

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

NOVEMBER | 2021



FOOD AND FARM TOUR

Eastern Washington agriculture celebrated, producers talk issues



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Washington Association of Wheat Growers
109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, WA 99169

WHEAT LIFE

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**WASHINGTON
ASSOCIATION OF
WHEAT GROWERS**

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President's Perspective



My supportive family made service possible

By Ryan Poe

Well, as this is my last president's column, I want to pause for a minute and thank a number of people and reflect on the past two years.

When I became the current Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) president at our convention in late 2019, COVID-19 was a foreign concept. As the pandemic began to make waves, I thought 2020 would be a very challenging year. Fortunately, most of our legislative visits were completed before a lot of the restrictions were put into place, and 2020 turned out to be much less complicated than 2021 has been. When the decision was made to keep the 2020 officers for 2021, I thought the last year wasn't so bad so why not? Well, with virtual legislative visits, challenging legislation both at the state and national level, wide ranging pandemic restrictions, Snake River dam attacks, a major, widespread drought and protein issues, 2021 has not been easy. Fortunately, my first year as president allowed me to get my feet under me, and I think I was better prepared for all the challenges the second year has brought.

As I reflect on the past couple of years, I want to make sure and give a shout out to a number of people that have helped me in my term as president. First and foremost, I need to thank my wife, Marlene, who has encouraged me all along the way and has picked up a ton of slack taking care of the household, her business and our two children while I have been out of town at meetings. My mom and dad, John and Sue, have also helped with kids and cows while I've been away. I also would not have been able to serve without my partners in our family farming operation, my uncle, Terry, and my cousin, Dean. Without them being here while I was away, I don't think I would have been able to do this. I also need to give a huge shout out to the WAWG staff. I sincerely appreciate everything each one of them does to make this organization work.

The past couple years, I have had amazing opportunities that I am so thankful for, and I've met a lot of incredible people. I thought going into this I knew a lot about our industry, but I'm continually learning more and more about it. I want to encourage anyone out there to get active at the county or state level; from my perspective, it is so worth it. It has been an honor to serve as WAWG president, and I look forward to moving into the past president's role at our upcoming Tri-State Grain Growers Convention and staying involved.

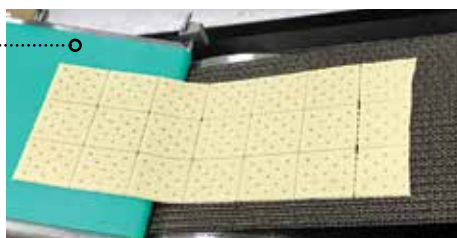
Speaking of convention, one of the most important things we do during it is review our resolutions. The resolutions set our priorities for the coming year and help guide staff and leaders' efforts. Without our members' input on these resolutions, we can't adequately represent and advocate for our industry. Please consider attending our meeting on Dec. 1 at 9:30 a.m. to make your priorities known. ■



Cover photo: In September, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers sponsored a legislative tour in the Walla Walla region. See page 20. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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WAWG MEMBERSHIP FORM

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- ☐ Student \$75 ☐ Family \$200 (up to 2 members)
☐ Grower \$125 ☐ Partnership \$500 (up to 5 partners)
☐ Landlord \$125 ☐ Convention \$600
☐ Industry Associate \$150 ☐ Lifetime \$2,500

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City

State

Zip

Phone

Fax

Email

County Affiliation (if none, write state)

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LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP

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Grower or Landlord \$125	X	X	X			X
Family \$200 (2 family members)	X	X	X			X
Partnership \$500 (1-5 family members)	X	X	X	X		X
Convention \$600 (2 individuals)	X	X	X		X	X
Lifetime \$2,500 (1 individual)	X	X	X	X		X
Non-Voting Membership						
Student \$75	X	X	X			
Industry Associate \$150	X	X	X			

WAWG's current top priorities are:

- ✓ Protecting agriculture from liability for complying with state overtime laws.
- ✓ Fighting mandatory carbon regulations that would raise prices on fuel and fertilizer.
- ✓ Maintaining a safe and sound transportation system that includes rail, river and roads.
- ✓ Protecting existing tax policy.
- ✓ Preserving the Snake River dams.

If these issues are important to your operation, become a member today and help us educate our legislators and advocate for agriculture.
We are making sure the wheat industry's voice is heard.

More member benefits:

- Greensheet ALERTS • WAWG updates
- Voice to WAWG through opinion surveys
- National Wheat Grower updates
- State and national legislative updates



**Washington Association
of Wheat Growers**

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Board checks in before annual convention, national meetings

October's Washington Association of Wheat Growers' (WAWG) board meeting, the first in-person board meeting in more than a year, was mainly concerned about checking in before upcoming events, such as national fall meetings and the annual convention.

Counties reported significant amounts of reseeding happening. Conditions remain very dry, and the winter wheat that has sprouted is spotty, with some stands looking good and some not so good.

WAWG officers will be traveling to Kansas City, Mo., early this month to take part in the National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) fall conference. They will be discussing national policies and legislative priorities, including farm bill, climate change, conservation, risk management and trade.

Diana Carlen, WAWG's lobbyist, joined the meeting virtually. She said they still don't know if the 2022 Legislative Session will be in person, virtual or a combination of both. The latest revenue forecast shows the state is doing well, with an extra \$1.8 billion expected over the next four years.

There is still a push to rewrite the state's energy code and ban natural gas in commercial buildings. The effort is opposed by the Association of Washington

Business. The state is also wrestling with several pieces of legislation passed earlier this year. A judge has ruled that a lawsuit to determine if the new capital gains tax is an income tax or not can go forward. There are also reports that legislators are getting lots of complaints about the new long term care tax that is set to go into effect in January. Residents who want to opt out are running into issues getting private policies before the

deadline, and out-of-state residents who work in Washington—who wouldn't be eligible for benefits—are raising red flags.

In national legislation, Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director, said both the House and Senate agriculture committees have agreed to continue funding the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) program for 2020 and 2021 losses. WHIP+ provides payments to producers who experience quality losses due to certain natural disasters. Growers who experienced high protein in soft white wheat will be eligible. Hennings said NAWG has been lobbying heavily for continued funding of the program.

"This is a win for Pacific Northwest wheat growers," she told the board. "We want to hear from growers how the application and funding process for WHIP+ goes."

Board members also heard from U.S. Department of Agriculture agency representatives. Travis Martin, a district director from the Farm Service Agency,

Legislative fund looking for grower contributions

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers' (WAWG) Legislative Action Fund (LAF) helps fund our lobbying efforts. We need your generous contributions to continue to tell wheat's story and advocate on your behalf on issues such as carbon taxes, tax preferences, infrastructure needs and more. If you donate \$20 or more, you'll be put in a drawing for a chance to win some fabulous prizes at our annual meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2021. You don't need to be present to win.

If you have already donated \$20 or more to the LAF with your membership renewal form, you will automatically be entered.

We'll have nearly \$1,000 worth of prizes to be awarded, much of them donated by county associations. Thank you to Adams County, Benton County, Columbia County, Douglas County, Grant County, Walla Walla County and Whitman County wheat growers associations for their donations.

LAF contributions must be mailed to the WAWG office at 109 E 1st. Ave, Ritzville, Wash., 99169, and received by Nov. 19, 2021. Please include name, address and phone number with all donations. ■

The next time the board will meet will be at the 2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention on Dec. 1 at 9:30 a.m. for the all-committee meeting. Members are encouraged to attend.



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said most Washington counties didn't trigger Agriculture Risk Coverage-County payments, but Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments were triggered for both barley and wheat. Producers who elected PLC should see payments in the next few weeks.

The next WAWG board meeting will take place at the 2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention at the all-committee meeting on Dec. 1 at 9:30 a.m. at the Davenport Grand Hotel. WAWG resolutions will be discussed and modified as necessary. All WAWG members are invited to attend the meeting. ■

Whitman County growers hear WSU research updates

Whitman County wheat growers took care of pre-convention business and heard updates from two Washington State University (WSU) researchers at their October county meeting in Colfax.

Arron Carter, WSU winter wheat breeder, talked about his latest research and the varieties he is working on. Drew Lyon, WSU weed scientist, talked about herbicide resistance and how to combat it. One of the Washington Grain Commission's rotating endowed chairs at WSU is coming up for reassignment, and Lyon asked growers for ideas on what topics the position should focus on next.

In county business, growers agreed to donate funds to the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) Legislative Action Fund and the convention's silent auc-

tion. They also discussed WAWG's resolutions and any changes they wanted to propose. ■

Wheat third in 2020 value of production; apples still first

From the National Agricultural Statistics Service

In 2020, the wheat industry overtook potatoes as the third leading agricultural commodity in the state with a production value of \$949 million, up 20 percent from the previous year. The total value of Washington's 2020 agricultural production was \$10.2 billion, up 7 percent from the revised previous year value of \$9.49 billion.

Apples remain the leading agricultural commodity in the state with a 2020 value of \$2.1 billion. This is up 7 percent from the previous year. Apples represented 21 percent of the total agricultural value in 2020. In the previous year, apple's share of the total was also 21 percent. Milk remained in the second position and had value of production totaling \$1.19 billion dollars in 2020, down 7 percent from 2019. Potatoes, valued at \$753 million, represented the fourth highest value in the state. This was a 19 percent decrease from the previous year. Cattle and calves rounded out the top five with a value of \$693 million, down 1 percent from the previous year. These five commodities had a combined value of \$5.68 billion, or 56 percent of the 2020 value for all commodities (excluding government payments). The same five commodities in 2019 had a combined value of \$5.67 billion, 60 percent of the total value. ■

Top 10 agricultural commodities in Washington 2018-2020

Commodity	Rank		Value of production			Change 2020/2019 (percent)
	2020	2019	2018 (1,000 dollars)	2019 (1,000 dollars)	2020 (1,000 dollars)	
Apples.....	1	1	2,140,650	1,958,900	2,095,265	7.0
Milk ¹	2	2	1,131,648	1,281,987	1,192,975	-6.9
Wheat, all.....	3	4	844,592	792,509	948,593	19.7
Potatoes.....	4	3	788,256	934,144	753,377	-19.4
Cattle and Calves.....	5	5	652,062	700,501	692,936	-1.1
Cherries, sweet.....	6	8	426,470	393,577	561,696	42.7
Hay, all.....	7	7	519,277	468,306	500,740	6.9
Hops.....	8	6	427,502	475,686	444,909	-6.5
Grapes, all.....	9	9	360,910	308,070	302,178	-1.9
Eggs.....	10	11	240,515	165,929	220,203	32.7
Value of crop production.....			7,155,547	6,791,071	7,503,040	10.5
Value of livestock production.....			2,520,163	2,694,258	2,677,804	-0.6
Total value of production, all commodities....			9,675,710	9,485,329	10,180,844	7.3

¹Value at average returns per 100 pounds of milk in combined marketings of milk and cream plus value of milk used for home consumption and milk fed to calves.

