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*More than 50% of the wheat
grown in the United States is
exported. In this issue, we look at
the opportunities and challenges
of diversifying supply chains and
expanding markets throughout the
wheat industry. Story on page 16.
Photo courtesy of David Schauer.*



Against the Grain

The waiting game

Just when you think you've seen it all in farming, Mother Nature reminds us once again just exactly who's in charge.

As I pen this column, our region in northwest Minnesota is blanketed with wet, heavy snow, thanks to a historic (and very unwelcome) April blizzard. What. A. Mess. It's a fitting end – we can only hope – to a cold, long and unrelenting winter here in the Northern Plains.

It's hard to believe looking outside that, in just a few weeks (give or take), we'll head out to begin the hard work it takes to produce this year's crop. But we've been here before, as recently as last spring, which was delayed for most of us; and yet, many growers in our readership area harvested better than expected yields. Let's heed the wisdom of NDAWN Director Daryl Ritchison (by way of Mark Twain): *Weather doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme.*

On the bright side, the delayed spring has allowed me to reflect on the past few months in the wheat world, from board meetings to paperwork to in-person advocacy. We had a fantastic time at this year's Commodity Classic. I'm proud to represent Minnesota and national farmers on the National Association of Wheat Growers alongside Kevin Leiser. At this year's annual meeting at Classic,

we finalized our priorities, discussed the upcoming Farm Bill and elected a new president. I'd also like to extend my appreciation to my colleague on the checkoff side, Rhonda K. Larson, for serving U.S. wheat farmers with distinction during her term as chair of U.S. Wheat Associates (USW). Rhonda will transition to past chair at USW's summer board meeting in July in Minneapolis. She will also remain a key voice on our state checkoff board. Thank you, Rhonda!

As you'll read in this issue's cover story, the Port of Duluth-Superior is primed to return to its grain glory days. I can remember as a youngster a lot of grain heading that way. Through checkoff investments and advocacy efforts, the Great Lakes continues to be an attractive outlet for our commodities. Exports are critical to our industry's profitability – equating to more than \$8 billion each year – and diversifying our supply chain options is a big step toward ensuring U.S. wheat remains a top provider in feeding the world.

My MAWG colleagues also participated in the return of our



Mike Gunderson

annual St. Paul Bus Trip. This is a very important part of our legislative strategy, and we appreciate all our members who volunteered their time to participate. It's been an uphill battle, and it's all hands-on-deck as we prepare to play legislative defense during the final month of the 2022 Legislative Session.

To that end, we are also seeking a new At-Large Director to replace Steve Lacey, whose term is ending. While we encourage candidates from throughout the state to apply, because most current MAWG directors are situated in far northwest Minnesota, we are specifically seeking any potential directors who farm in a more central section of Minnesota. Our state is geographically diverse, and the more representation we have from throughout the wheat-growing region, the better.

On behalf of the entire U.S. wheat community, I wish you all the best this spring as we finally put the shovels away and get to work on planting high-quality wheat.

Mike Gunderson farms in Bejou, Minnesota, and serves as president of the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers. 🌾

TAMING THE BULLS



BY BETSY JENSEN



Betsy Jensen is a Farm Business Management Instructor at Northland Community and Technical College. Follow her on Twitter at [@jensenbetsyr](https://twitter.com/jensenbetsyr).

& BEARS

You don't know the answer

One joy of being a parent is knowing everything, at least in the eyes of a young kid. The questions just keep coming, and coming, and coming, and the kid thinks you know the answer. I recognize that someday she will think I know nothing, but in the short term, I am the smartest person she knows. Take a deep breath, appreciate the inquisitiveness and answer the question.

It is confusing to explain that I don't know everything. The restaurant question, "When will our food come?" The church whisper, "How long is the sermon?" I don't know the answers. How can someone who knows everything not know the length of a sermon? I can see the confusion on her face.

We need to know our limits. We often try to answer questions that cannot be accurately answered. I get many questions about commodity prices. I appreciate that someone thinks I know the answer to where wheat prices will peak, but I know my limits. I have a feeling and gut instinct about where prices are headed. I also have a bull and bear coin I can flip. Statistically, they are the same thing. If you call me, I can flip a coin and let you know the results.

How much time do you spend trying to predict price movements? Do you read too many marketing emails, listen to radio reports or watch morning television? It is important to stay informed but remember your limits. No one knows the future of price movements.

As we enter spring, past market performance indicates we will have some large price movements. We will have weather scares, planting delays, rumors of acreage changes or winter wheat freezes. These are your opportunities to sell! Take advantage of the market reaction and sell at profitable prices. You have no inside knowledge of the weather.

There are some things we can know about marketing. We can understand seasonal price movements, like selling in the spring. We can know our cost of production and sell at profitable levels. We can know our cash flow requirements and storage capabilities and plan our sales to match our needs. If you plan to raise 50,000 bushels of wheat but only have storage for 30,000, it is better to plan ahead for those 20,000 bushels.

You can know how to sell the crop. For example, today I would not lock

in a harvest basis. When I sell crop for harvest 2023, I sell the futures because basis will likely improve. Maybe you sell wheat for September delivery but plan to roll to December if the market develops a carrying charge. If the market is inverted, like soybeans, you can deliver at harvest instead of storing.

There are marketing strategies you can understand and utilize to improve your price. Spending your time predicting market movements can be fun, but it's not usually a profitable use of time. If you correctly predict market prices, is it skill or luck?

One of the worst parts of crop marketing is how often we are humbled. You hold crop, watch prices rally, start feeling smart and boom, the market crashes. When we start to feel in control, the market reminds us we have no control.

It is OK to admit you don't know where prices are moving. You can understand sales strategies for your remaining bushels and have a plan.

The next time my kid whispers, "How much longer is the sermon?" I'm just going to throw out a number. She doesn't have a watch. She can't prove me wrong. I will try to stay the all-knowing parent for a few more years. 🌾



NEW OPPORTUNITIES MAWG leaders return to Capitol

By Sydney Harris

Advocacy is like riding a bike.

After a three-year hiatus, 16 members of the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG) fell right back in rhythm when they traveled to St. Paul to visit with legislators in March to discuss issues impacting their farms.

“Getting the opportunity to sit down with our legislators and have constructive conversations with them is vital, especially during this legislative session,” MAWG President Mike Gunderson said.

Paid Family and Medical Leave Act

The group split into multiple teams to discuss MAWG’s policy priorities with legislators. An item at the top of their agenda was the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act. The act would allow all Minnesotans, including small business owners and self-employed individuals, to receive up to 12 weeks of family leave and 12 weeks of medical leave, which would be self-funded by contributions from both the employer and employee.

“We had great conversations,” MAWG CEO Charlie Vogel

said. “Ag is definitely on the defense, but we’re playing the defense well.”

The language in the proposed legislation raises a few concerns for farmers and agribusinesses, especially those who hire seasonal employees. When employees are onboarded for the planting or harvesting season, they remain on the grower’s payroll for only a couple of months. If they were to take a 12-week leave during that time, it could be detrimental to operations throughout the state.

“It’s a large percentage of our total labor force,” MAWG Secretary/Treasurer Tate Petry said. “For us, it’s just our family, but we needed to hire someone for a while. If we would have lost him for 12 weeks, we would have lost a third of our operation. So it does present challenges on the farm as well as our communities because it’s such a large percentage of our labor force.”

The act has the potential to negatively affect not only farmers, but rural communities, said Austen Germolus, MAWG second vice president.

“It’ll impact our schools, hospitals and any small businesses that are already struggling to keep and hire

employees,” Germolus said.

Farmers understand the importance of spending time with family and recognize that unexpected and unavoidable situations arise that require an absence from work. Throughout their Hill Visits, MAWG members expressed the need to revise language within the act to protect farming operations.

“I don’t think we need legislation,” MAWG member Rachel Arneson said. “We need social and cultural change.”

Rep. Samantha Vang, who chairs the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee, said there is still time for lawmakers to include small business exemptions to the bill.

“It takes a lot of time to fine-tune the details on a bill like this,” Vang said. “I definitely think that it’s a great bill, but we need to work on the language and see what we can do.”

Drainage Registry Information Portal

As spring slowly found its way to Minnesota, growers were once again reminded of the importance of water drainage to their operation.

A Minnesota House bill referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance would, if passed, “establish a drainage registry information portal that includes a publicly searchable electronic database. The portal would require a drainage authority to electronically submit information on a petitioned drainage project and a petition or order for reestablishment of records.” The additional regulations would add further burdens to farmers, MAWG members told lawmakers.

“We already have watershed districts. All the permitting is already done,” MAWG Director Erik Younggren said. “Adding another drainage portal is repetitive and adds another layer and more time to what we’re already doing.”

Furthermore, an engineer would be appointed to petition drainage projects and required to submit several pieces of information about the project, including drainage



MAWG leaders speak about issues affecting the state’s wheat industry during a visit with House Ag Committee Chair Rep. Samantha Vang.



On National Ag Day 2023, MAWG Second Vice President Austen Germolus (left) and MAWG member Rachel Arneson (middle) discuss farm-related policies with Rep. Bobbie Harder, a fellow Minnesota farmer and member of the House Ag Committee.

authority information and local contact information.

