

Common Tater Interview WITH:

Jeremie Pavelski



by Tamas Houlihan, Managing Editor

Name: Jeremie Pavelski
Title: Vice President/Co-Owner
Farm Name: Heartland Farms, Inc.
Location: Hancock, WI
Hometown: Amherst, WI
Current Residence: Arkdale, WI
Crops Grown/Acreage: Potatoes – 6,500 acres

Years Farming: Since childhood; Nine years full time.

Schooling: 2000 graduate of Amherst High School; 2002 graduate of North Central Technical College, Wausau, WI with Associate degree in Computer Networking; Attended business management courses at the Milwaukee School of Engineering

Activities/Organizations: Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) Board of Directors; WPVGA Chip Committee Chair; WPVGA Irrigation Task Force Co-Chair; NPC Board of Directors; NPC Water and Endangered Species Co-Chair; USPB Chip Committee; Adams County Rural and Industrial Development Commission.

Awards/Honors: WPVGA Young Grower of the Year – 2011; WPVGA Industry Appreciation Award – 2010; Frito-Lay National Supplier of the Year - 2009; Frito-Lay North Central Supplier of the Year – 2008; Potato Industry Leadership Institute Graduate - 2006; Portage County Leadership Institute Graduate – 2008.

Family: Parents: Barb and Dick Pavelski; Fiancée: Alicia Williams; Sisters: Michelle Peariso and Andria Davisson

Hobbies: Boating, Computers, Skiing, Biking, Enjoying the outdoors.

Heartland Farms, Inc. is a 14,000 acre irrigated potato and vegetable farm, specializing in chipping potatoes. Headquartered in Hancock, Wisconsin, this fifth generation farm was settled in 1873 by August Pavelski, great-grandfather of current President Richard Pavelski.

li High School in 1967. When Dave Knights formed a partnership with Richard in 1990, he helped grow the operation to its current size of 14,000 acres. Dave's tenure with Heartland Farms has been marked by the use of innovative new technologies and the development of new agronomic and storage protocols

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In addition to being one of the nation's largest suppliers of chipping potatoes to Frito-Lay, Heartland Farms also produces Snowden, Atlantic and Pike varieties. The farm ships out of four locations: Bancroft, Amherst-Junction, Hancock and Plainfield. The farm's potato storage capacity is 3.8 million cwt. Other crops grown include sweet corn, peas, green beans and soybeans, all for processing.

Richard Pavelski grew up on the original 80-acre farm near Amherst-Junction and has been active in business since graduating from Stevens Point's Pacel-

for emerging Frito-Lay varieties.

Nearly 150 years since the farm's beginnings, Richard's son, Jeremie Pavelski, carries on the family tradition of growing top quality potatoes.

The 2011 WPVGA Young Grower of the Year, Jeremie currently serves on the WPVGA Board of Directors. He is the Chairman of the WPVGA Chip Committee and Co-chair of the WPVGA Irrigation Task Force. He is also one of three Wisconsin representatives on the National Potato Council board of direc-



Jeremie Pavelski is pictured at his desk at Heartland Farms, Inc. in Hancock, Wisconsin.

tors, while also serving on the US Potato Board's Chip Committee.

In 2010, Jeremie worked closely with the WPVGA on the EPA Tour, which is extremely valuable in demonstrating the need for certain farm practices to regulators with the EPA who otherwise would have no idea how such practices are safe and necessary for successful farming operations. He was also instrumental in helping with an off-gassing study of metam sodium which could have far-reaching implications for the potato industry throughout the US.

In the following interview, Jeremie shares his views on a number of issues critical to the potato and vegetable industry, with an emphasis on water issues, including irrigation.

How many center-pivot irrigation systems do you have on your farm? How important are these systems to your potato farming operation?

