

Potatoes USA
2026 Spring Board Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2026
The Hilton Denver Inverness, Englewood, Colorado
Recorded by: Madison Mayle

Welcome

Chairman Steve Elfering called the meeting to order at 8:36 AM

USDA Update

Katie Cook, USDA-AMS Specialist, acknowledged that the 2026 nominations are still in process and are currently in the Secretary's office.

Antitrust Statement

Chairman Steve Elfering acknowledged the antitrust policy statement that Zoom attendees must accept when logging in to the meeting platform. A copy of the Antitrust Policy Statement was also provided to attendees before meetings on BoardEffect.

Roll Call

Board Members present included James Baker, Thomas Baker, Trever Belnap, Nathan Bender, Jess Blatchford, Norbert Bomm, Jennifer Bunger, Daniel Corey, Jim Corneillie, Sander Dagen, Adam DeGroot (virtual), Ben DeJonge, Danny Deprey, Kathy Devries-Ruehs, Wendy Dykstra, Steve Elfering, Hunter Gibbs, Jenniger Gogan (virtual), John Halverson (virtual), Jeff Irving, Ben Josephson, Sanjiv Kakkar, Rhonda Kleyn, Matthew Linehan, Brian Mahany, Juan Martinez, David Masser, Tara May, Nathan McBride, Travis Meacham, Andrew Moquist, Ryan Moss, Shelley Olsen, Derek Peterson, Mike Pink, Andrew Price, Elizabeth Rachut, Bruce Richardson, Kevin Schleicher, Cliff Shaw, Camburn Shephard, Alison Sklarczyk, Clifton Smith, Kathy Sponheim, Jonathan Springstead, Diane Szawlowski, Jordan Thomas, Dennis Wright.

Proxies were received from Aron Derbidge, David Mundt, and Charlie Husnick.

With over 50% of the board in attendance, Chairman Steve Elfering acknowledged a quorum was present.

2026 Potatoes USA Board member nominees present included Mia Reed, Chelsea Blatchford, Jay Savage, Keith Barrett (Virtual), Rick Bernstein (Virtual), Tara Cunningham (Virtual) Jacalynn Gumz (Virtual), Leah Halverson (Virtual), Andrew Hyer (Virtual), Ken Irving (Virtual), Justin Kylo (Virtual), Brian Lee (Virtual), Brian Miesner (Virtual), Austin Moss (Virtual), and Laurie Widdowson (Virtual).

Potatoes USA Staff members present included Blair Richardson, Kim Breshears, John Lundeen, Monica Heath, Chelsea Gray, Caitlin Roberts, Megan Mulcahy, RJ Harvey, Tim Rendall, Robert King, Lucy Gabrielse, Kayla Vogel, Nick Bartelme, Dinah Tobey, Aurora Hollenbeck, Katarina Ivanovic, Marisa Stein, Martin von

Ruden, Madison Mayle, Nicole Field, Heather Campbell, Annelise McAuliffe Soares, Riley Peterson, and Michelle Binns.

Guests present included John Vachalek from Webolutions, Dale Lathim (Virtual), Eric Davis and Audrey Rahjes from Morgan Meyers (Virtual), Shawn Boyle from IGSA (Virtual), Brittany Knox from SRG (Virtual), John Mesko from PSA (Virtual), Tamas Houlihan and Dana Rady from Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (Virtual). Katie Cook from USDA, Tara Artho from Colorado Potato Administrative Commission, Travis Blacker from Idaho Potato Commission, Kelly Turner from Michigan Potato Industry Council, Nathan Tallman from Pennsylvania Coop Potato Growers, Chris Voigt and Brandy Tucker from Washington Potato Commission, Kam Quarles and Mike Wenkel from National Potato Council, and Mark Klompein from United Potato Growers of America.

Minutes Approval

Copies of the meeting minutes were emailed to attendees before the meeting and made available for everyone to view via BoardEffect.

A **MOTION** was made by Shelley Olsen and seconded to approve the minutes from the Winter Board Meeting held on Jan 6, 2026. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Executive Committee Report

Chairman Steve Elfering explained recent executive activities, including their focus on International, Research, and Industry Outreach activities.

Market Development Committee Report

Marisa Stein, Director of Marketing for Potatoes USA, shared results from *Why Buy US* Research Study. These included information on the increasing global competition, the need for a strategic shift, and a focused conversation on consistency in U.S. product performance compared to global competitors. Martin von Ruden, Global Marketing Strategy Director for Potatoes USA, shared global export opportunities with a focus on Indonesia as a high-potential market. There was also a focus on Africa. Lixcap, an advisory firm, will share the findings of its market assessments and export market potential analyses. Lastly, Martin announced the World Potato Congress will be held in Kenya in October 2026, and Potatoes USA will host a trade mission alongside the event.

Market Development Consumer Subcommittee Report

Hunter Gibbs, chair of the Consumer Subcommittee, and Kayla Vogel, Community Engagement Manager for Potatoes USA, shared recent social media and event strategy for domestic and international consumer activities, along with a high-level budget overview.

Market Development Retail Subcommittee Report

David Masser, chair of the Retail Subcommittee, and Nick Bartelme, Global Retail Development Manager at Potatoes USA, reviewed the 2026-2027 Retail program

plan, along with hypothetical scenarios explaining how the retail program works. They concluded with a budget overview.

BREAK

At 10:23 AM, the meeting was suspended. At 11:01 AM, Chairman Steve Elfering reconvened the meeting.

Market Development Foodservice Subcommittee Report

Travis Meacham, chair of the Foodservice Subcommittee, Annelise McAuliffe Soares, Foodservice Director, and Katarina Ivanovic, Associate Marketing Manager for Potatoes USA, shared strategies and tactics for interacting with foodservice operators, such as event marketing, operator outreach, and discovery calls. Additionally, they reviewed international strategies like Reverse Trade Missions, trade education, and promotional support. They concluded with a budget overview.

