

mnwheat.org

Issue 206 April - May 2025

Prairie Grains

Building Opportunities by Association

WIDE WORLD of WHEAT

An in-depth look at wheat exports

Read More

- Sorenson marks one year with MN Wheat
- MWRPC bids farewell to three directors
- NAWG celebrates 75 years of advocacy

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Fargo, ND
Permit #684



Watch visions come to fruition with the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers.

While farmers farm, MAWG is in St. Paul and Washington, D.C., protecting producers from harmful policies and advocating for farm-friendly legislation.

Because checkoff dollars cannot be used for advocacy, MAWG depends on our members' support to ensure that Minnesota wheat growers have a voice at the legislative table.

Join the wheat family today — become a MAWG member!



Prairie Grains

April - May 2025 | Issue 206

1

2

3

4

5

06

Happy place: Brian Sorenson grows into role as MN Wheat executive director

10

Variety insights: Spring Wheat Survey provides valuable information to researchers

16

Passing the torch: Three Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council directors passing leadership torch to new board members

20

Research returns: MWRPC approves funding for FY26 projects

28

Wheat goes to Washington: NAWG celebrates 75 years of federal advocacy

Cover Story

In 2024, Minnesota wheat farmers produced over 80 million bushels of spring wheat. Where does all that wheat go? While some of it remains in the region, making its way to flour mills, a significant amount is shipped to countries around the world. Read pages 14-15 to learn which countries are steadfast importers of Minnesota wheat.

PUBLISHER AND CIRCULATION

Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers
2600 Wheat Drive • Red Lake Falls, MN 56750
218.253.4311 • Email: mnwheat@mnwheat.com
Web: www.mnwheat.org

EDITORIAL

Doug Monson, Sr. Director of Integrated Marketing
Ag Management Solutions
1020 Innovation Lane • Mankato, MN 56001
Ph: 507.995.7534
Email: dmonson@agmgmtsolutions.com

Sydney Harris, Managing Editor

Ag Management Solutions
Ph: 218.689.5091
Email: sharris@agmgmtsolutions.com

CONTENT EDITORS

Drew Lyon, News Editor
Ag Management Solutions
Ph: 507.388.1635
Email: dlyon@agmgmtsolutions.com

Katelyn Engquist

Ag Management Solutions
Ph: 507.508.1540
Email: kengquist@agmgmtsolutions.com

ART DIRECTOR

Alex Troska
Ag Management Solutions
Ph: 952.334.2539
Email: atroska@agmgmtsolutions.com

ADVERTISING SALES

Erin Rossow, Ag Management Solutions
Ph: 507.902.9191
Email: erin.rossow@agmgmtsolutions.com

ABOUT PRAIRIE GRAINS

Prairie Grains magazine is published six times annually and delivered free of charge to members of these grower associations, and to spring wheat and barley producers in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. To subscribe or change address, please write or call our circulation department.

OUR PARTNERS



Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers and Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council
2600 Wheat Drive • Red Lake Falls, MN 56750
218.253.4311 • Email: mnwheat@mnwheat.com
Web: www.mnwheat.org



North Dakota Grain Growers Association
2401 46th Ave SE, Suite 204 • Mandan, ND 58554
701.222.2216 • Email: danw@ndgga.com
Web: www.ndgga.com



South Dakota Wheat Growers Association
116 N. Euclid, Box 667 • Pierre, SD 58501
605.224.4418 • Email: wheatinc@midco.net



Montana Grain Growers Association
P.O. Box 1165 • Great Falls, MT 59403 • 406.761.4596
Email: erobinson@mgga.org • Web: www.mgga.org



Northland Community and Technical College
1101 Highway One East • Thief River Falls, MN 56701
218.683.8800 • Email: ron.dvergsten@northlandcollege.edu
Web: www.northlandcollege.edu

Against the Grain

Expecting the unexpected

Above all else, the farming life keeps us nimble and on our toes.

By April Fools' Day, following a relatively mild March, Mother Nature dealt us a cruel blow by dumping several inches of snow on northern Minnesota, crushing my hopes for an early planting season. I should've known better than to make a prediction. Snow it goes! Lately, it seems our planting dates are getting pushed further back into the spring, capped by a mad rush.

While our 2025 crop will eventually get in the ground, there's a lot of uncertainty hanging over our industry this spring, from global trade wars to a long overdue Farm Bill. As you'll read in one of our features from this issue, Minnesota wheat relies on diverse markets across the globe – from the Philippines to Honduras to Italy – to consume our product. These relationships are vital to our bottom line, and we urge the administration to quickly settle these trade disputes while continuing to pursue fair market access for U.S. agriculture.

While tariffs are causing fear across farm country, I was encouraged by the efficiency in getting much-needed relief to our producers this spring as part of the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP). I urge my fellow producers to contact your local Farm Service Agency office to sign up. USDA made ECAP easy. We also want to thank Minnesota's congressional delegation for their bipartisan support in passing this legislation last year.

On the national front, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) is preparing to bid farewell this summer to CEP Chandler Goule, who's stepping down after nine years of helping manage our federal advocacy efforts. As a NAWG director, I've seen Chandler's leadership firsthand, including on the Prop 65 case against the state of California. NAWG and Chandler spent several years leading this critical case that recognized the fundamental role of EPA scientists to consistently evaluate and determine the safety of the products U.S. wheat farmers use to produce our food. At any level of advocacy, it's important to play the long game. Chandler and his staff recognized that policy wins aren't gained overnight; they require patience, strategy, relationship-building and a passion for the cause. We thank him for his service to U.S. wheat producers. NAWG's member states, including those from Minnesota, South Dakota and Montana, will take a fresh look at the organizational structure and determine a course for our future as we search for our next CEO.

Throughout this winter and into spring, Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers continues staying active at the state Capitol while legislators face committee deadlines and negotiate the



Kevin Leiser

biennial budget. We remain committed to working with both parties to push back against burdensome regulations, protecting our freedom to farm and supporting the full funding of Minnesota Department of Agriculture's programs. We'll have more coverage from the legislative session

after it adjourns May 19 – although a special session is increasingly possible – in our next issue later this summer.

Our organization has made positive strides in the year since Brian Sorenson joined Minnesota Wheat as our executive director. Brian's steady demeanor and industry knowledge has been stabilizing. We're also excited that our recruiting efforts paid off and we now have full boards on both MAWG and the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council. After over a decade on the Council board, I'm stepping off to focus entirely on local, state and national advocacy on behalf of our wheat producers on the MAWG board. My family will tell you that keeps me busy enough.

I'm looking forward to staying busy in the months ahead, growing the world's highest-quality wheat and promoting our industry's priorities. This cautiously optimistic farmer wishes you a safe, healthy and on-time planting season. Let's get growing!

Kevin Leiser farms in Fertile, Minnesota, and is in his second year 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 X at @jensenbetsy.

& BEARS

It's not wrong, it's just different

Once upon a time, high-school Betsy went to Russia with FFA. Imagine a bunch of country kids, ages 15 to 18, heading to Russia. God bless those chaperones. Not just a trip overseas, but a trip to Russia. Unfamiliar food, language, alphabet, architecture, even the Pizza Hut and McDonald's tasted funny. We split into smaller groups when we arrived in Russia, and I was sent to Siberia. I still can't believe we all made it home.

Knowing that a bunch of country kids were going to be overwhelmed, National FFA sent us to a few days of training. Part of that training has stuck with me for 30 years. We were told to keep repeating, "It's not wrong, it's just different." We saw so many different things on that trip, but we had to remember that it wasn't wrong. It felt like everything was wrong, but it was just different.

As I work with farmers, I use that mantra every day. Each farm is different, and there isn't one correct way to farm. Different machinery, different crops, different rotations, different balance sheets, different financial decisions. Farming has more than one path to success.

We released our annual farm management data, and of course you should be pouring over that data and

analyzing all the numbers. There is a lot of great information in there, but it isn't the same as your own data. Each farm is different, and each farm has unique strengths. Make sure you know where your farm has success and where it can improve.

You can find generic crop budgets and marketing plans, but they might not work for your farm. I have farms that can store their entire crop, and maybe a little more. Other farms must deliver half the crop during harvest. Some farms split between several different elevators, and some have been loyal to one elevator for multiple generations. Your marketing plan should reflect what works for your operation.

Keep an open mind as you see a farm try new machinery, new crops or new methods. I appreciate when someone else is the guinea pig. If it works well, maybe we can adopt those methods on our farm.