Rep. Roger Skraba echoed MAWG’s concerns with the proposed bill.

“This isn’t a state issue,” said Skraba, who represents District 3A. “When we make a state law, it deals with where I live, which is a very different world from other parts of the state. And we have to go along with all of these regulations, but there aren’t enough employees to run around to look to see the issue.”

Beginning Farmer Tax Credit

Just as legislators need to understand how certain bills might harm the agriculture industry, they also must know which bills they should champion or defend on behalf of farmers and agribusinesses.

During their Hill visits, the Minnesota Wheat delegation asked their legislators to continue supporting the Young Beginning Farmer Tax Credit and encouraged them to extend the benefits to family members.

Currently, the tax credit, offered through the Department of

Agriculture, “provides annual state tax credits to landlords and sellers who rent or sell farmland, equipment, livestock and other agricultural assets to beginning farmers.” However, asset owners cannot be directly related to the young farmer.

“The Beginning Farmer Tax Credit is a really helpful tool,” Petry said. “Expanding it to family members would be even more helpful.”

By the end of the day, the MAWG delegation had surpassed their daily step goals, partaking in as many meetings as they could fit into their day. And, with the support of membership dollars, MAWG will continue monitoring the legislative session and won’t shy away from having difficult conversations that must happen to protect the agriculture industry and Minnesota wheat growers.

MAWG and its lobbying team now have their eyes on the remainder of the biennial session, which must end by May 22.

“May is going to be critical,” Vogel said. “It’s not going to be boring.” 🌾

Instant 'Classic'

Annual farm conference returns with record attendance

By Drew Lyon

Wheat farmers from across the Northern Plains and the United States flocked to Florida in March for the 2023 Commodity Classic, the nation's largest farmer conference and trade show.

"It's always great to get down here to Classic and visit with producers and industry as we prep for the year ahead," said Mike Gunderson, president of the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG). "We've had a lot of good meetings and conversations."

Gunderson was joined by a team of Minnesota Wheat growers and staff, including MAWG First Vice President Kevin Leiser; Second Vice President Austen Germolus; MAWG Secretary/Treasurer Tate Petry; Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council Directors Scott Swenson and Mark Jossund; U.S. Wheat Associates Chair Rhonda K. Larson and Minnesota Wheat Vice President of Operations Coreen Berdahl.

"It's so important to be down here and tell our story," Swenson, who recently stepped off the National Wheat Foundation board, said in USW's Classic trade show booth.

"There's so much going on in our industry, and this is the place to be to see where the industry is headed."

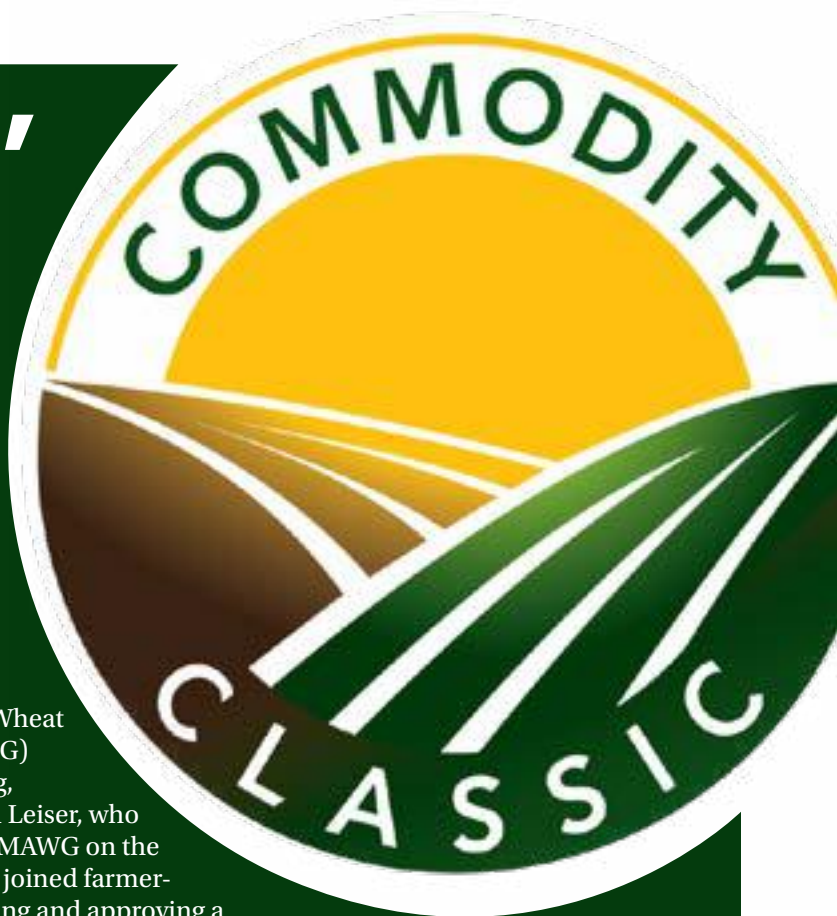
During the National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) Annual Meeting, Gunderson and Leiser, who both represent MAWG on the national board, joined farmer-leaders in drafting and approving a policy agenda for the year ahead and electing new officers. Petry, who's sat on NAWG's Environment and Policy Subcommittee since 2020, was also appointed to participate in NAWG's Budget Finance Committee. He said NAWG is looking to address the challenges in a wheat market that, because of its geographical and class diversity, makes it difficult to take a singular approach to policy.

"We're certainly trying to figure out what the implications of certain policies will do for different growers and different classes of wheat,"

Petry said. "We have a lot to tackle throughout the year, both state and nationally. ... It's a difficult time to have input."

Oregon farmer Brent Cheyne was elected NAWG president. Cheyne farms with his son, Rodney, near Klamath Falls, Ore., where they raise wheat, barley, oats, alfalfa and Angus cattle.

"It is an honor to have been elected president of NAWG during this Farm Bill year. NAWG's purpose is to advocate for all wheat growers, and we have an excellent opportunity



MAWG President Mike Gunderson (far right) and First Vice President Kevin Leiser (second to right) represent Minnesota on the National Association of Wheat Growers board and participated in NAWG's Annual Meeting at Commodity Classic.

to do just that with the 2023 Farm Bill,” Cheyne said. “I hope to see, and I encourage, more involvement and commitment from farmers as we come together to improve the agricultural community.”

During Cheyne’s term, he will continue working across the industry on the upcoming Farm Bill and advocating for the nation’s wheat growers.

Along with Cheyne’s election, the NAWG board named Keffy Felty from Oklahoma as vice president. Kentucky grower Pat Clements was elected treasurer, and Idaho’s Jamie Kress will serve as secretary. Nicole Berg from Washington has transitioned to the role of past president.

“We greatly appreciate Nicole Berg’s service to the National Association of Wheat Growers. Nicole has led our organization as we developed our initial 2023 Farm Bill priorities, testified in front of Congress three times in reviewing the 2018 Farm Bill and acted as a national spokesperson for wheat with Russia’s invasion

of Ukraine. She has been a true advocate for wheat growers, and we are thankful for her commitment to agriculture,” NAWG CEO Chandler Goule said. “We are looking forward to our new leadership this upcoming year as we continue to promote unity among wheat growers and support policy efforts that create an environment that is beneficial for wheat growers in our nation.”

Record attendance

During Commodity Classic’s General Session, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack addressed a capacity crowd and later signed a memorandum of understanding to fund USDA’s Farmers for Soil Health partnerships.

“It is the beginning of a process of a number of projects that are going to transform how we farm, where we farm (and) what we do to produce sustainably produced crops and livestock products,” Vilsack said. “It’s an opportunity for us to celebrate what happens every single day on the farm.”

Outside of board meetings, directors learned about the latest technology advancements, received research and policy updates and networked and walked the sold-out trade show floor.

“Classic is a great time to wrap up our meeting season before we head back home and get ready for spring planting,” Gunderson said. “The conference makes you feel optimistic and energized about where agriculture is heading.”

After a dip in 2022, attendance at the 2023 Classic reached a record 10,400. Established in 1996, Commodity Classic is America’s biggest farmer-led, farmer-focused agricultural and educational experience. It is presented annually by NAWG, the American Soybean Association, National Corn Growers Association, National Sorghum Producers and the Association of Equipment Manufacturers.

The 2024 Commodity Classic will be held Feb. 29-March 2 in Houston. 🌾



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RANCHERS FOR YOUR DEDICATION
TO FEEDING THE WORLD!**



STRIPPED DOWN

MAWG MEMBERS RECOGNIZED FOR PRODUCTION PRACTICES AT COMMODITY CLASSIC

By Drew Lyon

Minnesota farmer David Johnstad believes in the benefits of belonging – to his family and the organizations that help support his farming operation. The Beltrami producer is a member of several farmer advocacy groups, including the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association and the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association. And for nearly 40 years, David Johnstad has pledged his membership support toward the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG).

It's just the right thing to do, he said.

"I've been a member forever," said Johnstad, who joined MAWG in 1985. "We as farmers have got to have a voice, and this is a way to make sure our voice is heard."

