

Irrigated Agriculture: Growing Food for Families

Since the late 1800s, the Columbia and Snake rivers have provided a lifeline to farmers throughout the Northwest. Irrigation has brought agricultural prosperity to vast arid areas of the region and nurtured a large agricultural and food-processing industry, a benefit to Northwest families. River transportation is important for getting agricultural products from every Northwest state to market.

Northwest Farming

- Six percent of the yearly runoff in the Columbia River Basin is diverted to irrigate about 7.8 million acres.
- There are over 6 million irrigated acres of farmland in the arid inland Pacific Northwest.
- Idaho has the most irrigated acreage in the region, with over 3 million acres under irrigation at any given time. Washington irrigates 1.8 million acres and Oregon 1.7 million acres.
- Farmers in arid parts of eastern Washington, northeastern Oregon, and southern Idaho produce a wide variety of crops. Once known primarily for dry-land wheat production, these farmers now grow corn, potatoes, peas, alfalfa, apples, and grapes, thanks to irrigation water from the Columbia and Snake rivers.
- Close to 90 percent of Idaho's potatoes are grown on 110,000 acres of irrigated land on the Snake River.
- Greater irrigation efficiency has decreased water use 10-25 percent/acre in the last decade.



Irrigated Agriculture Brings Economic Benefits

- The net value of irrigated agriculture to all western states is \$60 billion.
- Annual net earned income from agricultural production in the Northwest states exceeds \$8 billion.
- Pacific Northwest food processing is the third-largest manufacturing sector, with annual revenues of \$17 billion and more than 100,000 employees.

- Food processing is the largest manufacturing employment sector in the state of Idaho. It is the third-largest in Washington, and the fourth-largest in Oregon.
- The net direct value to the economy of one-acre foot of water used for irrigation is \$60 to \$90. The Columbia Basin Project in eastern Washington alone supplies about 2.6 million acre-feet of water per year.

River Transportation Moves Farm Products

- Wheat growers in all Northwest states depend on the Columbia and Snake river system to transport their product. At least 99 percent of the wheat exported from Montana through the Pacific Northwest travels on the river system.
- Over 70 percent of Idaho's wheat is exported, mostly via the Columbia and Snake river system. Idaho-grown barley, peas, and lentils also travel to market on the river.
- The Columbia and Snake river system is the country's #1 wheat export gateway and the #1 barley export gateway. River transportation keeps 700,000 carbon-producing trucks off highways each year.

Northwest RiverPartners is a partnership of farmers, electric utilities, ports, and large and small businesses in the Pacific Northwest. We are dedicated to ensuring the Columbia and Snake remain living, working rivers to benefit families and businesses in the region.

www.nwrivernpartners.org

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