



# INDUSTRY FLOCKED TO FLORIDA FOR 2025 POTATO EXPO

Show hits consistent stride with event being the second largest in event's 17-year history

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common'Tater*

For two years running, Potato Expo has broken attendance records, with the 2025 event, January 9-10, in Orlando, Florida, attracting more than

200 exhibitors and 2,170 attendees, making it the second largest in the show's 17-year history. Potato Expo 2024 broke all attendance records

in Austin, Texas.

Originally scheduled for Las Vegas, when the contracted hotel in Nevada went under construction, the National Potato Council, which plans the event each year, pivoted, and with just under a year to prepare, landed the Orlando World Center Marriott to play host in 2025.

Potato Expo is the largest conference and trade show for the potato industry in North America, bringing together U.S. and international growers, manufacturers, suppliers, industry experts, and value chain partners all under one roof.

The industry throws its full weight behind the show, with Potatoes



**Left:** The second-busiest Potato Expo in its 17-year history included plenty of Breakout Sessions covering topics relevant to the industry, such as a presentation by Mike Conway, director of strategic accounts and global operations for Nutrien Ag Solutions, titled "Potatoes & Progress: Applying Future Fertilizer Insights and Technologies to Today's Farms."



USA holding its Winter Meeting in conjunction with Potato Expo, in the same venue and for three days leading up to the event.

Affiliated business gatherings include the National Fry Processing Meeting, Potato Sustainability Alliance General Meeting, the Alliance for Potato Research & Education (APRE) Board

Meeting, and the National Chip Program Grower Meeting.

Providing full Potatoes USA reports during the Winter Meeting are the Consumer; Retail; Market Development/Foodservice; Culinary; Finance & Policy; Production Research; Communications;

*continued on pg. 18*

**Above:** Lucas Wysocki, chairman of the United Potato Growers of America (UPGA), welcomed a packed hall to the annual Potato Business Summit, a comprehensive economic and market analysis of the global and North American potato industry. Others from Wisconsin who have chaired the UPGA in its 20-year history are Russell Wysocki, Dick Okray and Brian Bushman. In addition, Louis Wysocki was a founding member of the UPGA.



**CONVEYOR LINE**



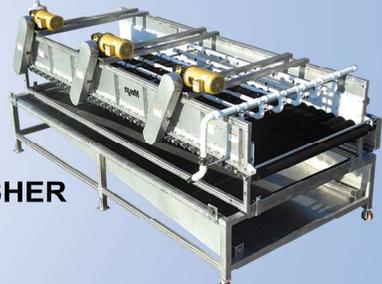
**LOADING SYSTEM**



**ROLLER GRADING TABLE**



**WEB BELT SIZER**



**BRUSH WASHER**





## 2025 Potato Expo . . .

*continued from pg. 17*

and Nutrition & Health committees; as well as the Seed Task Force.

Potatoes USA Chief Marketing Officer Kim Breshears said global demand for potatoes is expected to remain strong in 2025 and beyond, with a shifting dietary focus toward convenient, ready-to-eat foods due to urbanization and population growth.

Thanks to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) grants, Potatoes USA has funding to explore export markets and expansion opportunities. One grant alone was for \$6,500,000.

### CULINARY IMMERSIONS

Just a few of the focused marketing initiatives Potatoes USA has undertaken over the past year include Innovation Sessions; educational webinars; Culinary Immersions, including one in New Orleans and another in Denver, in the Spud Lab—the first non-professional medical program to train culinary medicine professionals; and a Food Ovation event in Sand Valley, Idaho, to meet with food operators.

With a mission to “Strengthen Demand for Potatoes,” Potatoes USA’s goal is to “Get more people eating more potatoes in more ways.”



**Above:** Monica Heath (left) and Wendy Dykstra (right) gave a Finance & Policy Committee report during the Potatoes USA Winter Meeting, which took place prior to Potato Expo and in the same venue.

To achieve that goal, the national marketing and research organization is focused globally on Gen Z, using social media, online influencers and “AmbassaTaters” to reach targeted audiences.

Team Potato held a contest and selected one “Speedy Spud” runner to race in a handmade potato costume at the event of their choice. The first-ever Speedy Spud—Izzy Aguiar—competed in the Dallas Half Marathon, taking eighth place in her age group with a time of 1 hour, 39 minutes.

Potatoes USA chefs Aurora Hollenbeck and R.J. Harvey were able to land a meeting with Starbucks executives and present a couple potato-centric recipes as potential afternoon snack menu items.