When it comes to your marketing plan, I cannot stress enough that it should match your farm's needs. When do you need cash? Do you want the income this year or will you defer it? How much crop insurance do you have? All these factors should be reflected in your plan. Hold and hope is not an effective plan for all your bushels.

If you have a new generation on your farm, this is an opportunity to remember it's not wrong, just different. New ideas are essential on your farm, and new faces might give you the nudge to experiment.

If you are the new generation, remember your parents think your new ideas are wrong, so have patience. Different can be scary.

Each farming year is different, and farmers seem comfortable with that. Early spring, late harvest, dry summer, corn standing in December; we know the weather is different every year. That doesn't mean the weather is wrong.

I am prepared for a difficult financial year, and some things might have to be different on the farm. Capital purchases may need to be pushed forward, tax planning can be adjusted and crops sold earlier to minimize interest expense. I have been impressed with the changes farmers have been willing to make.

As you start questioning your decisions, your neighbor's decision, a recommendation from your bank or Farm Business Management instructor, keep an open mind. It's not wrong, it's just different. We need to stay adaptable in agriculture because there is never one right answer. 🌾

HAPPY PLACE

Brian Sorenson grows into role as MN Wheat executive director

The “Sunday scaries” plague professionals across industries around the world.

But not Minnesota Wheat Executive Director Brian Sorenson, who marked one year with the organization on April 2. He’s right where he wants to be.

“My first year was truly a great experience,” Sorenson said. “When I sit back and think about this past year, I know I’m right where I’m supposed to be – everything we’re working on is to support wheat farming. There isn’t anything I do that I think, ‘I’d rather be working on something else.’”

Before Sorenson, who joined the wheat family after six years as a program manager at Northern Crops Institute, assumed the responsibilities of guiding the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC) and the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG), he’d had exposure to the organization. But looking in from the outside doesn’t paint the full picture.

“I knew the mission and the different activities that Minnesota Wheat was involved in from my role with the Northern Crops Institute,” Sorenson said. “But it’s when a person is actually in that position that you find there is a lot more to it. So, during my first year, it was a matter of getting a good handle on exactly what the priorities are and what

kinds of opportunities there are for the organization to grow and adapt as wheat farming changes.”

Sorenson’s previous role laid a firm foundation, giving him solid footing when he took over the reins.

“His vast knowledge of wheat has been an asset,” MAWG President Kevin Leiser said. “Before, we didn’t have his knowledge of overseas markets and because he dealt with a lot of this stuff before, there wasn’t as big of a learning curve.”

New views

While many elements of the job were familiar to Sorenson, like with any new position there remained several aspects that were an adjustment.

“That’s a challenge, you know,



switching from one hat to the next,” Sorenson said. “I have to remember, ‘OK, I have my Council hat on this morning and then this afternoon I’ll have on my Growers hat.’ It’s been really challenging and fun at the same time.”

To navigate the challenges, Sorenson has had a first-class group of farmer leaders to guide him.

“I was pleasantly surprised with how engaged and interested the board members are on both the Growers and Council boards,” Sorenson said. “They are genuinely interested in being leaders and providing leadership to the wheat industry. I was really excited to see that.”

That feeling was mutual. Sorenson’s affable and inquisitive nature endeared him to board members.

“He’s very easy to work with,” MWRPC Chair Mark Jossund said. “If he has questions about something, he isn’t scared to call me and if I have a question, he’s very responsive. He’s been a great asset and really understands farming and wheat farming very well.”

Fresh eyes mean a fresh perspective. In his first year, Sorenson didn’t hesitate to dig in and ask questions about how each organization operates. And he wasn’t afraid to challenge the status quo when he saw potential for growth.

“One of my goals is to streamline things that we do and take another look or rethink some of our efforts to make sure we are as effective as possible,” Sorenson said. “For example, on the Council side, we fine-tuned our research grant process to the point where we eliminated one step of the process, saving everyone’s time.”



Eyes wide open

With one year under his belt, Sorenson is eager to continue learning and growing with the organization.

“I’m looking forward to making sure that we’re doing what we can to adapt to the changes in agriculture,” Sorenson said. “I think everyone understands that things are going to be a lot different in our world in the next 10 years and it’s exciting to be in a situation where we can do our best to not only remain relevant but to also help drive where trends go.”

Through it all, the focus remains on Minnesota wheat producers, and, at times, the agriculture industry as a whole.

“We’re not only a spokesperson for wheat producers, but we’re here to work on behalf of Minnesota agriculture,” Sorenson said. “Obviously, our primary focus is wheat but the things we’re doing impact all agriculture producers, especially in the wheat growing region. And when we advocate, we’re there to advocate for wheat as part of the big picture of agriculture. The mission is bigger than wheat.”

One year down the road, Sorenson is far from done making moves at Minnesota Wheat.

“It’s been really quite an eye-opening experience,” Sorenson said. 🌾

Proud to Plant

Despite challenges, the sounds of spring planting are music to growers' ears

Spring is in the air and Minnesota wheat producers are chomping at the bit to get back in the field.

"The smell of fresh dirt, springtime weather, putting seeds in the ground," said Austen Germolus, Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG) vice president. "There's just a lot to be excited about."

After a long winter, farms across Minnesota are showing signs of life as they gear up for the 2025 growing season. Whether 2024 was an exceptional or a lackluster year for producers, a new planting season is a clean slate.

"It's just fun being out there in the spring," Germolus said. "If I had to choose one over the other, I probably do like planting better than harvesting."

A clean slate allows for a potential bumper crop but, at the same time, potential difficulties. Thus, planting season is an exciting but stressful time in farm country.

"There are some nerves at the start," MAWG Secretary/Treasurer Tate Petry said. "In Minnesota, because we have such a relatively narrow growing season, we don't have a lot of leeway to have things go wrong. That first week of planting, when the planters have gone out and all the glitches have been worked out, that's my favorite time. Once things are moving, I'm like, 'OK, we're good, we got this.'"

And Minnesota wheat producers have got this, despite the curveballs they've already been thrown this year.

Clearing hurdles, maximizing opportunities

It's no secret that farmers are more than just farmers – they're agronomists, mechanics, accountants and so much more. And, based on the sheer number of hurdles they have to jump every year, they should also be Olympic hurdlers.

What obstacles will farmers have to contend with in 2025?

"Just everything," Germolus said. "Commodity prices are a challenge. Managing input costs is going to be a challenge. The weather, obviously, is a variable every year that's challenging."

If only farmers had Mother Nature on speed dial. But, alas, they are subjected to checking their local weather app with the same frequency that teenagers scroll TikTok.

"I tell myself, 'Well, there's nothing we can do about the weather,'" Germolus said. "There's nothing you can do. It doesn't help you

or your family to have a sour attitude about the weather when you can't do a thing about it. You just have to change your plans and hope that things work out and you get a period of time where you can get the work done that you need to get done."

Amidst a boisterous political climate, successful growers will be the diligent growers.

"We're keeping an eye on tariffs and making sure that we're really proactive in our marketing early in the year," Petry said. "It's going to be really important this year if we have opportunities to get prices that we can profit on."

Unfortunately, Minnesota producers have more than commodity prices to worry about.

"I think the tariff impacts on our inputs is concerning, as well," Petry said. "Between potash and chemicals, which we import a lot of from China, it gives me a little bit of pause going forward. We are making sure that the inputs we need this year are locked in."

Born to produce

Despite it all, it's in a farmer's nature to see the glass as half full.

"I'm not struggling to be optimistic," Petry said. "We have a lot of market opportunities in the U.S. that have been developing to help our domestic use. It certainly doesn't

equal our exports but it's helpful that we've done a lot of market development in the last few years to try to increase demand for our products."

Growers who embrace the challenges facing them have the potential to improve their operations for the long haul.

"It's not a great thing for us but it does help, when things are tight, to say, 'How can we produce this crop more effectively at a lower cost?'" Petry said. "It really does make you a better manager."

With more factors out of growers' control than in their control, farming isn't for the faint of heart.

"There's a lot of stress in farming, but there are a lot of great aspects, too," Germolus said. "You're your own boss, which is liberating. You're on your own schedule and you work as hard as you want to work."

And, for many, farming includes the whole family.

"The variety of the day-to-day, getting to work outside and work with your kids – those are all really important things," Petry said. "There are some things you have to sacrifice for the farm, from a time aspect, but it's well worth it."

Do you hear that? It's the sound of a tractor firing up and Minnesota wheat farmers heading for the fields.