Johnstad spoke with Prairie Grains Magazine on the trade show floor at the 2023 Commodity Classic in Orlando, Fla. Later that day, David and his sons Andrew and James were recognized by The Fertilizer Institute with the 4R Advocate award for their ongoing commitment to implementing fertilizer management practices that incorporate the principles of 4R Nutrient Stewardship and demonstrate myriad economic and environmental benefits for their operation.

"It's quite an honor. I'm proud of my boys," David Johnstad said. "I'm still out there every day, but I let these guys run the show and they're doing great things for our operation."

The Johnstads operate a fourth-generation farm in Beltrami, Minn., growing winter wheat, corn, soybeans, sugarbeets and cover crops. The 2023 growing season marks David Johnstad's 53rd year farming. He took over management responsibilities in 1971 at just 16 years old after his father died in a car accident.

"I was on my own," David said. "I've seen a lot, but now I'm turning it over to these guys."

'A better way'

Beltrami is centered in northwest Minnesota in Polk County, where the growing season is short, prone to cold weather and marked by gusty winds. Weary of the wind, the Johnstads worked with David's longtime friend, crop adviser Dwight Christian of TDS Fertilizer, and began experimenting a few years ago with strip tilling, an uncommon practice in their region.

"Strip till in our area isn't standard procedure," Andrew Johnstad said. "A lot of guys spread fertilizer and chisel plow it in and they end up having wind plows. ... We knew there was a better way."

The Johnstads also contended with skeptical glances from fellow farmers.

"We're looking across the road, and not a lot of people are doing what we're doing," Andrew Johnstad said with a chuckle. "It's kind of scary when all your neighbors are watching you waiting for you to screw up."

The Johnstads have gotten the last laugh. Far from screwing up, the Johnstad's operation has thrived since adopting strip tilling. Wind erosion has tamped down, improving the soil health of their farm and boosting yields.

They're also seeing less nitrogen loss from heavy rains. In total, according to The Fertilizer Institute, the Johnstads have reduced field preparation for sugarbeets by four passes; cut fuel consumption by 16%; decreased P and K in corn 25%; and dropped N in corn by 15% and 5% in sugarbeets.

"We're excited about what we're seeing and excited to see where it goes," Andrew Johnstad said.

The Johnstads hope their strip tilling success will encourage others to follow their lead – and join advocacy groups like MAWG.

"This is such a cool honor for us," David Johnstad said. "We're trying to build a culture here, and everyone's included." 🌾



I've been a member forever. We as farmers have got to have a voice, and this is a way to make sure our voice is heard.

-David Johnstad, a longtime Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers member

Now in its 12th year, the 4R Advocate program demonstrates the in-field successes of implementing 4R practices based on the right source, rate, time and placement of fertilizer. 4R Nutrient Stewardship provides a framework to achieve in-field goals, such as increased production and profitability, enhanced environmental protection, and improved sustainability.

Additional 4R practices include:

- Nitrogen stabilizer for dry and liquid fertilizers
- Nitrification inhibitor
- Urease inhibitor
- Phosphate efficiency enhancement additives
- Zone soil sampling
- Split application for nutrients
- Variable rate nutrient application
- Account for nutrient credits from last year
- Buffer strips

Stepping into Spring

Experts offer advice to growers this planting season

By Sydney Harris

When the snow starts melting, the ground thaws and birds start chirping, farmers have a visible pep in their step bursting with the knowledge that it won't be long before they are back in their fields doing what they were born to do.

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of taking the machinery out of storage and hearing those engines roar. But before growers make that first field pass this spring, regional production experts have a few tips to share with growers for the coming planting season.

Variety selection

A successful spring begins with carefully selecting a variety, which often happens before the planter is dusted off for the year. Justin Berg, technical product manager for WestBred, reminds growers that variety selection is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

"Visit with your local agronomist to learn about the varieties that are available, and which would be right for your operation," Berg said. "I encourage growers to select wheat varieties based on local results and their own experiences, whether that be on their own farm or from visiting with their neighbors."

Minnesota Wheat Vice President of Research Melissa Carlson also suggests choosing a variety that's resistant to bacterial leaf streak (BLS), which can thrive in humid climates and damage wheat and barley yields by up to 40%.

"We've had BLS for a long time, it's just becoming more prevalent," Carlson said. "Check the variety trial ratings and try to choose a variety that is more resistant to BLS or at least make sure that some of your acres are a more BLS-resistant variety in case we do have an outbreak. Because there aren't

any fungicides that can be sprayed for a bacterial infection, variety tolerance is the only method of defense."

Seeding rates

With rising input prices, farmers are searching for ways to economically juggle their expenses. As growers begin their planting marathon this spring, reexamining seeding rates could be an option that saves them money.

"I always tell farmers to make sure they keep their seeding rates lower," said Carlson. "We did years of research and we never saw any differences in yield between planting 2 million plants per acre versus 1 million plants per acre. The University recommendation is right at about 1.3 or 1.4 million plants per acre. If folks are seeding more than that, they're wasting seed."

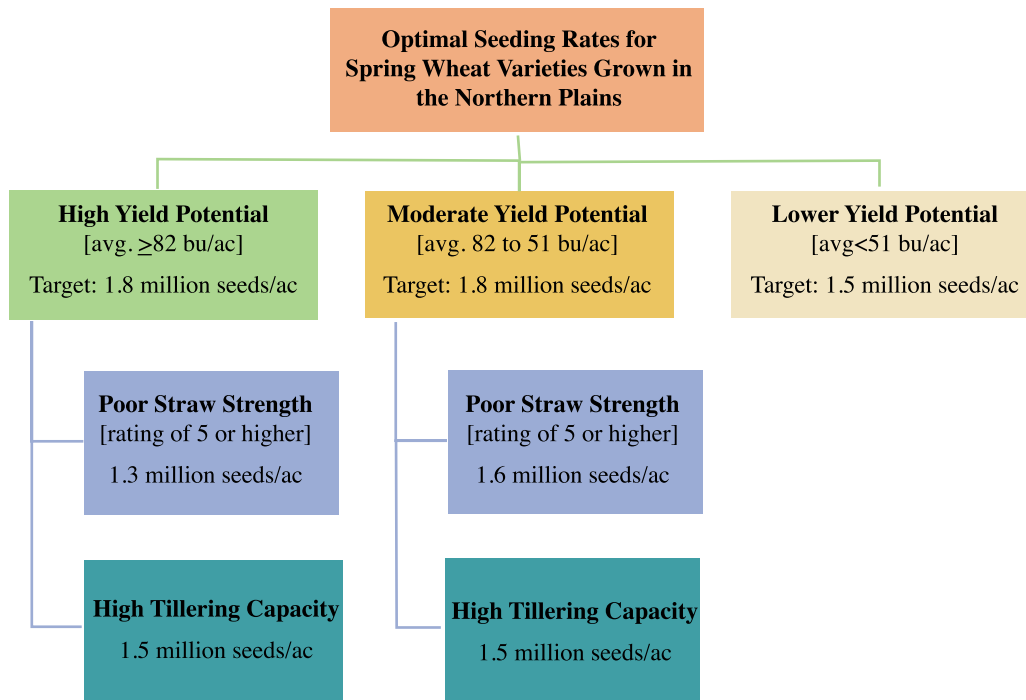
Seeding rate suggestions aren't arbitrary. Countless factors are considered when universities and companies make their recommendations.

"By identifying those correct seeding rates, we ensure that the growers are achieving the correct population for good tiller development," Berg said. "Small grains have the very unique ability to tiller and produce several stems that contribute to yield. A majority of the grain that wheat plants produce will come from the main stem and possibly one or two of those tillers."

Seed treatments

A vital tool in a farmer's toolbox is seed treatments. Seed treatments provide farmers with a method of defense against pests that threaten the success of a crop.

"I always encourage growers to visit with their suppliers and get their seed treatments in place to make sure they



have enough inventory,” Berg said. “By working with their local agronomist, the farmers will get the knowledge they need to correctly understand what pests they may face on their farm. And once a grower has identified and understands what those pests are, or potentially will be, they can make better decisions as to which seed treatment is right for them.”

Fertilizer application

Out of necessity, farmers’ practices have evolved to keep up with an increased demand for their crops. Because farmland acres decrease each year, the agriculture industry has relied on innovation to compensate for lost acreage. Fertilizer is an option that farmers can use to improve their yields. One of the most important fertilizers is nitrogen, which is critical for plant growth and reproduction.

“Nitrogen management within a wheat crop is extremely critical to overall yield potential. When farmers are managing their nitrogen this spring, they should consider their past yield and protein results as well as the current price of wheat versus those nitrogen costs,” Berg said.

While it’s easy to focus on nitrogen, farmers should also pay attention to the phosphorous and potassium levels in their fields.

“It’s important to evaluate those fall soil tests to determine how much fertilizer is needed for your wheat crop,” Berg said. “Growers should be thinking about how they are managing their phosphorous and potassium levels as well. We definitely do not want to deplete those levels, as they are hard to build back up in the soil.” 🌾

Change it up

It’s never too late to try something new. This spring, Carlson hopes growers will take the leap and branch out of their comfort zone.

