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Issue 183 September 2021

# Prairie Grains

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**DRIVING  
SOY** FROM SEED BED  
TO TIRE TREAD

## **ARE YOU DRIVING SOY?**

From the seed bed to tire tread, Minnesota soybean farmers are DRIVING SOY this summer by embarking on a statewide campaign to give back to their local communities by donating sets of soy-based tires to their sheriffs' department, all while driving further demand for soybeans grown right here in Minnesota. Now that's treading new ground. Learn more at [mnsoybean.org/driving-soy](http://mnsoybean.org/driving-soy).

# Against the Grain

## Harvest 2021: The New Normal

I recently asked a colleague when she thought we would get a normal year. Her response: “Normal is an illusion. It is the average of 10 abnormal years.”

Harvest 2021 is nearly complete for wheat, and it has been far from the “normal” we have come to know, especially in northwest Minnesota.

Last week, I had the opportunity to participate in the Wheat Quality Council’s Spring Wheat Tour through North Dakota and Minnesota.

I am writing this from the Minnesota Wheat booth on the last day of Farmfest in Redwood Falls, Minnesota. These opportunities have allowed me to look at crops while traveling on more than 1,500 miles of highway, stopping frequently to walk fields. In those travels, I have yet to find an area or field that is looking to achieve trendline. The drought has affected our entire region. Some areas received thunderstorms and are in better shape than others, but this is a tough situation. I have walked wheat fields that range from 3 to 60 bushels per acre, with the average in Minnesota being in the

low 40s.

Being a glass-half-full kind of guy, the good news is, quality looks excellent. Our domestic and foreign buyers will have limited supplies due to decreased yield across the region, but the bushels that are produced will continue to build on the high-quality reputation that our region and Spring Wheat have come to be known for.



Farmers are a progressive, forward-looking collective of world-class problem solvers. So, it is with

no surprise that I have been receiving inquiries seeking information how to best position their operations for 2022 in these current conditions. What should be done with stubble management? Are there different chemistry solutions to use that could reduce our need for tillage? What agronomic practices should be explored if we stay dry? What are the consequences of employing those practices if the cycle turns wet?

What is Minnesota Wheat doing in this environment? At this year’s Farmfest, we communicated with our elected officials and their staffs the seriousness of the ’21

drought and advocated for programs and policies that allow for the continuation of the farming heritage that is crucial to rural America and the world food supply.

We then pivoted and began working on a workshop to address the questions about fall tillage and agronomic practices in drought conditions. In the coming weeks, we will put on our annual marketing seminar and continue planning for a return to an in-person Prairie Grains Conference in December. We will continue to advocate at the state and federal level for policies that support you, our valued members.

I’ll leave you with one request: Whether you are in Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota or Minnesota, get involved and join your state growers organization. I’m biased and would prefer Wheat, but get involved in at least one association that represents a commodity that you are producing. We need you, your neighbors need you and agriculture needs you. We are too small of an industry not to mobilize everyone.

Thank you for what you do, stay safe and may you have a prosperous future. 🌾

Charlie Vogel,  
Minnesota Wheat CEO





# TAMING THE BULLS



BY BETSY JENSEN



& BEARS

## Higher Prices, Higher Stress

My brain is backwards. The higher commodity prices climb, the higher my stress levels climb. It should be reversed. I should be stressed about low prices and relaxed about high prices. Is my brain wired backwards? Am I the only one with this backwards thinking?

When it comes to the 2020 crop, most of mine was sold long before the markets rallied. I got lucky with a few bushels, but not enough to pull up my average prices. I have been able to walk away from the 2020 crop. I sold too early, but it is time to move on.

It is my 2021 crop that is causing me stress. I have already made sales, my farm is in a drought and I feel paralyzed looking at high prices. Will I have more bushels to sell? How high will prices go? What if we keep rallying all winter? What if I hold and prices drop?

During runaway markets, like we have right now, the decisions are bigger. When we decide to sell or hold, we should prepare to be wrong by several dollars, not just a dime or quarter. Sell today, and watch it go several dollars higher. Hold today, and watch it drop several dollars.

For the first time ever, I have contracted wheat for harvest delivery. I often deliver a load or two each year

at harvest, but this year I moved some of my December contracts to harvest delivery. I avoid harvest delivery for wheat because of weak basis and large discounts. This year I was able to lock in protein scales and a respectable cash price, so off the combine it goes.

If prices remain high, delivering off the field may be an easy answer. Imagine not checking bins, blowing snow, starting trucks and waiting for clear roads. There are measurable costs to storage, but the immeasurable costs are often higher.

I imagine myself in February, delivering wheat for \$6. Or I have empty bins and wheat is worth double digits. Which will I regret more? That's a personal decision, so choose wisely.

I believe you can market your crops without using puts, calls or directly in the futures market. You can be a good marketer using only the tools available at your elevator. If you have a strong understanding of futures and options, this is a year to use them. They can help calm the waves of higher and lower prices. If you don't have a good understanding of futures and options, use caution.

You need to understand your risks before trying an unfamiliar marketing

tool. Do not make crop marketing more stressful than necessary.

If you are considering buying fall fertilizer, run a few numbers. You cannot be profitable paying 2021 fall fertilizer prices and end up selling wheat for \$5 in March 2023 when you finally clean out the bin. If you buy fertilizer and sell 2022 crop at the same time, high wheat prices will help offset high fertilizer. We have high commodity prices for 2022, and those come with high fuel and fertilizer prices.

When I look at the cash flows I created for farmers last winter, I laugh. We made a plan, prices rose, yields went down and maybe even acres changed. I encourage everyone to update their plan for 2021 and get a start on the 2022 plan. I am a number lover, so crunching numbers is my idea of a fun day. Will I still be able to make money in 2021, and what about 2022? Having numbers on paper helps ease my stress.

I am always grateful for high wheat, corn and soybean prices. I really am. Gratitude and stress can come from the same item. Just look at your kids. I have amazing kids and they keep me up at night. I guess the commodities we grow really are part of the family. 🌾





# CAPITOL GAINS

## MAWG earns legislative wins during 2021 session

By Drew Lyon  
*Ag Management Solutions*

Political observers predicted the 2021 legislative session would come down to the 11th hour, and they were vindicated when lawmakers and Gov. Walz agreed on a record \$52 billion biennial budget just hours before the July 1 midnight deadline.

“It was an orderly finish but it came down to the final day,” Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG) lobbyist Bruce Kleven said. “That wasn’t a surprise.”

MAWG emerged from the 2021 legislative session, which was held mostly virtual for the first time, with a series of policy wins in the two-year budget.

### Research

As with every session, agriculture research was a key MAWG priority. In the ag omnibus bill, MAWG worked to protect continued funding for the Agricultural Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer (AGREETT) program at the University of Minnesota at a base of \$9.3 million per year. MAWG also helped ensure Northern Crops Institute remained fully funded at \$47,000 per year in the biennial budget. The Ag Special at the

University of Minnesota also received nearly \$43 million per year, and the MDA’s noxious weed program received \$450,000 in state funding.

“The Wheat Growers are pleased to see all of these vital programs will continue to receive funding in the years ahead,” MAWG President Gary Anderson said.

### Fighting regulations

MAWG successfully protected its members from a pesticide fee increase proposed by Governor Walz and supported by House Democrats, saving farmers about \$2.25 million in registration increases. Farm groups also joined together to prevent passage of House bills that would’ve banned certain pesticides and allowed cities to enact their own pesticide regulations. The current law continues to allow states authority over pesticides, which MAWG supports.

“We were happy to work together with other ag groups to squash those proposals,” Kleven said.

### Taxes

MAWG worked with legislators to bring Payroll Protection Program (PPP) tax conformity into federal law. The law, which saw bipartisan support, will provide more than \$1 billion in tax relief

toward Minnesota farmers and other businesses.

“All of the ag groups were pretty much united on that front,” Kleven said.

### Transportation

MAWG, along with the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, successfully advocated for a weight exemption lifted along Highway 2 to allow for soybean meal trucks to haul up to 106,000 pounds from the Ag Innovation Campus up to the Canadian border. MAWG opposed the governor’s Clean Cars rule, which bypassed the legislative process and will instead be enacted by the Pollution Control Agency.

As part of the budget agreement, Gov. Walz agreed to relinquish his emergency powers, ahead of what will be a fierce reelection battle in 2022. This session was unprecedented, Kleven said, and 2022 – with a gubernatorial election and redistricting as backdrops – could set the stage for another round of contentious negotiations in the nation’s only divided legislature.