Culinary Committee Report

Cliff Shaw, Chairman of the Culinary Committee, RJ Harvey, Culinary Director, and Aurora Hollenbeck, Executive Sous Chef, at Potatoes USA, explained how the Culinary team supports all the Potatoes USA programs with tactics and activities like culinary trainings and events, operator immersions, consumer recipe development, and culinary nutrition education. They concluded with a budget overview.

BREAK

At 11:48 AM, the meeting was suspended. At 1:00 PM, Chairman Steve Elfering reconvened the meeting.

Nutrition and Health Committee Report

Kathy Sponheim, Chair of the Nutrition and Health Committee, and Riley Peterson, Director of Nutrition, shared program objectives and historical results and presented the Nutrition & Health program budget allocation. Concluded with the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans and stressed the importance of nutrition research funding.

Alliance for Potato Research and Education Report

Michelle Kijek shared how APRE Research is helping to drive positive media coverage as authors cite APRE-funded research, and how APRE has helped produce 48 published papers over the past 12 years.

Production Research Committee Report

Tim Rendall, Associate Director of Research; John Lundeen, Director of Research for Potatoes USA; and Nathan Bender and Jess Blatchford, Co-chairs of the Production Research Committee, shared research priorities along with an update on the NCP and NFPT trials and Potato Research Advisory Committee. They reviewed NFPT and NCP trial wins, and PRAC wins. Tim shared the objective of the Seed Task Force program, which is to obtain more stable sales opportunities. Lastly, John outlined

the history of the Seed Export Program in Cuba and potential market opportunity, with the goal of the program being to register 1-2 more varieties by 2027.

BREAK

At 2:34 PM, the meeting was suspended. At 2:49 PM, Chairman Steve Elfering reconvened the meeting.

Communications Committee Report

Trever Belnap, chair of the Communications Committee, Megan Mulcahy, Director of Communications for Potatoes USA, and Heather Campbell, Digital Marketing Manager for Potatoes USA, shared how the Communications team works alongside the staff to amplify and share the work Potatoes USA is doing to multiple different stakeholders. Their presentation concluded with a high-level budget allocation.

Finance and Policy Committee Report

Monica Heath, CFO at Potatoes USA, and Wendy Dykstra, Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee, shared the FY26 financial review, assessment rate history, and the FY27 budget proposal.

Budget Approval and Board Business

Wendy Dykstra made a **MOTION** to approve keeping the FY27 assessment rate at 3 cents per hundred weight. The motion was seconded, there was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Wendy Dykstra made a **MOTION** to approve \$37,000 in special project funding for Production Research to continue trials in Cuba. The motion was seconded, there was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Wendy Dykstra made a **MOTION** to approve the FY27 budget as presented. The motion was seconded, there was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Blair Richardson presented the 2026-2027 Strategic Plan.

Dave Masser made a **MOTION** to approve the FY27 Strategic Plan updates made by the Operating Committees during the December Planning and Winter meetings. The motion was seconded, there was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Blair shared the suggested with caucus topics and instructions for the caucus meetings

Suspension

Chairman Steve Elfering suspended the meeting at 4:24PM

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Welcome

Chairman Steve Elfering reconvened the meeting at 8:18 AM

Antitrust Statement

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LixCap Report

Matthew Meredith and Emmett Stinson with LixCap, shared results from the Africa Market Assessment, noting that in 2040, nearly 1 in 4 people on the planet will be living in Africa, emphasizing the importance of exports to the continent.

Nominations and Elections

Blair Richardson informed the Board that, based on guidance from the USDA, no nominations or elections should be conducted at this time, as the nominees for the 2026–2027 term—representing one-third of the Board—have not yet been appointed. As a result, all current committee members, committee chairs, and Executive Committee positions will remain in place until the Summer meeting, allowing sufficient time for the Secretary to complete the appointment process. There were no questions or comments.

Caucus Reports

The seven caucuses provided reports on regional challenges, including impacts of imported potatoes and potato products, and discussed changes to the format of the Strategy Planning and Winter Board meetings. The presentations concluded with any opportunities or challenges they foresee in exporting potatoes and potato products to Africa, and what the most significant opportunity or industry need is over the next decade.

Break

At 9:22 AM, the meeting was suspended for a break. At 9:48 AM, Chairman Steve Elfering reconvened the meeting.

CEO Report

Blair Richardson, CEO of Potatoes USA, shared an update on the Seed to Table feasibility study. The feasibility study RFP will be issued by March 31, 2026. Blair explained there will be meetings and communications with the industry over the next six months to discuss needs and long-term goals for the project. Results from the feasibility study will be presented by Spring or Summer 2027. Blair then explained the current U.S. economic landscape and defined a K-shaped economy, discussing its impact on the potato industry. He concluded with seed export case

studies for Egypt and Guatemala, highlighting the opportunities of exporting seed potatoes to other countries.

Travis Meacham made a **MOTION** to continue investigating seed export opportunities in Africa. The motion was seconded, there was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Announcements

Recognition was given to John Lundeen, Director of Research for Potatoes USA, for his tenure and contributions to the potato industry.

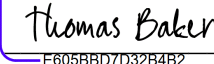
Closed Session

There was no need for a closed session

Adjourn

Chairman Steve Elfering adjourned the meeting at 10:31 AM

Approved by:

Signed by:  C74363C3E81340D...	7/28/2026
Chairperson	Date
Signed by:  E605BBD7D32B4B2...	7/28/2026
Secretary/Treasurer	Date