"It's something that you grow up with and it gets embedded in your soul," Germolus said. "I think that's why we keep farming." 🌾

30th Annual Wheat Open

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, July 17, 2025
Thumper Pond Golf Course - Ottertail, MN

9:00 am - Registration and driving range open

10:00 am - Tournament start

Awards, social and supper at conclusion of tournament play

Visit www.mnwheat.org to register your team today!





Variety insights

Minnesota's Spring Wheat Survey provides valuable information to researchers

Minnesota farmers have got mail. And lots of it. While sifting through piles of bills, credit card offers and product catalogs this spring, there is one item that keeps wheat producers running in anticipation to their mailboxes – the annual Spring Wheat Survey.

“We get a pretty good, accurate picture of what wheat varieties are being grown every year throughout the state,” said Jim Anderson, University of Minnesota wheat breeder.

When Anderson began his tenure in 1998, he partnered with the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC) to create and distribute the Spring Wheat Survey to gain an understanding of which varieties Minnesota farmers gravitated toward.

“It helps guide breeding and release decisions,” Anderson said. “We could guess by certified seed sales, but that’s only about half of the picture. The survey gives us more refined insights into which varieties are popular, and, in turn, that tells us which traits are most important to growers.”

After planting has wrapped up, most likely toward the end of May, the survey will be emailed and mailed to Minnesota wheat growers. If you live in Minnesota and planted spring wheat, you’re encouraged to complete the survey, regardless of if you received it in the mail, via email or heard about it from another source.

“It’s cumulative over time,” Anderson said. “Each year is a snapshot, and we don’t see huge changes from one year to another, unless there’s a new variety that does really well.”

Spearheaded by Anderson, the University of Minnesota Wheat Breeding Program is a critical Minnesota wheat checkoff-supported program. The program’s objectives are to develop improved wheat varieties and germplasm combining high grain yield, disease resistance and end-use quality and to provide performance data on wheat varieties adapted to the state of Minnesota.

“The information gleaned from the Spring Wheat Survey supports Jim Anderson’s Wheat Breeding Program, which is invaluable to Minnesota wheat producers,” MWRPC Executive Director Brian Sorenson said. “When farmers take the time out of their day to complete the survey, they’re supporting and improving research that will ultimately benefit them.”

'Hanging in there'

Farming is a risky business, and results from previous years show that farmers tend to mitigate their risk by sticking to tried-and-true varieties.

"It's been a little surprising to see how well some of the older varieties are hanging in there," Anderson said. "We've got varieties that were released in 2016 and 2017 that are still in the top five in terms of acreage being grown. That tells me that growers are reluctant to switch varieties."

While yield may pay the bills, there are a multitude of factors that play a role in wheat quality – for both growers and purchasers – and by completing the survey, farmers give Anderson an idea of which factors to focus on when breeding varieties.

"Farmers are looking for a good package and have specific traits they're interested in and are cautious about switching to a new variety," Anderson said. "So, we're trying to breed for those main traits of straw

strength, protein and disease resistance."

Not only is the survey information useful when breeding new varieties, it also helps Anderson strengthen existing varieties that farmers consistently plant.

"If we see that there are some varieties that are susceptible to some of our major diseases and are becoming more popular, we can focus on trying to get some newer releases that can address those concerns and have the proper disease resistance," Anderson said.

The odds are that Minnesota wheat growers don't look forward to filling out surveys in the same way that they look forward to getting back in the field each spring. But spending a few minutes completing the Spring Wheat Survey pays off in the long run.

"I'm very thankful that growers take the time to fill it out," Anderson said. "They get a lot of surveys and a lot of things in the mail come their way. So, we're very thankful to those that do take time and fill this out because it is very valuable information for us." 🌾

The 2025 SPRING WHEAT SURVEY will be out in May!

Each year the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council conducts a **Spring Wheat Survey**. The information gathered from the survey will help Dr. Jim Anderson, UMN Spring Wheat Breeder, with his selection of new varieties that meet the needs of you, the grower.

In late May, after planting is complete, the Spring Wheat Survey will be emailed and mailed out to wheat growers in Minnesota. Please take the time to complete the survey. It will only take a few minutes.

Whether you received a survey in the mail, email, or received the information from another source, if you live in Minnesota and planted spring wheat, we welcome you to complete a survey.

The link to the survey will be available on mnwheat.org in May.

The combined results of the surveys will be put into a report that shows each variety as a percent of all wheat acres in the state and regions of the state. Results will be published in the Prairie Grains magazine in the fall.

Thank you,
Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council

Spring Wheat Survey
Local Area: <<County>> County <<ID>>
DIRECTIONS: List the approximate number of acres of each variety planted on your entire operation in 2024. If the variety you planted is not on the list, please enter the information in "Other".
***Please complete only one (1) survey per farming operation. (see bottom)
WIN THIS COOKER: Surveys completed online will be entered into a drawing for this 24-can cooler (\$350 value) <https://bit.ly/44K0C0z>
Spring Wheat Variety Planted Acres Spring Wheat Variety Planted Acres
AP Classic Mtn-Walshburn
AP Quencha CL2 ND Stampede
AP Munkit ND Thunder
AP Smith PFS Buns
Accord-SD Shelly
Braem-SD SV 811 CL2
CAD Russell SV Vista
CP1000A TCS-Bellamy
CP1000B TCS-Heritance
Dyna-Gro Ambush TCS-Jelly
LCS Accent TCS-Whisper
LCS Beam TCS-Zesta
LCS Buster TW Champion
LCS Cannon TW Starline
LCS Dual TW Trailite
LCS Hammer AX W80470
LCS Trigger W80500
Linkert W8-Mayville
Mtn-Fullway Other:
Mtn-Turkey Other:
***If survey is completed for your entire farm operation, please list farm partners and/or farm name:
1. If you did not plant wheat in 2024, please check this box. ☐
2. If spring wheat is no longer in your crop rotation, please check this box. ☐
3. If you are no longer farming, please check this box. ☐

This survey is conducted for the benefit of the University of Minnesota Spring Wheat Breeding Program.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

A Grain of Knowledge

Bacterial leaf streak



With spring's arrival, it is important to look ahead to problems that can affect yield. Diseases are one such problem. A disease that is beginning to cause some issues across the Upper Midwest is bacterial leaf streak (BLS).

BLS thrives in hot, humid conditions. Damage and severity depend on the heat and moisture level. In cool, dry seasons the symptoms may barely show. Summer 2024, for example, was one of the coolest summers in the past 10 years. This led to fewer reports of BLS.

The sources of the BLS pathogen aren't clear. The main theory is that it lives on the seeds but has also been shown to thrive on common weedy grasses. Rebecca Curland and some collaborators at North Dakota State University are working on understanding the sources.

"We're looking to see if we can track a strain throughout a growing season," Curland said. "If it's on the seed, is it always going to lead to disease?"

While infected seeds are the main theory, the disease can also travel in other ways. Insects and weather conditions can be helpful to the bacterium to spread it around various fields. Due to the random nature of how BLS spreads, symptoms won't necessarily be consistent throughout a field. One area may have high levels of BLS, and the rest of the field could be clean.

What to look for

Once the disease has set in, the first visible clues are greasy-looking lesions on the leaves that are translucent.

"It's pretty hard to detect unless you're down on your hands

and knees," Curland said. "That's where the actual scientific name comes from – *Xanthomonas translucens*. Translucens, like translucent – if you hold it up to the light you can almost see through the leaf."

Within a couple weeks, the lesions will expand and become chlorotic, yellow and eventually necrotic where the leaf tissue dies. It is not a vascular disease, so it doesn't move throughout the plant internally. Rather, it is spread through wind, rain and other mechanical movements within a field. It is often most evident on the upper curve of the leaf.

"We don't want anything to disrupt the foliar surface because that decreases photosynthesis and can lead to decreased yield," Curland said.

In more severe cases, the grain heads can also be affected, leading to a darkening of the glumes and banding of the arms. This is where it earns its nickname, "black chaff." While it isn't known to be harmful like other wheat diseases can be – there are no microtoxins in this one – it can still decrease yield overall.

There are no set boundaries for where this disease is most prevalent.

"It's pretty evenly distributed across the upper Midwest," Curland said. "We haven't done extensive surveying year to year to track it. I think that's something that needs to be done."

What can producers do

Since BLS stems from a bacterium, traditional chemicals don't work. Most are labeled as fungicides or herbicides, which won't affect bacteria. While bactericides do exist, results are not



conclusive as to if this is helpful.

