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**Double-digit spud sales growth in the Northeast, Midwest**

Despite higher prices, consumers in the Northeast and Midwest can't seem to get their fill of Idaho potatoes, reported Mike Krage, retail promotion director-Northeast/Midwest for the [Idaho Potato Commission](#).

"We are in our third year of double-digit sales increases within the potato category in our region," Krage said. "We're running almost 20 percent up in dollars, even with Idaho having out-of-stock situations this year for the first time in a very long time."

IPC data shows that demand from consumers is the driving force behind the increases, said Krage. "In the last two years, it was Idaho potato volume that was up, but this year the dollar sales are up from inflation," he said. "Northeast and Midwest retailers are running flat in volume but high in sales dollars from Idaho potatoes."

While Idaho russets are tops in the Northeast/Midwest region, white potatoes are also superstars here, where they sell better than in any other region of the United States, said Krage.

### **High value**

Northeast/Midwest retailers have not been afraid to raise Idaho potato prices in the wake of inflation, said Krage, because they know their shoppers recognize the inherent value of both potatoes and the Idaho brand.

"Retailers have had to get creative with their promotional programs to generate demand while still showing value. Idaho has come a long way in diversifying their crop," said Krage.

With Idaho now the largest volume supplier of yellow potatoes, savvy retailers are mixing and matching their promotions. "I've seen retailers running 2/\$7 or 3/\$10 promotions across the category, and they have been surprised with the results," he said.

"When you look at the dinner plate, the potato is still the cheapest item by the pound than any other item on that plate," Krage added. "When times get tough, we see that portion of potatoes getting larger on the dinner plate because it's economical and healthy."

In addition, Idaho potatoes store better at home than most other produce items. Since the COVID-19 pandemic forced more people to learn how to cook because dining out was limited, consumers have been reminded of how much potatoes can add to almost any recipe.

### **Eating in**

Potatoes are also a culinary bargain compared with inflated restaurant prices these days, said Krage, with one-third of Americans cooking more at home and dining out less than usual, according to a January 2022 Ipsos survey. High-quality staples like Idaho potatoes are a natural purchase for home cooks who are watching their pennies during inflationary times: From January through July 2022, U.S. year-over-year food and beverage prices increased significantly, reported IRI in September.

"Potatoes have always been a steady commodity in the fruit and vegetable category," said Krage. "Consumers are coming to terms with higher food prices overall this year and are paying the higher

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prices for items that provide top value for their dollar, like Idaho potatoes.”

*Photo: Ross Johnson, Matt Brigotti and Mike Krage at the IPC booth at the New York Produce Show.*

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