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2021 convention rapidly approaching

Preparations for the 2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention are moving full speed ahead. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is monitoring COVID-19 requirements and will provide updates as necessary at wawg.org and in the weekly Greensheet email newsletter.

This year's event is scheduled for Nov. 30-Dec. 3 at the Davenport Grand Hotel in Spokane, Wash., and is sponsored by WAWG, the Oregon Wheat Growers League and the Idaho Grain Producers Association. Besides offering an opportunity to socialize and network, producers will hear state and national policy updates, enjoy top-notch keynote speakers and participate in educational break-out sessions. A detailed agenda is available at wawg.org/convention/schedule/. Producers can register for the convention online at wawg.org/convention/registration/.

There is still time to take advantage of the 15x40 program, which offers a free convention registration to 15 Washington state producers under 40 years of age who haven't attended the convention before. For the first time ever, the program will also include lodging costs. A standard room rate will be reimbursed by the Washington Wheat Foundation. Receipt required, and no additional charges will be allowed. Besides a convention registration, if the participant isn't a WAWG member, he or she will get a one-year paid association membership. To register, call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.

WAWG is still accepting entries into the photo contest. Submissions should be sent to lori@wawg.org by noon, Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2021.

Thank you convention sponsors, exhibitors

The annual Tri-State Grain Growers Convention wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our sponsors and exhibitors. This year, WAWG would like to thank:

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Idaho Grain Producers Association
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T&S Sales
Title One
Valley Wide Cooperative/Valley Agronomics
Washington Labor & Industries
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Washington Wheat Foundation
Western Insurance Associates
Western Trailer Sales Company
Washington State University Small Grains/Washington Genetics ■

Please include photographer's name, contact and caption information. For more information, please contact Lori Williams at lori@wawg.org or by phone at (509) 659-0610. Contest is open to convention registrants only, and photos must have been taken within the last 12 months. The grand prize is a free registration to the 2022 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention to be held at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Nov. 29-Dec. 2, 2022. Winning photos may be used in 2022 marketing materials and will be published in *Wheat Life*, *Oregon Wheat* and *Idaho Grain* magazines. Entries will be displayed throughout the 2021 convention. ■

USDA launches soil carbon initiative

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$10 million in a new initiative to sample, measure and monitor soil carbon on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to better quantify the climate outcomes of the program. This initiative will begin implementation in fall 2021.

USDA partners will conduct soil carbon sampling on three categories of CRP practice types: perennial grass, trees and wetlands. Michigan State University will sample and measure soil carbon and bulk density of CRP grasslands at an estimated 600 sites across the U.S. with a focus in the central states. For CRP tree practice types, Mississippi State University will partner with Alabama A&M University to collect above and below ground data at 162 sites across seven states. This five-year project will focus within the Mississippi Delta and Southeast states. Finally, Ducks Unlimited and its partners will collect data on carbon stocks in wetland soils as well as vegetation carbon levels at 250 wetland sites across a 15-state area in the central U.S. ■

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Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2021

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Located in the heart of Downtown Spokane, within walking distance of theaters, art galleries, spas, restaurants and outdoor activities is the home of the 2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention. The Convention Center and INB Performing Arts Center are connected to the hotel via a skybridge. The Spokane Veteran's Arena, River Front Park, Spokane River and Centennial Trail are all within walking distance.

**Early bird registration
ends October 29, 2021**

Steve Miller, emcee

Recognized throughout Idaho as an ag event emcee, Steve Miller was born and raised on a farming/ranching operation in North Dakota. While retired from the animal health pharmaceutical industry, Steve has remained closely tied to the agriculture industry and his rural roots. He currently resides in Middleton, Idaho, with his wife. He is the father to three and grandfather to seven.



Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has been invited!



Jack Bobo, keynote

The global food supply chain is undergoing the greatest disruptions in the last hundred years. From COVID-19 to climate change and ever-changing consumer demands, it has never been more difficult, nor more crucial for businesses to understand these changes and how they impact their bottom line. This presentation will explore trends to help companies get ahead of them before they get run over.

Mark Mayfield, keynote

Hall-of-Fame speaker and former National FFA president has merged his corporate background as a lobbyist and his comedy background as a nightclub performer to create a unique experience. His program focuses on the changing face and challenges of agriculture. He'll explain the reason change is hard and the best response to ensure success and profitability. He delves into the need for communication and activism and why we have to continue that ag spirit of optimism.



Eric Snodgrass, keynote

Eric Snodgrass is the Principal Atmospheric Scientist for Nutrien Ag Solutions, where he develops predictive, analytical software to help agricultural producers manage weather risk. His frequent weather updates focus on how high-impact weather events influence global agriculture productivity.

National update with Sara Wyant

Sara Wyant is president of Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc. As a veteran farm policy reporter, she is recognized on Capitol Hill, as well as with farm and commodity associations across the country. The newsletter and website she founded, Agri-Pulse, include the latest updates on farm policy, commodity and conservation programs, trade, food safety, rural development, and environmental and regulatory programs.



Breakout session topics to include:

- Wheat market report
- Crop insurance update
- Lower Snake River dams
- Variety panel discussion
- Managing stress
- Legislative happenings
- Precision ag technology
- Tax updates
- And many more...

Auction and Dinner

Auction and Dinner is Thursday, Dec. 2, at 6 p.m., with entertainment by Cara Pascalar. Social hour starts at 5:30 p.m. Donation forms can be found at wawg.org.





November 30 -
December 3, 2021
The Davenport Grand Hotel
Spokane, WA

Mail, Phone, Fax or online at
www.wawg.org/convention
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FULL REGISTRATION (includes meals)

	#ATTENDING	AMOUNT
Regular Registration	_____ x \$ 210 =	\$ _____
Spouse Registration	_____ x \$ 210 =	\$ _____
After 10/29/2021	_____ x \$ 250 =	\$ _____
Non-Member	_____ x \$ 320 =	\$ _____

***Note: FULL Convention Registration includes Wednesday, Thursday & Friday meetings and all meals.**

SINGLE DAY REGISTRATION

Single Day	_____ x \$ 150 =	\$ _____ Wednesday/Thursday
Single Day	_____ x \$ 100 =	\$ _____ Friday
Non-Member Single Day	_____ x \$ 200 =	\$ _____ Wednesday/Thursday/ Friday

DINNER & AUCTION - Heads & Tails **Auction Fundraiser**

_____ x \$ 10 per person = \$ _____

ADDITIONAL Meal Tickets *Available to purchase ONLY with a Full Registration

_____ Individual Breakfast	_____ x \$ 30 =	\$ _____
_____ Individual Lunch	_____ x \$ 45 =	\$ _____
_____ State Banquet	_____ x \$ 50 =	\$ _____
_____ Dinner & Auction	_____ x \$ 70 =	\$ _____

Please Indicate Which Meals you will be Attending (for head count purposes):

_____ National Organization	_____ Oregon Banquet (Wednesday)	_____ Luncheon (Thursday)
_____ Update Breakfast (Wednesday)	_____ Washington Banquet (Wednesday)	_____ Dinner & Auction (Thursday)
_____ Tri-State Luncheon (Wednesday)	_____ Idaho Banquet (Wednesday)	_____ Breakfast (Friday)
	_____ Opening Breakfast (Thursday)	

Please Indicate All that apply:

_____ Speaker	_____ Committee Chairperson	_____ Past Washington Wheat Commissioner
_____ Exhibitor	_____ Idaho Wheat Commissioner	_____ Past Washington Barley Commissioner
_____ Sponsor	_____ Idaho Barley Commissioner	_____ Wheat Foundation
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POLICY MATTERS

Federal government funding bill includes disaster aid

As Eastern Washington wheat farmers continue to deal with lingering drought conditions impacting winter wheat seeding, they could see some relief for the quality issues experienced in the 2021 harvest.

At the end of September, Congress passed a continuing resolution funding the federal government through Dec. 3 that also provided \$10 billion in agricultural disaster aid through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) for losses experienced in 2020 and 2021.

“We are glad to see that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has recognized the losses our growers have experienced due to this year’s drought, especially the high protein levels in our soft white wheat,” said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. “This funding is a big win for the Pacific Northwest wheat industry and something Washington, Oregon and Idaho have worked hard on with NAWG, our national organization.”

The continuing resolution included language that provides drought assistance triggered when counties experience D2 conditions for eight weeks on the U.S. Drought Monitor. Further, this bill included previous causes of loss for WHIP+ and makes assistance for additional causes of losses experienced over the current and past year. Key highlights for WHIP+ in the continuing resolution include:

- Extends disaster assistance programs through 2020 and 2021, including losses to crops, milk, on-farm stored commodities, crops prevented from planting, adulterated wine grapes, trees, bushes and vines.
- Maintains the causes of loss that were in WHIP+ and includes additional causes of loss. Assistance will be available for losses due to: droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze, polar vortices, smoke exposure, quality losses of crops and excessive moisture in 2020 and 2021.
- Allows for drought assistance to be triggered when counties experience D2 drought conditions on the Drought Monitor for 8 consecutive weeks, or more severe drought conditions.
- Includes \$750 million for livestock losses in 2021.