“This was the oddest session I can recall,” said Kleven, MAWG’s lobbyist since 1995. “We’re taking a wait-and-see approach for 2022 because so much remains unknown at this time.” 🌾



## Montana, Dakotas Nab Policy Win For Region's Farmers

By Prairie Grains Magazine Staff

### Montana

With a new governor, Greg Gianforte, taking office in January, and the Legislature convening, as required, in an odd-numbered year, the Montana Grain Growers Association worked with the Montana Ag Coalition on various bills.

MGGA supported appointments for the Department of Ag and the Board of Hail Insurance and also supported bills that positively impacted growers, such as increasing the exemption limit for business equipment tax to \$300,000. Other bills signed by the governor included:

HB 660-Funding for Made in Montana programs. This gives an additional \$200,000 to promote products.

HB 681-Creating an ag transportation enhancement account for port authorities. This account distributes grants to port authorities with truck/train transloading facilities. This is important for growers due to the fact that Montana exports most of our goods.

HB 554-Requiring Legislative approval for National Heritage Areas. This provides an additional layer of protection for private property owners.

"MGGA is thrilled to have a governor who is so supportive of agriculture – Montana's way of life," said Alison Vergeront, MGGA Executive Vice President. "Throughout the session, we kept in close contact with the governor's office and will continue to keep in touch during the interim."

### North Dakota

North Dakota's 2021 Legislative Session concluded in late May, and agricultural research received broad support from lawmakers. The funding came follow better-than-expected revenue numbers, along with federal relief related to COVID-19.

One of the North Dakota Grain Growers Associations' (NDGGA) top priorities was securing funds for the Ag Products Development Center at NDSU. The center, which has been in the works for several years, combines meat science, cereal science, the Northern Crops Institute and North Dakota's Trade Office into a single state-of-the-art facility. As part of the bonding bill signed by Gov. Doug Burgum, the center will receive \$50 million in state funding.

Other ag-related highlights in the budget include: \$80 million toward a value-added loan guarantee program, \$30 million in township and bridge infrastructure improvements, boosts in renewable energy funding and \$4.4 million in resources for the Ag Products Utilization Commission (APUC) fund.

Beyond the state budget, NDGGA was grateful for the USDA's June announcement that authorizes more than \$1 billion in programs to provide disaster assistance to producers who suffered losses to 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

### South Dakota

During the 2021 Legislative Session, lawmakers approved \$20 million toward the Bioproducts Facility at the Research Park in Brookings to fuel research into value-added ag products. The funding was included as part of the state's record \$5.1 billion budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

In the state's infrastructure funding bill, \$6 million will be directed toward improving the state's rural infrastructure. \$100 million will be invested in upgrading rural broadband access. \$20 million in upgrades to the State Fair's Dakota Events Complex also received legislative approval. Construction on the building is expected to be completed in 2022. 🌾



# USDA Offers Assistance to Drought-Stricken Farmers

By Prairie Grains Magazine Staff

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering technical and financial assistance to help Midwest farmers and livestock producers recover from the severe drought affecting the majority of the region.

As agricultural producers move into recovery mode and assess damages, they are encouraged to contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure and livestock losses and damages, according to a USDA news release. During the summer, the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers has also been in contact with Gov. Tim Walz and Minnesota Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen regarding the drought issues affecting its members.

“Unfortunately, conditions continue to deteriorate across Minnesota, with more than half of the state experiencing severe to extreme drought conditions,” said Gloria Montañó Greene, deputy undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). “I am thankful that USDA can step in with disaster assistance programs designed to alleviate some of the financial impact experienced

by agricultural producers suffering drought losses.”

In July, Gov. Walz visited with northwest Minnesota farmers to get a closer look at how producers are enduring the drought.

“If you're like me, there's two things I'm refreshing: the Weather Channel and seeing if the damn radar shows up something, and the other one is the drought monitor,” Walz told the group, which included MWR&PC Director Tim Dufault.

## USDA disaster assistance for drought recovery

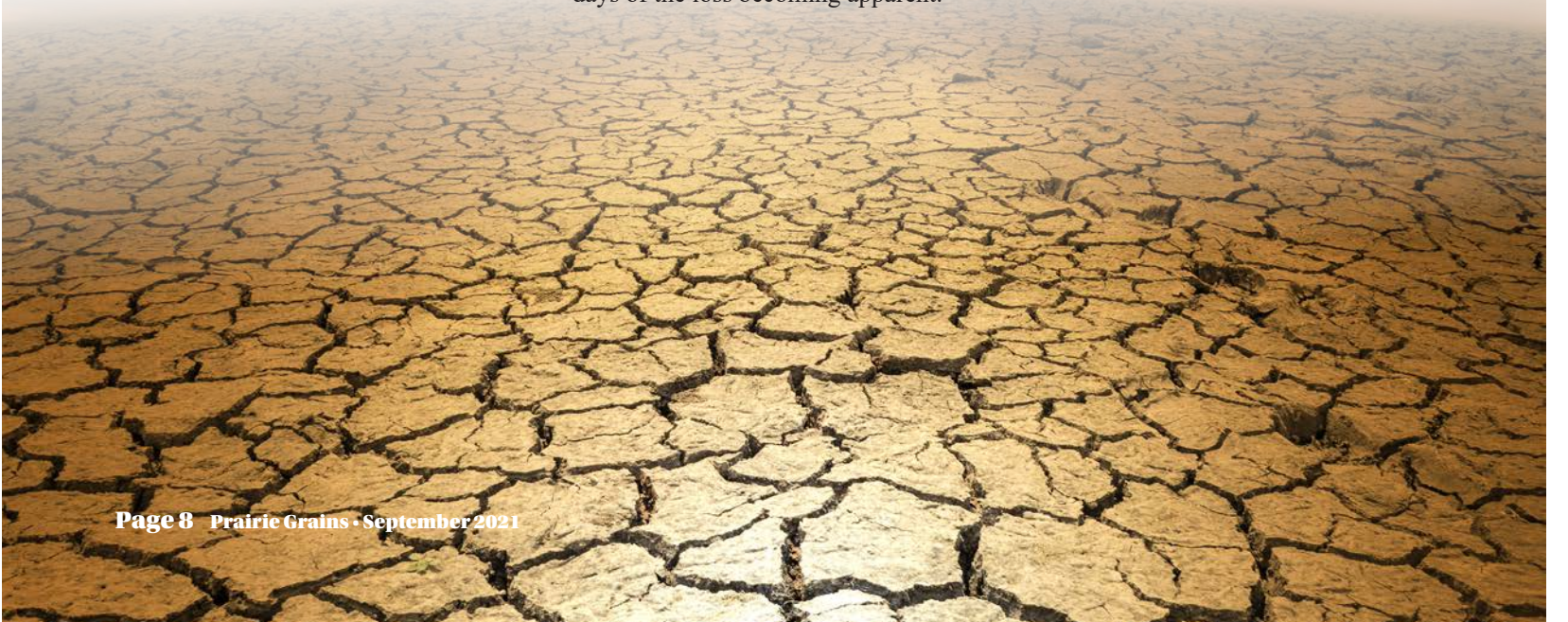
Producers who experience livestock deaths and feed losses due to natural disasters may be eligible for the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). This program also provides eligible producers with compensation for expenses associated with transporting water to livestock physically located in a county that is designated as level “D3 Drought - Extreme” according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

For ELAP, producers will need to file a notice of livestock loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent.

Livestock producers who have suffered grazing losses due to drought in 2021 may be eligible for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP).

Additionally, emergency haying and grazing of CRP acres may be authorized (outside of the primary nesting season) to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought or similar natural disaster. Emergency haying and grazing status is reviewed and authorized each Thursday using the U.S. Drought Monitor. Counties are approved for emergency haying and grazing due to drought conditions on a county-by-county basis, when a county is designated as level “D2 Drought – Severe,” according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed loans, including operating and emergency loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low-interest emergency loans to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs.





## Risk management

Producers who have risk protection through Federal Crop Insurance or FSA's NAP should report crop damage to their crop insurance agents or FSA office, respectively. If they have crop insurance, producers should report crop damage to their agents within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days. For NAP covered crops, a Notice of Loss (CCC-576) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

Additionally, RMA authorized emergency procedures earlier this month to help agricultural producers impacted by extreme drought conditions. Emergency procedures allow insurance companies to accept delayed notices of loss in certain situations, streamline paperwork and reduce the number of required representative samples when damage is consistent.

