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Will the U.S. Potato Industry Step Up to the Challenge?

DENVER (January 13, 2015)—United States Potato Board (USPB) President & CEO Blair Richardson surprised attendees at the USPB-sponsored Thursday Keynote Luncheon at POTATO EXPO 2015 in Orlando, FL, January 8, 2015, with an industry challenge to install 3,000 potato-friendly salad bars in school lunch programs across the United States.

Taking to the stage following Fox News Sunday anchor and keynoter Chris Wallace and in an unprecedented move since the beginning of POTATO EXPO after eight years of USPB sponsorship of the Keynote Luncheon, USPB Chairman Brett Jensen of Brett Jensen Farms, Idaho Falls, ID, brought Richardson to the stage to issue the challenge to the entire potato industry.



The Challenge:

Put 3,000 "potato-friendly" salad bars in elementary, middle and high schools across the country over the next five years. Targeting 300 salad bars per year for five years, for every one of those 1,500 salad/potato bars donated by growers, potato industry agribusinesses or others vested in the U.S. potato industry, the USPB will match one-for-one for a total of 3,000 potato friendly salad bars installed by 2020.

But the challenge doesn't stop with the donation of the salad/potato bar, putting it in a school of the donor(s)' choice and walking away! No! For every donated salad/potato bar installed by U.S. potato industry stakeholders, the USPB will continuously work with school lunch personnel and school district nutritionists to deliver a nonstop stream of potato serving ideas, recipes and themes. Imagine the salad bars with Mexican themed potatoes for Cinco de Mayo or red, white and blue potato salad for President's Day... the possibilities are endless. The USPB will ensure schools never run out of exciting, fun—and most importantly—healthy, nutritious potato ideas students will love-- and eat! A 2014 Texas A & M Plate Waste Study said that when "comparing

fruit and vegetable consumption, it appears fruit is much more popular than vegetables...but when potato products are served (mashed potatoes, potato wedges, tater tots, etc.); just about every student chooses the vegetable.”



Why Salad Bars?

Today's kids are referred to by the media as the “Salad Generation” because they're so fresh-food focused. There are 55 million of them attending K–12 schools nationwide, and they eat over **5 billion school lunches** each year. If they eat potatoes one more time per week, that will be 3,750,000 cwt more potatoes served each year. The potato industry has a rare opportunity to be on the front lines of getting potato-friendly salad bars and potato nutrition materials in thousands of schools nationwide.

Richardson concluded his challenge with a core statement for this program, “It is government's role to help educate consumers on proper nutrition. As an instrumentality of USDA, the USBP is delivering to students, nationwide, much needed education on healthy eating and the many positive nutrition facts about potatoes, ‘America's Favorite Vegetable’.”

For additional information on the proposed challenge, please visit www.uspotatoes.com/saladbars, call the USBP Marketing Department at 303-369-7783 or email to saladbars@uspotatoes.com.

For more information on the USBP as the nation's potato marketing organization, positioned as the "catalyst for positive change," and the central organizing force in implementing programs that will increase demand for potatoes, please visit www.uspotatoes.com. In an effort to enhance diversity of the Board, USDA encourages women, younger growers, minorities, and people with disabilities to seek positions on the Board.

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David Fraser is Vice President, Industry Communications & Policy, at the United States Potato Board in Denver. The mission of the USBP is to increase demand for potatoes and potato products through an integrated promotion program, thereby providing U.S. producers with expanding markets for their production. David can be contacted at 303-369-7783 or david.fraser@uspotatoes.com. For complete information about the programs, ROI results, resources and tools available to all members of the industry through the USBP, please visit www.uspotatoes.com. *The United States Potato Board—Maximizing Return on Grower Investment.*