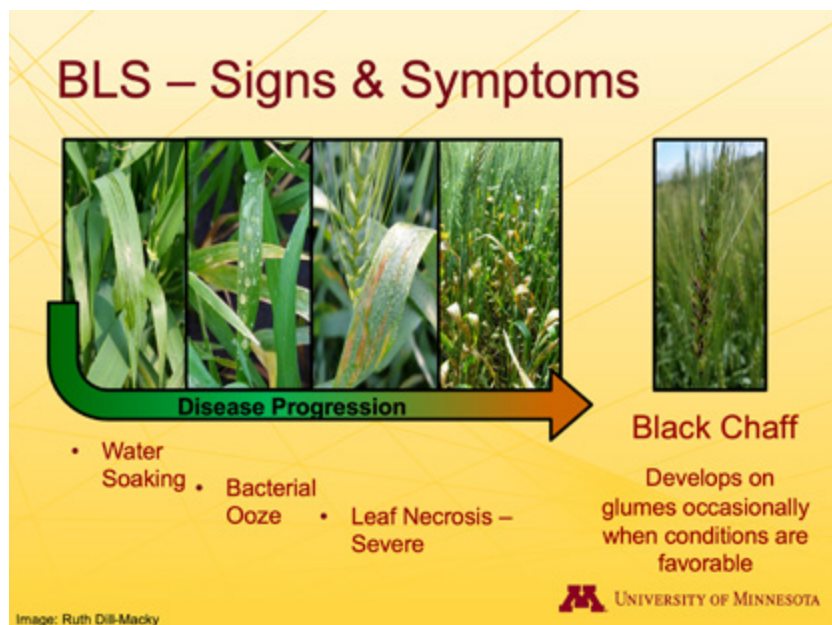
The best way to defend against the disease is prevention. Curland and other researchers at the University of Minnesota are working with breeding programs to develop resistance to this bacterium.

“There is no full resistance, only some varieties that are moderately more resistant than others,” Curland said.

A resource producers can use is the Spring Wheat Field Crop Variety Trials, published by the University of Minnesota every year. They test hard red spring wheat varieties at various locations around the state. Not only do they rank them based on production aspects like grain quality and yield, but they rank their disease resistance to common wheat diseases. BLS is one of the diseases on the list.

“If someone has had (BLS) previously in their field, you could look to that to find one of the varieties that ranks a little bit higher for BLS resistance,” Curland said. “That’s a good way to be proactive.”

Rebecca Curland is a research scientist in the Small Grains Pathology laboratory. She can be reached at curl0013@umn.edu. To view the variety trial referenced, visit varietytrials.umn.edu/spring-wheat. 🌾





WIDE WORLD OF WHITE

While just a little over half of the hard red spring wheat (HRSW) grown in Minnesota and throughout the Northern Plains makes it way to mills in the region to be turned into flour for artisan breads, bagels and other premium baked goods, the remaining amount is shipped, via rail, ship or both, to destinations across the world. Some is shipped from the Pacific Northwest to Japan and the Philippines, some out of the Gulf of America to Africa and some takes a train to Mexico. Overall, there are dozens of destinations across the globe enjoying Minnesota's high-quality, hard red spring wheat.

"Our wheat is expensive in the world market, so they're buying from us for the quality to mix in and bring their flour up to a higher standard," said Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council Chair Mark Jossund. "Our protein levels and quality for baking is what makes us desirable."

Key players

When it comes to HRSW purchasers, there are a handful of countries that tend to stand above the rest. The first is the Philippines, which has been one of the top buyers for more than 60 years thanks to promotion from Western Wheat Associates, now known as U.S. Wheat Associates (USW). Following in a close second to the Philippines is Mexico, which takes advantage of the close proximity to transport wheat from the northern plains via railway. Another consistent buyer over the years has been Japan; however, in more recent years, sales have been shrinking as their demands slows down.

"Their population has been declining, and so consumption has been going down," said Steve Mercer, vice president of communications for USW. "They were at one time our largest market but is probably our third largest now."

There are a handful of other countries in Southeast Asia that are common destinations for northern-grown wheat,

including Taiwan – which actually surpassed Japan this past year in sales – South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand and Bangladesh.

Growing markets, opportunities

Known also as a regular buyer of durum, Italy has increased its interest in HRSW from the U.S. this past year with sales up more than 220% following rough weather in Europe. Those sales may level out in the future, but what's unique about the journey to Italy is that it starts close to home.

"Italy actually gets our wheat, which was quite a bit this year, out of the Port of Duluth and through the Great Lakes," Mercer said.

In addition to Italy, another growing market over the years has been Egypt, which at one time in history was one of the top buyers. Just a few years ago they were non-existent on the sales sheet, but changing economics are driving demand for a quality product.

"They've relied heavily on Russia for hard red winter wheat and soft red

winter wheat for most of their needs as quality didn't matter as much to them, but they do have a growing middle class and changing diets," Mercer said. "They're actually using a lot of HRSW to make pasta and in their higher-end bakeries."

Opportunity for growth also lies in South and Central America in countries such as Chile, Honduras, Columbia, Venezuela and Panama.

"Relatively speaking, the flour mills in countries such as Chile and Colombia have a hard time managing large, single vessel loads of wheat, so our team in Santiago is working with the millers to encourage them to buy together and buy multiple classes of wheat," Mercer said. "We're helping them better understand the U.S. system so they can

get better value out of their wheat and help them understand the benefits of that wheat as well."

The Caribbean, namely Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, are also reputable markets for U.S. wheat.

Continued support

Both in-country and abroad, U.S. Wheat continues to provide technical support and services for their customers around the globe. A shining example, according to Mercer, is how their staff in the Philippines is helping educate their bakers to capitalize on growing Korean culture trends.

"With the 'K-wave' taking over, we have sent our baking expert from Korea to the Philippines to show their bakers and millers how to use U.S. wheat

to do more Korean style food," said Mercer. "We also have a consumption campaign in the Philippines called 'Go Wheat' to promote wheat products."

In the USW provides technical support and education by inviting customers and potential purchasers from many different nations to educational courses, such as the grain procurement and pasta production courses held at Northern Crops Institute, and to visit the farms growing their wheat.

"They really appreciate being able to see where their wheat comes from and meet the families who are growing it, and then to be able to head over to the Port of Duluth to meet those buyers and see how their grain is shipped," Mercer said. 🌾

WHEAT ON THE WATER

While just over half of the wheat grown in Minnesota stays in the state or the U.S., the rest travels great distances to get to its final destination. Here's a look at just how far it goes to some of the top buyers:



Passing the Torch

Three Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council directors passing leadership torch to new board members

With a passion for research, Tony Brateng helped kick-start Minnesota Wheat's On-Farm Research Network.

Kevin Leiser (2011-2025)

What started out as a one-year trial on the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC) led to a 14-year adventure for Fertile farmer Kevin Leiser. Now Leiser is hanging up his checkoff hat on the MWRPC to focus his efforts on advocating on behalf of the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG), a policy group Leiser represents as president.

Leiser initially joined the Council in 2011 at the recommendation of then Minnesota Wheat Executive Director Dave Torgerson.

"I was talking with Dave about protein and how quality affects wheat, and he said, 'You know, we have a board position open if you have some ideas,' so I gave it a try," Leiser said. "I got to know the people on the board well and I began to like it, so I stayed on."

During his time on the Council, Leiser enjoyed learning

more about wheat exports and how U.S. Wheat Associates, the U.S. wheat industry's export market development organization, works hard to find new markets and sell wheat internationally. One of Leiser's favorite experiences came from his experiences on a trade mission to China.

"It was eye-opening to see just how different of a country it was, but also on a personal level how similar it is as well," Leiser said.

Leiser feels he is leaving the Council in a good place with three new members coming on board this summer. He can now turn his attention solely to MAWG, which also has some new faces.

"Both boards will now have all their open positions filled and will have five new members between the two," Leiser said, "so that's five new perspectives to help us figure things out."

Tony Brateng (2013-2025)

A love of growing wheat and interest in the wheat industry inspired Roseau's Tony Brateng to join MWRPC in 2013. Roughly a dozen years later, he's stepping off to make room for new voices. Like Leiser, Brateng also joined the board after encouragement from Minnesota Wheat's staff lead at the time.

"I had gotten to become friends with Dave Torgerson, who inspired me to run for the Council and I'm glad he did," Brateng said.