## Conservation

FSA offers the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and Emergency Forest Restoration Program to assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore fencing, damaged farmland or forests.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also offers programs to help in the recovery process. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can help producers plan and implement conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters. Practices include brush management, livestock watering facilities, prescribed grazing, etc. Long-term damage from drought includes forage production loss in pastures and fields and increased wind erosion on crop fields not protected with soil health practices.

"Only Mother Nature knows when South Dakota will begin to experience some relief from this ongoing drought. USDA can be a very valuable partner

to help landowners with their future recovery efforts," said Laura Broyles, NRCS acting state conservationist in South Dakota. "The NRCS resource professionals are available to help producers through onsite, one-on-one consultations to help in mitigating drought damages and post-fire restoration, if needed."

For more information, visit [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their crop insurance agent. For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their local USDA Service Center. North Dakota has a website devoted to resources for drought assistance. To learn more, visit [ndresponse.gov/farm-ranch-assistance](https://ndresponse.gov/farm-ranch-assistance).

"We appreciate our state and national leaders doing their part to assist farmers," Minnesota Wheat CEO Charlie Vogel said. "We encourage all of our state's wheat growers who are suffering through these historic droughts to access these critical resources that have been made available to us." 🌾

## Thank you for supporting the 2021 MAWG Shoot Out

This year's annual MN Wheat Sporting Clay Shoot Out had 49 novice and advanced shooters participate. All of the growers and ag professionals enjoyed a beautiful day of shooting at the Northwest Sporting Clay Association course in Thief River Falls, MN. Prizes were also awarded to the best individual and the best team shooters.

### The winners are....



Winner of Annie Oakley:  
Eric Johnson (left), Charlie Vogel,  
(right), MN Wheat Executive Director



4-Team Winners (L to R): Chad Haugen, Justin Paul,  
TJ LaPlante and Brent Strickler



Individual winner: Justin Paul (left),  
with score of 48. Charlie Vogel, (right),  
MN Wheat Executive Director

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# A CRICKET CACOPHONY

By Doug Monson  
*Ag Management Solutions*

As a visitor to Revier Farms, Ag Commissioner Thom Petersen had the opportunity to sample a muffin made with cricket flour.

Chirp, chirp, chirp.

No that wasn't awe-inspiring silence filling the room when Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen walked into a barn in Moorhead on an early July morning. While that would have been an acceptable response for Madeline and Pat Revier in their first encounter with Commissioner Petersen, the serenading came from the resident orchestra – of crickets.

The Revier Family Farms in Moorhead isn't your typical farm, and the Reviers don't have a typical barn. If one didn't know the area, the bars on the windows of a nearby neighbor might scare visitors off. Once inside the building, the farm comes to life with rows and shelves of Tupperware cricket condos adorning the room.

"When we're full we'll have about 3

million in here," Pat Revier said as he showed the commissioner the nearly 500,000 crickets already calling Revier Family Farms home. "Our plan initially was to harvest them, dry them and ground them into a flour and ship them off to companies looking for flour. We haven't achieved that yet. We need to get some different equipment here. It hasn't really been that easy."

Nothing has been easy for the young couple. Pat, born and raised on a dairy farm, has found creative and unique ways to manage the cricket farm. He converted an old fridge into an incubator, first building in a heater and later replacing the heater with a computer fan.

"The heater that I installed was never turned on because the development process of the eggs creates enough heat that it actually gets too hot, so I had to



Crickets eat a mixture of meal that includes wheat, soybeans and corn, among other products.



install a fan to cool it down,” he said.

The couple has tried using a maize grinder more suitable for a poultry operation and a cement mixer to combine the different feeds to create cricket meal. The blend comes from a 1970s scientific review of feeding byproducts to crickets.

“It’s soybeans, corn, wheat ... used brewer’s yeast, blood meal and bone meal because they are naturally carnivores, and we need to get some of the meat in there,” Madeline said. “And then we use nonfat dried milk because they need all of that calcium to grow their exoskeleton.”

Noreen Thomas, a Moorhead organic grains farmer, provides the soybeans, corn and wheat. She also helped arrange the meeting between the Reviers and Commissioner Petersen.

“We don’t necessarily need organic, but we need crops that don’t use pesticides,” Pat said.

“We don’t want to be poisoning our little guys.”

### Finding a market

For the Revier business to ultimately take off, the duo needs to get a commercial dryer to handle their orchestra. More specifically, the couple needs a microwave dryer, which lowers the drying time of a standard dryer from 5 hours to 7 minutes. And the couple needs a smaller unit than currently available.

“In the U.S. they only make really big ones,” Madeline said. “They are like a quarter of a million dollars, and they can process what we produce in months, in one day.”

The couple literally has searched the globe, inquiring in Asia, where the cricket industry thrives, until finding a company in Canada.

“There’s a company in British Columbia that manufactures them,” Pat said. “I called them, and he said the same week that I called, four other people called inquiring about drying crickets. So they’re looking into it and looking to develop a smaller drier.”

*Continued on page 12*



A cricket grows to adulthood in anywhere from four to six weeks; warmer temperatures accelerate growth.



A cricket molts, like a snake, and sheds its cuticle many times as it grows to adulthood.



Crickets will breed for roughly five days, and then they are harvested.



Crickets are fasted before harvesting to clear the gut content before being stored in a refrigerator to induce a natural hibernation.



Once hibernating, crickets are packaged and moved to the freezer where they finally die, preserving most of the nutrients.



Madeline (center) and Pat Revier (right) explain to Commissioner Petersen the trial and error process of finding the right bottles and sponges to water the crickets. Photos by Doug Monson.

The Revers say they worry the wait will be more than a year. In the meantime, they are tackling other issues, such as the classification of their farm.

“We started working with AURI because there are no regulations in Minnesota,” Madeline said. “They set us up with someone and classified us as a small-scale livestock production.”

Unfortunately, as the couple shared with Commissioner Petersen, the livestock grant opportunities don’t cover cricket farms. Petersen encouraged the couple to pursue value-added ag grants and to explore Minnesota Grown once their company is fully up and running.

“We also host shows for food buyers, because if you want to go to a food show and promote your products, it can be expensive,” Petersen said. “What we do is we take 20 to 25 companies and we put them up in our pavilion, and the buyers from grocery stores and similar industries come to the event. You can really get in front of them in our pavilion for nothing or next to nothing.”

Until then, the couple is left with a few options to keep their fledgling farm afloat: sell to the local live market and freeze the rest of the inventory.

“What we have right now is a freezer full of crickets, and we are starting to market toward to live market to people who feed their pets,” Pat said. “We’ve sold a few. There’s a pet rescue for exotic pets, and we’ve been providing them with crickets, and then (North Dakota State University) gets crickets from us (for research).”

Asked if they have considered selling crickets

to bait shops, the couple quickly ruled it out.

“It’s surprising how emotionally attached you get to these things,” Madeline said. “I think twice about killing insects now.”

Pat concurred: “I wouldn’t feel right putting a hook through one after all the time I’ve spent here.” 🌾



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# 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Minnesota Wheat Golf Events

The Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers hosted 9-hole, 2-man scrambles at two locations, Hawley, MN and Red Lake Falls, MN. This new format better accommodated growers and agri-business' schedules within the wheat growing area. From the golf and weather to the great food, everyone had a fantastic time out on the courses. The Minnesota Wheat Open Golf events are a way to say thank you to members and supporters of the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers. *Thank you* for making these events a great success. The membership dues and sponsorships help raise the funds necessary to continue our work in St. Paul and Washington D.C. We are proud of our past successes and we continually work on issues important to wheat growers in Minnesota.

*And the winners are .....*

## *Hawley*

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Nick Olsgaard & Jeremy Hovde

**5<sup>th</sup> Place:** Joe McCollum & Aaron Schenck

**10<sup>th</sup> Place:** Jessy Wicht & Mickie Rogal

## *Red Lake Falls*

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Spencer Sundberg & Andrew Ness

**4<sup>th</sup> Place:** Peter Durand & Dalton Feuillerat

**7<sup>th</sup> Place:** Ryan Ulrich & Lonnie Longtin



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# Links in the Chain

**Increased input costs have growers looking ahead to 2022**

By Drew Lyon  
*Ag Management Solutions*

With supply chain issues throwing a wrench into transportation and shipping, ag leaders are urging farmers to start their input considerations for 2022 as soon as possible.