“The biggest thing that I want to push people on is to just try something new or different. If you’re not going to do a whole field, at least raise the planter up or shut the sprayer off for a few hundred feet,” said Carlson, who oversees Minnesota Wheat’s checkoff-supported research programs. “Test out the field. Try something new.”

It’s never too late for a farmer to experiment with new practices. The economic and environmental rewards outweigh the risk, Carlson said.

“On average, a grower gets 40 springs in their lifetime and 40 harvests. So, if you only have 40 shots from the time you start farming to the time you finish, you don’t have time not to be trying something new every year,” Carlson said. “There’s just not enough time in your career not to try something new and try to improve. Improve your soil and leave it in better condition than when you started.”

FINDING A HOME

MN Wheat Council directors earn reelection

By Drew Lyon

The Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC), in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, held its annual commodity election in March. Three veteran directors – Vice Chair Mark Jossund, Treasurer Mikayla Tabert and Scott Lee, respectively – won their reelection bids. Their terms will begin July 1.

“Research is very important to these directors, and it has to be,” MWRPC Chair Tim Dufault said. “We’ve got to grow more and sell more, and all three of those (reelected) members are really good at speaking up for new funding for foreign market development or more research funds into wheat.”

Lee farms in Benson, Minn., where he grows wheat, oats, corn and soybeans with his sons Hayden and Everett. He also runs a retail seed operation, including a seed-cleaning plant. The business was started more than 50 years ago by Scott’s dad, Wallace. All the small grain grown is for seed production and is purchased by local producers.

“Scott has an excellent perspective, and he gives great input,” Council Executive Director Charlie Vogel said. “He’s just a great director to work with.”

A big research proponent, Lee has been a longtime host of University of Minnesota varietal trials, working with U of M researchers Jochum Wiersma and Jim Anderson. Lee’s participation in MWRPC’s Research Committee led to his appointment to the Council in 2011. Lee currently serves as the Council’s Area 3 representative, a vast territory that covers central and the southern half of Minnesota.



“We want to fund research that makes us more profitable,” said Lee, who graduated from the University of Minnesota Crookston with degrees in crop science and seed conditioning and technology. “I’m not involved that much with market development, but that’s very critical. They’re all important because if we’re going to grow it, then we have to have a home for it.”

In his area, Lee works to encourage growers to consider incorporating small grains into their crop rotations.

“We’re trying to promote more than a two-crop rotation and the benefits of a small grain rotation for disease and insect pressure, and spreading the work load out so you’re not trying to do it all in October and November,” he said.

Tabert’s grandfather started the family farm in the Red River Valley when it was called Miller Ranch. The family has raised beef cattle since Mikayla’s dad, David Miller, took over the operation.

The Millers and Taberts also raise corn, wheat, field peas, fescue grass seed, sunflowers and alfalfa. In her role on the Council, Tabert serves as Treasurer, is on the Research Committee and participates in the Council’s On Farm Research Network trials.

“I’d like to see more research into cover crops that, in my opinion, needs more research,” said Tabert, who was first elected in 2019. “I also enjoy prioritizing that wheat can be beneficial in crop rotations and help with profitability and sustainability.”

Always prepared and willing to ask tough questions, Tabert is a huge asset to the Council, Dufault said.

“Their farm is more diverse and unique than the rest of the board,” Dufault said. “She does a lot of soil health and cover crops. She’s a busy woman who brings a fresh and scientific mind to things, and she’s always prepared on the finance side of things.”

Jossund lives in Moorhead and farms about 30 miles north across both northern Clay and southern Norman counties. Mark, his wife, Brendy,

and sons Carson and Bryce rotate wheat, corn and soybeans on their fourth-generation farm that’s been in operation since the 1880s. In 2021, the Jossunds were named Clay County’s Farm Family of the Year.

“Mark is an easygoing guy. He listens intently, gives great insight and is really respected by the board and growers,” Vogel said. “He’s an even-keeled, steady personality.”

Jossund will start his seventh term on the Council, and also represents MWRPC on the U.S. Wheat Associates board.

“I’m kind of becoming the dinosaur on the board,” he said with a laugh, “but it’s a great group to work with, and I think we’re continuing to do great things on behalf of the checkoff.”

‘Always prepared’

Rounding out the Council are Secretary Peter Hvidsten, Directors Scott Swenson, Kevin Leiser and Tony Brateng; and U.S. Wheat Associates Chair Rhonda K. Larson, respectively.

MWRPC directors are elected to direct Minnesota wheat checkoff dollars to benefit the state’s wheat industry. As part of the program, wheat producers contribute a portion of their wheat sales by bushel to the checkoff.

“Our board is excellent and is always prepared,” Vogel said. “They take their roles directing checkoff dollars seriously.”

Council members must be active wheat producers willing to serve as leaders and advocates for the Minnesota wheat industry and work to improve industry profitability and viability.

Council directors serve three-year terms, and the board meets approximately six times throughout the year. The board most recently met in April prior to spring planting to discuss the organization’s budget, research projects and future checkoff investments.

“We have a mix of good ideas, farming operations and outside-the-box thinkers,” Dufault said. “We represent Minnesota that way.” 🌾



Benson farmer Scott Lee is the Council’s Area 3 director.



Mark Jossund (left) is returning to help direct wheat checkoff resources.



Mikayla Tabert (left) and her husband, Benjamin, farm with Mikayla’s parents, David and Peggy Miller.



Shipped Out

Great Lakes could hold key to increasing grain exports



By Drew Lyon

While searching for routes to broaden supply chains and boost exports, agricultural leaders in recent years have set their sights on shipping more grain through the Port of Duluth and the massive Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System.

“Less wheat goes out that way than when I first started farming, but there still is wheat and other crops from this area going through the port and inputs coming in,” said Tim Dufault, chair of the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC). “That is a very important transportation avenue for us.”

As a farm kid growing up in Moorhead, Minnesota, Mark Jossund can remember a regular convoy of truckers hauling grain to Duluth.

“Now, mainly a lot of the wheat that comes out of our small elevators is getting shipped down to Hastings (Minnesota),” said Jossund, MWRPC vice chair.

Jossund and his colleagues hope the past can repeat itself. In 2022, Nebraska-based Hansen-Mueller Company acquired General Mills’ Duluth Elevator A, which brings a welcome return of the grain-handling facility. The facility can store 3.5 million bushels of grain and support a nearly 2,000-foot dock and on-dock rail service from BNSF Railway. Minnesota Wheat leaders are excited that Hansen-Mueller can ship small grains from the United States and Canada to both domestic and international destinations.

“The Port of Duluth is an unknown gem that’s very underutilized,” MWRPC Executive Director Charlie Vogel said. “And the Hansen-Mueller terminal will ship anything out. They’re nimble and looking for arbitrages.”

Kate Ferguson, director of trade and business development with the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, said despite noble efforts from farm groups, commodity trade via the Port of Duluth has proven difficult primarily because many facilities are

held by private entities. The lingering effects from the pandemic haven’t helped matters, either. And the Jones Act, legislation enacted in 1920 that requires shipping vessels traveling from one United States port to another be U.S.-flagged, has also hampered shippers’ ability to move more grain through Duluth.

“The Jones Act is complicated,” Vogel said, “but it’s causing our waterways not to be used that much.”

Though the port, which is open nearly 300 days annually, still ships about a million tons of grain each year – wheat and durum typically are the top exported commodities – iron ore is king at the Port of Duluth-Superior, which first opened for commercial shipping more than 150 years ago. The port is North America’s furthest inland seaport and the highest-ranking port on the Great Lakes. Shippers are attracted to use the Duluth port because traffic is uncongested; traffic on the Seaway could double and ships and barges would still flow freely. Additionally, low water levels on the Mississippi River, combined with recent supply chain blockage on the West Coast and numerous incentive programs, have made the Great Lakes system increasingly more appealing.

“The great thing about the Great Lakes is we can offer a diversified supply chain for many of these shippers utilizing the coast,” Ferguson said. “So many companies want to diversify their risks, and we know the Great Lakes can be a reliable chain.”

Getting to work

Despite its biggest January throughput since 2010 (1.34 million short tons), total maritime tonnage for the Port of Duluth-Superior finished the 2022 navigation season down 7.6% compared to 2021 and fell 7% against the five-season average. Additionally, grain shipments dipped by 20% in 2022, the port’s smallest grain throughput since 1890.

“Grain is a very dynamic commodity in terms of supply, demand, pricing and routing, and the port faced a number of headwinds in 2022, including two years of tightening grain supplies worldwide, further exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, a very strong dollar, extremely elevated transportation costs and competition from other countries’ less-expensive wheat,” said Deb DeLuca, executive director of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority.

Beet pulp pellets emerged as a bright spot. Duluth-Superior exported 150,000 tons of beet pulp pellets in 2022, the most since 2014 and an 85% increase over last season, the Port Authority reported. General cargo tonnage total also more than quadrupled the five-season average, finishing at nearly 118,000 tons, the highest for Duluth-Superior since 1986.

“2022 was a terrific season for general cargo tonnage,” DeLuca said, “and while it doesn’t offset grain or coal in total tonnage, those general cargo shipments deliver outsized economic value per ton in comparison, and they also support development of regional industry and greener energy sources, so they represent a big win for our port and our region.”

Continued on page 18





The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System is the world's longest deep draft commercial waterway.