Research was always a special interest of Brateng's while on the board. One of his proudest accomplishments was helping launch the popular On-Farm Research Network program.

"That was quite a feat to get that going," Brateng said. "I

Kevin Leiser (second from left) talks shop with Ag Commissioner Thom Petersen (second from right) along with other wheat leaders at the Prairie Grains Conference.



was also able to participate in the program when we tested an onboard protein analyzer on our combine.”

Brateng, who’s married and raising three grade-school kids, isn’t ruling out a possible return to the Council later on in life, but for now he says it’s time to rotate in some new blood and give others a chance to lead.

“It’s good to get other people involved to share their ideas and be a new voice,” said Brateng. “It’s a great opportunity to get off the farm and meet new people in the industry that you’ll continue to interact (with) for years to come.”

Tim Dufault (2016-2025)

There hasn’t been much time over the past several decades when Tim Dufault hasn’t been involved with Minnesota Wheat in some shape or form. He first got involved with the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers in the 1990s, then later assisted with selling advertisements for MAWG’s official publication, Prairie Grains Magazine. Dufault is a fourth-generation farmer and retired from farming following the 2024 harvest.

It might be the end of an era, but Dufault won’t be a stranger.

“I’ll probably still have to stop into the office, and I’m sure there will be some meetings where I can still interact with the

folks that are involved with wheat,” he said.

Dufault, who resides in the Crookston area, joined MWRPC shortly after the checkoff was raised to two cents a bushel, which allowed the checkoff to put more investments into research. A graduate of the University of Minnesota Crookston, Dufault said he’s proud of the public research the checkoff has sponsored.

“Especially with the wheat breeding at the University of Minnesota, which is always changing, and wheat having less acres, we needed to make sure to have that agronomic support for wheat in our area,” Dufault said. “For a long time, there was no private breeding programs, so we had to make sure to support our public wheat breeding programs.”

Throughout Dufault’s longstanding tenure with Minnesota Wheat in his various capacities, he notes that the people he’s worked with and met over the years have been what he has enjoyed the most. In addition, he’s also enjoyed having a voice in agriculture.

“Just the chance to have input at the higher level was important to me and being able to make an impact with where that research money goes,” he said.

Dufault currently represents MWRPC as chair of Northern Crops Council, the governing body of the Northern Crops Institute, located in Fargo, N.D. 🌾

After an impressive tenure, Tim Dufault is stepping back from his leadership within Minnesota Wheat.



Pride in producing: MN farmer finds strength in crop diversity

Anne Schwagerl isn't just a farmer leader enrolled in the one-of-a-kind Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). The Big Stone County farmer has taken her passion for soil health a step further by becoming a farmer representative on the MAWQCP Advisory Committee.

"My role is to represent what farmers need from a program, how it can better serve the farmers that they're trying to reach and how can they reach more producers," she said.

The 15-person board, which includes producers, soil health experts and industry leaders, meets biannually to provide Ag Commissioner Thom Petersen and MAWQCP Manager Brad Jordahl Redlin with strategic advice and recommendations to continue improving the MAWQCP in its mission to serve farmers and ranchers, the ag industry and the nation's resources. Schwagerl, who also serves as vice president of Minnesota Farmers Union – "Farmers Union really values our relationship with MDA," she said – was recently reappointed to a second term on the committee.

"There's nothing like the (MAWQCP)," Schwagerl said. "It is a really uniquely positioned program, and it gives Minnesota farmers an edge for us to get out and tell our story and the story of Minnesota agriculture."

The MAWQCP is a voluntary program for farmers and landowners that protects the state's water resources. Since the program's statewide launch in 2015, 1,602 farms totaling over 1.17 million acres have been certified across

Minnesota. Farms have added over 9,350 new conservation practices, which protect Minnesota's waters. Those new practices help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 55,000 metric tons each year and have kept more than 57,000 tons of sediment out of Minnesota rivers while saving 170,000 tons of soil and 73,000 pounds of phosphorous on farms each year. The conservation practices have also reduced nitrogen loss up to 49%.

Anne and her husband, Peter, farm a diversified grain and livestock operation near Browns Valley, raising soybeans, corn, oats, rye and winter camelina. In 2020, the Schwagerls began growing kernza; that same year, Anne and Peter enrolled in the MAWQCP.

"It was a very smooth process," she said. "It's a voluntary, self-certify program that proves that the practices that we're doing on our farm are actually protecting our natural resources."

The Schwagerls adapted some production practices since first enrolling in 2020, transitioning from an organic farm to conventional, no-till production. In spring 2025, they worked with Area Certification Specialist Grant Pearson to re-enroll and ensure their current production practices were still aligned with MAWQCP's latest assessment process.

Anne, a fifth-generation farmer, continues to lead by example, Pearson said.

"Anne and Peter are very passionate about agriculture," he said. "They definitely want to manage for the long run to stabilize their soil resources and manage for good soil health and nutrient-use efficiency."

Minnesota farmers can contact their local Soil & Water Conservation Districts to apply for MAWQCP certification and then complete a series of steps with local certifiers using a 100% site-specific risk-assessment process. Enrolled farmers can also apply for financial assistance and MAWQCP's Climate Smart Project. The Schwagerls used the cost-share program last year to try a warm-season cover crop.

"That's another really cool incentive of the program," she said. "It was neat to help offset the cost of trying a new practice."

By law, all MAWQCP data is kept private, and only by signing a formal release can a farmer's name be released publicly. After becoming certified, farmers receive a 10-year contract ensuring they will be considered in compliance with any new water quality laws, an official MAWQCP sign to display on their farm and other benefits developed by local MAWQCP providers.

"Being enrolled doesn't just give us regulatory certainty," Schwagerl said. "It gives us pride."

Learn more about enrolling by visiting mylandmylegacy.com. To request copies of the MAWQCP Advisory Committee meeting minutes or receive information about the next scheduled meeting, contact Megan Moland at Moland@state.mn.us.



Big Stone County farmer Anne Schwagerl farms with her husband, Peter, and recently reenrolled in the MAWQCP. Schwagerl also volunteers her time as a farmer representative on the MAWQCP Advisory Committee.

Brought to you by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture

IT'S NOT JUST YOUR LAND. IT'S YOUR LEGACY.

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program rewards farmers like you for what you do best, taking care of your land and its natural resources.

To get started and learn more, contact your local soil and water conservation district or go to:

MyLandMyLegacy.com



RESEARCH RETURNS

MWRPC approves funding for FY26 projects

While Minnesota wheat growers are hard at work in their fields, Minnesota wheat checkoff dollars are working hard on their behalf to increase farmer profitability. And as the steward of wheat checkoff investments, the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC) carefully selects research projects that improve yields, reduce input costs and increase value.

This growing season, several projects caught the eye of MWRPC's farmer leaders, with 13 projects receiving funding for Fiscal Year 2026.

To foster a thorough discussion about each project before approval decisions are made, the research committee – comprised of individuals with a variety of backgrounds – evaluates proposals for quality and gives its recommendations to the full MWRPC board of directors.

"We partner with established researchers across the region to develop better wheat varieties, more effective and efficient agronomic practices and develop new uses or more valuable uses for wheat," MWRPC Executive Director Brian Sorenson said. "This is the cornerstone of the Council's efforts. Wise investment of checkoff funds is critical to improve the profitability of wheat for our producers, which is the main purpose of our organization."

The following projects shined and earned a spot on this year's research roster.

Optimization of bacterial leaf streak screening nurseries for hard red spring wheat in Minnesota

Rebecca Curland, University of Minnesota

Bacterial leaf streak (BLS) is a significant disease in Minnesota, as well as other wheat-growing regions. Leading to reduced yield and grain quality, BLS is a priority concern for Minnesota wheat growers. In this project, Curland will use genome sequence data to determine which bacterial genotypes are present in BLS infections of commercial wheat crops from the past



five years and test a subset of those strains in field trials using a variety of wheat lines. She'll also investigate how inoculation timing affects disease severity. Ultimately, this checkoff sponsored project will benefit wheat breeders and producers in Minnesota by reducing the prevalence of BLS and enhancing wheat yields.