“There’s a fair amount of turbulence in the supply chain right now,” said Tate Petry, who, along with Mike Gunderson, represents Minnesota on the National Association of Wheat Growers. “The

national board is doing our part in alerting federal agencies and the Biden administration of these ongoing struggles.”

Petry, who farms in Ada, Minnesota, said his current circumstances are favorable because he pre-bought many of his inputs last fall. It brought him peace of mind during the pandemic, and he recommends other growers do the same heading into the 2022 growing season.

“Going into 2022, we’re pre-buying to have that assurance that we paid for it,” he said.

Prices for Glyphosate, a product often used to by wheat growers to combat weeds, have skyrocketed as a result of shortages due to unprecedented shipping delays from China, where it’s manufactured. Liberty (glufosinate) has seen similar price increases. Petry also reports he’s seen fertilizer costs spike by more than 100% in recent months, reaching levels not seen in nearly a decade. The blame can be directly traced back to supply chain snags due to the ongoing pandemic.

“Our ratios on fertilizer are wildly high, not seen since 2012,” Petry said. “The ratios are out of whack because of the supply chain issues.”

Gunderson, who’s also a second vice

president with the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers, said he’s been told by experts that growers who purchase their inputs by this fall or early 2022 should be in relatively good shape.

“But we’re still a month or two away from getting a better grasp on things,” he said in late July.

Petry recommended farmers think ahead, consult their agronomists and consider backup plans, such as mixing chemicals.

“Being in contact with your agronomist is the best step to take,” he said. “Have plans in place if you can’t get seed and make sure you can access two products individually. We mix a lot of chemicals to get modes of action against weeds. They cost more, but they’re convenient.”

With seed costs also soaring, Gunderson said growers may want to consider holding back extra wheat for seed because there may be more demand for spring wheat in 2022.

“Things will hopefully stabilize, but for right now, the best thing a farmer can do is be proactive in their plans for 2022,” he said. 🌾



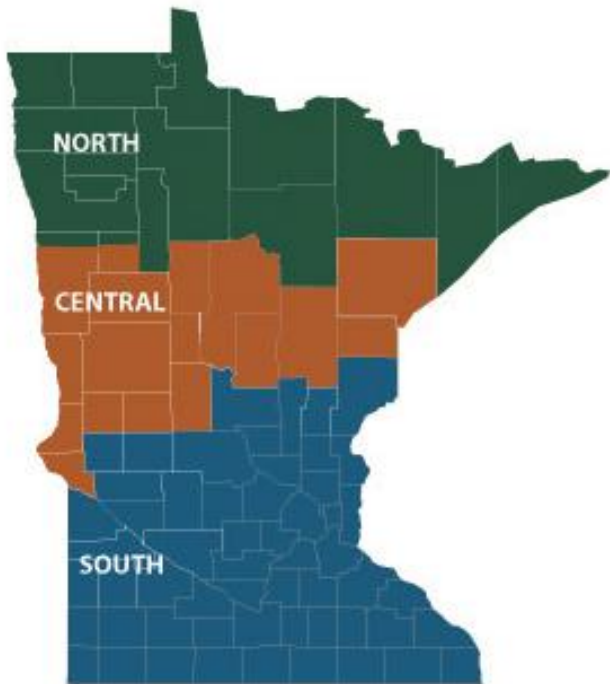
# 2021 Minnesota Wheat Varieties

We would like to thank all of the Minnesota wheat producers who responded to our annual wheat variety survey. The results of this survey help guide our U of M spring wheat breeder, Jim Anderson, in developing suitable varieties for production in Minnesota.

The results of the survey depict what varieties are most popular, and what characteristics are most important to you as growers.

## Survey Findings:

- WB9590 was the most popular variety statewide, with 18.02% of the acreage planted in 2021.
- Second most popular was SY Valda at 12.84% of the state's acreage.
- Third on the list was Linkert at 11.91%, followed by WB9479 at 10.27% and MN-Torgy at 9.67%.
- In the northern growing regions of the state, WB9590 was the most popular variety with 20.62%.
- SY Valda was the most popular variety in the central growing region, with 17.39% of the acres planted.
- In the southern region, Linkert was first on the list at 16.20% acres planted.



This survey is conducted from the check-off funds collected by the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council.



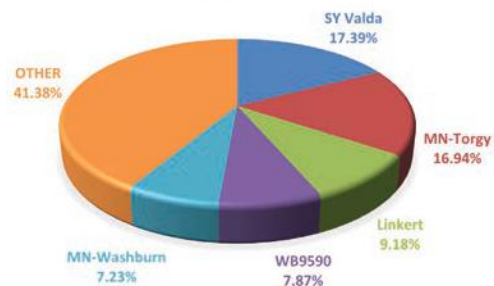
Total Acres Surveyed: 378,461  
2021 TOP FIVE VARIETIES STATEWIDE IN MINNESOTA



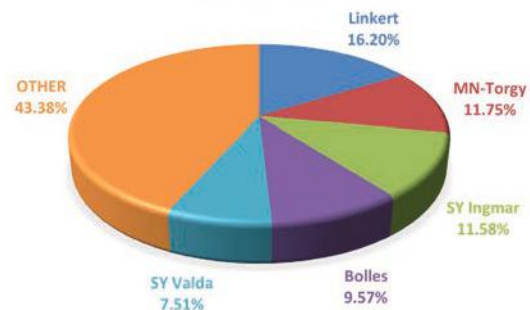
Total Acres Surveyed: 305,187  
2021 TOP FIVE VARIETIES IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA



Total Acres Surveyed: 66,485  
2021 TOP FIVE VARIETIES IN CENTRAL MINNESOTA



Total Acres Surveyed: 6,789  
2021 TOP FIVE VARIETIES IN SOUTHERN MINNESOTA





# POST-WHEAT HARVEST & PRE-ROW CROP HARVEST STRATEGIES

## *Virtual* **SEPTEMBER MARKETING SEMINAR**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2021  
4:00 - 6:30 p.m.

Please join us for this virtual event. Presenters will be together at one location to maximize the delivery of their valuable information. Your registration and participation is requested!

### **PROGRAM**

- 3:45-4:00 p.m.      Login to virtual meeting via emailed link
- 3:55 p.m.            **Welcome** - Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers  
and North Dakota Grain Growers
- 4:00 p.m.            **Grains: Where Do We Go From Here?**  
*Katie Tangen, Market Education Specialist*  
*AgCountry Farm Credit Services*
- 4:45 p.m.            **How to Take a Fall: Adapting When Nothing Goes as Planned**  
*Betsy Jensen, Farm Business Management Instructor,*  
*Northland Community & Technical College, Stephen, MN*
- 5:30 p.m.            **The Tale of Two Crops: 2021-22 Market Outlook**  
*Dr. Frayne Olson, Crops Economist/Marketing Specialist, NDSU, Fargo*
- 6:15 p.m.            **Final Comments / Adjourn**

Registration is FREE to all attendees. Follow the link below to register for the virtual marketing seminar. A confirmation email with meeting link will be emailed after registration.

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED to view the seminar.**

**Register online at <https://bit.ly/2VDfsJv>**

# THE SPEAKERS

## How to Take a Fall: Adapting When Nothing Goes as Planned

– **Betsy Jensen**, Farm  
Business Management  
Instructor, Northland  
Community & Technical  
College

Farming never goes as planned. Breakdowns, commodity prices, yields - every year has its challenges. How can you navigate the unexpected in commodity marketing? When things don't go as planned, how can we manage the fall? Let's discuss ways to get back up and prepare for future years.

## The Tale of Two Crops: 2021-22 Market Outlook

– **Dr. Frayne Olson**, Crops  
Economist/Marketing  
Specialist, NDSU


Frayne will tell the story on where we were, where we are and where this might go.

## Grains: Where Do We

## Go From Here?

– **Katie Tangen**, Market  
Education Specialist,  
AgCountry Farm  
Credit Services

Katie will take a look at global grain production and how it impacts U.S. producers.



Q & A will be available after each presentation.



