



Treasure Valley

Two UI facilities in Caldwell merge at epicenter of Treasure Valley ag

A century after it was founded as a UI agronomy laboratory, the Caldwell Research and Extension Center will have a new home on July 1. Faculty and staff in animal science, agricultural economics, 4-H, and computer support will join colleagues at the Food Technology Center and Caldwell Business Incubator to form a UI Caldwell complex less than five miles northeast of its original home.

About 3,650 square feet—including a technologically current 1,200-square-foot class/conference room—will be added to 29,000 square feet that now span two steel-frame buildings on Chicago Street, just off Interstate 84's Exit 29. Facilities presently house a UI commercial kitchen, a UI pilot food-processing and testing plant, and a dozen startup businesses, as well as the Caldwell Economic Development Council and SCORE volunteer business advisers.

"It will put a critical mass of people together to solve problems in the Treasure Valley," says CALS Dean John Hammel. "Rather than spending considerable sums to rectify serious infrastructure problems at our old facility—where we're being encroached upon by residential development—we're looking to the future."

Pat Momont, UI Extension District II director and one of the complex's new occupants, sees abundant opportunities for extension faculty to work closely with the incubator's startup businesses, the kitchen's and pilot plant's clients, and economic developers. He expects the complex to "shorten the distance that information travels between sectors."

Jim Toomey, UI incubator director, agrees. "We'll be well-positioned to help Treasure Valley agriculture make a transition to small-acreage, value-added businesses in the face of the urbanization that is going on here."

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New pilot plant expands—and supports—UI's Food Technology Center in Caldwell

A 3,000-square-foot pilot plant, added this winter, will help the UI Food Technology Center support the 47 food entrepreneurs now using its commercial kitchen. The pilot plant is one of five in the U.S. that can conduct Good Laboratory Practice studies, preparing foods for pesticide- and fertilizer-residue testing. Manager Drew Dalgetty says these GLP studies, plus research and development work by potato processors and other medium- to large-sized food companies, will keep the FTC

well in the black.

Few Idaho processors have their own facilities in which to test new products and processes. They're forced to shut down a processing line, which they can't easily do. The FTC purchased equipment and transferred clients from Englar Food Laboratories in Moses Lake, Wash., to Caldwell.

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DID YOU KNOW?

654

The number of cheeses listed in the database of www.cheese.com.

*Source: www.cheese.com

UI's Food Tech Center aids cheese makers

Last September, when UI and United Dairymen of Idaho offered its first Farmstead and Artisan Cheese-making Workshop in Caldwell, 25 registrants eagerly responded. After getting instruction in cheese enzymes, cultures, quality, and safety, they slipped on gloves, slapped on aprons, and made feta, havarti, and gouda cheese. Orofino yak-raiser Debi Bordoni regrets having previously "wasted time" trying to teach herself cheese-making. "This workshop is the quickest, most efficient way to gain the most knowledge in the shortest amount of time," she said.

Applauding the workshop's "tremendous atmosphere of learning," dairy co-owner Marcella Stewart of Nampa predicted it would spur new Idaho dairy enterprises.

"Economics is a constant ebb and flow of changing opportunities," noted participant Cygnia Rapp of Hailey's Prosperity Organic Foods. "Artisan cheese-making is definitely one of those opportunities."

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