Breeding to boost seed-filling and increase Minnesota wheat yields

Walid Sadok, University of Minnesota

During the seed-fill period, which is the most critical window for the productivity of grain crops, the wheat plant needs energy to fill the developing grain with nitrogen, starch and other nutritional factors. In this project, Sadok aims to increase the plant's rate of seed-fill by increasing flag leaf photosynthesis, which based on theoretical evidence, could increase current wheat yields by 15 percent or more. Confirmed in the first year of the project, increases in flag leaf photosynthesis have played a role in yield increases achieved by the University of Minnesota's wheat breeding program and the goal is to develop a high-volume screening method for detecting the trait in large populations. If successful, Sadok's project would enable higher rates of Minnesota wheat yield increases and directly benefit farmer's economic returns.



soil nutrients that are inaccessible by the crop, which would immediately benefit producers by reducing their fertilizer needs and improving the health and biological activity of their soil.

Enhancing spring wheat yields through split in-season nitrogen and sulfur applications in conventional and no-till systems

Sergio Cabello-Leiva, North Dakota State University

Accurate management of nitrogen (N) and sulfur (S), two elements that are critical for photosynthesis and chlorophyll production, is essential to optimize wheat yields and reduce environmental impact. This project will continue evaluating the effects of N and S rates on wheat yield in Carrington, N.D., and Staples, Minn. In its first year, the research demonstrated that a split application can be as effective as full rate planting date application and, overall, split application significantly enhanced wheat yields in both locations, suggesting the potential for higher yields with reduced fertilizer use and lower carbon intensity.

Influence of hard red spring wheat flour quality and particle size distribution on pasta characteristics

Amrita Ray, Northern Crops Institute

While durum wheat is traditionally chosen in pasta production for its high protein and gluten content, interest is growing in using locally grown spring wheat as a cost-effective alternative. Ray's research will explore the potential of various commercial spring wheat flours as alternatives to durum semolina in pasta production, assessing how flour qualities influence pasta development and key characteristics of the final product, including texture, cooking quality and sensory attributes. The findings will help pasta processors understand how to utilize commercially available hard red spring wheat flour and broaden the range of raw materials used in high-quality pasta production. 🌾

Breeding resilient winter wheat varieties for FHB resistance and straw strength

Sunish Sehgal, South Dakota State University

Growing winter wheat offers several advantages, including a 20 percent yield increase compared to spring wheat, healthy cover crop rotation, soil moisture conservation, water quality improvement, soil erosion reduction and soil structure and health development. With increased local demand for soft and hard wheat in southern and western Minnesota, it's important to develop winter wheat varieties with strong Fusarium head blight resistance and straw strength adapted to the region. This project will enhance FHB resistance and straw strength in soft and hard winter wheat, as well as develop and release winter wheat varieties for the region.

Third year evaluation of Johnson-Su Bioreactor extract as seed treatment

Lindsay Pease, University of Minnesota

High yielding wheat requires high amounts of applied nitrogen and phosphorous fertilizer. To determine if fertilizer rates can be reduced in wheat, Pease will continue her work of using a furrow-applied Johnson-Su bioreactor compost extract to inoculate the soil with beneficial microorganisms. Those microorganisms work symbiotically with crop roots to supply additional



FY26 will mark year three of MWRPC investing in Johnson-Su bioreactor research.

CADILLAC QUALITY

David Boehm touts wheat's premium status in new role as NCI executive director

If there's a way to describe the Northern Crops Institute's (NCI) newly appointed director, David Boehm, it's well rounded and well spoken. It's no surprise that he holds degrees from North Dakota State University in both plant science and communications and has worked in various capacities in the wheat, soybean, sunflower and sugarbeet industries before he joined NCI in 2020 as technical manager.

"As I look back at my 25-plus year career, I've had jobs in sales, product management, marketing and communications, agronomy and research, but now here at NCI, I've been able to pull from all that experience to help me in this new role," Boehm said. "We're ambassadors for regional

agriculture and all my experience has led me to where I'm at today, which is promoting agriculture."

Boehm was promoted to NCI's director in January 2025 after briefly sharing the role alongside coworker and NCI Program Development Manager Casey Peterson. While Peterson has returned to his previous role at NCI, Boehm says they continue to have a strong partnership and lean on each other for their strengths.

"As we were going through so much transition, it took a different perspective from each of us with our different skills and backgrounds, and that was really helpful this past year," said Boehm. "Even though we're not co-directors anymore I don't view Casey any differently because

he's been my partner so long. It's been great!"

With all the changes that took place at NCI over the past year, including changes in leadership, staffing and moving into a new facility, Boehm is looking forward to settling in and getting to work.

"We're settling in here at the Peltier Complex and finding our way with the programs that will be taking place this year, and then on the technical side, we're finally getting to take advantage of the new labs and additional space we have," Boehm said. "On a personal level, I'm really looking forward to continuing to work with the great staff we have and helping them and NCI grow into the future."

Growing markets

For more than four decades, NCI has prided itself on developing pasta, bakery and snack food products and finding markets for those ingredients both domestically and internationally. Boehm notes that with half of hard red spring wheat being exported and the other half used domestically, one of their challenges is figuring out how NCI can help U.S. companies take advantage of the high-quality product.

“One of those examples is maybe as we look at some of the changing food dynamics around food additives and stabilizers that some might see as negative food ingredients, hard red spring wheat, because of its inherent superb baking quality, could be a replacement for dough stabilizers or oxidative ingredients,” said Boehm. “So, how can we at NCI help farmers by utilizing hard red spring wheat as the Cadillac quality that we all know it is?”

One of Boehm’s former coworkers is current Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers and Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council Executive Director Brian Sorenson, who is looking forward to working alongside him to help advance wheat into new markets.

“He’s well equipped for the job and understands agriculture, having worked in the various aspects of it,” Sorenson said. “He’s a very engaging individual and will serve NCI’s mission of supporting agriculture very well.”

Northern Crops Institute (NCI) is a collaborative effort among Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota South Dakota to support the promotion and market development of crops grown in this four-state region. Minnesota’s wheat producers provided funding for the new Peltier Complex and continue to provide annual funding for NCI through Minnesota’s wheat checkoff program and the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council. 🌾



NCI Director David Boehm is excited to continue highlighting the “Cadillac quality” of hard red spring wheat through NCI programs and services.

Capture the value of today’s best genetics

PLANT NORTH DAKOTA CERTIFIED SEED

Call your local ND Certified Seed dealer to
put the best seed to work on your farm.

www.ndseed.com



More than 240 varieties of 20 crops

Known Varietal
Identity

Field
Inspected

Lab
Tested

Proven
Quality

Superior
Performance

Greater
Profitability



FOOD FADS

What it really means to be a trendy consumer

Trends appear to rule the world. They're everywhere – in fashion, in lifestyles, in workouts and so much more. And, perhaps overwhelmingly so, they're in food.

To dive deeper into food trends, Ardent Mills conducted a research study called “Trend to Table,” investigating what consumers care about when purchasing food items. While assumptions about fad diets are often made, the reality is that there are many factors that determine what items consumers choose to put into their shopping carts.

With concern throughout the industry that grains – or lack of them – were caught in a fad diet trend, the study found that consumers are focused on other factors. In fact, results showed that 59 percent of consumers agree that grains are the cornerstone of American diets.

“For some people, gluten-free diets are medically necessary,” Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council (MWRPC) Executive Director Brian Sorenson said. “But as

this study shows, more and more consumers are recognizing the importance of incorporating whole grains into their diets, which adds value to the wheat grown in Minnesota.”

The real trends behind purchase behavior

After surveying 10,000 U.S. consumers over the age of 18 responsible for the household food sourcing and using other market data, it was found that there are five main purchasing drivers:

1.) “Ingredients Matter” - Consumers are taking a closer look at every item on the ingredient list when purchasing items, with 85 percent of consumers responding that ingredients play a role in what foods they choose to eat.

2.) “Heritage is Hero” - Consumers focus on items that are in line with their ancestors and their cooking practices and 51 percent of consumers agree that food is a part of their identity.

3.) “Adding with Intent” - Consumers choose foods that align with their dietary goals with 80 percent of consumers



“As this study shows, more and more consumers are recognizing the importance of incorporating whole grains into their diets, which adds value to the wheat grown in Minnesota.”

-MWRPC Executive Director Brian Sorenson

agreeing that seeking “good for you” foods is important to dietary goals and priorities.

4.) “Desire to Do Good” - Consumers want to support foods that align with their sustainability goals with 47 percent of consumers desiring food that is also good for the planet and the food supply system.

5.) “Indulge Me” - Consumers feel good about enjoying the foods and “great tasting foods” and 68 percent of consumers report that “rewarding and treating” is a top dietary priority.