“Just to get in the door at the second-largest restaurant association in the United States is monumental,” Chef Harvey said. “We’re waiting with bated breath to see if we’ll have a potato offering at Starbucks.”

Potatoes USA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Blair Richardson challenged the Culinary Committee to have a recipe go viral, and one that was posted recently and is now on <https://potatogoodness.com> got more than 1 million online views.

“In the last year, we’ve probably implemented more programs and initiatives than we ever have in the



In his presentation “AI’s Impact on the Potato Industry,” Ron Green, founder and chief technology officer of KUNGFU.AI, explored the groundbreaking intersection of AI and agriculture, saying technology is reshaping the landscape of the potato industry.

18 BC’T February



Jay Warner (left) of Warner Packaging and Russell Wysocki (right), Wysocki Family of Companies, talk shop with Sarah and Daniel Mueller (center) of Volm Companies during the 2025 Potato Expo.

past,” Richardson said. “AI [artificial intelligence] was a leap of faith, but we are the first commodity board in the U.S. to successfully create our own AI system, and we have a strong case to patent it.”

**PROACTIVE AI**

The team at Potatoes USA is using AI to scan social media and other news outlets for misinformation about potatoes and generate draft responses containing facts about the vegetable’s health benefits. The drafts are reviewed by the marketing team before being shared with editors and social media.

Richardson introduced Cedric Porter, owner and managing editor of World Potato Markets, saying, “I consider Cedric to be the foremost expert on international trade.”

In his overview of the global potato market, Porter mentioned that some of the industry’s largest processing plants—McCain Foods, Simplot and Agristo—are planning expansions in the United States.

During the Potato Expo media breakfast early Thursday morning, National Potato Council CEO Kam Quarles stated, “Attendees matter to us, but the substance of the event counts. Every segment of the complex industry is here. We’re thrilled by what we see on the Potato Expo show floor.”

Just prior to the opening of Potato Expo each year is the well-attended Potato Business Summit, a comprehensive economic and market analysis of the global and North American potato industry.

The Potato Business Summit is a joint effort between the United Potato Growers of America (UPGA), United Potato Growers of Canada, and Potato Marketing Association of North America (PMANA).

Lucas Wysocki, chairman of the UPGA, welcomed a packed hall for the Potato Business Summit. Others

*continued on pg. 20*

*“AI [artificial intelligence] was a leap of faith, but we are the first commodity board in the U.S. to successfully create our own AI system, and we have a strong case to patent it.”*

**– Blair Richardson**  
Potatoes USA CEO



**1994 Lenco Model 65-INCH**  
4-Row Self-Propelled Air Head Harvester



**1998 4-ROW SELF PROPELLED**  
Air Head Harvester



Various Legend Trailers  
in Stock



**DEMCO 650** Grain Cart



Various Tillage Options



**SPUDNIK 48”** Eliminator  
w/Grading Table & Stingers

**Proud Dealer of:** **New & Used Sales Service • Repair**

2731 Maple Drive • Plover, WI 54467 • 715-344-3401 • Toll Free: 1-888-696-4019

**www.bigironequipment.com**

## 2025 Potato Expo . . .

continued from pg. 19

from Wisconsin who have chaired the UPGA in its 20-year history are Russell Wysocki, Dick Okray and Brian Bushman. In addition, Louis Wysocki was a founding member of the UPGA.

Dale Lathim, executive director of PMANA, said, "I've been a part of all 35 of these Potato Business Summits, and this is some of the best information you'll get anywhere in one spot."

### SUMMIT PRESENTATIONS

Presenters at the 2025 Potato Business Summit included Micah Scanga, business manager for AMVAC; Steve Nicholson of Rabobank, who gave his anticipated annual Economic Outlook; Porter who presented a European Market Update; and Breshears who provided a Consumer/Frozen Market Overview.

Steve Elfering of 1,4GROUP suggested potato storage solutions for growers/shippers/packers, and UPGA President and CEO Mark Klompfen rounded out the offerings with a "Fresh Potato Market Outlook."

Nicholson said, "Growers have always produced enough food to feed everyone in the world. You have a calling to feed people. But politics,



population, distribution and price are challenges. Birthrates are going down. I'm more concerned about that than whether we can feed 10 billion people by 2050."

"In agriculture, we benefit from free trade," Nicholson continued. "Where does the President's power begin and stop with tariffs? Immigration is also a huge issue. We need that labor in the ag industry."