BETSY JENSEN



DR. FRAYNE OLSON



KATIE TANGEN

A PROGRAM OF



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# Healthy BENEFITS

## IMPROVING WHEAT DIGESTIBILITY THROUGH SOURDOUGH FERMENTATION AND CROP VARIETY

By Agricultural Utilization Research Institute

In past issues of *Prairie Grains Magazine*, we have highlighted ongoing research investigating ways to reduce potentially reactive components of wheat, like FODMAPs and ATIs. FODMAPs are sugars, known as fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols. ATIs are proteins called amylase-trypsin inhibitors. Research indicates that “anti-nutrients,” such as ATIs, and fructans (a component of FODMAPs) in wheat have been identified as triggers of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

There is a growing understanding that wheat digestibility issues may not be solely caused by gluten sensitivity but are also related to the presence of FODMAPs and ATIs. According to George Annor, assistant professor of cereal chemistry and technology at the University of Minnesota, FODMAPs are normally present in small quantities and tolerated by most. However, foods with more than 0.3 grams per serving (the equivalent of two slices or more of bread), as seen in the chart on page 19, can cause issues. FODMAPs are best tolerated if less than 0.3 grams per serving.

For individuals with this sensitivity, changes to wheat characteristics or processing techniques can result in more digestible products, increasing quality of life for consumers and allowing them to enjoy the health benefits of wheat products.

Conducted through a partnership between the Minnesota Wheat Research and Promotion Council (MWRPC), the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), the



“Screening the ancient, heritage and modern wheat varieties for their FODMAPs and ATI gave us important insights into how these parameters vary in different wheat varieties.”

University of Minnesota’s College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) and its Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, as well as Back When Foods, Inc., this research has the potential to create new products and processes that will positively impact the entire wheat industry value chain.

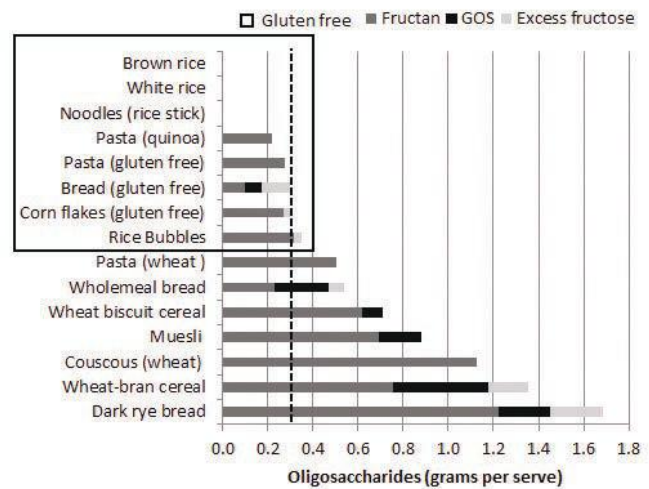
The hypothesis set for this research is that ATIs and FODMAPS can be reduced through breeding programs and processing techniques (i.e. sourdough fermentation) of modern, heritage and ancient wheat. The reason this topic is important to wheat growers and the entire industry is researchers’ belief these reactive components are triggers of non-celiac gluten sensitivity and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which cause many people to avoid wheat-based products. Instead, they look for less-reactive products, thus reducing the overall consumption of wheat-based products impacting the industry overall.

Until now.

The MWRPC and its partners undertook this endeavor in order

to create new opportunities for wheat-based products, consumable by those with wheat-digestion concerns. Additionally, the study has the potential to provide new market opportunities that could have a positive financial impact for growers, the wheat industry and Minnesota.

“We have identified significant variation in FODMAP and ATI levels in a diverse panel of wheat varieties, including among modern wheat germplasm,” said James Anderson, professor of wheat breeding and genetics at the U of M. “This variation may allow us to selectively breed for lower levels of these anti-nutrients. The ancient Einkorn and Emmer wheats were consistently low in FODMAPs, and Einkorn was also low in ATIs.”



Varney, J., Barrett, J., Scarlata, K., Catsos, P., Gibson, P. R., & Muir, J. G. (2017)

Annord said research shows that sourdough production can help reduce the amount of FODMAPS and ATIs in wheat.

“Screening the ancient, heritage and modern wheat varieties for their FODMAPs and ATI gave us important insights into how these parameters vary in different wheat varieties,” Annord said.

Continued on page 20



“It was apparent that we have not inherently bred them for increased levels of FODMAPs and ATI over the years. Our study also showed that fermentation was very effective in reducing FODMAPs and ATI levels in wheat in the form of sourdough. These results tell us that sourdough production can be effectively used to reduce the levels of FODMAPs and ATIs in wheat.”

### New approaches

Coupled with breeding efforts to reduce the levels of anti-nutrients in wheat lines, the degradation of FODMAPs and ATIs through sourdough fermentation provides immediate opportunities for wheat growers to regain market share by focusing their efforts on channeling their crops directly to the ever-growing artisan bakery sector.

An additional channel for growers to use the research findings is in support of ongoing breeding programs and low FODMAP certification, in which large-scale processors have shown great interest.

“Both FODMAP and ATI levels appear to be under complex genetic control,” Anderson said, “thus making the selective breeding of these traits more difficult. But I’m optimistic that we can make breeding progress.”

Anderson added that new approaches involving DNA sequencing and genomic



Brian LaPlante, owner of Back When Foods in Fisher, Minnesota, has studied sourdough fermentation to develop new, innovative bakery products for wheat-sensitive eaters and others. Photo Credit: Suzanne Irwin

prediction will be used to enhance our breeding efforts to reduce FODMAP and ATI levels.

As the project researchers and partners continue to seek ways to have a meaningful impact on the wheat industry overall, plans are underway to continue to build upon these recent findings in a second phase that focuses on further development of wheat varieties that not only have improved digestibility but also have high amylose and resistant starch content for a lower glycemic index and improved gut health (microbiome).

*Financial support for this project is provided by an Agricultural Growth, Research, & Innovation Crop Research Grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The AGRI program awards grants, scholarships and cost shares to advance Minnesota’s agricultural and renewable energy industries. For more information about the AGRI program, visit [www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/agri](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/agri). To learn more about AGRI Crop Research Grants, visit [www.mda.state.mn.us/cropresearch](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/cropresearch).*

**For more information, and to follow this research, visit: [www.auri.org/agri](http://www.auri.org/agri).**

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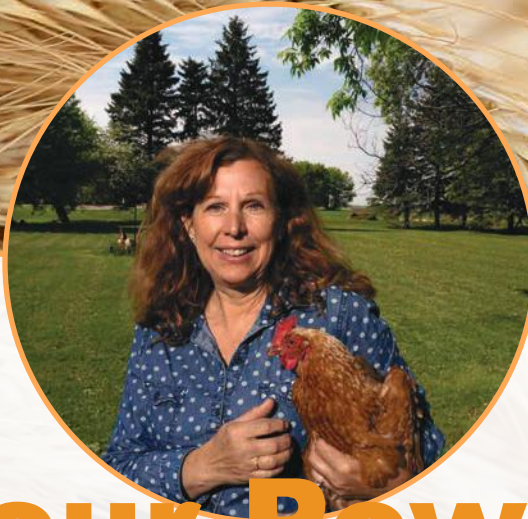
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# Flour Power

Northwest Minnesota farm has no doubt in its mission

By **Drew Lyon**  
*Ag Management Solutions*

In March 2020, Doubting Thomas Farms in northwest Minnesota launched its online food store. In many ways, the timing was fortuitous, as COVID-19 crippled the restaurant industry and threw a wrench in food supply chains.

“There was a big shift with COVID,” said Noreen Thomas, a producer and co-owner of Doubting Thomas. “People starting eating for health and nutrition to protect themselves.”

Thomas, a pioneer in the organic farming movement, had been expecting a slower rollout with her online store, which offers more than a dozen products. But when stores began experiencing yeast shortages, consumers

began seeking out farm-to-table producers like the Thomases.

“We thought, ‘Oh we’ll see if we get any orders,’ and then – boom! – COVID hit, and then you couldn’t find flour,” Thomas said. “Everyone seemed to get into baking, the whole world. Everyone got into bread making. ... We could barely hold the door on.”

Doubting Thomas’ store offers a plethora of locally sourced products, including whole wheat flour, Minnesota wild rice, malted oats and more. When the pandemic hit, the farm temporarily lost about 90% of the restaurants it serves nationwide, from Moorhead to New York City. The online store helped fill the gap and brought consumers even closer to the source of where their food comes from.

*Continued on page 22*





2020©Alice McCabe

Noreen Thomas (left) and her husband, Lee, farm along the Buffalo River in Clay County, Minnesota.