MN Wheat research

Tasked with directing Minnesota wheat checkoff dollars, MWRPC conducts research focused in several areas. One of the projects it has funded focuses on wheat digestibility and goes hand in hand with the consumer trends found in the “Trend to Table” study.

Knowing that consumers pay attention to “Ingredients Matter” while also adhering to “Indulge Me,” shows that wheat

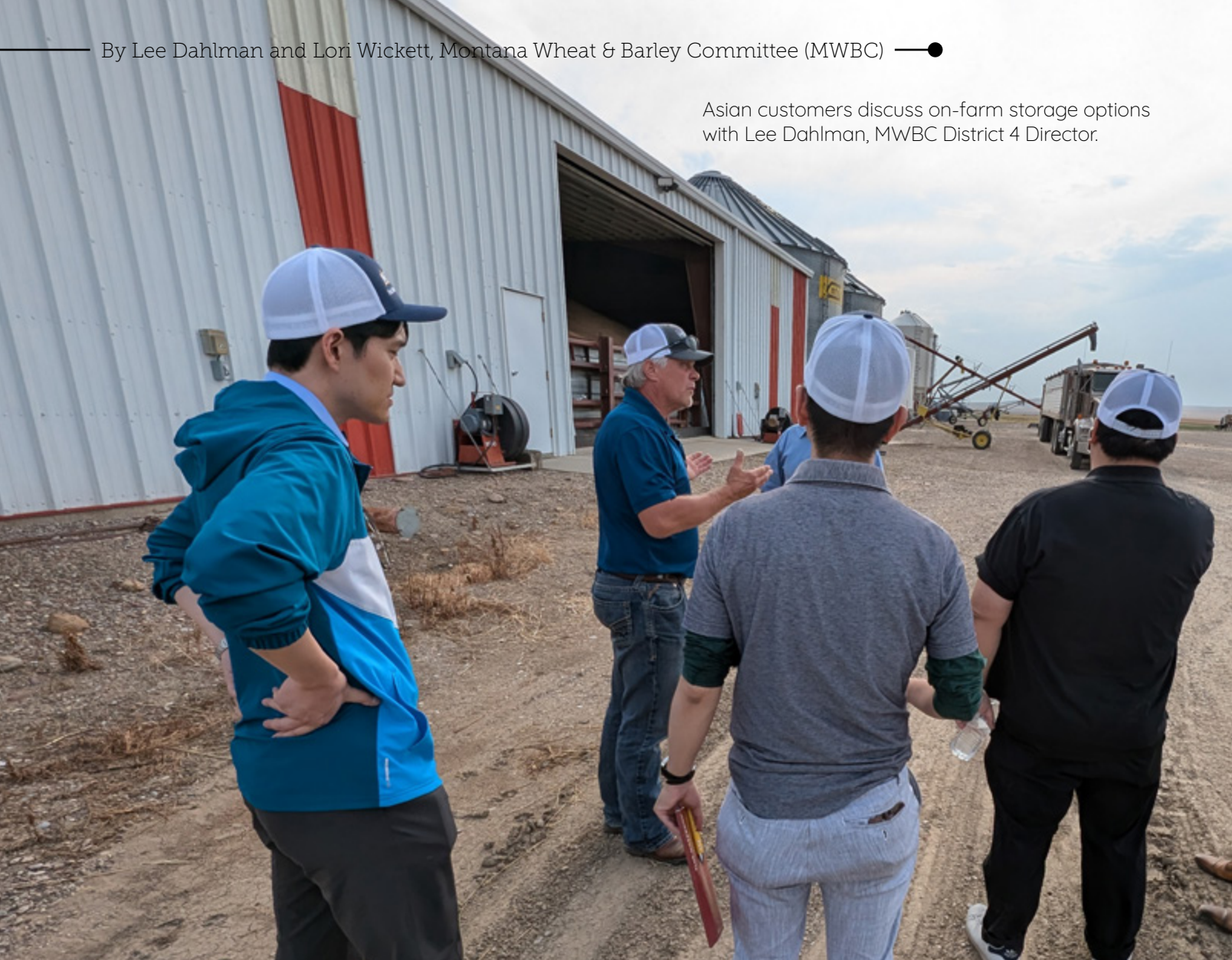
digestibility research falls right where consumers care. The MWRPC funded research is investigating options to retain the bread taste that people crave, while making it available to a wider market by carefully curating ingredients. The Ardent Mills study found that 52 percent of consumers indicated they wish they knew more about grains and what grains bring to food, which is promising for the wheat market. And with 46 percent of respondents indicating they plan to eat more grains in the next year, the future looks bright.

“Minnesota wheat farmers depend on consumer trends to drive the market, which in turn increases farmer profitability,” Sorenson said. “The results of the Ardent Mills study are encouraging. It will be exciting to see how the industry continues to grow and to discover how Minnesota wheat can grow with market trends.”

All in all, there is good news for Minnesota wheat growers: Consumers are still looking for ways to incorporate grains into their diets, despite fads that take over the Internet. 🌾



Asian customers discuss on-farm storage options with Lee Dahlman, MWBC District 4 Director.



THE BARLEY BLUES

Summarizing concerns about barley – and hope for what could come

What does the horizon hold for barley growers? That question's answer looks as muddy as Montana spring corrals – if we get some much-needed rain. For Montana growers, barley has been an oft-chosen production crop since the first shovel turned over clay loam. Our average annual moisture can be just six to nine inches in prairie counties and yet Montana remains number one for planted barley acres in the U.S. Quality barley loves the 406 area code. Thanks to great barley variety improvement, the last 25 years have proven that dryland malt barley can and will prove profitable for growers when rainfall is timely. That is, until beer drinkers began to choose differently a few years ago, depressing the beer market.

Over the past several months, MWBC has been knee-deep in conversations with fellow barley growers nationally, including conferences for the National Barley Improvement Committee (NBIC), the National Barley Growers Association (NBGA) and the U.S. Grains Council. Our focus has largely fallen on two areas of concern: First, how to compensate for declining domestic beer consumption, and second, how to diversify barley for other market uses. One thing is certain: Barley is no longer a commodity but has evolved into a specialty crop.



Adult beverage consumption – most of the eggs in this basket

In 2022, the U.S. barley crop totaled \$1.07 billion in crop value with 68 percent going to beer and 22 percent to feed. A July 2024 article in Beverage Industry does a good job of summarizing trends in the adult beverage market, which growers should follow if they are going to continue to grow barley for the brewing industry. Consumers today are increasingly driven by tasty profiles of flavored teas, cocktail-styles and hard sodas, all gaining traction in double digits.

Another increase in adult beverage sales is found in spirits (six percent growth in 2023 with moderate slowing in 2024). Some experts attribute this to a combination of health-conscious buying combined with high inflation. The greatest contributing factor to spirits growth, however surprising it might be, is ready-to-go cocktails or “cocktail in a can.”

On the surface, choosing a more flavorful beer seems to run parallel to the popularity of imported beer brands. Modelo Especial earned \$4.18 billion in revenues in 2023, up 16.2 percent over 2022. While Twisted Tea’s 2023 sales were an impressive \$1.3 billion, their increase was an astonishing 26.8 percent over the previous year, testimony of consumers’ move toward more flavorful product lines.

The competition thickens with legal cannabis-infused drinks as an alternative to alcohol, followed by the ironic twist in perceptions “discovered” by many younger buyers that beer contains carcinogens (a fact of all alcohol, classified as carcinogenic to humans in 1987 by the National Cancer Institute).

It is difficult to know how long before our good beer aficionados might be replaced by new generations desiring a Cayman Jack Margarita. If Gen Z is any indication, the growth in import brands such as Modelo may not prove strong enough to outweigh the demand for these fun and flavorful tastes. To be competitive, barley will need to find new opportunities.

Exploring new end-uses for U.S. barley

Dryland malt barley varieties are a good example of barley’s development. We should use that history lesson for further research into different barley end-uses. Montana’s new interest in building livestock feedlots and processing facilities has refreshed

conversations about feed barley improvements as an alternative to corn. Like Canada, we have a harder time growing dryland corn versus barley due to our climate and other environmental factors.

Currently, feed processing that breaks open barley’s outer hull (making it more digestible for cattle) without over-processing is a tricky business. Visits with Montana State University’s barley breeding program have brought hope. If we could develop a readily digestible feed barley (making it easier for cattle to break down barley’s starch and protein), while outshining corn in nutrition, we could meet two important demands for Montana’s agriculture industry.