He went on to state that the U.S. dollar is showing strength against nearly all currencies and the economy is strong, but it's going to cost the European Union, Brazil, Japan and Canada to buy our goods.

"It's a very delicate balancing act

**Above:** Steve Tatro (left) of T.I.P., Inc. stopped to visit WPVGA Director of Promotions and Consumer Education Dana Rady (right) at the Wisconsin Certified Seed Potatoes booth during Potato Expo.

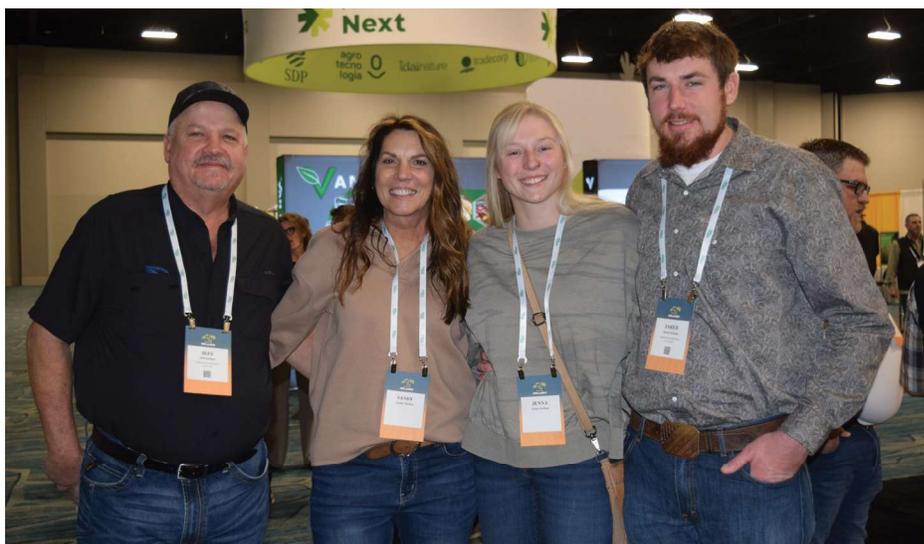
we're in," Nicholson stated, "but there are good signs. Inflation is down under 3% now, and income is up. Consumer spending is up, and unemployment is historically very low. We're still producing 200,000 jobs a month."

Over the course of Porter's Potato Business Summit presentation, he introduced David Prior Hope, chief technology officer (CTO) and founder of Vibe, a London-based company that has developed the world's first

continued on pg. 22



A popular featured speaker at the Potato Business Summit each year, Cedric Porter, owner and editor of World Potato Markets, provided a European market update for attendees of the meeting.



It was all in the family at Potato Expo for the Suchon's of Bushman's Riverside Ranch, including, from left to right, Jeff, Sandy, Jenna and Jared, who drove to Orlando from Wisconsin.



**Above Left:** “The Happy Potato Showdown” cooking competition teams included 2024 Top Spud, Mike Carter (second from right) of Bushmans’ Inc., and his teammate Shelley Olsen (right), L.J. Olsen, Inc., versus Becky Eddy (second from left), University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Colin Szawlowski (left) from Valley Spud LLC, against a third team comprised of Grant Morris, Schneider Farms, and Adam Weber of Weber Farms. Potatoes USA Executive Sous Chef Aurora Hollenbeck stands behind them overseeing the competition.

**Above Right:** Enjoying themselves at the Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association (WSPIA) & WPVGA Chip Committee annual reception are, from left to right, Craig Uhlenbrauck and Guy Kiser of Miron Construction, and John Pluta and Matt Sipiorski from Excel Engineering.



1,4GROUP CEO Steve Elfering, who is on the Potatoes USA Promotion Board and chairs the Communications Committee, discussed “Advances in Potato Storage & Treatment” at the Potato Business Summit.



## Discover the ultimate potato stacking & palletizing solutions.

Do you need the ability to accumulate boxes with multiple SKUs?

Scan the QR to watch our flagship machine VPM-VHV stack pallets at blistering speeds or visit [verbruggen-palletizing.com](https://verbruggen-palletizing.com)



**Verbruggen**  
Palletizing Solutions

## 2025 Potato Expo . . .

continued from pg. 20



textile fiber from potato harvest waste, specifically the stems of plants.

“We’re changing potato stems into textile thread for the clothing industry,” Hope explained. “By 2030, the demand for eco-textiles is expected to exceed supply by 133 million tonnes. We believe the answer lies in ag commodities, specifically potato stems.”

