

14.1 Executive Summary*

Agriculture plays a fundamental role in Idaho's economy and community, and for many is a way of life. Idaho ranks as the third-largest agricultural state in the nation, with 25,000 farms and ranches producing over 185 different commodities (ISDA). Elmore County is one of the largest counties in the State of Idaho with approximately 2 million acres of land, and is one of the top 10 producers in Idaho with over \$429 million dollars contributing to the market, with over 340 farms, ranches and dairies. Though there is little to no agricultural-designated land within the city limits of Mountain Home, Elmore County—where Mountain Home is the largest city—is full of agricultural land.

14.2 CURRENT CONDITIONS

Elmore County is made up of a multitude of terrains consisting of mostly public owned land and farmland. The county is 60% mountainous, and 40% sloping land, down into the Snake River Plain, with altitudes ranging from 2,500 feet to over 9,700 feet above sea level.

CLIMATE

Mountain Home is characterized as a semi-arid desert landscape with sagebrush steppe as the dominant native plant. Temperatures may reach 105°F in the middle of summer, with a low winter temperature of 20°F. Wind is a major concern in Mountain Home as there is a corridor between the Owyhee Mountain Range to the southwest and the Boise National Forest to the north-northeast.

14.3 SOCIAL & ECONOMIC PROFILE

The agricultural industry in plays an important role in Mountain Home and Elmore County. Major crops in the area include:

POTATOES

Potatoes are Idaho's largest commodity. Over 315,000 acres of potatoes were planted in Idaho in 2017.

SUGARBEETS

Sugarbeets are known as Idaho's fourth most valuable crop. Idaho ranks second in the nation for its production of sugarbeets.

BEANS

Idaho's seeds for dry edible beans and garden beans are considered the best and most disease free in the world. Dry beans and peas in Elmore County contribute over \$32 million to Idaho's economy (USDA).



Photo credit: Mountain Home 4H Club



Photo credit: Realtor.com



Photo credit: Mountain Home 4H Club

*This Chapter is excerpted from a comprehensive narrative with citations attached as **Appendix L**.

OTHER MAJOR CROPS IN THE AREA INCLUDE:

VARIOUS FORAGE (hay & haylage)

Forage is land used for all hay and haylage, grass silage and green chop, often either a blend used for livestock grazing, or harvested as feed. This includes forage grown for livestock, alfalfa hay, and corn for silage or green chop.

WHEAT

All of the wheat planted in Idaho totaled 1.19 million acres (ISDA). Wheat is one of the largest commodities in Elmore County.

ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTORS

The animal husbandry sector, or livestock, is another important agricultural economic driver in Mountain Home and Elmore County. Livestock types include cattle/calves; goats of varying species; sheep and lamb; and swine/pigs.



Photo credit: Brad Stokes



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14.4 SPECIAL AGRICULTURE

BEE CITY, USA AND MONARCH CITY, USA

In 2018, the UI Extension Elmore County Office in Mountain Home realized the need to protect our pollinators and create a habitat necessary for their survival. The Extension Educator, obtained Mountain Home City Council's assistance in approving Mountain Home becoming a Bee City USA affiliate. The Extension also promoted the Pollinator Protection Policy for the City of Mountain Home. Later in 2019, the UI Extension went before the Mountain Home City Council for Mountain Home to become a Monarch City USA affiliate. All three resolutions were approved, and Mountain Home became the most pollinator cautious town in Elmore County.

There are currently street signs at both entrances of town that show that Mountain Home is not only a Bee City USA, but also a Monarch City USA. To further improve the conditions for our pollinators, the City of Mountain Home and the UI Extension Elmore County Office has handed out over 100 showy milkweed plants to the public and holds the annual event "Pollinator Appreciation Day". This event spreads awareness about our pollinators by offering the public educational information, locally harvested honey-based foods and free activities that promote our pollinators.



Monarch butterfly around a showy milkweed plant. Photo credit: The Xerces Society.

14.5 AGRICULTURAL HAZARDS: Noxious Weeds



Noxious weeds are an epidemic not only in Elmore County, but in all of Idaho. They are not only harmful and sometimes poisonous to humans, but also for many domesticated grazing animals and wildlife. Unfortunately many are pleasing to the eye which can increase the danger of the species being spread by people. Idaho code 02.06.22 lists 67 species of plants as noxious weeds (Elmore County). Elmore County works with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in efforts to try and control or eradicate the presence of Noxious Weeds in Elmore County. Early Detection and Rapid Response methods are used by the Noxious Weed Superintendent in Elmore County in response to newly discovered weed species.



14.6 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

UI Extension Elmore County Master Gardeners

The University of Idaho Extension Elmore County Office in Mountain Home utilizes university resources to assist farmers, ranchers and community members with their agricultural and horticultural needs. The Extension Educator teaches a twelve-week course for the home gardener. The class educates community members on horticulture and all the aspects that make a "Master Gardener". The course requires 30 hours of volunteer hours. The course is designed not only to assist the home gardener, but also assist the community.

14.7 FUTURE: Agricultural Trends and Projections

According the 2017 Census of Agriculture performed by the USDA, on average, the number of farms in and around Mountain Home is declining for every crop. However, the harvested amount of the crop is remaining the same or increasing. The UI Extension Elmore County Office in Mountain Home believes this may be due to small/family-owned farms being sold in the recent years. Bigger agricultural conglomerates use expensive and newly developed technology as well as harvesting techniques/machinery that may outcompete smaller farming operations.

There are also many new up and coming farmers in Elmore County that are contributing to the agricultural economy. As of 2017, there were 90 new farms with 117 new and beginning producers contributing to 67,848 acres in new farmland.

14.8 GOAL 1

Increase agricultural productivity through newly developed technological advances that decrease inputs and increase yields for all crops grown in Elmore County

- A. Gather information from interested parties to develop a Stakeholder group to generate further interest.
- B. Host classes that have 1 on 1 education in required technologies.

14.9 GOAL 2

Address potential infrastructure needs across Mountain Home and the Area of Impact to attract more agricultural commodities and companies, or grower-owned cooperatives.

- A. Access Stakeholder groups to identify needs and determine ways to address.
- B. Involve the agricultural community including educators, and school groups and organizations (such as 4H) to work on goal as a project.