At MWBC, we are also curious about barley research into health and nutritional benefits for human consumption. For more than 50 years, we’ve invested heavily in the agronomy side with goals such as drought tolerance, yield, disease resistance or protein levels, all with great results! The time might not get any better to expand research into how barley might improve human health, such as its contribution of beta-glucan to help control diabetes, obesity or high cholesterol. And with consumers demanding healthy choices, non-alcoholic beer has gained popularity, leaping 30 percent in 2023 sales and another 25 percent in 2024.

With Montana barley’s longtime brewer relationships, it has been a tough reality check as the availability of grower contracts has dramatically changed in recent years. Fear comes with those shifts. A similar situation arrived for our colleagues in corn and soybeans. Quality research at major land grant institutions and private industry led to discoveries for these growers resulting in value-added revenue streams such as ethanol and industrial applications. At MWBC, we believe that barley may have been overlooked for such strategies.

For now, improving existing conditions is paramount. Barley leaders and industry stakeholders have worked on the FY26 appropriation priorities while helping shape the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP). These are temporary measures, however. If barley is to remain a viable crop for farmers, we’ll need to find additional baskets for a more balanced market distribution, while marketing it like the specialty crop it has become.🌾



Wheat goes to Washington

NAWG celebrates 75 years of federal advocacy

Once upon a time, wheat farmers across the U.S. had to fend for themselves in Washington, D.C.

That changed on May 15, 1950, when a group of wheat growers came together to form the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), with primary goals of representing wheat growers on the Farm Bill and helping to protect crop risk management tools. Seventy-five years later, NAWG is still going strong.

"As we look back at these past 75 years, it is amazing to see all that NAWG has accomplished," said NAWG Past President Keeff Felty, who farms in Oklahoma. "Our work is more important than ever, and the next 75 years will be vital as we continue to

move the industry forward. It's been an honor to serve as NAWG's president."

To celebrate the milestone, NAWG held a press conference at the 2025 Commodity Classic in Denver. The event brought together current and past leaders of the organization, including some from the Prairie Grains region, to reflect on the organization's accomplishments and discuss the future of the wheat industry. The group discussed the future of wheat advocacy, including continued efforts to get a long-term Farm Bill signed into law that meets the needs of today and makes a meaningful investment in the farm safety net.

"This event recognizes the hard work of those who have been part of

NAWG's history and reaffirms our ongoing commitment to ensuring that wheat growers and rural America can continue to thrive for generations to come," said NAWG CEO Chandler Goule during the press conference. "I am confident NAWG has a bright future ahead of us."

'On our side'

Throughout its 75-year history, NAWG has played a pivotal role in advancing wheat production through alliances, advocacy and innovation. The press conference highlighted key milestones from the past, including being the first trade organization to beat California's Prop 65. NAWG continues to lead the way in protecting



producers' access to crop protection tools, maintaining a robust farm safety net and ensuring the wheat community can compete globally.

NAWG's illustrious history makes it a critical partner for the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers (MAWG). As a NAWG member, MAWG has unparalleled access to resources and professionals at the national level that help move the industry forward.

"While we can accomplish a lot on behalf of Minnesota wheat growers, policies at the national level also play a huge role in farmer's ability to farm," MAWG Executive Director Brian Sorenson said. "With NAWG on our side, Minnesota producers have a seat at the table in Washington, D.C."

NAWG's original articles of incorporation stated their mission was to, "promote the spirit of harmony among members in achieving common interest and promote the spirit of public service and public responsibility through the agriculture industry." Today, NAWG is a federation made up of 20 state wheat grower organizations and serves as the primary representative in Washington, D.C., for wheat growers, working to ensure a better future for America's growers, the industry and rural America. From their offices in the nation's capital, NAWG's staff members are in constant contact with state association representatives, NAWG grower leaders, Members of Congress, Congressional staff members and the public. 🌾

CELEBRATE!

Scan the QR code to watch NAWG's 75th anniversary video!



ACROSS THE PRAIRIE

By Prairie Grains Magazine staff

Rural Leadership North Dakota now accepting applications

North Dakota State University Extension's Rural Leadership North Dakota (RLND) program is accepting applications for its 11th class, which begins in November 2025. The application deadline is June 1, 2025. Applicants must have been North Dakota residents for at least one year and be able to attend all seminars.

RLND is an 18-month leadership development program that includes seven seminars in North Dakota, featuring expert speakers and tours of agricultural and community businesses, as well as three out-of-state trips. Along with traveling to Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis to engage with agricultural, business and government leaders, participants will partake in an international study seminar to explore global agricultural and community issues.

The program focuses on leadership skills like critical thinking, effective communication, self-awareness, decision-making, strategic planning and conflict management. Participants gain insights into agricultural and rural policy, economic trends, funding strategies for local development projects, marketing, civic engagement, coalition building, industry advocacy and legislative processes. Since 2003, over 175 people from 87 communities in 41 counties have participated in RLND.

To apply or nominate someone for RLND, visit ndsuhq.org/rlndapply25, email ndsuhq.ruralleadership@ndsuhq.edu or call 701-231-5640.

NAWG announces staffing changes

In late March, the National Association of Wheat Growers announced that CEO, Chandler Goule will be stepping down from his position in July 2025.

"The past nine years at NAWG have been incredibly rewarding," Goule said. "I am confident that NAWG is in a stronger position today than when I first started. One of my proudest accomplishments has been winning our Prop 65 case against the state of California, ensuring that facts and science guided the outcome. I encourage

all wheat farmers to stay actively engaged with NAWG – your participation amplifies your voice and strengthens our industry. As for me, I won't be going far – where that leads is still to be determined."

A search for Goule's replacement begins this spring.

Goule isn't the only staffing change at NAWG: Anthony Pena was welcomed as the new policy manager in early March. Pena brings valuable experience from his nearly three-year tenure as government relations manager at the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA). Before PNWA, Pena served for years with U.S. Sen. Patty Murray as regional district director and representative. Pena is from Vancouver, Wash., and attended Eastern Washington University.

"I'm honored to join the National Association of Wheat Growers and build on my experience advocating for the infrastructure that wheat growers depend upon," Pena said. "Having worked on waterway issues critical to moving wheat to market, I understand the interconnected challenges facing the industry. I look forward to working directly with wheat producers to learn more and advance the policies that enhance their competitiveness and profitability."



NAWG CEO Chandler Goule will step down from his position in July.

Life Cycle Assessment confirms environmental benefits of wheat production

NAWG also announced the results of a comprehensive Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) showing significant progress in the sustainability of U.S. wheat production. The study highlights substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, water usage, land use and soil erosion on a per-bushel basis over the past several decades.

In collaboration with the National Wheat Foundation and U.S. Wheat Associates, NAWG commissioned the LCA to assess the environmental impact of wheat production across the U.S. Key findings include:

- Greenhouse gas emissions are down 33% due to more prescriptive use of fertilizers and precision input application.
- Energy use is down 57% thanks to improved fuel efficiency and reduced tillage.
- Water use is down 46% with higher yield per water unit and reduced irrigation.
- Land use is down 45% through multiple production improvements and lower planted area.
- Soil erosion is down 60% due to reduced tillage and other production improvements.

“Wheat growers take great pride in being stewards of the environment,” said Pat Clements, NAWG president. “This study helps the wheat industry set a baseline to track our ongoing progress across these key indicators and will empower growers to help tell the story about how sustainability in wheat production has improved over a 40-year time frame.”

2025 National Wheat Yield Contest registration open

The National Wheat Yield Contest is accepting registrations for 2025. Entry deadlines are May 15 for winter wheat and Aug. 1 for spring wheat.

Challenging wheat growers to achieve high yields, quality and profit since 2016, the contest has three objectives:

1. Educate and communicate to all segments of the wheat industry the importance of yield, quality and profit
2. Improve the overall productivity, quality and marketability of U.S. wheat
3. Develop best management practices to achieve high yield, high quality and higher profit

To learn more about the contest or to register, visit www.wheatcontest.org 🌾



Providing solutions for your success.

chsagservices.com | 218-745-4166

747 S. Main St.
Warren, MN 56762
© 2024 CHS Inc.





Investing in Drainage. Investing in the Future.

Scott Litzau: 320.905.1857
Matt Casper: 320.463.8135
Office: 320.905.8873

Litzaufarmdrainage.com



LITZAU
FARM DRAINAGE & DIRECTIONAL BORING
Multiple locations in MN, ND, and SD: to serve the farming community