### POTATO TEXTILE FIBERS

“We calculated that 150 million tonnes of stems are discarded annually. We can turn them into

textile fibers and meet sustainability targets. We’ve already partnered with Grimme to develop the first potato stem harvester,” he added. “Growers have reported no land or field damage.”

“We’ve raised \$2.8 million in funding and are building a pilot production facility,” Hope concluded.

In addition to an exhibition hall filled with exhibitors, Potato Expo has always featured expert speakers and addressed issues top-of-mind for industry professionals, including educational and business-oriented

**Above Left:** From left to right at the Wisconsin Seed and Chip Reception are Munevver Dogramaci, USDA-ARS, Laura Shannon, University of Minnesota, Jeff Endelman, University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison, and Becky Eddy, UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

**Above Right:** Tom Bulgrin (left) and Jacalynn Gumz (second from right) of Gumz Muck Farms, visit with Tim Schrank (second from left) of Nichino America, and Unal Karabulut, INTI Logistics, at the Seed and Chip Reception.

sessions held on three stages—the Expo Stage, Potato Pavilion, and Cultivation Stage.

Breakout sessions, panel discussions,



Dan Kendall of Compeer Financial Services had his name called as the lucky winner of a Wisconsin Certified Seed Potatoes shirt during the Seed and Chip Reception.



From left to right, University of Wisconsin (UW) Professor Emeritus Walt Stevenson, Larry Alsum of Alsum Farms & Produce, and Bruce Anderson, Atticus, LLC, pause for a photo in front of the Wisconsin Certified Seed Potatoes booth at Potato Expo.



“Potato Talks” and keynote addresses run concurrently with the trade show for two full days.

In his presentation, “AI’s Impact on the Potato Industry,” Ron Green, founder and CTO of KUNGFU. AI, explored the groundbreaking

intersection of AI and agriculture, saying technology is reshaping the landscape of the potato industry.

“Until now, we’ve overpromised and underdelivered on AI,” Green admitted. “Modern AI can do amazing things that mimic human

**Above:** Gathered at the Wisconsin Seed and Chip Reception are Nate Bolton (left) and Jay Warner (right) of Warner & Warner, Inc., with Jason Blenker (second from left), Wysocki Family of Companies, and Paul Salm (second from right), BMO Harris Bank.

intelligence. But as AI is to a brain, a jet is to a bird.”

*continued on pg. 24*

**WILCOX**  
AGRI-PRODUCTS

**“Just one pass and done!”**  
(Sustainability)

Come see us at the  
**2025 WPVGA**  
**INDUSTRY SHOW!**  
February 4-6  
Stevens Point, WI

**DON'T MISS OUT!**

One tractor, One tool, One operator  
One pass, and One great finish!!!

“We’ve never done that good, nothing we have on the ranch could give us this great finish!” -J.W. Mattek & Sons

HOME GROWN  
WISCONSIN  
POTATOES

Scan for video!

WILCOX AGRI-PRODUCTS (916)776-1784 | Find us on Facebook & Instagram! @wilcoxagriproducts



He then went on to explain an AI system's ability to learn, plan, and schedule, and summarized machine learning, deep learning, robotics and "automated reasoning."

Where AI is currently being utilized in the potato industry is in identifying plant stress, estimating potato yields, and fighting misinformation, such as the AI system the company created for Potatoes USA to scan social media and other news outlets for misinformation about potatoes and generate draft responses.

During a grower panel titled "The Future of Technology in Potato Production," Mike Wenkel, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the National Potato Council, Tom Ryan, president of RD Offutt Company, Steve Gangwish, president and CEO

of CSS Farms, and Josh Reeves, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for Walther Farms, also explored cutting-edge technologies transforming potato production.

#### PREDICTIVE AI

"What's gotten me most excited about AI," Ryan said, "is that we've moved from reporting data to being more predictive, which prevents losses and helps savings. The speed in which AI is evolving is exciting for such things as managing individual varieties in individual fields."

In "Treat Them Early, Treat Them Right," Chad Reynolds, North American sales manager for 1,4GROUP, discussed potato storage management strategies and proactive approaches to understanding varieties and how each of them store.

**Left:** Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association Executive Director Tamas Houlihan (left) chats with Randy Fleishauer, Plover River Farms Alliance, Inc., at Potato Expo.

**Right:** The 2025 Potato Expo attracted more than 200 exhibitors, including Allan Equipment Manufacturing Ltd. from Canada, and 2,170 attendees.

