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## **Record-Breaking Attendance, Inspiring Speakers Drive Excitement at POTATO EXPO 2012**

**ORLANDO, Fla.** – More than 1,500 potato growers and industry leaders from across the United States and a dozen countries turned out for POTATO EXPO 2012, held January 5-7, 2012, in Orlando, Fla. The largest meeting of its kind in North America, POTATO EXPO 2012 featured 130 companies in its sold-out tradeshow, which showcased cutting-edge products representing the entire spectrum of industry innovations.

“This annual event is about more than the number of participants; it's about the bottom line. POTATO EXPO 2012 offered attendees state-of-the-art solutions and information to increase the efficiency and productivity of their operations,” said Klaren and Cheryl Koopin, POTATO EXPO 2012 steering committee co-chairs and owners of Koopin Farms in American Falls, Idaho. “It also provided a unique networking forum for industry members to develop lasting connections that will grow their businesses for years – and decades – to come.”

POTATO EXPO 2012 represented the "who's who" of the North American potato industry, and included 20 breakout sessions featuring experts from the potato industry, agriculture and academic communities. The speakers and panelists informed attendees on the latest advances, research and issues facing the chipping, fresh, process and seed sectors.

The general sessions featured some of the most respected authorities in the business, marketing and political fields. Former Continental Airlines CEO Gordon Bethune described to attendees what it took to take his company from worst to first. Addressing the Thursday, January 5 POTATO EXPO breakfast and general session audience, he said, "Success is many things, but in business, it means 'Does your business beat the competition?' There's no excuse for not showing up with a product. What gets measured and awarded gets done."

During the lunch general session, keynote speaker and former Governor of Florida Jeb Bush presented four issues for the country to address: 1) How to create a patriotic energy security policy; 2) The need for an immigration policy that is faithful to our nation's heritage; 3) The challenge of unshackling U.S. ingenuity and capitalism for future growth and prosperity; and, 4) Transforming our public education system to reward the talents and successes of teachers and students.

Sustainability was discussed during the final general session of the first day. The panel included Wada Farms' CEO Bob Meek, The Kroger Company's VP of Produce Reggie Griffin (retired), Black Gold Farms' Executive VP of Technology Eric Halverson, Frito-Lay's Senior Group Manager for North America Agro Operations Gerhard Bester, WHB Farms' Farm Manager Eli Wollman, and McCain Foods' Director for Crop Improvement for North America Leigh Morrow. The panel presented ideas and examples of how their organizations define and demonstrate sustainability, and work together as supply chain partners in communicating their successes to their customers.

At the Friday, January 6 general session and breakfast, former White House Executive Chef Walter Scheib entertained conference attendees with his experiences gained from his 11 years of service to the Clinton and Bush families. His insights offered special and unique glimpses into the lives of these first families during the 1990s and early 2000s.

In the closing general session, Phil Lempert, "The Supermarket Guru ®" and leading food industry analyst, journalist and trend-watcher, demonstrated how the produce department is leading the charge with new choices in consumer products focused on health and wellness. He also moderated a consumer panel of six guests, discussing potatoes, shopping, recipes, convenience and meal preparation.

Photos of POTATO EXPO 2012 are available at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/potatoexpo/>.

POTATO EXPO 2013 will be held January 9-11, 2013, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada. More information is available at [www.potato-expo.com](http://www.potato-expo.com).

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