

PRO*ACT

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Crop Update

September 2, 2026

In Idaho, Size Matters

It feels like we haven't seen a "normal" Idaho potato market in several years. Extreme highs have been followed by extreme lows, and as growers begin the 2026 harvest, Idaho is once again walking on eggshells waiting to see what this crop ultimately puts into the cellar.

Early indications have not been encouraging. A cool spring slowed plant development, followed by periods of summer heat and warmer-than-normal nights that did not give the crop much opportunity to size. Early harvests are running smaller than expected, with grower reports showing very little product above 12 ounces and the crop currently peaking around 90-count. Large 40- and 50-count potatoes are expected to be especially scarce. Yields on some early acreage have been reported as much as 20% below last season, resulting in growers digging more acreage than originally planned to keep up with demand.

In a more typical year, harvest pressure often pushes FOBs lower after Labor Day before markets begin to firm again as harvest progresses and potatoes move into storage. This year, the concern is whether there will be enough large potatoes going into those cellars in the first place. We should have a much clearer picture later in September as the main storage harvest gets underway. Idaho's primary harvest traditionally runs through September and October, with the heaviest harvest period coming in late September and early October.



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There are also some normal new-crop characteristics customers may notice. Freshly harvested Russets have not had time to completely cure, so skinning or feathering can be more prevalent. Once potatoes enter storage, they go through a sweat and curing period as field heat leaves the tubers. During this time, suberization helps harvest wounds heal while the skin continues to mature and set. This is what eventually gives Idaho Russets the familiar, mature skin appearance we see throughout most of the year and helps the crop maintain quality in storage well into the following summer.

New crop also creates an interesting challenge with No. 2 potatoes. Russet Norkotahs, the primary early-season variety, commonly produce a high percentage of No. 1-grade potatoes. That can leave fewer true No. 2s available early in the season. With fewer No. 2s available, customers will often substitute into smaller 80- through 120-count No. 1 potatoes. In a crop already weighted toward smaller sizes, that additional demand puts even more pressure on the same portion of the crop.

For now, size is the story in Idaho. There are still a lot of potatoes left to harvest, and it is too early to judge the entire storage crop from these early fields. But if the current size profile follows growers into the main harvest, large cartons could remain one of the biggest challenges as we move through the fall and into the storage season.

