



## **Van Buren, Maine, Grower to Lead Potatoes USA Industry Outreach Committee**

**DENVER (March 17, 2016)**—Jay LaJoie of Van Buren, ME, was elected to the Potatoes USA Executive Committee on March 17, 2016, at the organization's 44th Annual Meeting in Colorado Springs, CO. He will be serving his third year on the Board as Co-Chairman of the new Industry Outreach Committee. This will be his first year on its Executive Committee. During 2014-2016, he served as a member of the Board's Administrative Committee and on the Industry Communications and Policy Committee, which was reorganized as the Industry Outreach Committee.

LaJoie grew up on the farm and started growing his own crops in 2003 on the LaJoie family farm. This is a fifth generation farm established in Cyr Plantation, ME, in 1868. In 2007 he and his family formed LaJoie Growers, LLC of which he is a co-owner and Farm Business Manager. Russets, red, whites, yellows and blue potatoes are grown primarily for chip-stock, but also for frozen-processing, seed and table-stock. Beets are also produced for the fresh and chip market along with other miscellaneous vegetables and small grains.

"I am very passionate about the industry's potential," LaJoie says. "Our farm often implements the latest technology in farming, and we continue to improve our farming practices to promote environmental health. Agriculture is changing fast in ways of farming practices and technology. It is important to sell the fact

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that the potato itself is not only healthy, but the way it's grown contributes to a healthy environment."

LaJoie is a member of the Maine Potato Board, and serves on a seed breeding advisory committee. He was also a participant in the 2008 Potato Industry Leadership Institute. His past experience includes working for the USDA Farm Service Agency for two years in farm programs and loans. He is also a Past President of the Central Aroostook Young Farmers organization.

"At this stage in my life, I am focused on improving my family business and putting our industry on the map," LaJoie explains. "I enjoy researching new farming practices, rotation crops and potential markets for the crops in our region. LaJoie Growers is appreciative of the community in which it operates; we employ a local workforce that contributes greatly to our success. We appreciate the support we received from our local community and the State of Maine."

LaJoie holds a Bachelor's Degree in business administration from Husson University, Bangor, ME, and an Associate's Degree in agriculture business from Northern Maine Community College, Presque Isle, ME. The LaJoie family farming operation was recognized as the 2010 Maine Potato Board Farm Family of the Year. In 2013, LaJoie Growers received a grant award through the Maine Department of Agriculture "Farms for the Future" program—for its GPS and food safety initiatives. LaJoie is married to Ashley LaJoie, and they have a one year old daughter Kathryn.

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## **About Potatoes USA**

Potatoes USA is the marketing organization for the 2,500 commercial potato growers operating in the United States. We promote five main potato products: fresh table-stock potatoes, fresh chipping potatoes, seed potatoes, frozen potato products and dehydrated potato products. The National Potato Promotion Board, dba Potatoes USA, was established in 1971 by a group of potato growers to promote the benefits of eating potatoes. Today, as the largest vegetable commodity board, Potatoes USA is proud to be recognized as an innovator in the produce industry. For more information on Potatoes USA's mission to "Strengthen Demand for U.S. Potatoes" by creating positive change in the industry through innovative and inspiring approaches, please visit [PotatoesUSA.com](http://PotatoesUSA.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.