Reynolds went over late nitrogen applications, harvest conditions that affect potato physiology, dormancy management tools, and optimal storage crop protection applications.

"After harvest, potatoes are still living, breathing things. Understand what's going on with your potatoes before they get to storage," he suggested, "and understand that the first 30-45 days in storage are when quality issues occur—sprouting, pressure bruising, and shrinkage through respiration, among others."

One group of panelists was more than happy to report on "Maintaining and Enhancing Export Market Access for U.S. Potatoes."

"We're no long talking about opening Mexico to the U.S. fresh potato market, but rather maintaining and enhancing access," Quarles said. The National Potato Council CEO was joined by Breshears, Matt Lantz, senior vice president of global access for Bryant Christie, and Luis Moreno, CEO of Grupo PM.



Chad Reynolds, North American sales manager for 1,4GROUP, presented "Treat Them Early, Treat Them Right" covering potato storage management strategies and proactive approaches to understanding varieties and how they store.



“Now we’re building demand for U.S. potatoes in Mexico,” Quarles added. “This was one of the longest-running trade disputes, in attempting to get the market open, in U.S. history.”

Breshears said, “I don’t see any reason why we can’t double potato exports to Mexico in the next five years. We saw 63% growth in our second year sending fresh potatoes

to Mexico. The opportunity is great and Mexico’s proximity to the U.S. is ideal. Our next market access issue is Japan.”

**POTATO TALKS**

Breakout sessions and Potato Talks covered topics such as trade; tariffs; neonicotinoid use and regulation;

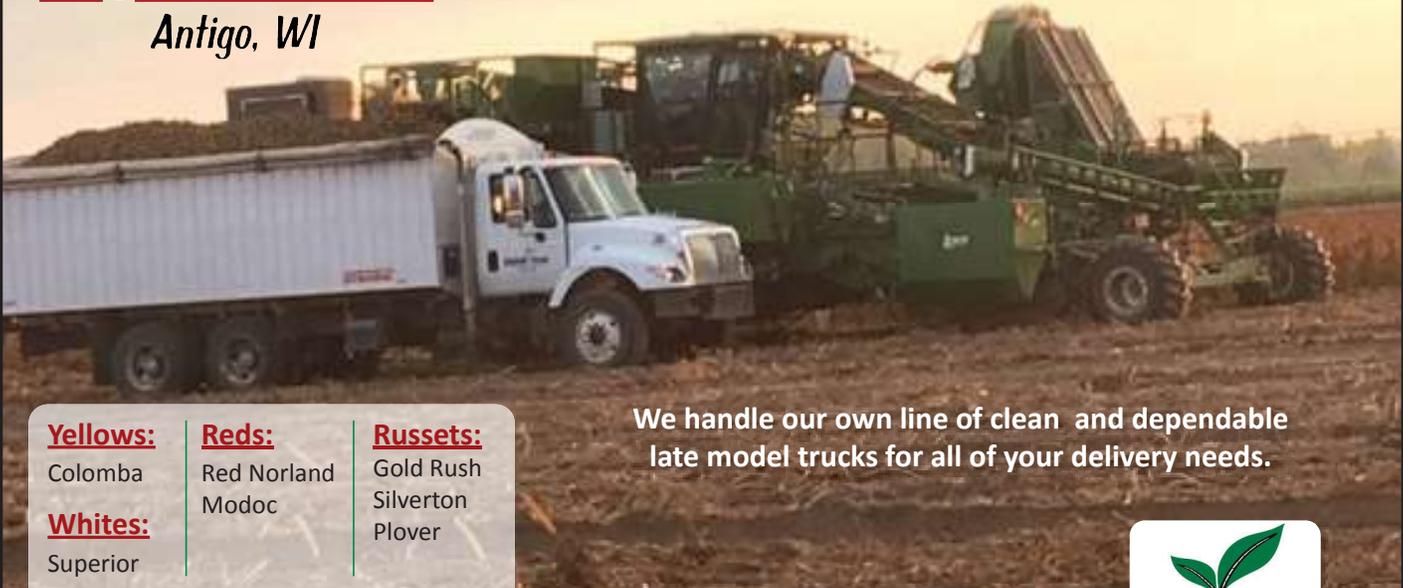
*continued on pg. 26*

**Above:** In a Friday afternoon Breakout Session titled “Maintaining and Enhancing Export Market Access for U.S Potatoes,” panelists discussed steps being taken every day to increase demand for potatoes in Mexico and the importance of keeping the market open into the future. The panelists are, from left to right, Matt Lantz, senior vice president of global access at Bryant Christie; Potatoes USA Chief Marketing Officer Kim Breshears; Luis Moreno, CEO of Grupo PM; and National Potato Council CEO Kam Quarles.