Heartland Farms operates about 100 center pivot irrigation systems. These systems are critical to potato production. Potatoes are more sensitive to stress than other crops. Without the ability to apply the proper moisture a crop needs you will see a major reduction in yield and quality. If you look

at agricultural statistics you will notice there are fewer acres of potatoes grown in Wisconsin than in the past and this is due in part to increased yields from proper water and nutrient management. To supply the ever growing population with a consistent food supply, we need to increase yields while lowering the inputs used.

What are your thoughts on high-pressure vs. low-pressure irrigation systems? What about drop nozzles?

We use low pressure systems and drop nozzles. I believe it is a very smart decision to use low pressure irrigation systems. These systems use much less energy than high pressure systems since you are using pump motors that are about half the horse power. Using drop noz-

zles allows the water to be applied closer to the ground, reducing the amount of evaporation that can take place. The goal of any irrigation system is to supply the water where it is needed.

What guidelines do you follow with regard to an irrigation or water management plan on your farm?

At Heartland Farms we follow the Wisconsin Irrigation Scheduling Program. Our team also checks the moisture by hand as well as using moisture probes. The moisture probes have been something we have been playing around with for quite a few years but until lately they have not been as consistent as required. The technology is maturing to the point the usefulness and accuracy is improving.

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Heartland Farms operates approximately 100 center pivot irrigation systems on its 14,000 acre potato and vegetable farm.

How will the new administrative rules on Water Use Fees (NR850) and Water Use Registration and Reporting (NR856) affect your farm?

I do not have a good answer for this one. There is some analysis being done by the WPVGA lobbyist Ron Kuhn on what the impact is going to be. There seems to be some inconsistency in the way the department describes calculating the fees as compared to what was

discussed in the past. There currently are discussions happening with the DNR and I am sure we will come to a resolution. As far as NR856, we have already been reporting the water usage every year for the past few years. There has been some frustration with this as well. Over the past eight years or so we have been working with the DNR to get their records of our wells up-to-date. It seems whenever we let them know of changes, they don't get the information

into their system and there are many errors. Going back to 2002, we gave the DNR a high cap well inventory and updated their records showing which wells were actually used and which ones are not in place any more. We had to provide the same information *once again* in 2004 and have been consistently giving them updates. Yet again this year I still received inaccurate well report forms from the DNR.

What do you see as the key issues facing the WPVGA in 2011 and beyond?

I would say the biggest issues are water regulation, chemical regulation, and new potato variety development. The weather is always an issue, but we can't control that.

As Chairman of the WPVGA Chip Committee, what do you see as the most critical issues facing the chip industry?

The most important one would be creating a positive image for chips. They are all natural and most people do not know that. At a promotion for Frito-Lay at the Wisconsin State Fair last year, we showed videos and told the consumers where the chips came from. I had people telling me that potatoes are manufactured, they do not come from the ground and I am an actor because there are no real growers! We also need to keep up-to-date and stay involved