- Ensures that producers are not eligible to receive more than the value of their crop by limiting assistance for producers with crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage to 90 percent of the loss and limiting assistance to 70 percent of the loss for producers without crop insurance or NAP coverage.
- Accounts for the premiums that producers pay for crop insurance and NAP coverage in calculating assistance for producers.
- Continues the requirement in WHIP+ that recipients of assistance under this program must purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for the next two available crop years. ■

NAWG CEO requests meeting with Idaho’s Simpson

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) CEO, **Chandler Goule**, has requested a meeting with Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) to discuss Simpson’s proposal to breach the lower Snake River dams, which are critical to Pacific Northwest farmers’ livelihoods. NAWG will advocate for concerned wheat growers on the issue of breaching these dams since these river systems are responsible for 10 percent of U.S. wheat flows. Exports are critical to U.S. wheat growers and maintaining these locks and dams plays a key role in ensuring wheat’s competitiveness. The dams provide a safe and reliable mode of transportation and are key to the long-term vitality of our industry. ■



NAWG president testifies in House carbon markets hearing

National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) president and Cass City, Mich., wheat farmer, Dave Milligan, testified in front of the House Agriculture Committee in late September in a hearing on voluntary carbon markets

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Milligan highlighted NAWG's interest in voluntary carbon market opportunities that work for diverse wheat production systems across the country, but said growers still have many questions.

"The carbon credit will be generated on the farm. The farmer needs to have an equitable return as the carbon credit increases in value," Milligan said. "NAWG is cautiously optimistic about voluntary carbon efforts, and while we see the potential to have both an increasingly positive environmental impact and additional revenue stream for those ecosystem services, there is still a lack of transparency in program details, and growers have questions about the voluntary carbon markets." ■

PNW winter wheat production down 40 percent; lowest since 1991

From the National Agricultural Statistics Service

Washington planted 1.75 million acres of winter wheat for 2021, down 50,000 acres from 2020. Harvested area, at 1.69 million acres, was down 60,000 acres from 2020. Winter wheat production in Washington was 71 million bushels, down 47 percent from last year with yield estimated at 42 bushels per acre, down 34 bushels per acre from 2020.

Idaho planted 710,000 acres of winter wheat for 2021, down 10,000 acres from 2020. Harvested area, at 640,000 acres, was down 20,000 acres from 2020. Winter wheat production in Idaho was 45.4 million bushels, down 32 percent from last year with

yield estimated at 71 bushels per acre, down 30 bushels per acre from 2020. Oregon planted 720,000 acres of winter wheat for 2021, down 20,000 acres from 2020. Harvested area, at 705,000 acres, was down 20,000 acres from 2020. Winter wheat production in Oregon was 31.7 million bushels, down 32 percent from last year with yield estimated at 45 bushels per acre, down 19 bushels per acre from 2020.

Washington planted 580,000 acres of spring wheat in 2021, up 30,000 acres from 2020. Harvested area, at 540,000 acres, was down 5,000 acres from 2020. Spring wheat production in Washington was 16.2 million bushels, down 51 percent from last year with yield estimated at 30 bushels per acre, down 31 bushels per acre from 2020. Idaho planted 510,000 acres of spring wheat in 2021, unchanged from 2020. Harvested area, at 485,000 acres, was down 10,000 acres from 2020. Spring wheat production in Idaho was 30.6 million bushels, down 32 percent from last year with yield estimated at 63 bushels per acre, down 28 bushels per acre from 2020.

Washington planted 83,000 acres of barley in 2021, down 7,000 acres from 2020. Harvested area, at 70,000 acres, was down 1,000 acres from 2020. Barley production in Washington was 2.66 million bushels, down 58 percent from last year with yield estimated at 38 bushels per acre, down 52 bushels per acre from 2020. Idaho planted 520,000 acres of barley in 2021, down 10,000 acres from 2020. Harvested area, at 490,000 acres, was down 10,000 acres from 2020. Barley production in Idaho was 43.6 million bushels, down 21 percent from last year with yield estimated at 89 bushels per acre, down 21 bushels per acre from 2020. Oregon planted 37,000 acres of barley in 2021, down 8,000 acres from 2020. Harvested area, at 19,000 acres, was down 11,000 acres from 2020. Barley production in Oregon was 608,000 bushels, down 72 percent from last year with yield estimated at 32 bushels per acre, down 40 bushels per acre from 2020. ■

How are we doing?

Like something you read in *Wheat Life*? Disagree with something you read in *Wheat Life*? Let us know by emailing your comments and suggestions to editor@wawg.org or mail them to 109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, Wash., 99169-2394. Submissions may be edited for length. ■






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Thank you, all. Enjoy the fall.

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Painter-Pittman Farms, established 1882 in Cheney

Originally from Ohio, Benjamin and Melvina Painter arrived in Washington with a wagon train from California. They had eight children, five of whom survived to adulthood. They purchased the original 160-acre homestead of David and Emma Bonney in 1882

for \$12.50 an acre. The old Bonney cabin still stands on the property, and it is for that family that nearby Bonney Lake is named.



During that time, homesteaders had to grow a variety of crops to receive the land from the government, so the original farm had orchards, wheat and other crops, along with a herd of cattle. Ben and his sons built a large Dutch gambrel barn, 36'x60', which is still standing and used by their descendants to this day.

When Ben died in 1908, his son, Parlan, took over caring for the farm. Parlan and Mary Painter, who owned the property from 1908 to 1930, were active in the Buckeye community, so named because so many of the area's settlers were from Ohio, with Mary overseeing Buckeye School eighth grade examinations, and Parlan serving as township assessor, training his workhorses and even helping train cavalry horses for World War I. They had three children, Clarence, Eleanor and James.

When the children were grown, they took over the running of the farm. Clarence married Irma Johnson, and James married Jeanne Terrell Darling. After years of farming together, Clarence moved his family to the Chewelah area, and James took over the Painter homestead. During those midcentury years, James ushered the farm into the modern farming era: they brought electricity to the farm, bought tractors and even had a combine with a 12-foot header.

James and Jeanne had two daughters, Janice and Julie. And when the girls met the Pittmann boys from Rosalia, they fell head-over-heels. That's not the end of the story! Learn more about the Pittman family and the farm today at wawheat.org/centennial-farm-project. ■



(Above) Harvest on the Painter Farm. (Below, clockwise from right) Parlan and Mary Painter; Clarence, Eleanor and James Painter; and Ben and Melvina Painter.



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Food and Farm Tour

YEARLY EVENT BRINGS LEGISLATORS TO WALLA WALLA TO MEET GROWERS, HEAR ISSUES

More than 60 legislators, legislative staff and industry stakeholders descended on Walla Walla in late September to take part in a two-day food and farm tour that highlighted issues facing agriculture and celebrated the region's many farms.

Stops on the tour included a wheat farm, a grain elevator, a vineyard, a potato storehouse, a tree fruit farm, a dairy and a fertilizer company. At the wheat farm, participants discussed the toll the drought had taken on yields in 2021, impacts carbon legislation would have on fuel and other input costs and the steps growers are taking to lessen their environmental footprint. Chad Kruger, director of Washington State University's Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, talked about carbon markets and the efforts to monetize them, calling them complicated. He said there are a lot of claims out there that should be taken with "a grain of salt."

At the end of the wheat stop, tour participants sampled



breads dipped in vinegar and olive oil from a Walla Walla bakery.

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), said the tour was a success, bringing legislators face to face with growers and demonstrating the pressures the state's producers are under. WAWG and the Washington Grain Commission were among the sponsors of the tour.

"Many times, lawmakers in Olympia don't truly appreciate the impacts legislation will have on a grower's operation. These kinds of tours are the best way to show our elected officials the struggle farmers have, working to comply with regulations and rules while still making a living and preserving the family farm for the next generation," she said. "We all want to be good stewards of our natural resources, and we all want to keep our families, our employees and our communities safe." ►





Hennings said a good example of this struggle was the new agricultural overtime rules that are set to go into effect in 2022 that don't include any sort of seasonal exemption. At nearly every stop, growers explained that the new rules would likely hurt employees more than help them, as employers will have to cut hours to avoid paying overtime or invest in more mechanization and hire fewer employees. One vineyard manager explained that she was initially supportive of overtime pay, but when she talked to her workers who would be limited to 40 hours a week, she changed her mind, because "you can't feed families on 40 hours."

Lack of available labor, pesticide availability, transportation infrastructure, the lower Snake River dams, nutrient management and the possibility that the state will curtail the use of natural gas were other issues discussed during the tour.

Besides legislators and staffers, Washington's Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck and Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), also participated in the tour. During the welcome reception, Heck told the group that tours like this are an opportunity for urban legislators and growers to talk and listen to one another. When asked about the issues growers should be concerned about, Heck replied he was concerned about the effects of climate change on the economy and competition with China.

At breakfast the next morning, Sandison kicked off the tour proper by reviewing the state's agriculture industry and its impact on the state's economy. According to WSDA records, in 2019, there were 35,900 farms in the state, of which 95 percent were family owned. Ten percent of the state's farms produce 90 percent of the value of the state's

agricultural production. Washington produces more than 300 different crops, and the market value of the state's crops and livestock is almost \$10 billion. Nearly \$6.7 billion worth of food and ag products is exported through Washington ports.

Some of the issues WSDA is currently working on include trade, keeping the state's farmers competitive with other states and countries, labor issues and sustainability, including soil health, and water use.

The tour concluded with a stop at Second Harvest's Pasco location and lunch at Tri-Cities Grain, which is located along the banks of the Snake River. Alex McGregor, chairman of the board of directors for The McGregor Company, talked about the need to protect the lower Snake River dams and the critical part they play in the region's ability to move products between Lewiston and Portland. The dams are also an important part of the region's renewable energy portfolio. ■

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BEHIND THE MONIKER

Is a family farm by any other name still a family farm?

By Trista Crossley

What is a family farm? Definitions vary, depending on the person answering, but one thing is for sure—it shouldn't be based on the farm name.