The Port of Duluth has a vocal supporter in Minnesota Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen, who often promotes the waterway's potential during public appearances.

"Exports are important to Minnesota farmers and our state's economy," Petersen told Prairie Grains. "Interest in the Port of Duluth, like the Hansen-Mueller Co. purchase of the General Mills Elevator A and the return of container shipments, provides another opportunity for our farmers and ag businesses to access important markets in Europe and elsewhere. We're excited for the investments happening in Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System and the impact this will have on the Upper Midwest."

To begin the 2023 shipping season, the Port of Duluth-Superior celebrated the earliest arrival (March 28) of a saltie (oceangoing vessel), when the 656-foot-long Federal Dart made its way under Duluth's Aerial Lift Bridge.

"We want to support the businesses, commodities and their marketing development. We're helping them figure out what the future looks like," Ferguson said. "We really have great support behind us. Let's go to work and get it done and support our growers and ranchers and our farmers and our agriculture companies."

'Tell the story'

The St. Lawrence Seaway, the "Opportunity Belt" that traverses 2,300 miles from the head of the Great Lakes in Duluth to the Atlantic Ocean, currently accounts for only about 2% of U.S. soybean exports. Agricultural products, including wheat, represent about 40% of all Seaway trade, more than 25% of which is shipped in November and December.

"It's the transportation conduit between the rest of the world and the Great Lakes and the Upper Midwest," said former St. Lawrence Seaway Deputy Administrator Craig Middlebrook, who retired in late 2022 after nearly 30 years with the organization. "The reliability of the infrastructure is one of our strongest selling points."

In late March, the Seaway System opened for its 65th navigation system and is expected to deliver about 164 million metric tons of cargo this year.

"At a time when we are working to strengthen our nation's supply chains, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System plays a central role, helping us move tens of millions of tons of goods each year, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs, and combating climate change," U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said. "It remains a model of international cooperation and a cornerstone of America's trade with the rest of the world."

In March, Vogel attended the Transportation Go! conference put on by the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance in Omaha, Nebraska. During his presentation, Peter Hirthe of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation noted that, as a trade lane, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway isn't reaching its full potential, only running at about 50% capacity. Considering the region surrounding that area is the world's third-largest economy, ample opportunities remain.

"Canada uses it more but doesn't have the PNW (U.S. Pacific-Northwest ports) or the river system," Hirthe said. "But we can improve the ratio of U.S. exports."

U.S. grain exports on the system increased by 4.3% last year, and there have been several developments, with more on the way, including new or expanded infrastructure and facility developments at Duluth-Superior, Milwaukee (Wis.), Monroe (Mich.) and Oswego (N.Y.), as well as upcoming opportunities at Cleveland (Ohio), Burns Harbor (Ind.) and Green Bay (Wis.).

"We're always keeping an eye on exports," said Jossund, who sits on the U.S. Wheat Associates board. "Wheat struggles to keep acres, so we really need to keep our exports strong."

Shippers and commodity leaders agree that the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System will be an ongoing priority in the years ahead. Vogel envisions future shipments via the Port of Duluth to parts of South America, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

"We've got to work with the industry and then tell the story, so people are aware of it," Vogel said. "Everyone's willing to do the things to make Duluth and the Great Lakes system work." 🌾

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

WHEAT LEADERS GO GLOBAL TO GROW MARKETS

By Sydney Harris

When wheat is sold, the two-cent per bushel checkoff doesn't vanish into an imaginary cloud. Instead, through the wise investments made by national and state organizations like the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC), checkoff dollars are put to work in various areas - including market development - to improve the profitability of wheat producers.

Key foreign market development progress is made through USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) programs, such as the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program.

The funding received by organizations for these programs is determined by the Unified Export Strategy (UES), which is the "integrated planning system used by U.S. agricultural trade groups to apply for FAS market development and export promotion programs."

"MAP and FMD in large part funds U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) overseas offices, which promote wheat and expands markets," MWRPC Executive Director Charlie Vogel said.

In 2022/23, the USDA forecasts U.S. wheat exports to total 21.09 million metric tons (MMT), accounting for almost half of U.S. wheat production. With such a large percentage of U.S.

wheat sent to international countries, UES meetings are key to securing the funding needed to continue expanding wheat's market.

"There is a ton of paperwork and planning involved," Vogel said. "There is midterm reporting to show how you're coming on meeting the objectives and at the end, you have to prove (to USDA) that you met the objectives and used the funds appropriately."

USW Chair and MWRPC board member Rhonda K. Larson attended the latest UES meetings in Portugal, representing Minnesota and U.S. wheat growers.

"It's pretty intense," said Larson, who farms near East Grand Forks, Minn. "We get together with folks from USW offices around the world and talk about their market - what they see as their strengths and what needs work. And then, there might be things that they need assistance with, or they might have projects that they want to do."

'Strengths and weaknesses'

Unsurprisingly, price is the biggest challenge facing U.S. wheat exports and requires the U.S. to search for alternative ways to compete. By being present at UES meetings, state wheat staff help cultivate and maintain relationships.

"Market development is long-term," said North Dakota Wheat Commission Policy and Marketing Director Jim

Peterson. "It's developing relationships, developing trust and educating customers on our products. We've been growing wheat for multiple decades and have been working in these markets for many years, but each year brings different variables and competition. In some markets there's more need for technical training and support, in others it may be addressing trade restrictions, but in all markets it's showing customers the tremendous value U.S. wheat can deliver. That's why our relationships are key."

While the success of foreign programs is heavily reliant on funding, having a physical presence in international markets is essential.

"The recent UES meetings were so interesting, and you really learn about the people that we have on the ground in these countries," Larson said. "I can't say enough about these people. They're so knowledgeable and passionate about what they do. It's comforting to know that somebody cares about U.S. wheat so much that they're over there trying to sell it for us."

Despite obstacles that may arise, the main objective remains simple: sell more wheat.

"We just have to keep trying to sell our wheat the best we can," Larson said. "Securing funding is the first step in that, and it all begins at UES meetings."



BLOCKBUSTED TRADE

Minnesota, national exports continue growing

By Prairie Grains Staff

The world wants Minnesota's – and the nation's – agricultural goods, and producers are happy to service the growing demand.

Minnesota exports of agricultural, mining and manufactured products notched a record high of \$27 billion in 2022, according to a report released this spring by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The state's exports extended their growth streak from 2021, jumping 16% over the year.

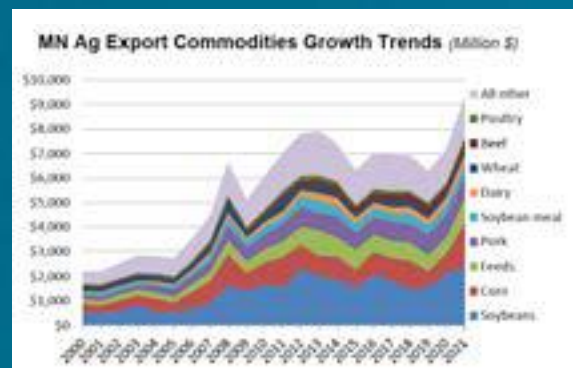
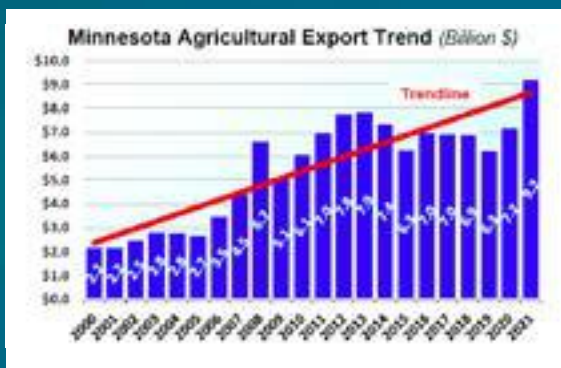
"Minnesota's record export sales and continued export growth are great news. These trends show that our manufacturers are well-positioned in international markets and contribute strongly to resilience in our state economy," interim DEED Commissioner Kevin McKinnon said. "We will continue to engage in multi-faceted efforts to bring Minnesota companies and goods to the global stage."

According to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the 2022 state level agricultural export data will be available later in 2023. However, according to most recent totals, Minnesota's soybean exports valued \$2.4 billion, accounting for about 26% of Minnesota's total ag exports. Minnesota is the nation's fourth largest agricultural exporting state; from 2000 to 2021, the state's farm exports increased by more than 300%. Throughout the state, ag exports support more than 52,000 jobs both on-farm and off-farm and generate over \$14 billion in total economic impact. Following soybeans, Minnesota's top export commodities are corn, feeds, red meat, dairy and wheat, respectively. According to MDA's latest statistics, Minnesota wheat farmers export more than \$200 million each year. Mexico is currently the top market for Minnesota wheat, followed by Japan, the Philippines, Nigeria and China.

"As a board, we are consistently searching to develop new markets, maximize opportunities and address challenges," said Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council Chair Tim Dufault, who traveled to the United Kingdom and Finland in November 2021 as part of an MDA trade mission. "And U.S. wheat is known around the world for its quality."

