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Editor's Note: If you're interested in including the grower perspective in your news story, please contact Britt Raybould at 208-629-8006. UPGI has contact information for growers willing to be interviewed.

UNITED POTATO GROWERS OF IDAHO REACHES MEMBERSHIP GOAL

80% of Idaho's Acres Join United

Idaho Falls, Idaho, November 11, 2009—Today, at both All-Grower Fall Meetings, United Potato Growers of Idaho (UPGI) announced the successful completion of its fall membership drive. Growers throughout the state have chosen to recommit themselves to working together collectively to address the issues facing the Idaho potato industry. With 80% of the state's potato acres, UPGI has the critical mass to make an impact on the industry

“We're excited that individual growers have come together as a group to support UPGI and our efforts to have a positive role in the industry,” said Carl Taylor, UPGI Board Chairman. “As an industry, we face challenges that we're more likely to overcome if we work together as a grower cooperative.”

Each year, UPGI hosts an all-grower meeting in the fall. These annual meetings give UPGI an opportunity to share the results of its own data collection, including harvest field digs and stocks on hand. This year, Idaho growers planted 16,850 more acres this year than last. Those additional acres break down as follows: 10,000+ acres contracted for dehy; 6,000+ acres were open; and 1000+ were seed acres. The two federal agencies that also release acreage numbers, NASS and FSA, have published 319,000 and 312,430 acres, respectively, for Idaho.

Achieving the 80% membership goal was a highlight of this year's meeting, but as Taylor acknowledged, “Between our data and the numbers released by NASS, we recognize that we're facing a serious situation this season. As growers and as an organization, we must be proactive

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when we market this crop to look for opportunities to improve prices and to plan for the future.” UPGI’s plans for the future include holding district meetings during the coming weeks to elect new members to the Board of Directors.

As announced at the grower meeting, UPGI’s main objectives going forward include acreage management and data collection and analysis. Both programs were identified by UPGI’s board as key to future grower success. UPGI will also continue to work with individuals like economist Dr. Paul Patterson at the University of Idaho and Bruce Huffaker of North American Potato Market News to share relevant industry data like grower cost of production and national potato market information.

“Idaho potato growers are a strong bunch. We’ve faced challenges before and we’ve overcome them,” added Taylor. “We believe we can do so again.”

About United Potato Growers of Idaho

United Potato Growers of Idaho is a member co-op of the United Potato Growers of America, which was formed in March 2005 by growers to balance supply to demand. The mission is to reverse years of declining and unprofitable prices for growers, which has caused many independent growers to go out of business. UPGA is a federated cooperative currently with ten member co-op chapters. UPGA was created under the provisions of the Capper-Volstead Act that was enacted in 1922 by Congress to allow growers to work collectively to market their products.

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