“It was such an eye-opener for people,” Thomas said. “We weren’t as ready, but we pivoted and it was such a blessing.”

People all over the country started ordering from the online store, further solidifying the relationship between farmer and consumer, especially in the Midwest.

“We shipped all the over U.S. because people really want to know their farmer,” Thomas said, “and I think especially there’s a bond with Midwest farmers.”

Noreen also writes recipes on the farm’s blog, but she prefers brevity when baking. “I don’t like recipes that are really long,” she said. “My attention span isn’t very long.”

**Great taste**

Thomas and her husband, Lee, farm about 1,200 certified organic acres on their six-generation operation established in 1887. They are joined by a family friend, Seth Gorman, and French chef Benoit Decormeille, who helps with the gardening. Together, Doubting Thomas raises organic oats, wheat, blue corn, barley and soybeans, along with fresh-picked garden produce and certified-organic eggs.

“Grandma and grandpa’s farm isn’t what it used to be,” said Thomas, who began



## 'An inspiration'

Labeling Noreen merely a farmer doesn't begin to describe her range of her attributes, says her friend, award-winning chef Dan Barber.

*"(Noreen) is an educator, nutritionist and breeder," Barber said. "She's also an inspiration for how we think about farmers and farmland in the future."*

## No Doubt

Noreen laughed when asked how they came up with Doubting Thomas name. It's simple, she said with a laugh, "because they doubted us when we went organic!"

## The more the merrier

Over the course of nearly 25 years, the Thomases have hosted more than 8,000 visitors on their farm. During the tour, guests can try their hand at planting or harvesting, flower planting/picking, tree nursing, feeding animals, heritage cooking and more. To schedule an on-farm tour, call 218-790-0290.



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farming in 1997. "By using regional grains in this area, we help keep farmers on the land."

Recently, Noreen's daughter-in-law, Melaney, has joined the team in raising and malting oat and barley. Those ingredients have been used in local breweries and were used in one of the Minnesota State Fair's top-rated beers. This fall, Lakes and Legends of Minneapolis is debuting a Minnesota-grown brew made with rolled oats and malted barley grown on the Thomas' land.

Doubting Thomas' high-fiber, whole-grain pancake and waffle mix, made with buckwheat flour, is a fan favorite. Farm-fresh eggs, produced by heirloom chickens, are another popular item.

"We wanted something that tasted really good and nutritious," Thomas said of her pancake and waffle mix, which sells for \$5.50. "I'm always trying to get people to eat better and walk that line of what tastes good and what's healthy."

The months ahead will be busy as the Thomas' complete harvest. In late August, they'll be at the Minnesota State Fair promoting the grains they use in beer. They're also releasing a book on a Midwest Mediterranean diet. For the past 17 years, the Thomases have been supplying Fargo chef Andrea Baumgartner with grains. Noreen says it's a work in progress, but there are tentative plans to host a mill at Baumgartner's

restaurant, BernBaum.

"Andrea's definitely got a chef's taste, and she loves the grains that we have," Noreen said.

Later this year, Doubting Thomas' retail packages will be available at Minnesota Farmers Union's first restaurant, Farmers Kitchen + Bar, in Minneapolis' Mill District neighborhood. Doubting Thomas Farms oats and rice are also featured in an MFU book, *The Farmer and the Chef*.

"We're really excited to partner with Farmers Union on these projects," Noreen said.

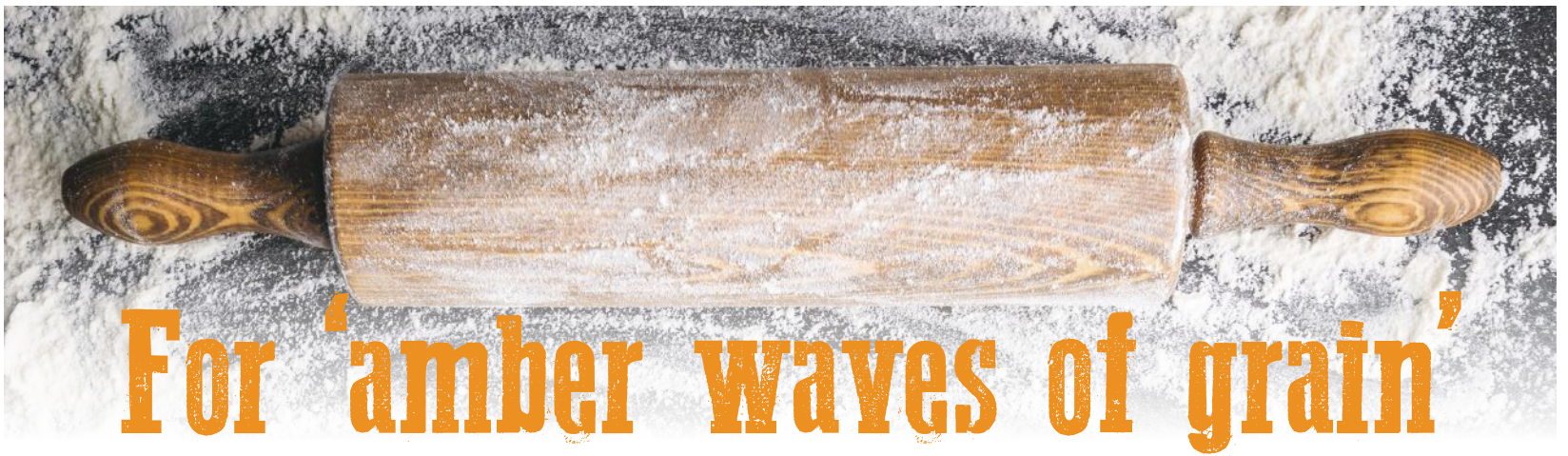
In 2004, Thomas became the first woman (and only organic) farmer awarded the prestigious University of Minnesota's Siehl Prize for Excellence in Agriculture. Noreen is also passionate about teaching children and advocating for female farmers. The Thomases were recent recipients of a federal grant that will foster collaboration among young, beginning northwest Minnesota grain farmers to market together.

The pandemic may have changed the way people source their foods, but Noreen Thomas and her family are made of strong fiber.

"Our crops could use a drink," she said, "but we're typical Minnesotans: Someone's always got it worse than you."

To learn more and shop their store, visit [doubtingthomasfarms.com](http://doubtingthomasfarms.com). 🌾





By Sara Hewitt

Ag Management Solutions

Artisanal flour begins with very specific grain varieties to achieve a unique and sought-after flavor in baking. For Ben Penner, a Minnesota wheat farmer, that grain is 1874 Turkey Red wheat.

Turkey Red Wheat inspired the line “amber waves of grain” in the famous song and poem, “America the Beautiful.” The line pays homage to the golden-red hue that is characteristic of this variety that was first planted in central Kansas. As new varieties emerged throughout the years, Turkey Red’s popularity with wheat farmers decreased, and all but vanished from the agriculture landscape. For Penner though, growing Turkey Red Wheat was a connection to his family heritage.

“My Mennonite ancestors brought it here from Ukraine when they immigrated to the U.S.,” Penner said. “They brought it over in the fall of 1873, planted it on the plains of central Kansas and harvested it in 1874.”

In 2008, Penner landed near St. Peter, Minn., where his wife, Anna Versluis, is a professor at Gustavus Adolphus College. He connected with a landowner who wanted the land farmed organically. Like any good farmer will attest to, Penner didn’t turn down the opportunity to farm land.

“I had this idea of doing a direct-to-customer farm – a similar approach as a CSA would do, having a lot of customer contact and growing grains that way versus a commodity,” he said. “I felt like there was quite a bit of room for doing similar things with grains with how we drink wine and coffee and eat chocolate based on where they are grown, how



Tandem Bagels and River Rock Coffee are two of the 25 Minnesota locations that are use Penner Farms wheat and flour.

they are grown and their flavor profiles. Having been around wheat my whole

life, I knew there was flavor diversity available.”



### Real food, real purpose

Penner sells his flours in 25 stores in Minnesota, plus one in Kansas, in addition to his website online. He also has a unique relationship with River Rock Kitchen and Baking Co., in downtown St. Peter. River Rock sources as many of its ingredients locally and provides a variety of breads and bakery items to restaurants, coffee shops and grocery stores across south-central Minnesota.

"In 2015 or so, I really got the ball rolling," Penner said.

"I developed my own little supply chain and launched a new product into the world. There were early adopters, and it took a couple years for it to take off. I found a good community."