"I think most people don't realize that every business they interact with on a daily basis is in a legal entity of some kind," said John Kragt, an attorney with McGuire, DeWulf, Kragt & Johnson P.S. in Ritzville, Wash. "But when people think of farmers, they think of the Johnson family, and when they see Johnson Farms Inc. or Johnson Family Landholding LLC, there's a disconnect. There's the concept that a family farmer shouldn't be an entity. That doesn't make any sense."

Organizing a farm into multiple legal entities provides owners and operators legal protections and tax advantages. When dealing with farmers, Kragt says he strongly suggests the family forms a family corporation for the operation of the farm and even more strongly suggests forming a limited liability corporation (LLC) as a landholding entity. He called an LLC the best tool for keeping a family farm actually in the family.

"I think people see an entity name and think big business. I think it's the opposite. I think the entity helps keep it a small family business, puts the family in a position where they have the ability to afford, at today's prices, to keep the family farm in the family," he explained. "Everybody thinks it's protection from the outside world, but it's protection from inside."

An LLC generally sets out the expectations and legal requirements



for a family on who can have ownership in the operation and puts a process in place in the event an owner wants to sell their units. Generally, an LLC gives an advantage to the other owners to buy out the family member; advantages often include a lower interest rate or a longer loan term. Kragt said he's set up many family farms this way, and people always ask him why they need an LLC. He explained that problems generally start with the second generation of non-farming heirs. This group didn't grow up on the farm and likely doesn't have the same emotional attachment that preceding generations did. They may get frustrated at the complexity of farming and feel like the investment isn't worth the hassle.

"If you and I each have half an interest in farm ground, you could sell that to whoever you want, and I would have no say," Kragt said. "But if it's in an LLC, I may have the ability, depending on how the agreement is structured, to say no and buy you out at this interest rate, etc."

The advantages of operating a farm under a corporation, usually a C corporation, are twofold: tax benefits and liability protection. There are also advantages to operating as a C corporation when dealing with Farm Service Agency programs.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) estimates there are 35,900 farms in the state, and that about 95 percent of them are family owned. At the national level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture classifies family farms as "any farm organized as a sole proprietorship, partnership or family corporation. Family farms exclude farms organized as nonfamily corporations or cooperatives, as well as farms with hired managers."

For Kragt, a family farm is one that is farmed at the local level by operators that are part of the local community, regardless of where the actual landowners reside. See sidebar to hear how other Washington farmers define a family farm.

"Any daily interactions that somebody has with any type of business, that business is going to be legally put in an entity, because there are too many attorneys in the world," he said. "The idea that you are okay with everybody you interact with being in an entity, but a family farm that provides income and way of life shouldn't be in a legal organized entity and is no longer a family business? That's not a realistic situation for the world we live in." ■

What do growers say makes a farm a family farm?

"When a farm is passed down through the generations, the stories of the years full of painful struggles are also passed down to help us appreciate the blessings of the land, making us even more grateful for the successes we experience because of their sacrifices. For a farm to remain in the family, there will always be struggles, some more difficult than others, but no one takes more pride in growing food for the world than those who are able to pass the family farm to the next generation in better condition than we started with. It's in our blood, and it's in our soul!"

Michele Kiesz, Adams County

"I believe it's a family-ran farm or ranch. Owned or not."

Chad Smith, Benton County

"When you find one of your grandpa's rusty tools laying in the field, you know you're farming on a generational family farm!"

Tony Smith, Benton County

"A family farm is a tradition of agriculture handed down through the bonds of commitment and time. It is one generation teaching the next about what it takes to make a living off the land."

Ben and Jenny Adams, Douglas County

"What makes up a family farm? When the farm starts with a family and stays with that family. The farm does not have to have to stay with the same name, just that the farm remains within that family."

Claude Pierret, Franklin County

"What makes a farm a family farm, in my opinion, is ground that is being actively farmed/operated within a family. Family farms are managed by family members, not by a board of directors outside the family (lots of farm structures have a set of board of directors but family members comprise that board). The amount of acres or profit earned doesn't change if it is a family farm or not. They may be a large family farm or a small family farm, but it doesn't change if it's a family farm."

Ryan Poe, Grant County

"Family farms are operated by one or more members of a family who also have the majority of financial investment in the operation. If the land is also owned by members of the same family, even better!"

Marci Green, Spokane County

"A family farm is where more than one generation has been farming the property. Family farms are generational."

Jim Kent, Walla Walla County

"I think a family farm is owned by a family and farmed by a family, although the family that owns the farm may be a different family than the family that does the farming."

Jan Abrams, Whitman County

"A family farmer knows family, friends, community and country. A family farm understands finances, freedom and the question of why. And a family farm understands that it is the family that makes farming/living worthwhile and prosperous."

David Swannack, Whitman County

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EASTERN WASHINGTON GROWERS UNCOVER SOME OF THE UNCERTAINTIES OF COVER CROPS

By Trista Crossley


In Eastern Washington, cover crops hold promise, but growers are still weeding out some issues.

Ryan Poe, a grower from Grant County and president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, ran into one of those issues in 2019 and 2020 when he planted a cover crop at the same time he direct seeded 25 acres of winter wheat. The idea was that the cover crop, rather than chemicals, would keep weeds in check. The cover crop would terminate during the winter leaving a wheat crop he could take to harvest. Unfortunately, Poe ended up with subpar stands of wheat that were ineligible for crop insurance as the Risk Management Agency deemed the experiment too...experimental. Despite considering the trial to be a failure from the crop side, Poe said some of the results were positive.

"I thought we were going to have a weedy big mess," Poe said. "It was shocking to me. We didn't get Russian thistles and other weeds that I would have expected."

Poe thinks there might have been a green bridge issue as the wheat stand had some disease problems. His concern, aside from the fact that there are still some crop insurance issues to iron out, is that the traditional cover crop model isn't going to work in the dryer regions of Eastern Washington that practice a summer fallow rotation.

"If we plant a cover crop in the spring and terminate it in late summer, we might end up using stored moisture that the winter wheat crop needs. At that point, I don't think we'll be getting any benefits out of a cover crop," he explained, adding that he knows a lot of Eastern Washington growers who want cover crops to work.



A field outside Ritzville planted in a cover crop (mung beans, faba beans, corn, sorghum-sudangrass, pearl millet, sunflowers and turnips) at the end of June. The field will be grazed, and after frost kills the cover crop, it will be seeded with a cash crop.

'When it dies, it dries'

That moisture concern is understood by **Mike Nestor**, a manager/agronomist-CCA at Ag Enterprise's Wilbur, Wash., branch, who has worked with Poe and many other Eastern Washington wheat growers on cover crop experiments over the past seven or eight years.



"Everybody is scared of using the moisture in the ground and not having enough moisture for crop production. That's the experiment, that's the game," he said. But in Nestor's experience, that's not really what's happening. "We are seeing some good benefits. There's lots of diversity to the soil profile. We are seeing the soil break some stuff down and hold moisture better than fallow."

Nestor and the folks he's working with on cover crops have come up with a saying, "When it dies, it dries." The experiments he's participated in have shown that when the cover crop is terminated, the soil loses moisture immediately. He believes that it's the plants and their biology that is holding the moisture in the soil, and without plants, the biology goes dormant, and the moisture is lost. Even in a drought year like 2021, Nestor said he's seeing some cover crop-planted fields holding moisture better than fallow fields.

Why cover crops?

The reasons for using cover crops are as varied as the ways in which cover crops can be used. For some growers, it is part of a payment program or a way to save on crop

insurance premiums. For some, it's an alternate way to manage weeds and use less chemicals. For others, especially direct seeders, it's a way to replace residue lost through a natural disaster, such as a fire. In some situations, cover crops can be grazed or swathed. Some growers will treat it as a green manure and turn it into the soil to decompose.

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Washington state office, over the past five years, NRCS has helped apply cover crops to 13,929 acres through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and 12,559 acres through the Conservation Stewardship Program in Eastern Washington.

In an email, Tracy Hanger, NRCS's Snake River Team district conservationist, said cover crops have been used to help treat resource concerns, including soil erosion, improved water quality, soil compaction and to break pest cycles. When implementing a cover crop, producers need to consider the best species and mix for the addressed resource concern, seed availability, seed costs, labor, timing with current crop rotations and previous crop herbicide residual.

"There's no magic bullet for a cover crop mix as there are various purposes for them, and the management operations are just a little different. What is consistent though, is how the producers who continue to work with cover crops and modify their use continue to see benefits with each of those resource concerns they have been targeting," Hanger said in the email. ►



Mike Nestor says these hairy roots from a plant in a cover-cropped field are called rhizosheathing. Rhizosheathing represents microbes associating with plants, and cover crops generally associate with more microbes than a monoculture crop.



Josh Riddle's Spokane County wheat fields may look "dirty" to some growers, but he says he's seeing his soil come alive thanks to cover crops.



Josh Riddle is experimenting with using radishes and turnips (above) and crimson clover (below) as cover crops.



Covering some of the issues

There are potential crop insurance conflicts with cover crops, such as a cover crop pushing a fallow-rotation grower into an annual cropping scenario or triggering RMA's restriction on making a profit off a cover crop.

Nestor has also seen a yield problem in the cash crop when it is planted with a cover crop, and the cover crop is allowed to self-terminate. Although it removes three to four passes of chemical weed control, like Poe, he thinks there might be a green bridge problem.

"What we've learned now is that most of our seeds in the Pacific Northwest can't tolerate that system. They aren't bred for it. We have to remove the cash crop, keep it just as a cover crop and reseed into it later to break the green bridge," he said. "We are learning and adjusting the system."

There is also a slight yield drag as the cover crop can pull nutrients away from the cash crop. Nestor has learned that there has to be a certain amount of fertilizer in the soil with additional fertilizer added as a foliar application. He doesn't think that is too surprising as today's plants have been trained to be pushed by synthetic fertilizers.

