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Potatoes USA names board chair, new executive committee

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[Potatoes USA](#) elected Shelley R. Olsen as chair of the board at its annual meeting. Potatoes USA also announced its Executive Committee members to lead the organization through 2024-25.

This marks the seventh year that Olsen, of Othello, WA, has served on Potatoes USA's board and her fourth year on the executive committee. She previously co-chaired the board's industry outreach and international marketing committees.

"It's such an honor for my peers to believe in me and to be able to walk in the steps of some of the great people who have led our industry for decades," Olsen said. "I'm looking forward to sharing the message across our industry about the work that Potatoes USA is doing."

One of the efforts Olsen is most excited about is the streamlining of Potatoes USA's board.

"It's great to see the Potatoes USA board evolve to become more dynamic," said Olsen. "Every board member now has a seat on a committee and an opportunity to be really involved. I've loved seeing how much board members are buying into this new approach.

"I'm also really excited about some of the innovative initiatives at Potatoes USA, like using artificial intelligence to support reputation management and the Culinary Medicine Program, which helps people learn about how high-quality food can be part of a healthy lifestyle," she added.

In addition to her involvement with Potatoes USA, Olsen serves on the Washington State Potato Commission's Marketing and Industry Affairs Committee, and she is the former chair of the Potato Leadership, Education and Advancement Foundation board. She is also a 2015 Potato Industry Leadership Institute graduate.

Olsen's family-owned companies have three generations working together, including her husband, Chris, who previously served on the Potatoes USA board; her in-laws, Lynn and Marthann; her two sons, Owen and Connor; and Connor's wife, Kaitlyn. Their focus is on growing potatoes for frozen processing.

"It's a unique opportunity to work with my family every day, and I love watching my adult children have great new ideas they go out and implement," said Olsen. "We're also overjoyed to welcome our first fourth-generation family member."

In addition to Olsen, Potatoes USA's 2024-25 Executive Committee members include:

- Wendy Dykstra of Friesland, WI, chair of the Finance & Policy Committee
- Trever Belnap of Hamer, ID, co-chair of the Production Research Committee
- Dave Masser of Sacramento, PA, co-chair of the Production Research Committee
- Ed Staunton of Tulelake, CA, chair of the Culinary Committee
- Steve Elfering of Meridian, ID, chair of the Communications Committee
- Hunter Gibbs of Swan Quarter, NC, chair of the Nutrition and Health Committee
- Les Alderete of Monte Vista, CO, chair of the Market Development: Consumer Committee
- Dennis Wright of Kennewick, WA, chair of the Market Development: Foodservice Committee

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- Leah Halverson of Grand Forks, ND, chair of the Market Development: Retail Committee
 - Mike Carter of Rosholt, WI, immediate past chair

Photo: Potatoes USA's 2024-25 Executive Committee members (back row) Dave Masser, Wendy Dykstra, Les Alderete, Shelley Olsen, Trever Belnap, Blair Richardson, Dennis Wright and Hunter Gibbs with (seated) Ed Staunton, Steve Elfering, Mike Carter and Leah Halverson.

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