Heritage wheat, like the varieties that Penner grows, typically focuses on specific flavors for certain baking needs or what varieties mill well.

"Some are sweeter, some are drier or crunchy in flavor. Turkey Red has an earthy, drier flavor," he said.

"My customers have grown accustomed to what I produce, so my experimentation has slowed down a bit with other varieties because they are asking for certain ones I grow," Penner added. "But each customer has their own unique needs and some have experimented right along with me."

As a specialty wheat grower, Penner has faced many challenges in figuring out the supply

chain for his products.

"There aren't many organic mills for smaller scale, and not everyone is interested in working with a smaller producer," he said. "If I could wave a magic wand, I would love to see more infrastructure, investment and entrepreneurship in this space. I think other grain growers could take a similar approach if there was infrastructure in place."

Despite the challenges of starting a small-scale farm and piecing together

infrastructure for his specialty wheat flour, Penner still finds that the reward of entrepreneurship and customer connection outweighs the complexities of building a successful farm and food business.

"As a person of faith, we should do everything we can to flourish on our landscape (and in) our communities," he said. "And agriculture, particularly, is an advantageous way to do that. This is real food with real purpose that everyone can enjoy in their daily lives." 🌾



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## New study highlights higher profits for ag water quality certified farms

A new study by the Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence shows that farmers enrolled in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) had higher profits than non-certified farms. This marks the second year of data highlighting improved financial outcomes.

The “Influence of Intensified Environmental Practices on Farm Profitability” study examined financial and crop production information from farmers enrolled in the Minnesota State Farm Business Management education program. The 64 MAWQCP farms in the study saw 2020 profits that were an average of \$40,000 or 18% higher (median of \$11,000) than non-certified farms. The 2019 data showed an average of \$19,000 or 20% in higher profits (median of \$7,000) for certified producers. Other key financial metrics are also better for those enrolled in the MAWQCP, such as debt-to-asset ratios and operating expense ratios.

The two years of data serve as an early indicator of a positive return on investment for whole-farm conservation management farmers implement in order to become certified.

“The Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program is a double-win for the state,” said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. “We see that certified farms have a major impact on our environment for the better; now we also know that those farmers see better economic outlooks which helps our ag economy. I encourage all farmers and landowners to look into the advantages of certifying their land.”

“While this study is in its infancy, capturing two years of data and 3% of the Minnesota database, it does look encouraging that producers who are water quality certified enjoy an increase in farm profitability,” said Keith Olander, Executive Director of AgCentric. “As we expand this dataset in future years, we will look to incorporate enterprise level management data that may explain more about what is driving these profit levels.”

To view, download, or request a copy of this report, visit [agcentric.org](http://agcentric.org).

The MAWQCP is a voluntary program for farmers and landowners that protects the state’s water resources by putting farmers in touch with local conservation district experts to identify and mitigate any risks their farm poses to water quality. Producers going through the certification process have priority access to financial assistance.

Over 1,100 producers are currently certified in the MAWQCP, covering more than 785,000 certified acres, and implementing more than 2,200 new conservation practices. Those new practices help to reduce of greenhouse gas emissions by over 40,500 metric tons each year. That annual saving is equal to 4.5 million gallons of gasoline, or 44.6 million pounds of coal, or eliminating more than 100 million miles driven by an average passenger vehicle.

The program is on target to meet Governor Tim Walz’s goal of enrolling one million acres by the end of 2022.

Farmers and landowners interested in becoming water quality certified can contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District or visit [MyLandMyLegacy.com](http://MyLandMyLegacy.com). 🌾



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[MyLandMyLegacy.com](http://MyLandMyLegacy.com)





# All Hail Gail

Minnesota Wheat's CFO calls it  
a career after 44 years

By Drew Lyon  
*Ag Management Solutions*

In October 1977, just two weeks after being hired by Minnesota Wheat as a secretary, Gail Podenski started to panic. The organization's bookkeeper had just resigned. Then-Executive Director Charles Rhoades approached Podenski and asked if she'd want to try her hand at bookkeeping.

"I thought, 'Oh my god, seriously?'" Podenski said. "I used to sit and go, 'Mom, what's a debit and a credit?' I'm proud of how far I've come on my own."

Turns out, with a keen eye for structure and organization, Podenski handled the accounting duties more than adequately. Forty-four years since she began handling Minnesota Wheat's bookkeeping, Podenski is retiring from position as Minnesota's Wheat chief financial officer, effective Sept. 1, 2021. Though, true to her nature, she plans to stick around to help with any auditing work that may come up.

"I'm tired, I'm ready," she said with a smile. "But I will sure miss coming here and feeling like I'm part of a team."

## The way it was: 1977

- Average price of wheat: \$2.5765 per bushel
- Membership in Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers: 1,000+
- U.S. and Canada percentage of world grain exports: 75%
- Yearly USA inflation rate 6.5%
- Cost of a gallon of gas: 65 cents
- Average income per year: \$15,000
- Average cost of a new home: \$49,300
- Cost of 5-inch portable TV: \$147
- Elvis Presley dies
- First Apple Computers go on sale
- Star Wars is released in theaters

*Continued on page 30*



A photograph of a woman with short, curly, light-colored hair, wearing a bright pink sweater. She is sitting at a wooden desk in an office, looking out a window with white blinds. On the desk in front of her is a computer monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse. There are several papers scattered on the desk. In the background, there is a wooden cabinet with a calendar and several framed photographs. A hand sanitizer bottle is visible in the foreground on the right side of the desk.

*"Gail's been an excellent employee, a longtime favorite. She's always been there for us. She's an unselfish person, can't say enough good things about her. It's going to be hard to replace her – she's been a big part of Minnesota Wheat for 40 years."  
- Minnesota Wheat board member Tim Dufault*





In addition to her numerous duties, Gail Podenski also helped decorate Minnesota Wheat's office.

Her buoyant presence, booming laugh and encyclopedic command of the organization will leave a void at Minnesota Wheat, says her longtime colleague and VP of Operations Coreen Berdahl. It's been an epic run, and Podenski has witnessed and documented the organization's growth every step of the way.

"Gail is the historian of Minnesota Wheat," Berdahl said. "We will miss the vast knowledge she has about the past 44 years of these organizations. That knowledge is something that cannot be replaced. ... Where Minnesota Wheat has come from is quite amazing, and Gail can tell the story."

For the past 44 years, Podenski has made the short commute from her Red Lake Falls home to Minnesota Wheat's headquarters. For years, her routine remained unchanged. She wakes up at 5 a.m. – "I like the hour of quiet," she said – enters the building at 7 a.m. and calls it a day by 3:30 p.m.

Post-retirement, she hopes to stay up late, watch Minnesota Wild games to their completion, curl up with a good mystery and embrace whatever each day has to offer.

"I want to see what comes up," she said. "I want to have coffee in the morning and rest. And maybe I get up one morning and go, 'I want to go to the Duluth for the day.'"

#### **Doing her best**

Minnesota Wheat hired Podenski, a Red Lake Falls native, fresh out of vocational school and the "college

of life."

"I tell everyone I was 14 years old when I was hired, and I'm sticking by that," she said, laughing.

She's quick to point out that, contrary to the parlance of the times, her salary wasn't mere "gravy money." Podenski worked hard from the outset, helping to support and raise her children with her husband, Tony.

"That term – 'gravy money' – always infuriated me," she said during an interview in Minnesota Wheat's postage room, which she helped decorate. "My job helped pay for things, put food on the table."

Of course, in those days, accounting was handled via pad and pencil and big ledgers. Podenski said she felt overwhelmed at first with the digital transition to computers. A self-described perfectionist, she learned to love digital accounting, even though she needed to wear computer glasses to cope with migraine headaches.

"Things have changed so much," Podenski said. "The software out there is amazing. Now, I don't have to wait for bank statements; everything's a lot of faster."

For more than 30 years, Dave Torgerson worked alongside Podenski. The former executive director marvels at the myriad tasks Podenski covered – everything from MAWG membership to assisting with organizing the Prairie Grains Conference to helping publish the organization's newsletter in the office basement.

*Continued on page 23*



## Promptness is a virtue

What's the secret to thriving with an organization for nearly 50 years? According to Podenski, it's simple: Don't keep people waiting.

**“ I hate late! If I'm supposed to be somewhere, I'll be there. ”**



Gail Podenski won't be a stranger to Minnesota Wheat's office after her retirement: She lives just a few miles away.