"Nowhere in nature is she racing for yield. It's all about survival. Plants have a different mentality. They want to survive and reproduce," he said, adding that he expects that in most places, once the system is fine-tuned, any yield drag will be within 2 to 5 percent of normal yields. That yield drop will be compensated by savings in input costs. "I believe this is designed to allow producers to walk away from a chemical and synthetic diet. If they lower inputs but are running close to the same yields, they can make a system that will work."

Nestor also sees cover crops as a potential tool in the fight against resistant weeds.

Finding the right recipe

Just outside of Spokane, Wash., Josh Riddle has been experimenting with cover crops in his no-till fields for about eight years. He heard about a farmer in North Dakota who has been able to cut his fertilizer use to zero through the use of cover crops.

"I was really interested in that," Riddle said. "I've watched my pH drop and the organic matter stay kind of stagnate. The idea of no till, to plant a wheat crop, is you use a bunch of chemicals to keep grasses and weeds in check and put fertilizer down to deal with the residue. This doesn't seem sustainable long term. I'm farming around people and houses, and it made me want to change things up."



Spokane County grower Josh Riddle has had to figure out a way to plant his cash crop through a cover crop that often includes oversized radishes.

Riddle started out with turnips, radishes and sunflowers as a cover crop on some of his ground. He quickly learned not to seed his cover crop too early, as that first year, he ended up dealing with “turnips as big as cantaloupes and radishes as big as my forearm coming out of the ground like little torpedoes.” He had to figure out how to seed into a cover crop that was four feet tall. He’s found success by doing some high-speed tillage and shallow disking to knock the cover crop down.

“I’ve found that to not get the size issue, I can plant (the cover crop) as late as July 7,” he said. Riddle will “green seed” his winter wheat or other cash crop into the cover crop and let the frost terminate the cover crop. He said he’s tried to manually terminate the cover crop before seeding his cash crop, but has run into problems trying to seed through dry residue. “If it is green and growing, it slices like lettuce instead of tough straw.”

This spring, Riddle hopes to put cover crops on approximately 300 acres. So far, he hasn’t seen the cover crops stealing moisture from his cash crop. He has had to deal with a few more pests, but believes there’s a way to deal

with them with minimal chemical usage. He cautions other growers, however, that there is no one silver bullet when it comes to finding the right cover crop system.

“Each field has its own recipe. You start putting recipes together and finding what recipe works best for your ground,” he said. “It’s a process, finding what works, what doesn’t work. Every year is different. My recommendation is to just try some things.”

One of Riddle’s biggest challenges is managing the chemicals he uses on his cash crop so the residues don’t hurt his cover crops. He’s also run into crop insurance problems when his nonlegume cover crop flipped him from a fallow rotation to a continuous cropping designation.

Riddle says he largely considers his cover cropping experiments successful and is seeing his soil come alive.

“Growing up, we didn’t see a lot of worms in the dirt. Now I dig up soil and find worms everywhere. Those are free fertilizer employees! Nothing is more satisfying than seeing things come back to life,” he said. ■

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Scott Carroll, Big Iron Repair

By Trista Crossley

Big Iron Repair owner Scott Carroll has shifted gears in his career nearly as many times as he's rebuilt heavy equipment transmissions and engines. His journey began in the late 1970s on his father-in-law's Eastern Washington farm.

Carroll was born and raised in Ephrata, Wash. After high school, he found work as a truck driver. It was during this time he met his wife, Cindy, whose family grew wheat, bluegrass, garbanzos and barley on their farm between Wilbur and Odessa. After marrying Cindy in 1978, Carroll went to work on the farm.

"I was mechanically inclined, so I just got to working and doing a lot of repairs on equipment. That's how it started. I wasn't out on tractors that much or harvesting; I was always working on equipment and different things," he said. The Carrolls, who welcomed son, Eddy, in 1980, spent the next two decades on the farm. Carroll eventually became a certified welder through Big Bend Community College.

Things started to change when Carroll's father-in-law decided to retire. Eddy acquired ownership in the farm, alongside his parents, and took over the day-to-day operation. Carroll took a job working on heavy equipment with a road-building company in Ephrata, while still helping out on the farm, especially during harvest or when a piece of equipment broke down.

"Like I tell everybody, when you own a farm, you never really retire from it. You are always going to be there," he said. "When something broke down, or something went haywire on the farm, I'd get time off to get it straightened out."

The next career shift took Carroll to Southern California. He worked on construction equipment for a rental company. One of his coworkers was a former Caterpillar trainer.

"I really camped on that guy," Carroll said. "I got to know Caterpillars pretty darn well."

After a few years working in Southern California, Carroll returned to Eastern Washington and went to work for a road company in Spokane. He spent six months on a job in southeast Montana. He said he was filling up at a truck stop in Billings, Mont., when he struck up a conversation with a stranger who saw the tools in the back of Carroll's truck. Turns out, the stranger worked for a company that was starting a big job in Escondido, Calif., and was looking for mechanics. After talking it through with



Scott Carroll (right), owner of Big Iron Repair, and his son, Eddy.

Cindy, Carroll found himself back in Southern California, charged with hiring a crew to start a grading division and eventually becoming a service manager.

"I went from thinking I was just a mechanic to them sending me out to buy equipment. Heck, I was traveling all over the place," he said. A large job in Henderson, Nev., required more crew and more training. "That really raised up what I was doing. By really paying attention to that Cat trainer, I learned a lot so I could teach them lots of stuff. Of course, I was still learning all the time."

The Carrolls settled around Las Vegas, and Cindy, who has a financial background, took a job with the same company as an office manager.

"There we were, just working away. I really liked the weather and loved the work. I'd still be down there, but my mother-in-law died. My father-in-law was getting older, and I needed to help Eddy with the farm," Carroll said. Returning to Eastern Washington, the Carrolls successfully reopened and ran the NAPA store in Odessa before selling it.

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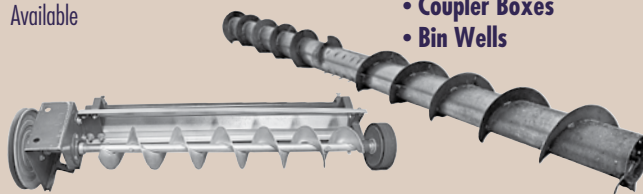


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complain because they don't have parts and another thing to being the person being complained at because you don't have parts," Carroll said, laughing. Another stint running road crews followed, but Carroll found himself wanting more flexibility in his schedule to help his son with the farm. Throughout his years working on road crews or for construction companies, Carroll had continued to work on farmers' equipment, so he transitioned into starting his own engine repair company around 2010. While he still works on a lot of construction equipment, he figures roughly 50 percent of his business comes from farm equipment. He specializes in mobile repairs.

"If a big dozer is broken down in a pit, that's where it's broken down. Most of my work is at other people's places in fields," he said. In fact, when *Wheat Life* spoke to him, he was out in a potato field repairing a truck loaded with spuds. "I have two service trucks that are overloaded with tools and cranes. I do a lot of motor and transmission work. If I can go somewhere and kick that motor out and take it back to the shop or farm and repair it there, that works better. But if I have to do it on the floor, that's what we do. We are always packing a lot of tools, different things to break tracks and hubs, especially on older Cat equipment and other brands of crawlers."

Big Iron Repair is mostly a family affair. Eddy helps out during the winter when work at the farm slows down. Carroll's brother lends a hand, and Cindy takes care of the books when she isn't working at her day job at Northwest Farm Credit Services.

"Sometimes I really wish I had a different bookkeeper who would give me more money to buy more tools," Carroll joked. "But in all fairness, she's usually pretty well right."

Over his years working on farm equipment, Carroll said there's been many changes in how they are built, including increasingly complicated electronics and the amount of plastic parts. He avoids working on machines that are still under warranty. He feels equipment built 20 years ago has fewer plastic parts and is easier to work on.

"If you are like me and are more about being efficient, some of these covers they put on these things, why do that? We just spent an hour getting the cover off to make a 10-minute repair," he said. Another thing that bothers him is the lack of replacement parts for older machines. "You still see people farming with 1940s and 50s stuff, and it runs great. But there are a few dealers, when things hit a certain age, that they don't carry parts for anymore."

There's a big push by big equipment manufacturers to limit who can perform repairs on their machines. Prohibiting a farmer from working on his own machine doesn't sit well with Carroll.





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"Tractors aren't cheap, so when you spend that kind of money and the companies are telling you that you own the tractor but you don't have the right to work on it? That's not right," he said. "They're saying only dealers have the right to work on it, but call a dealer, and they'll tell you they are two or three weeks out. How in the heck can they say you don't have the right to work on it, but they don't have enough people to work on it? It doesn't make any sense whatsoever."

Like many industries, there's a shortage of skilled labor in Carroll's field. He doesn't see young people going into the trades like they used to.

"There's a good living to be made out of this, especially right now. It just seems like it's easier to sit at a desk and create something graphic with a computer than it is to go out, scrape away grease, climb under something and fix it," he said. "I really enjoy what I'm doing. Some days, I'm as tired as you can believe, but when I sit back and look at it, I've helped people out, made some money for my living, and it's not that hard. I've always said the hardest part is getting started. Doesn't matter what it is. Once you get started, there's not much to it."

Reflecting back on his wheat farming days, Carroll said growing up on the farm with his family made for a great lifestyle.

"I wouldn't trade it for nothing. We all grew up together, and it made us really close," he said.

Big Iron Repair's website is currently under construction, but Carroll can be reached at bigironrepair@odessaoffice.com. ■

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CHAIRMAN

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Mike
Carstensen



Be honest, how many stories can we all tell about going to grandma's for Thanksgiving? We can all think of things associated with Thanksgiving, like gravy. Gravy is one of the most important parts of Thanksgiving, and, in general, is one of the most underrated foods. And football. Okay, not everybody is a football fan, but if your team plays on Thanksgiving, it only makes the day better to have a game to look forward to. Dessert, family and friends, telling everybody you're thankful for them... you can fill in the blanks.