***Baginski Farms***  
Antigo, WI

*Quality Growers of Foundation and Certified Seed Potatoes for Over 50 Years!*



<b>Yellows:</b> Colomba	<b>Reds:</b> Red Norland Modoc	<b>Russets:</b> Gold Rush Silverton Plover
<b>Whites:</b> Superior		

We handle our own line of clean and dependable late model trucks for all of your delivery needs.



**WISCONSIN  
CERTIFIED  
SEED POTATOES**

N3502 Hwy H • Antigo, WI 54409  
Office: 715-627-7753 • Fax: 715-623-5412 • [mike@baginskifarms.com](mailto:mike@baginskifarms.com)



**Ag Logistics Inc**  
DIVISION OF BAGINSKI FARMS

## 2025 Potato Expo . . .

continued from pg. 25

dietary guidelines and federal nutrition program regulations; late blight; advancing germplasm improvement in the U.S. with true potato seed breeding; glyphosates; and the Environmental Protection Agency's implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

Direct tuber testing was discussed as a viable option for seed certification, as were topics such as succession planning, the U.S. ag labor policy, and building bridges between agriculture and consumers.

"The Happy Potato Showdown" cooking competition on the Expo Stage, hosted by Chefs Harvey and Hollenbeck and sponsored by The Little Potato Company, was a popular attraction, pitting teams against each other who cooked potato dishes

before a live audience and a panel of judges.

Teams included the 2024 Top Spud, Mike Carter of Bushmans' Inc., and his teammate Shelley Olsen of L.J. Olsen, Inc. versus Becky Eddy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Colin Szawlowski of Valley Spud LLC, against a third team comprised of Grant Morris, Schneider Farms, and Adam Weber of Weber Farms.

The winners—Carter and Olsen—used their culinary expertise to create a delicious dish that included a bed of sauteed onions and peppers topped with mashed Little Potato Company Creamer potatoes and garlic butter shrimp, then drizzled with hot honey and melted butter.

To work off some of the potato-centric food at Expo, runners and casual walkers participated in the Potato LEAF (Leadership, Education, and Advancement Foundation) 5K Fun Run supporting efforts at "growing people who grow potatoes." One runner completed the 5K in full potato costume regalia.

The fun didn't stop there, as the 2025 Potato Expo included numerous networking opportunities, such as the "Flock to Florida Welcome Reception," Kick-Off Reception with a live auction to benefit Potato LEAF, daily happy hours, beer gardens, baked potato and salad bars, "Totally Tater Trivia" and an "Anchors Aweigh After Party."

The Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association & WPVGA Chip Committee held their annual reception at the Orlando World Center Marriott following Potato Expo, Thursday evening, with refreshments, door prizes, crackers, cheese and shrimp appetizers, networking and fun.

University of Wisconsin (UW) Professor Emeritus Walt Stevenson once again did the honors of emceeding the event and announcing winners of door prizes.

Potato Expo serves as a forum to foster collaboration between national and state potato associations, as well as the rest of the industry.

Potato Expo 2026 will be held January 6-8 at the Gaylord Texan in Dallas. More information is available by visiting [www.potato-expo.com](http://www.potato-expo.com). **BCT**



**Jay-Mar, Inc.** Jay-Mar can give you that edge with innovative, proven technologies that help you maximize your potential this season. Visit with a Jay-Mar agronomist today.

**AmiSorb**® Protects phosphate, keeping your fertilizer available to the plant longer.

**ESN** Smart Nitrogen This polymer-coated urea maximizes nitrogen efficiency, boosts the yield potential of hybrid corn varieties and helps to minimize the impact on the environment.

**VitaTRACE** A complete, fully-chelated secondary and micronutrient formulation. It provides a synergistic, comprehensive and plant-available blend to complement liquid NPK.

**ARISTA** Fortifies fertility programs by enhancing the soil and building a more robust root mass. Contains a proprietary blend of mycorrhizae, amino acids, humic acids and carbohydrates.

**Call Wayne, Julie, Ann, Sammi, Mike and Brady today!**

**www. Jay-Mar.com**  
Plover (715) 341-3445  
**800-236-2436**