North American markets drove Minnesota's export growth in 2022. Minnesota exports to North America grew to nearly \$12 billion, jumping by 30% over 2021. Exports also strongly performed to the European Union (up 26%), the Caribbean, Central America and South America (up 22%) and the Middle East (up 30%), but fell to Asia (down 2%).

"I am proud to see Minnesota's exports continue to break records," Gov. Tim Walz said. "Over 200 countries look to our workforce to put food on the table or manufacture their goods. This is another data point that demonstrates the diversity of our economy, strength of our workforce and influence in the global economy."



From 2000 to 2021, Minnesota's total agricultural exports increased by more than 300% – far higher than the national growth rate. Data courtesy of MDA.

Individual national markets gaining over \$150 million in exports from the state in 2022 included Canada (up \$2.3 billion), Mexico (up \$349 million), the Netherlands (up \$239 million), Korea (\$794 million, up \$211 million) and Spain (up \$158 million).

Among products, surging global sales of mineral fuel, oil (up \$1.8 billion), electrical equipment (up \$681 million) and cereals (up \$618 million) contributed the most to Minnesota's export gains in 2022. Mineral fuel, oil exports doubled to \$3.6 billion – propelled by Canada and petroleum products. High-growth markets for electrical equipment included Canada (up 38%), Germany (up 49%) and Singapore (up 50%); while those for cereals included Canada – the primary market for cereals – as well as emerging markets for wheat such as Yemen and Indonesia.

Minnesota conducted \$70 billion in total trade in goods with 215 countries in 2022. Total trade grew 25% since 2021. With nearly \$43 billion in imports (up 31%), the state ran a trade deficit of about \$15 billion in 2022. U.S. Minnesota ranked 21st highest in exports among the 50 states for total exports, up from 22nd in 2021. The state's exports of goods supported about 118,000 Minnesota jobs in 2021.

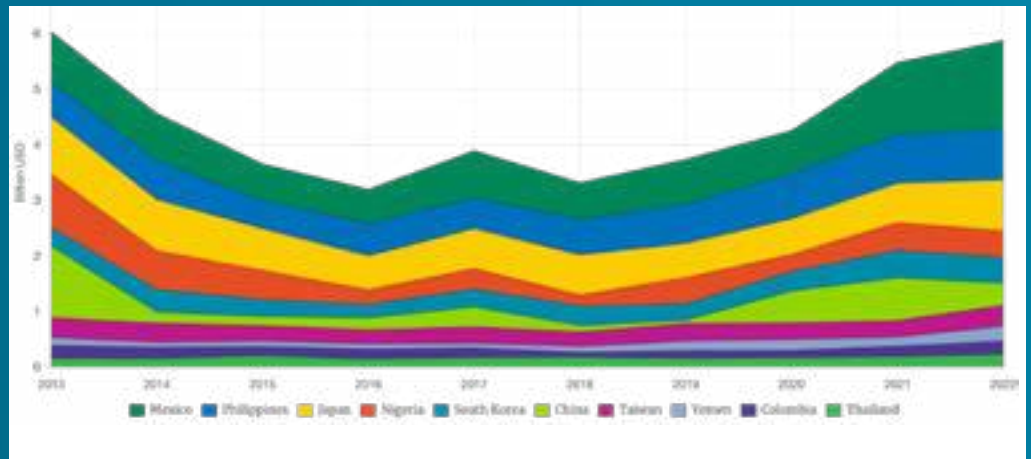
During the 2023 Legislative Session, farm groups, including the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG), are advocating for increasing resources for MDA's international marketing program.

"Trade is vital to keeping us price competitive and keeping those acres," MAWG CEO Charlie Vogel said. "People don't realize if you lose those acres, and now you're too small a commodity to get investment in those crop protection products and seed developments and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."

A national trend

The American agricultural sector posted its best export year ever in 2022 with international sales of U.S. farm and food products reaching \$196 billion. Final 2022 trade data released by the Commerce Department shows that U.S. agricultural exports increased 11 percent, or \$19.5 billion, from the previous record set in 2021.

"We're strengthening relationships with our trading partners and holding those partners accountable for their commitments. We're making historic investments in infrastructure to strengthen supply chains and prevent market disruptions," USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said. "We're knocking down trade barriers that hamper U.S.



Mexico was the top export market for U.S. wheat in 2022. Total exports reached \$8.49 billion.

producers' access to key markets. And we're continuing to invest in export market development programs, partnering with industry to bring high-quality, cost-competitive U.S. products to consumers around the world."

The value of sales increased in each of the United States' top 10 agricultural export markets – China, Mexico, Canada, Japan, the European Union, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Colombia and Vietnam, with sales in seven of the 10 markets (China, Mexico, Canada, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Colombia) setting new records.

The top commodities exported by the United States in 2022 were soybeans, corn, beef, dairy, cotton and tree nuts, which together comprised the majority of U.S. agricultural export value. International sales of many U.S. products – including soybeans, cotton, dairy, beef, ethanol, poultry, soybean meal, distilled spirits and distillers' grains – reached record values. The nation's wheat growers exported \$8.49 billion in products. On average, wheat exports are down about 2 percent from 2013-2022, according to the USDA. In 2014, the European Union supplanted the U.S. as the world's leading wheat exporter. U.S. soy's combined exports (whole soybeans, meal and oil) achieved a record value of \$40.42 billion for the marketing year 2021/22, up 17% year-on-year.

"At the end of the day, agricultural trade is all about opportunities – for America's farmers and ranchers, for our rural communities, for the U.S. economy and for our global customers," Vilsack said. "We extend our gratitude to the Americans across the agricultural industry who create and support those opportunities by growing, processing, selling and shipping our farm and food products to the world."

Minnesota Wheat's international marketing efforts are a core priority. Later this summer, the Council will host a Mediterranean trade team for a tour of regional elevators, farms and the Port of Duluth.

"Wheat is still the number one calorie worldwide. It's an important crop," Vogel said. "Politics are proving that out. I'm optimistic but we need trade – open and free markets." 🌾

Rate Reactions

Purchasing conditions improve after two years of instability

By USW Market Analyst Tyllor Ledford

With recent breaks in U.S. and global wheat futures and lower freight rates, the wheat market seems to have turned a corner to favor buyers after two years of volatility and risk.

Despite the improved general outlook, inflationary pressures persist, influencing macroeconomic conditions both in the U.S. and for our customers overseas. For example, major runups in the U.S. dollar in the second and third quarter of 2022 impeded wheat trade. Yet even with recent strengthening, the U.S. dollar index has decreased 7% from the highs hit in September 2022, providing some relief for wheat importers.

As world wheat importers are keenly aware, a strong dollar erodes the purchasing power of foreign currencies, making U.S. commodities more expensive to customers.

The factors driving currency markets are often complex, but the recent dollar strength can be primarily attributed to the U.S. Federal Reserve's reaction to the rising inflation

triggered by Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federal Reserve policy

The U.S. has faced inflation not seen since the 1980s, at an annualized inflation rate of 8.0% for 2022. To combat the inflationary pressures, the U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) began an aggressive series of interest rate increases, bringing Federal Fund Rates from 0.2% per year in March 2022 to 4.57% annually by February 2023. The hawkish policy added strength to the dollar as investors earned higher returns, making the currency more attractive.

As interest rates have risen, U.S. inflation has since slipped to 6.0%, signaling that inflation may be easing. Current market sentiment and comments from Federal Reserve leadership indicate that though interest rates may still increase, a slower pace could also ease the strength of the U.S. dollar.

In March 2023, the Fed announced it would raise by rates 25 basis

points, but signaled rate increases could be nearing an end.

Global reaction

In uncertain times, global investors often turn to the U.S. dollar as a haven currency, generating greater demand for a currency already supported by the Federal Reserve's hawkish policy. As fears regarding a global recession began to mount following the onset of Putin's war, many major central banks had to weigh their economic outlook against inflation risk, generally maintaining a looser monetary policy than their U.S. counterpart. These policy decisions allowed the dollar to strengthen more quickly than other world currencies.

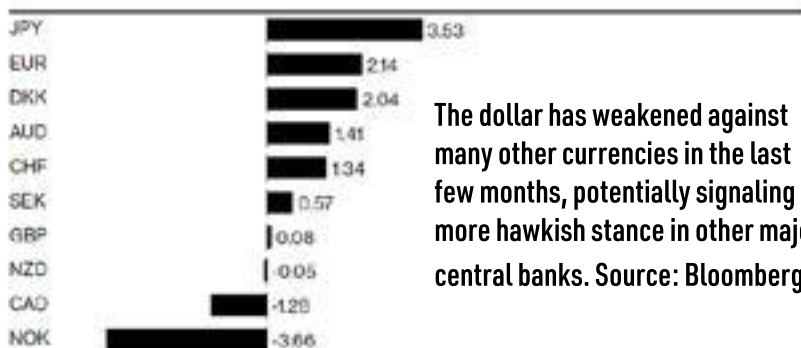
As recession fears have slowed and the global economy has normalized, central banks have become increasingly hawkish, moving their monetary policy in line with Federal Reserve. As interest rates rise around the world, future gains in the dollar will be curbed.

Bears or bulls, what's next for the dollar?