As we approach the holiday season, we all have stories for this past year. A few things come to mind: the hottest and driest year that hasn't been seen for many years; planting, not planting, replanting or dusting in for lack of rain; and supply-chain issues causing either the lack of or increasing costs of inputs, replacement parts and/or services. This past year proves there are a multitude of things that cause problems in wheat, and most of them we have solutions for. Whether it's a resistant variety, or some sort of cultural practice or a chemical practice, there's a way we can deal with it. Drought, not so much. Sometimes things can be frustrating.... Well, you fill in the blanks.

As Grandpa Henry taught me, despite the challenges of any year, there are always things to be thankful for. I'm thankful for family, friends, neighbors, health and gravy, of course! In addition to individual thankfulness, I believe collectively we all must be thankful for several things. Rain, yes rain, must be top of the list. Friends and neighbors rank high as well. Collectively, we can address challenges that can be insurmountable as an individual. In addition to this, I think we can all be thankful for the foresight from 1958, when the Washington State Department of Agriculture created the Washington Grain Commission (WGC). The WGC was established because farmers—independent as we are—understood 63 years ago there are some things we simply can't accomplish on our own. As smart as some of us think we are, we're not scientists. Research (and marketing, for that matter), required us to band together for the greater good.

The WGC's mission is to enhance the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Washington grain producers by responsible allocation of assessment funds in research, marketing and education. The WGC ful-

fills its mission by addressing these challenges head on. Collectively, we are advancing world-class wheat and barley breeding programs to develop innovative new plant varieties; addressing weed management and herbicide resistance; evaluating cropping systems to save farmers money by reducing waste, including saving water and other inputs; looking for answers to solve the falling numbers equation; and all the while, advancing the highest quality in our wheats that our customers have come to rely on.

Obviously, research is the "Big Daddy" item at the WGC, taking nearly 27 percent of its budget. Scientists specializing in plant breeding at Washington State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service come in for the lion's share of that funding. In addition, the WGC also supports the evaluation of new public and private wheat varieties for quality and yield. Barley breeding and evaluation are also found under the WGC research category, as well as research to combat diseases and pests, control weeds and improve soil health.

Marketing is a second area of emphasis, taking a little over 20 percent of the budget. The WGC marketing objective is to strengthen existing markets and develop new markets for Pacific Northwest small grains, with the goal to maintain and grow market share in existing, emerging and new markets through promotion, trade, transportation and policy activities; address country specific issues; and focus on end-use demand.

Finally, education is the third area WGC emphasizes through collaboration and outreach efforts. The WGC education objective is to promote and provide education with the goal that wheat and barley producers are recognized as good stewards of the land, producing healthful, high quality small grains.

Weather, inflation, trade uncertainty, global geopolitics and supply and marketing chain disruptions can lead one to say, "Enough is enough!" Well, this is the world of agriculture and the economy. While we haven't eliminated all these challenges, collectively, we are building the future of sustainability in farming. I am thankful for what that means for our future generations. How we adapt to challenges today will be the foundation for those who come next. Finally, I think we can all agree, "We are thankful this year is coming to a close!" ■

Cookie or biscuit, it's all delicious*

PNW-supported cracker production line fulfills its promise at the Wheat Marketing Center

By Janice Cooper

Managing Director, Wheat Marketing Center

Ten years ago at the Tri-State Commission meeting, the three states agreed to support the purchase of a new, pilot-scale line for cracker and biscuit research and training at the Wheat Marketing Center (WMC) in Portland. Long promoted by former Washington Grain Commission (WGC) CEO Tom Mick and other Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat leaders, the concept finally became reality. Designed by U.S. Wheat Associates Baking Consultant Roy Chung and built by Poolphol Engineering in Bangkok, Thailand, with substantial financial support from the PNW states, Montana and North Dakota, the new cracker line provided the WMC a unique tool for training, research and product development. The equipment was installed in June of 2013.

According to current WGC CEO Glen Squires, cracker/biscuit consumption around the world is so large that it made sense to promote PNW soft white wheat for use in these products.

"We heard from customers that new product development was very disruptive to the manufacturing process," he recalls.

The WMC's technical team, led by Dr. Jayne Bock, utilizes the cracker line in three main ways: technical training/education, research and new product development.

"We have had multiple cracker projects and workshops every year since my arrival in 2018," Bock said. "It is a popular pilot line with companies and customers because of its flexibility, quick production time and small batch sizes. We can run more than 60 batches in a week, allowing us to compare a complex array of products, flour blends, ingredients and processing conditions."

Technical training and grower education

Starting in December 2013, WMC has offered technical



The cracker line at the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland is often used for research and product development. Here the crackers are heading into the three-part oven. Photo courtesy of the Wheat Marketing Center.

training courses built around the cracker line. The early courses enabled customers of U.S. wheat from around the world to evaluate different flour blends (including soft white wheat) and ingredients to improve the products preferred by their local consumers. The use of whole wheat was also explored by a Korean baking team, and one of the participating companies released a popular grain bar as a result.

In addition to technical training, the cracker line is a popular feature in the workshops held at WMC for wheat producers from different states. As the dough moves through the process of lamination, cutting and

*Cracker, cookie or biscuit: In the U.S., we refer to savory products as crackers and sweet products as cookies. In much of the world, these same products are generally known as biscuits and are divided into savory and sweet types.



A group of Idaho wheat producers learn about how cracker formulas for Pacific Northwest wheat customers are made and tested at the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland. Photo courtesy of the Wheat Marketing Center.

baking, Bock explains each step and talks about optimal flour blends and the role of various ingredients. As they enjoy the warm crackers, participants gain a helpful understanding of another piece in the wheat value chain.

Research

WMC technical staff and visiting scholars have conducted multiple public research projects on cracker-related topics, including optimal protein levels and options for improving soft white performance in saltine crackers and whole wheat flour formulations. These results are published on the WMC website, wmcinc.org. WMC also conducts proprietary research for clients to evaluate the impact of ingredients (like different types of yeast) and processing conditions on cracker quality. Consistency in cracker size and thickness is key in commercial production.

Product development

Commercial cracker lines are many times larger than the pilot-scale line and produce thousands of crackers each hour. In order to try new products to meet changing consumer demands for new flavors, lower salt or sugar or different shapes, companies have to halt production to

run the experimental product. For companies interested in trying soft white wheat in their crackers, this was a major barrier. The cracker line offers an excellent alternative as an offsite research and development lab. Access to WMC technical expertise and the unique pilot line has helped expand the use of PNW soft white wheat in new products and in new markets.

WMC Board Chair Bill Flory, an Idaho wheat producer, gives credit to PNW wheat producers who had the vision and commitment to bring the concept of a pilot-scale cracker line to fruition.

“By understanding the needs of our customers and seeing the opportunity to provide technical assistance, the PNW commissions partnered with the Wheat Marketing Center to offer this solution,” Flory said. “The cracker line is enjoying frequent and diverse utilization and continues to provide an excellent return on the growers’ investment.”

Attendees at this year’s Tri-State Grain Growers Convention will find some special crackers in their welcome bags made with PNW wheat with a little spice added. ■

RiverFest pivots again

RIVER DOCUMENTARY RETURNS TO THE AIRWAVES TO TELL AN IMPORTANT STORY

By Rachel Little

Outreach Coordinator/Fish Biologist, Benton Conservation District

Bread is the product of an entire year of work, begun with preparing the fields for seed, raising and harvesting the wheat, grinding the kernels to make flour and baking the dough, all to provide nourishing food.

In modern times, our “bread” takes countless forms of wheat products as biscuits, crackers, cookies, cakes, flour, noodles and so much more. Unfortunately, many consumers don’t understand the long and complex route that wheat takes to arrive on their plates. Consumers live so far away from farms that they don’t understand that if Snake River dams are removed, pathways for wheat to get to market will be eliminated, and the price of food

will climb. A dedicated group wanted to spread that message and many other stories about the services of rivers. They invested time and finances to create a free, family-friendly event called RiverFest.

RiverFest attracts families and curious adults to the shores of the Columbia River in Kennewick, a large community in southcentral Washington.

Wheat farmers are not the only ones who depend on the modern river system. At RiverFest, the local public utility districts explain that the hydropower dams provide clean, sustainable and inexpensive electricity to our region. This clean, steady, economical electricity is used to attract industry and create jobs, pump irrigation water to crops and power our homes. A local union exhibit shows the hydrosystem provides an entire electri-





cal industry with family-wage jobs in the trades. Local vendors show off boats, jet skis, paddleboards, canoes, kayaks, fishing tackle and all kinds of gear for having fun on our local reservoirs. RiverFest has become a way to recognize and celebrate how our regional dams help us work, live well and play.

The Washington Grain Commission's exhibit is a favorite with kids. Imagine a big sandbox, but instead of sand, it's filled with wheat kernels. The kids drive toy tractors through the kernels, bury their hands and thrill to the smooth touch of the wheat. Parents and grandparents watch with delight, then raise their eyes to the colorful Washington grain banners explaining how farmers need the dams for barges to transport wheat to market.

RiverFest continues to spread the crucial lesson of the value of the dams and our local working waters. We are on a mission to teach people that the lower Snake and Columbia River dams must remain. The goal is to teach the general public how their quality of life is supported by the Columbia-Snake River System. These dams provide multiple essential services.

For the in-person event, signs were posted, explaining how each exhibit demonstrated a service provided by the dams. Sign slogans included "Dams make crops grow" for irrigation; "Dams make lights glow" for power generation; "Dams make boats go" for transportation; and "Dams make dough \$" for all the jobs they create or support. More than 4,000 people attended the last in-person RiverFest event, which was in 2019.

Unfortunately, due to local public health recommendations against large gatherings, the in-person RiverFest was postponed again in



2021. But it is more important than ever to tell the wheat-river story.

Last year, the COVID-19 alternative was a television documentary called "RiverFest." The one-hour program broadcast on southcentral Washington television reached an estimated audience twice as large as the in-person event the prior year. The website, riverfestwa.com/, continues to host the documentary as a resource to our community and teachers throughout Washington state. The website also features short stories from multiple viewpoints, and they all agree that our dams must remain intact.