Up until the past year, Podenski helped maintain flowers on the Minnesota Wheat grounds. During board meetings, grower-leaders would give their crop updates. When Podenski had the floor, she'd say, "My flowers are lovely!"



“She was dedicated and committed and pitched in and did whatever needed to be done,” Torgerson said. “With all the information and attention to detail she had, Gail made the decision-making process so much easier.”

An upbeat attitude and sense of humor helped keep Podenski during low moments. She subscribes to the notion that laughter is the best medicine.

“I’ve never lost my sense of humor – that and attitude are huge,” she said. “Everyone can have a bad day, but your attitude can change everything. There’s somebody out there who’s having a worse day than me.”

Gail’s worst day happened in 2016 when she returned home during her lunch break and discovered Tony, her husband of 34 years, had died.

“When Tony died, everything changed,” she said. “After that, I needed to be busier than ever.”

To cope, she contemplated retiring. Instead, she poured herself back into work and spending time with her children and grandkids. Last year, during the pandemic, Podenski approached Executive Director Charlie Vogel, expressing her wishes to retire. She considered moving to a part-time role but had second thoughts. Podenski doesn’t do half-measures. So she stuck it out.

“I’m not a good part-time; it wouldn’t have worked,” she said. “I’m a diehard. If I’m doing a job, I want to do it the best I can.”

#### **No fuss, no muss**

For the past two years, Podenski has worked alongside Vogel. She praised each of the five executive directors she’s worked under and jokingly pleads the fifth when asked who was her favorite, referencing a mug in her office that says, “You’re not the boss of me.”

“They’ve all been different, and they should be. Otherwise, it’d be boring,” she said. “Charlie is very likable and is doing a great job. He’s been wonderful through this process.”

Podenski is going to miss the farmers she’s worked with over the course of six decades. Her dad farmed, but Gail fashions herself as more a “city gal.” Her admiration for farmers runs deep though.

“I have such respect for farmers,” she said. “There’s so much out of their control: You plant, you pray for rain, prices are unpredictable. I couldn’t do it.”

When she retires, Gail doesn’t want any pomp and circumstance – just a lunch and a pontoon ride with her colleagues, she said. Oh, and a lifetime subscription to *Prairie Grains Magazine*. She’d like to exit the way she entered: behind the scenes, in the background.

“I don’t like fuss,” she said, laughing, “and I don’t want stuff.



Photo provided by Gail Podenski.

During her retirement, Gail Podenski plans to spend more time with her grandchildren, including Sawyer (left) and Dominic (right).

It will be hard enough to say goodbye.”

Her influence on the organization will linger long after her retirement.

“Gail’s work, words and expressions are scattered in every file cabinet, project and event,” Berdahl said. “I know I will hear her voice in our work. She was dedicated to Minnesota Wheat, and she should be proud of what she is leaving behind.”

Recently, Vogel approached Podenski in her final weeks on the job. “How are you doing?” he asked. “Ready to do this?”

“Yup,” she replied.

No turning back.

“I told him, ‘Life feels good. It feels good,’” she said. “I’m ready. But I’m not quitting, you know? I don’t quit. ... I started with an executive director named ‘Charlie’ and I’m ending with a ‘Charlie.’”



# Become a MAWG Member Today!

The Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers places a high priority on legislative issues such as crop insurance, the farm bill, wheat research funds and water and other environmental issues.

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Minnesota Association  
of Wheat Growers





# AROUND THE PRAIRIE

By Prairie Grains Magazine staff

## **NAWG debuts Industry Partners Program**

Recently, the National Association of Wheat Growers launched its Industry Partners Program (IPP), which is an opportunity for companies to become more closely involved with NAWG. Among the first to join the program were Syngenta, Ardent Mills, Farm Credit, and FMC. These companies will be featured in a social media campaign throughout the months ahead. Be sure to follow along with the posts on NAWG's Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Visit [wheatworld.org](http://wheatworld.org) to learn more about NAWG's Industry Partner Program.

## **Wheat leaders get firsthand look at North Dakota drought**

Most of the country has been significantly impacted by the drought, and spring wheat growers are seriously affected. To gain a better understanding of the drought's effect, National Association of Wheat Growers CEO Chandler Goule, and National Wheat Foundation project manager Anne Osborne are attending the Wheat Quality Council's 2021 Hard Spring and Durum Wheat Tour.

By gaining this firsthand experience, Goule was able to better represent the NAWG state members and create a more unified voice for wheat farmers in Washington, D.C. Crop insurance, disaster assistance and additional funding for breeding programs for more resilient crops are among the many programs NAWG continues to promote on Capitol Hill and

with the Biden administration.

"The people on the tour are interested in promoting high-quality, profitable wheat just like The Foundation is doing," Osborne said. "They may be interested in participating in our National Wheat Yield contest or helping with some of our other projects about high quality, high profit or nutrition through wheat."

Engaging with breeders, food scientists, millers, bakers, producers, input providers, nutritionists and consumers allows NAWG and NWF to develop meaningful research projects and education programs that will increase the value of wheat for all segments.

## **BASF unveils new hybrid wheat**

In June, BASF introduced its new brand for hybrid wheat seeds, Ideltis. The hybrid wheat is intended to provide farmers with higher and more-stable performance in yield and quality.

"With Ideltis, we are unlocking the full potential of wheat," BASF President Vincent Gros said. "Through our global research platform, we anticipate providing growers and the entire value chain hybrid wheat that is tailored to their local needs and consistently delivers better, more stable yield."

BASF hopes to continue to develop sustainable and efficient solutions to help farmers meet the demands of a rapid population.



### Beginning farmer tax credit still available for Minnesota farmers

A tax credit for the sale or lease of land, equipment, machinery and livestock in Minnesota by beginning farmers is still available through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Rural Finance Authority.

To qualify, the applicant must be a Minnesota resident with the desire to start farming or one who began farming in Minnesota within the past 10 years, provides positive projected earnings statements, has a net worth less than \$862,000, and enrolls in, or has completed, an approved financial management program.

The farmer cannot be related by blood or marriage (e.g., a parent, child, grandparent, grandchild or sibling) to the person from whom he or she is buying or renting assets. The farmer must provide most of the labor and management of the farm.

The tax credit for the sale or lease of assets can then be applied to the Minnesota income taxes of the owner of the agricultural land or other assets.

Three levels of credits are available:

- 5% of the lesser of the sale price or fair market value of the agricultural asset up to a maximum of \$32,000
- 10% of the gross rental income of each of the first, second and third years of a rental agreement, up to a maximum of \$7,000 per year
- 15% of the cash equivalent of the gross rental income in each of the first, second or third year of a share rent agreement, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per year

The Beginning Farmer Tax Credit is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications must be received by Oct. 1, 2021. Growers can learn more at [www.mda.state.mn.us/bftc](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/bftc). 🌾

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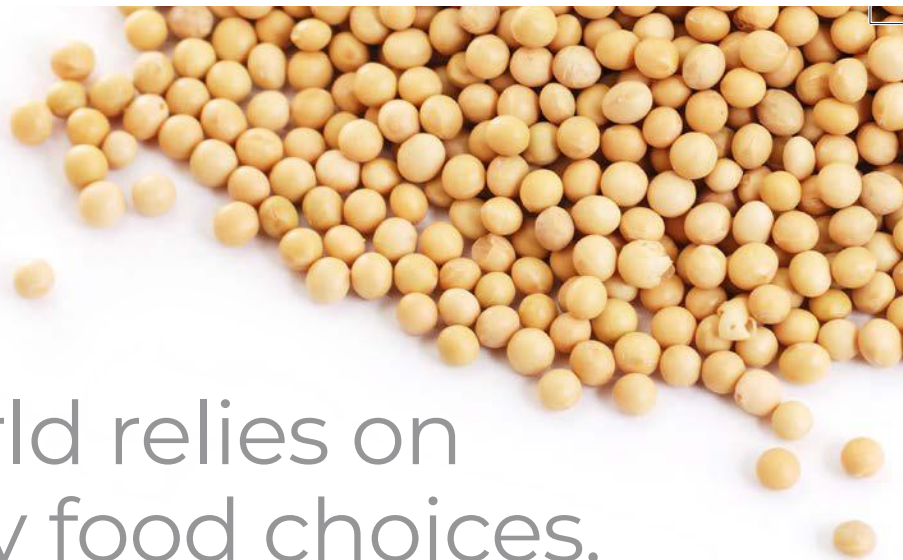
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