As the global economy stabilizes, many investors are increasingly bearish for the dollar, though the path will be far from straightforward. Analysts believe the recent dollar strength is temporary, and the currency could weaken if the Federal Reserve tapers its interest rate increases. Nevertheless, the underlying geopolitical risk of Putin's war will continue to prop up the dollar as it remains the haven currency in times of volatility. Likewise, the resilience of the U.S. economy will continue to drive dollar strength as robust jobs data, and stubborn increases in consumer and producer prices, underpin the need for hawkish policy and elevated interest rates. 🌾

Weaker Dollar

Greenback has weakened against majority of peers in past three months



Source: Bloomberg

NOTE: Chart shows percent gains and losses against USD in three months to Feb. 23

The dollar has weakened against many other currencies in the last few months, potentially signaling a more hawkish stance in other major central banks. Source: Bloomberg

Reaping Benefits

How Minnesota's fertilizer tonnage fee helps farmers, the economy and our environment



By Prairie Grains Staff

Most professionals in Minnesota agriculture are probably aware of the state's fertilizer tonnage fee and are aware of the "AFREC" acronym.

But what is AFREC and why is it important for Minnesota's farmers, economy and environment to support this program?

AFREC stands for the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council. The program, which launched in 2008 through the Minnesota Legislature, is tasked with improving fertilizer efficiency, farm profitability and Minnesota's environment through soil fertility research, technology development and education.

The Council comprises Minnesota farmers – including Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council Vice Chair Mark Jossund – and crop advisors from each of the major agricultural groups in the state.

The Council picks which research projects to fund, with University of Minnesota scientists leading most AFREC-funded studies. That's because land-grant researchers have the expertise, staff and equipment to conduct rigorous experiments, so farmers know they're making crucial soil fertility decisions based on the best information possible. However, not all AFREC funding is directed by the U of M. Farmers, crop advisors and others can also apply at mnsoilfertility.com/grants/.

"AFREC is doing really specific research on fertilizer," Jossund said. "It's a really good system, and hopefully it gets renewed in the legislature this session, because the funding is hard to come by."

U of M Extension Nutrient Management Specialist Dan Kaiser uses AFREC funding to improve the university's fertilizer guidelines for wheat, especially when it comes to nitrogen (N) management.

"When I started my first AFREC-funded wheat study in 2008, I felt many growers were under-applying nitrogen," he said. "The yield goal system, similar to corn, doesn't really work for wheat."

That's because Kaiser has seen too many cases where wheat growers' yield potential was high, but protein concentration stayed low. Their N rate would maximize yield but was not enough for optimal protein concentration. N management for wheat is a delicate balance because over-application of N can result in too much vegetative growth and lodging. AFREC-funded research conducted from 2008 to 2010 in northwest Minnesota showed that hard red spring wheat needed nearly 200 pounds of N per acre to optimize yield.

Other recent AFREC wheat projects have looked at polymer-coated urea (ESN), how wheat affects other crops in the rotation and nutrients other than nitrogen.

"There is interest in research on phosphorus (P), potassium (K), sulfur (S) and micronutrients but for the most part, nitrogen is the most critical component of nutrient management for wheat," Kaiser said.

AFREC also supports educational programming so farmers can learn about how to apply researchers' findings and recommendations to their operations. These efforts include:

- Minnesota's annual Nitrogen Conference and Nutrient Management Conference
- AFREC's website
- Minnesota Crop News blog posts
- Monthly episodes of the Nutrient Management Podcast
- U of M Extension videos

The Council's funding comes from a 40-cent per ton fee on bulk fertilizer sales in Minnesota. Farmers in the state invest around five cents per cropland acre per year, raising more than \$1 million each year. When the state legislature created AFREC in 2008, Minnesota became the 12th state to set up such a program.

Soil fertility research is valuable not just for farmers but for all Minnesotans – it affects our food supply, our economy, our drinking water and environment. AFREC research is key to helping Minnesota agriculture continue to move forward.

Learn more about AFREC at MNsoilFertility.com. 🌾



Trial Runs

On-Farm Research Network begins 11th year

By Prairie Grains Staff

Throughout this past winter, staff from the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC) and farmer-leaders have been hard at work reviewing and approving projects for the 2023 On-Farm Research Network (OFRN) as the program begins its 11th year. Minnesota Wheat Vice President of Research Melissa Carlson is looking forward to promising insights from trial data for the 2023 season.

Data from the OFRN is shared during a presentation at the annual Prairie Grains Conference, which is held Dec. 13-14 in Grand Forks, N.D. Past data from the OFRN is also available at mnwheat.org/council/farm-research-network/. To learn more about participating in the trials, contact Chris Matter at 218-688-3523 or Carlson at 952-738-2000.

Continuing trials

Nitrogen rate response - To launch the OFRN's first completely map-based trial, prescription maps were used to apply six N rates during fall or spring application to help examine varietal responses to varying N rates and to determine the most profitable N rate fertility strategies for those varieties.

Foliar copper applications in wheat - Some consultants and growers on non-peat soils have

noticed copper deficiencies beginning to show up inside and outside of the Red River Valley. The OFRN is testing foliar applications of chelated copper at the tillering stage to see if there is an economic increase in yield.

Polyhalite fertilizer - MWRPC is working with a fertilizer company to evaluate the potential of the natural mineral fertilizer polyhalite (0-0-14-19S-17Ca-6Mg) as an alternative source of sulfur for spring wheat.

Rye termination timing - MWRPC has partnered with the University of Minnesota to test rye termination dates when rye is planted after wheat harvest, and soybeans are planted into the rye residue the following spring. The OFRN will test termination dates of one week prior to planting, termination at soybean planting and rye termination one week after planting, and the effect on weed control and soybean yield.

Reduced tillage - This trial is tailored toward growers interested in conservation practices, but who haven't yet implemented those practices on their farm. The OFRN team will take a look at reducing one tillage pass in the fall on a field that would normally get two passes of tillage after wheat harvest.

Volunteer wheat as a cover crop

The OFRN is looking to quantify the field effects when volunteer wheat is left to grow after harvest, compared to a grower's regular control practices. The intent is to further delve into the amount of residual nitrate taken up by the wheat, the amount of biomass out in the field prior to freeze-up, and the effects of the residue on the following crop's stand establishment and yield. We will compare the volunteer wheat results to what a grower might expect when seeding a fall cover-crop.

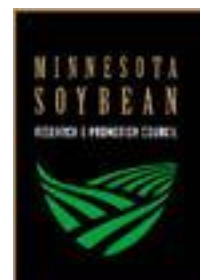
New trials for 2023

Biologicals Pivot Bio return - MWRPC will work with Pivot Bio to evaluate N use efficiency with RETURN, its new biological seed treatment for wheat.

Johnson-Su compost extract - The OFRN and the UMN received grant funding to test vermicompost extract applied as either a seed treatment or liquid in-furrow application to assess N and P use efficiency in wheat and row crops.

This method of biological amendment is used in high-value horticultural and vegetable crop production, and we will be testing a farm-scalable approach to measure the short term and long-term impacts on fertilizer use efficiency and the soil microbial community in commodity crop production. 🌾

The On-Farm Research Network thanks its sponsors:



U of M, NDSU seeking farmers for Crop Survey



By Prairie Grains Staff

This spring, the University of Minnesota (U of M), North Dakota State University (NDSU) and Minnesota Wheat are encouraging growers to participate in the 2023 Integrated Pest Management Crop Survey. The program is designed to help farmers better manage diseases and pests found in wheat, barley, soybeans and sunflower.

If a farmer has a wheat field or plans to have one, and would like to submit as a potential survey site to contribute to statewide Minnesota pest maps, they can register by scanning the QR code:



In Minnesota's crop survey, researchers address wheat and soybeans. Growers can email Anthony Hanson (hans4022@umn.edu) with questions or to learn more about participating.

Because scouts will be based in Morris, Moorhead and Crookston, the U of M is seeking sites in the western half of the state. Latitude and longitude coordinates can be easily found and copied by finding your field in Google Maps, right clicking and selecting What's Here? As in past surveys, field locations

will not be shared outside the U of M and NDSU Integrated Pest Management teams.

Fields that are relatively accessible from a roadside are preferred. Submissions will be selected to give the best geographic representations of study sites. The U of M can provide results for a farmer's field, so please include your email to ensure researchers can send timely updates on scouting results.

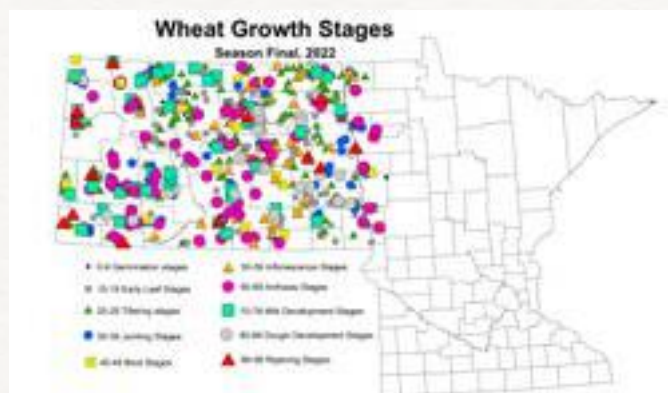
Maps will be available at <https://z.umn.edu/mn-ndsu-wheatipm> and alerts will be posted on Minnesota Crop News' website. Scouting will begin sampling in late May or early June on a weekly basis.