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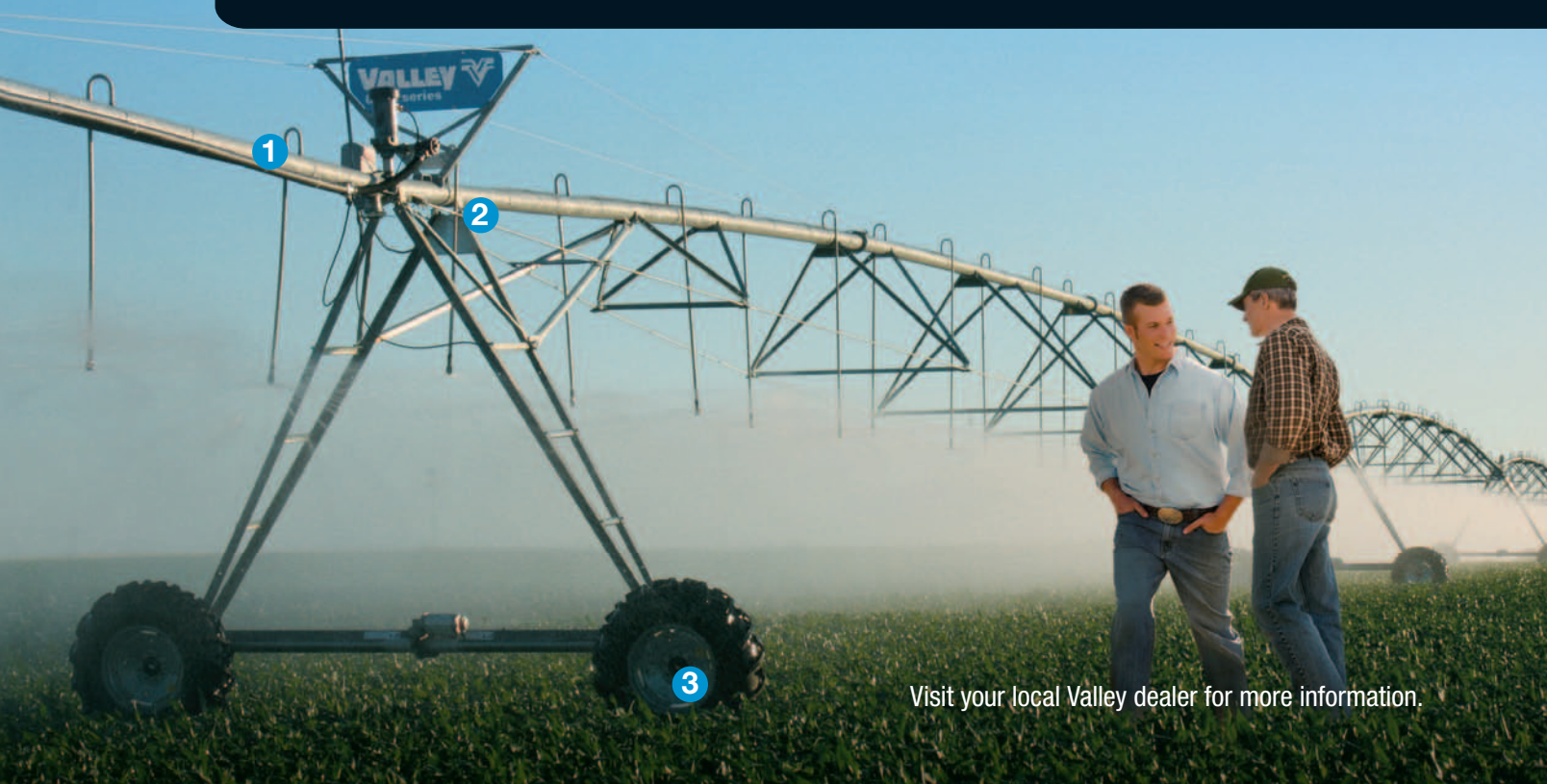


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and focused on the new regulations that are coming to the industry, specifically the new fumigant rules, NPDES rules and water use regulations.

What are your thoughts on the Producer Security Act?

The Producer Security Act is a hindrance to business in the Wisconsin potato industry. We already have the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) which provides adequate coverage for potato crops. The Producer Security Act has



Heartland Farms makes extensive use of low pressure irrigation systems along with drop nozzles which reduce evaporation.

cost the chip industry business in Wisconsin and creates a lot of paperwork. Even if you opt-out of participation there

are still tedious audits for chip growers. We would prefer the PSA be repealed for potatoes. **CT**



Jeremie Pavelski checks the control panel on one of the farm's irrigation systems. Heartland Farms uses telemetry on all of its center pivot irrigation systems.

Help Wanted: Manager

Central Wisconsin vegetable farm seeks full time working manager to oversee day-to-day operations and supervise three to 15 employees. Farm background a must. Candidates must be self-motivated with good people skills, willing to work long hours during busy seasons. Prefer someone with ag-related degree and supervisory experience. Mechanical skills helpful. Wage and benefits based on prior experience. Send resume to:

WPVGA, P.O. Box 327, Antigo, WI 54409.

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