This year, the televised documentary was broadcast in the Spokane and Portland communities on ABC and CBS stations, in conjunction with NFL football broadcasts. During the ongoing challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers and sponsors have continued to invest time and resources in the message that the dams support our way of life in the Pacific Northwest. As we've continued this effort, the message is spreading farther. We have faith that the true value of RiverFest will be realized when the voices of more and more Washingtonians support our working waters and resist the call for breaching dams. ■

The origins of club wheat

NOT QUITE A MARVEL PREQUEL, BUT STILL IMPORTANT TO MODERN-DAY BREEDING PROGRAMS



PHOTO ROBERT HUBNER/WSU

By Kimberly Garland Campbell
Research Geneticist-Wheat Breeding, USDA-ARS

Wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) is a primary human food grain. Global production of wheat was 775.8 million metric tons (mmt) in 2020/21, as compared to 505 mmt of rice. Club wheat is in commercial production only in the Pacific Northwest (PNW),

and the breeding programs of the northwest are the only programs that breed improved cultivars.

I get asked “How did club wheat get to the PNW, and why is it only grown here?” Club wheat has a long and rich heritage, and it has been helping to feed the world for centuries.

Club wheat is prized for the quality of its flour. When milled, the bran separates more cleanly from the endosperm for club wheat than for other types of wheat. Club wheat is bred to have low gluten strength, high flour yields, very soft flour and low water absorption. These characteristics result in good cakes and very finely textured cookies. The low water absorption also creates nice batters like tempura batters.

Soft white wheat is a high-quality component of the total wheat crop with 80 percent of annual production from the PNW exported to Asian markets. Growing wheat for the export market has always been the focus

of wheat production in the Inland Northwest, and club wheat has likely always been prized for its quality, even in prehistoric times.

An uncommon subclass that punches above its weight

Club wheat is a subclass of soft white wheat and is usually mixed with soft white common wheat in a blend marketed as “Western White.” Club wheat makes up a small, but significant (5-10 percent) of the annual wheat crop in the PNW. In 2020, club wheat was seeded on approximately 150,000 acres.

Genetically, both club and common are hexaploids with three closely related genomes named A, B and D. A mutation of the compactum “C” gene on chromosome 2D resulted in club wheat. It is characterized by short, compressed spikes usually less than three inches in length with 15-16 nodes on each spike. Each node forms a spikelet containing five florets. When the kernels develop in the florets, the short spike of club wheat twists, and the kernels form into a characteristic “humped” shape with a narrow crease.

Club wheat kernel size is about 10 percent smaller than common wheat, but club wheat spikes have higher floret fertility and produce up to 20 percent more grains per spike than common wheat. Although the spike morphology limits the total size of an individual spike, the grain yields of club wheat can match those of common wheat because of these trade-offs.

The early history of a unique grain

Hexaploid wheat arose about 8,000-10,000 years ago through hybridization between tetraploid Emmer and a form of wild goatgrass named *Aegilops tauschii* (which



The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Washington State University's newest club wheat, Cameo, in a variety trial plot located at Spillman Farm.

is not the same species as jointed goatgrass). Hexaploid wheat, including club wheat, moved with human migration from Turkey, where it originated, throughout Central Asia and into much of central and southern Europe. It can be tracked from as early as 4000 BCE in the latter Neolithic sites that were excavated in Romania, then from the Copper Age in Catalonia and southeast Iberia through the third and second millennium BCE around the Black Sea. It was found at archaeological sites in Budapest dating to the late Iron Age and also found in northeast Portugal at Terronha de Pinhovelo, which dates to the 4th and 5th Century CE.

Club wheat was found in adobe bricks in 12 of the 14 locations studied from Spanish missions that were built between 1701 through 1837 in northwest Mexico, Arizona and California. The swift shipping route between Chile and the port of San Francisco was well-established by the mid-1800s, and flour from Chile fed the gold rush population of northern California, with the "Chili club" wheat being highly valued.

Although club wheat was brought to the east coast of the U.S. from South America in 1818, it did not thrive in that environment, whereas the Chilean club wheat was ideally suited to the dry summers with low humidity that prevail in California and the western U.S.

Californians began to grow their own crops as early as 1851, and newspaper accounts at the time reported that although many varieties of wheat were cultivated, "The Chili gives general satisfaction and is more cultivated than the others." By 1870, the U.S. had overtaken Chile as the premier producer of wheat in the Pacific.

In California, farmers grew varieties named "White

Chile," "Red Chile," "Bearded Chile" and "Chilean club." These club wheats were prized for their tolerance to shattering and for their standability. These were spring habit or facultative wheats that were sown in the fall and harvested the next spring.

Finding its way to the Pacific Northwest

Wheat production in the Pacific Northwest began as early as 1829 by French-Canadian trappers on the French Prairie in the Willamette Valley of western Oregon. The *Vancouver Independent*, from Washington Territory, Sept. 4, 1879, reports the club wheat varieties "Little Club," and "White Chille Club" (sic) were exhibited by Oregon at the San Francisco Mechanics Fair in 1878.

Enoch Bryan, the third president of the Washington State College of Agriculture and School of Science (now Washington State University (WSU)), recruited W.J. Spillman to teach and conduct research in agriculture in 1894. Spillman was asked to coach the football team and is the only wheat breeder who was also an undefeated college football coach.

Spillman advocated crop rotations and growing forages and legumes for sustainability, rather than so much wheat for the export market, but he realized that improvement of wheat was critical to the economy of the time. The main wheat cultivars grown were the club wheats "Little Club" and "Red Chaff" and the common wheat "Bluestem." Little Club traced directly back to the imported Chile club wheats. Red Chaff club was the most productive, but its origin is unclear. Bluestem, or Pacific Bluestem, a common soft white wheat, was brought to the western U.S. from Australia in 1882 and was more suited to dryer conditions. All three cultivars were genetically spring habit wheats, but they were often seeded in the fall.

In search of greater winter hardiness, Spillman and students planted a variety trial in Pullman in 1899 and intercrossed the best survivors with the popular varieties. Crosses between the hard wheat variety, "Turkey," brought to Kansas by Mennonite immigrants, and Little Club were analyzed for spike shape, the presence or absence of awns, which enabled Spillman to reconstruct the genetic experiments of Austrian botanist Gregor Mendel who is now known as the "father of genetics." The most popular club wheat selected from these crosses was "Hybrid 128" from a cross between "White Track" and Little Club.

By 1901, Little Club, also known as Golden Gate Club, was grown along the entire West Coast and was the dominant form of wheat grown in Washington state. The soft grain was exported to western Europe and Asia to be used for biscuit and confectionery products due to the soft kernels and poor breadmaking properties. Wheat



Black line: 10,000-4,000 BCE. Movement of hexaploid wheat from Turkey throughout Central Asia and into Europe.

Red line: 4,000 BCE-1800. Wheat is tracked across Europe at archaeological sites in Romania, Catalonia, Iberia and the Black Sea to Budapest and through Spain to Portugal, then on to South America and Mexico.

Green line: 1800-1900. Shipping routes from Chile to California expedite wheat's progress to North America. By the 1830s, wheat finds its home in the Pacific Northwest.

quality wasn't assayed for breeding programs until 1941, so the end-use quality was a bit hit or miss.

The making of modern club

Major early club wheat cultivars included Spillman's Hybrid 128 and "Hybrid 143;" the high yielding but disease susceptible "Alicel" and "Elgin" from Oregon; "Elmar;" and "Omar." In particular, Omar, developed by O.A. Vogel, was resistant to several races of common bunt and had outstanding club wheat quality. It occupied the greatest production area of any club wheat when it was grown on more than 1.5 million acres in the PNW in 1959. Unfortunately, Omar was susceptible to stripe rust, and production dropped after the major stripe rust epidemic of 1960. This reduction in acreage coincided with the release of the semidwarf "Gaines" and "NuGaines," which had adult plant resistance to stripe rust and significantly better grain yields than Omar. However, the end-use quality of both was lacking. Soon, the Japanese market started specifically sourcing the high-quality club wheat from the PNW for their products.

"Moro" club wheat was released by C. Rohde from the Oregon State University research station in 1965 with resistance to multiple diseases and extremely fast emergence in dry soils. The cultivation of Moro helped

to establish deep furrow dryland agriculture in the drier areas of the Columbia basin. "Paha," developed by R.E. Allan of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) at Pullman, was the first semidwarf club wheat, and it had a race-specific gene for stripe rust resistance. "Tyee" and "Tres" were released after stripe rust overcame the resistance in Paha. Frustrated, Allan developed two multilines of club wheat, "Crew" and "Rely," in order to have longer lasting stripe rust resistance. Rely was the most successful club wheat grown in the 1990s with durable resistance for nearly 20 years. It was finally replaced by "Bruehl," which combined high grain yield, seedling and adult plant resistance to stripe rust and resistance to speckled snowmold, released by WSU in 2001.

The most recent club wheat cultivars developed by the USDA and WSU wheat breeding program in Pullman are "ARS Crescent," "Pritchett," "Castella" and "Cameo." They all have excellent club wheat quality, competitive grain yields and multigene resistance to stripe rust and soil-borne disease.

Club wheat is a big reason why the PNW is a world-renowned wheat-producing region. When you are next considering a change to your wheat varieties, I encourage you to consider planting more club. ■

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Australia increases export market share



By T. Randall Fortenbery
Professor,
Washington State
University

World wheat trade will likely see significant changes in market share among major wheat exporters in 2021/22. Short crops in the U.S., Canada and Russia, coupled with a rebound in Australian wheat production last year, has helped Australia increase its market share. More competitive Australian prices following back-to-back bumper crops in 2020 and 2021, plus a transportation advantage to Asian markets, has improved their market competitiveness. For the current marketing year, Australian exports are projected to represent about 12 percent of total world wheat trade, compared to only 5 percent a couple of years ago. This is about equal to the U.S. share of total world wheat trade.

Figure 1 shows wheat exports by major exporting countries over the last several years, and the current forecast for the 2021/22 marketing year. Note that Australia has moved from being last among the seven major exporters two years ago to tied for fourth this year.

