I watch the local news guy. Then I rely a lot on my smart phone, pull up on telecast, that's the one I use just to see what is coming. Then, being a pilot, I kind of like to be tuned into the weather if I am planning to go somewhere for the afternoon or morning or whatever. I look at the weather a lot just to see what is in store for us in the next foreseeable future. What was the other part of that?

I: Regulations.

R: Regulations: I stay active in the industry. I was the president of an Idaho potato association for about five years. So in that circle you know what is happening out there. I have also been involved with the another potato association, so you get a lot of information there. I have also served on another potato association committee, so you get bombarded with stuff. That's how I stay current. And you read the Spud Man and Potato Grower magazine and pick up on things too.

I: Which regulatory agencies, such as the USDA or other government agencies, have you been in contact with in the last few years?

R: Department of Environmental Quality. I have one underground tank on the farm that we store our AV gas in. It is a new one. It is all in compliance; but my goodness for one tank, hhh. It's every year. You are talking to the State Insurance Fund guy and whoever it is in the State Department that looks over that and the DEQ they contact you. How's your tank look? Just fine. Then you get audited. I think it is an automatic audit every three to five years. They just come out and look at your books. Poor tank. Agencies. The State Department of Ag. I have to apply fertilizers and pesticides on my place. I have to be certified to do that; so I have to stay current, my credits. I have to stay in contact with them and send them off. Every two years, I have to send them my license that has my stickers with my credits on it.

I: How many credits?

R: Six every two years; which isn't hard to do. A couple meetings in the winter each winter. The final ones that offer points, those meetings. So State Department of Ag and DEQ. I have done an EPA tour, had EPA individuals out here. But it is more of a good will ambassador sort of thing that we did about five or six years ago. EPA people came to the farm. They were in the state of Idaho for about a week and we hosted them here and gave them a tour and told them how we use things.

(spouse of respondent) How about your CRP paperwork people.

R: Oh, there's that. USDA. That is NRCS, National Resource Conservation, work with them on not quite an annual basis. When you renew something, if it does not meet their criteria for renewal, then you have to make a plan with them. Usually takes a couple years to get everything worked out and make sure they are satisfied with what you have done. So, yes, you see them annually and Farm Service Agency I guess I see them probably three times a year in the office for various reasons, crop reporting and acreage reporting.

I: How was that experience for you? For example, was it a positive or negative experience, and why?

R: By and large pretty good, yeah. Never been cited for anything with DEQ or EPA, never had any problems that way.

(spouse of respondent) Don't forget GAP.

R: I don't do that anymore. Try hard not to do that. Are you familiar with GAP? It is called Good Agricultural Practices. A few years ago, I grew potatoes for a potato distributor to grow for the frozen potato market. We had to be GAP certified. To do that, you have to go to a class and get certified. Everything I was doing already, but the interesting things were we had to have signs in our bathroom that said "Employees must wash their hands before returning to work." You couldn't have. Usually, when we are putting potatoes in the cellars at harvest time. A lot of times the guys will have a soda pop in the cellar and you can't do that, cause they might leave the can on the floor of the cellar and it gets covered up and then it ends up in the food source, that kind of stuff. Doesn't happen. I like the one where you had to document if you saw a bird flying over your field. You had to know if you saw wildlife in your field or wildlife flying over your field. You'd just be like a bird, oh, bird, I saw another bird. Like you'd even do that. I got busted on that too. When she came out to do the second audit, just before harvest time. She like so have you ever seen any deer in this field? You know, I never see deer here. Let's drive out to the field. No deer but there were tracks. Hell, so they don't come over. She was a pretty cool gal. I was just kidding about that. I don't pay attention if there are deer out there or not. If you just mark it down in the notebook, noticed deer in field on such and such a day. What did you do about it? Honked my horn. Really. That made me laugh. GAP was really funny, cause it had so much kind of silliness to go with the good stuff. Designed by committee. My dad runs the potato harvester for me. I assume he is going to do it this year. He is seventy four. It is what he loves to do. As long as everything is working right, it's not a bad job. You break down a lot. So we had to do at harvest an audit with the GAP people. So she came out and my dad thought he'd be

really funny. We had a good neighbor friend that is a surgical tech that is something at the surgical center something here in town. Was like hey so can you bring me some operating room gear so when the gal comes out to do this GAP thing I will be ready. So he had a hair net and a mask. He had the booties on his feet. He had the little white gloves when she rolled up. He was in compliance.

I: Okay, before we finish here, I would just like to ask you a couple of brief demographic questions. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

R: Four.

I: In the simplest terms, how would you describe your political views?

R: I wouldn't say I am hard core conservative but I do have conservative tendencies.

I: And what is your age?

R: Forty six.

I: Finally, is there anything else you would like to share with us about farming in southeastern Idaho that we have missed?

R: I don't think so. Hopefully, it will be of some use to you.

I: All right, thank you very much. We really appreciate the time you have taken to participate in this research. It helps us understand what issues you are facing and how steps could be taken to help you do your work, which is work we know benefits this community and others.