In North Dakota, researchers survey insect pests and diseases of wheat, barley, sunflower and soybeans, along with insect trapping in wheat and sunflower. The North Dakota IPM Crop Survey is supported in part by the Crop Protection and Pest Management Program from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the North Dakota Department of Agriculture.

For more information, North Dakota growers can contact NDSU Extension Entomologist Janet J. Knodel at janet.knodel@ndsu.edu.

In Minnesota, the survey is funded by the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council and Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council. 🌾

Researchers from North Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota collaborate on the annual Integrated Pest Management Survey.



A summary of the pest survey results is published in Minnesota Wheat's annual Research Review book at the Prairie Grains Conference.

Pine City farmer Craig Mold believes in stepping back and taking tips from the farming generation below him.

You can learn a lot from listening, he said.

“It’s the younger generation that’s leading the way,” said Mold, who will plant his 53rd crop in 2023. “They’re not afraid to try new things, and that’s a good thing. ... You have to be willing to change.”

Mold, who retired last year after serving 20 years on the Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District, is no stranger to improving the soil health on his operation. But he also relies on experts within his family. He farms with his son, Andre, who encouraged his dad to switch to vertical tiling. And Craig’s daughter, Jennifer Hahn, is a soil scientist and Extension educator for the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership.

“Vertical tillage was quite an adjustment for myself, but not so much for my son and daughter,” Craig said. “They pushed for us to go do it, and I’m a true believer in it now.”

Mold reports a big improvement in the consistency of his soil structure on his farm, which has helped to reduce fuel costs and boost yields. It’s all part of the Molds’ goal to experiment with new practices, including a 55-acre wetland restoration project and placing buffers throughout his land in 2017.

“When water goes through a culvert, it’s clear,” Craig Mold said. “In my lifetime, I didn’t think I would see that, but it really makes a difference. ... Everyone has to do their part.”

Craig’s dad started the farm in 1954 with 35 cows on 120 acres. Craig and Andre now farm 1,000 acres and grow corn and soybeans. During his farming career, Craig has seen his corn yields double, and soybean yields have continued increasing over the past two decades. In 2021, the Molds enrolled in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Certification Program (MAWQCP) by working with Ryan Clark, their local MAWQCP specialist. They only had to modify a few practices, namely reducing their fertilizer use.

“My son always says, ‘You don’t want to buy those last few bushels with increased fertilizer,’” Craig Mold said. “We try to get right in that sweet spot.”

Clark said the Molds’ advanced nutrient



Craig and Andre Mold are proud members of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program.

management practices, wetland restoration, sediment basins and crop history made them ideal candidates for the MAWQCP. Moving to vertical tillage was their final step needed.

“It was easy to explain the process to Craig,” Clark said. “He’s always able and willing to learn new things. They’ve come a long way, and we appreciate their efforts.”

MAWQCP connects farmers with local conservation district experts like Clark to identify and mitigate any risks their farm poses to water quality. Producers going through the certification process earn priority access to financial assistance. After certification, each farm is deemed in compliance with new water quality laws and regulations for 10 years. MAWQCP currently has five endorsements available to certified producers: Climate Smart Farm, Soil Health, Integrated Pest Management, Wildlife and Irrigation Water Management.

“It’s a good program,” Mold said. “It gets you to look at what you’re doing. It makes you feel good.”

More than 1,311 producers are currently certified in the voluntary program, covering more than 963,380 certified acres and implementing more than 2,500 new conservation practices. Gov. Tim Walz and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture will certify 1 million acres of farmland in Minnesota in 2023.

Mold, 69, said he’ll never stop learning from others. “I’m always looking for new things coming up,” he said. “I’m sure there will be something new in the future that we don’t even know about yet.”

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ACROSS THE PRAIRIE

By Prairie Grains Staff

Wheat groups displeased with railway merger

U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) and the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) are disappointed that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) approved the Canadian Pacific Railway's merger with Kansas City Southern Railroad.

In public comments submitted to the STB on the proposed merger in February 2022, USW said the market power held by the Class I railroads has serious implications for U.S. wheat's competitiveness compared to other major exporters. NAWG shared similar public comments with the STB and outlined how decreased rail-to-rail competition hurts shippers and growers alike. Now, this merger takes the U.S. rail system from seven to six Class 1 railroads.

USW and NAWG believe the STB has given a greenlight to rail consolidation without regard for the consequences on agricultural shippers from lack of competition in the U.S. rail sector.

"U.S. rail industry consolidation has led to poorer, not improved, service for agricultural shippers," USW President Vince Peterson said. "In addition, we see extreme disparity in rates for wheat shippers. Rail rates over the last decade have increased exponentially and rates for wheat are higher than rates for other commodities even with similar handling characteristics. Those higher rates make U.S. wheat less competitive in the global market at a time when higher prices already hurt our competitiveness."

USW and NAWG believe the STB must conduct more rigorous oversight of rail rates and service issues going forward. The STB should also aggressively pursue policies designed to inject competition such as reciprocal switching - a proposal that the STB ironically shelved last year because Class 1 rail service was severely challenged for agricultural shippers.

"With 50 percent of wheat being exported, wheat is heavily reliant on rail transportation to move across the United States," NAWG CEO Chandler Goule said.

U.S. Wheat vice president dies at 52

U.S. Wheat Associates and the entire U.S. wheat industry are saddened by the death of Mark Fowler, 52, in February. Mark joined USW in 2017 and was vice president of Global Technical Services.

Fowler's career began as a flour miller first for Cargill, Inc., and then Seaboard Corp. In those roles, Mark ran flour mills, worked on projects in several developing countries, including Ecuador, Guyana and Haiti, and worked as a technical director of the Africa Division within Seaboard's Overseas Group. As a highly respected flour milling expert, Mark also served as a technical milling consultant for USW, as well as the Northern Crops Institute.

"Mark's passing is a great personal and professional loss for our organization and the wheat farmers we serve," USW President Vince Peterson said. "Mark embraced his work and our mission with enthusiasm; as a result, our technical experts are better equipped and motivated partners for our many customers across the world."



The U.S. wheat family mourns the death of Mark Fowler.

USDA to change World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates wheat tables

Starting with the May 12, 2023, release, the following change will be made to the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report:

The wheat WASDE by-class tables will add separate lines for imports, food use, seed use, and feed and residual use. Sample WASDE tables, including the revised table, are available on the WASDE website.

The World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates is prepared and released by the USDA

World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB). The report is released monthly, and provides annual forecasts for supply and use of U.S. and world wheat, rice, coarse grains, oilseeds and cotton.

Register for South Dakota Ag Summit

Registration is now open for the 2023 South Dakota Governor's Agricultural Summit (Ag Summit). The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) will host the two-day event on July 18-19 in Watertown, South Dakota on the campus of Lake Area Technical College.

This year's agenda will include an ag economic market outlook, policy updates, Farm Bill discussions and producer recognition. The event is free, and attendance is open to all; however, pre-registration is required. To learn more, visit danr.sd.gov/AgSummit/default.aspx.

During the Ag Summit, the 2023 Governor's Ag Ambassador Award will be presented to an individual or organization making a positive contribution to South Dakota's agricultural industry.

South Dakota researcher earns honors from U.S. Wheat Quality Council

Sunish Sehgal, a winter wheat breeder with South Dakota State University (SDSU), earned the U.S. Wheat Quality Council's prestigious "Millers Choice Best of Show" honors for the second consecutive year.

"This is an awesome recognition requiring years of invested talent and energy," said Reid Christopherson, executive director of the South Dakota Wheat Commission. "The investment of SDWC checkoff dollars into these programs results in immeasurable returns to our agricultural economy."

Each year, SDSU's winter wheat breeding program evaluates more than 11,000 trial plots across eight locations and assesses the quality of more than 1,000 unique experimental varieties to select the best lines for public release and on-farm production.



SDSU Winter Wheat Breeder Sunish Sehgal is a two-time winner of the U.S. Wheat Quality Council's "Millers Choice Best of Show."

Montana Wheat and Barley Committee heads to Portland

Each year, the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee (MWBC) hosts an Export and Marketing Tour, which bring growers, wheat breeders, elevator managers and industry professionals to Portland, Oregon. Participants had a firsthand look at the route Montana grain takes once it leaves the farm. The trip also highlights the importance of quality and significance it has on export markets.

The main stop on the tour was the Wheat Marketing Center (WMC). The WMC serves as an educational facility for both growers and buyers of U.S. wheat. The WMC breaks down different wheat classes, demonstrates various baking processes and provides a closer look at the baking industry.

The Portland tour also provides an in depth look at grain exports. This year, grower-leaders toured the United Grain terminal and learned more about the logistics of grain shipment. The tour also rode on a tugboat, affording the group a chance to see firsthand the importance of barge movement and how using waterways along with rail, helps to keep grain shipment more competitive. The delegation also toured a commercial bakery and learned the science behind brewing beer. 🌾



Following its yearly Export and Marketing Tour, the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee held its April board meeting at Montana State University.

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