If current projections hold, the EU will replace Russia as the number one wheat exporter this year. Despite an anticipated 12 percent reduction in year-over-year export volume, the U.S. is currently projected to remain the number three exporter. However, U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) most recent market-year export forecast places the U.S. just

slightly ahead of both Australia and Ukraine in export volume, but the U.S. export pace through mid-October is lagging the export volume necessary to match USDA's projection. Given Australia's price competitiveness and its advantage on freight costs to Asia, it could well end up replacing the U.S. as the world's third largest exporter of wheat.

Figure 2 shows U.S. wheat prices over the last several years compared to the export price (in U.S. dollars) of Australian soft white wheat. Poor Australian crops in 2018/19 and 2019/20 resulted in Australian domestic prices exceeding U.S. prices by more than their transport cost advantage. As a result, Australian market share dropped significantly in those years. The last two years, however, have seen Australian prices more in line with U.S. prices, and this has allowed them to regain market share.

Growth in Australian wheat trade to Asia has come from several countries. Australia's largest market historically has been Indonesia (they are also traditionally the second largest wheat importer globally). Last year, Australia was able to recapture much of the market share it lost in Indonesia following their short crops. They continue to be an aggressive shipper to Indonesia this year. Their increased exports have come largely at the expense of the U.S. and Russia. In the 2019/20 marketing year, the U.S. shipped 1,061.9 thousand metric tons of wheat to Indonesia. Forty-four percent of the total was white wheat. Last year, we shipped 948 thousand tons, with 46 percent shipped by mid-October 2020. Almost 50 percent of last year's total was white wheat. While there are some small U.S. wheat sales reported to Indonesia this year, nothing has been shipped thus far, and none of the outstanding sales are for white wheat.

Australia has also experienced significant growth in sales to both Vietnam

Figure 1: Wheat exports by country

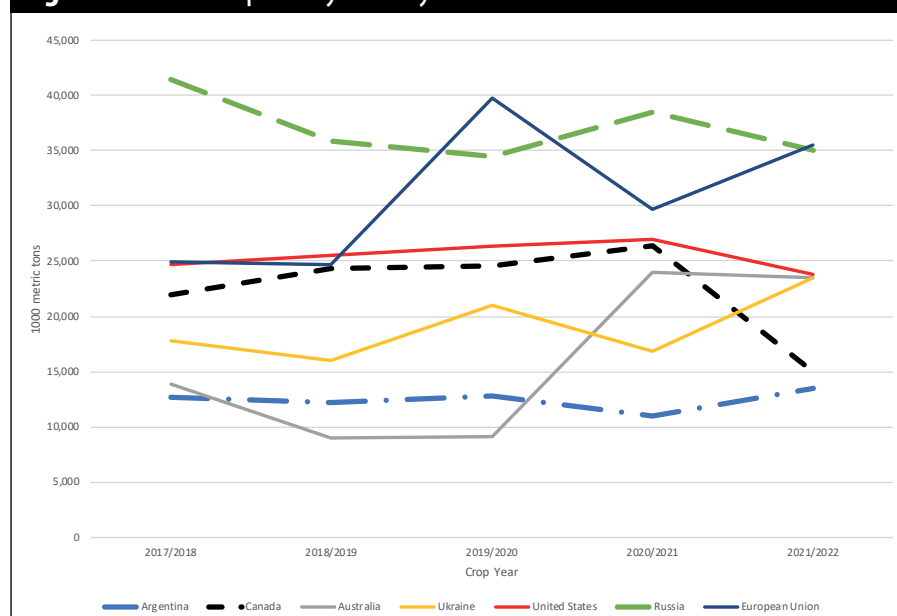
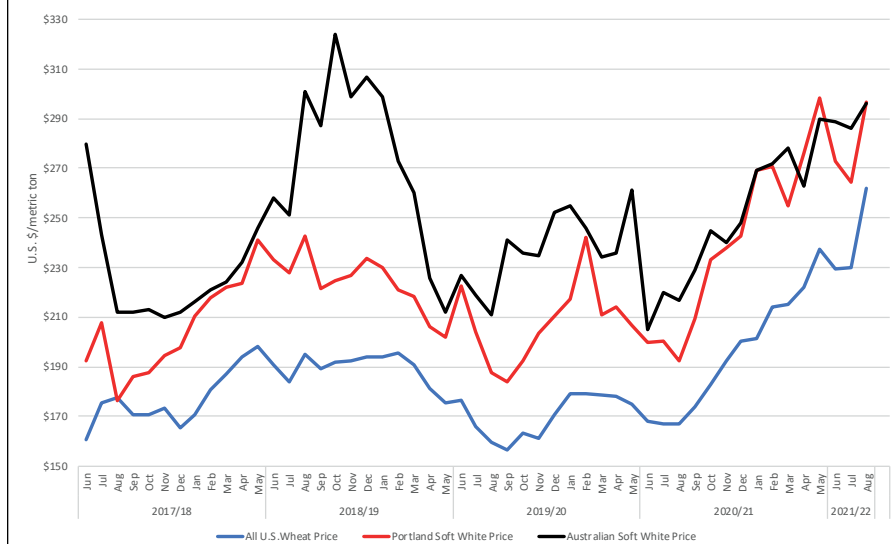
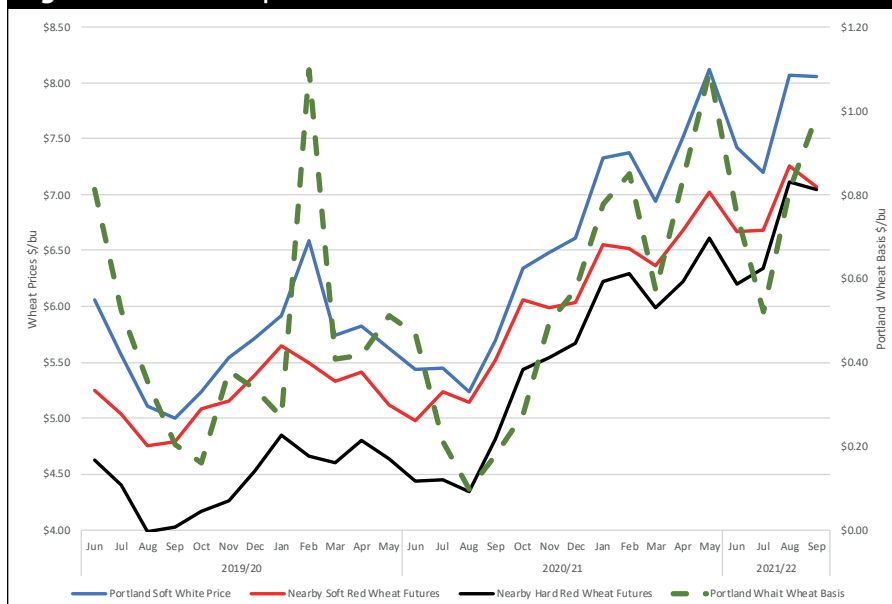


Figure 2: Wheat export prices**Figure 3: U.S. wheat prices**

and China and increased sales to the Philippine market. The Philippines typically represents the largest U.S. wheat market, and the largest white wheat market for U.S. producers. So far this year, U.S. shipments to the Philippines are up about 4 percent, but white wheat shipments are off about 16 percent year-over-year. Further, U.S. wheat shipments to China were running about 31 percent below year ago levels through mid-October, and shipments to Vietnam were down about 88 percent. On a positive note, however, U.S. white wheat shipments to China are up significantly. Through mid-October last year, we had shipped no white wheat to China. This year we shipped 296 thousand metric tons of white wheat through early October, representing about 35 percent of total shipments to China.

Based on the most recent World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE), USDA is projecting U.S. wheat exports to be down about 12 percent compared to last year, with white wheat exports off about 13 percent year-over-year. The combination of both Australian white wheat exports to Asia and the relative prices of U.S. white and red wheat helps explain the larger drop in U.S. white wheat exports compared to other classes.

Figure 3 shows prices of Portland soft white wheat compared to nearby futures prices (futures contracts closest to delivery) for both soft and hard red winter wheat. Note that the basis (basis is Portland cash price minus the soft red futures price) is quite strong this year compared to the September basis in previous years. This suggests that it will be difficult for white wheat prices to advance much further without first a rally in the U.S. futures markets for wheat, and we will struggle to compete for additional Asian market share unless Australian white wheat prices advance.

Current prices suggest that storing white wheat in the U.S. is quite risky this year. It will be difficult to increase U.S. white wheat exports relative to current projections if Australian and U.S. white wheat prices remain on par. Thus, it appears more likely USDA has overestimated U.S. white wheat exports this year than underestimated. Further, domestic futures prices for both soft red and hard red wheat are trading at steep discounts to white wheat cash prices. We normally would not expect to see discounts this steep until we get closer to the end of the marketing year. Further, futures prices appear pretty flat through the remainder of the crop year, implying white wheat prices may be near their seasonal top unless currently unanticipated events lead to some sort of futures market rally. However, even with a rally in red wheat futures, white wheat prices could lag given the strong premium they already exhibit over futures. ■

Randy Fortenbery holds the Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Grain Economics at Washington State University. He received his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign.

In the Corner of the Field

BY DANIEL MOORE | PART III

That spring, with the fresh smell of newly cultivated dirt, the sun was warm, and the breeze was cool. As Mac relaxed in his chair, his body was gently buffeted back and forth by the wind, and the sunshine felt like a cozy, warm blanket. It was as if somebody was rocking him to sleep. When he dozed off, the rhythmic chirping of the crickets, the sporadic croak of a toad and the babbling sound of the little creek dragged his thoughts toward the corner of his mind where old memories were parked. He dreamt his kids were laughing at him because he had fallen asleep again at the table after a hard day of work on the farm. In reality, he just let them think that so he could hear them talk freely amongst themselves without worrying what “Pops” would say. And if they said something funny about him, he would declare, “I heard that” then chuckle out loud.

But something was different this time. He kept hearing someone ask if he were asleep, and someone else replying, “Yes, at least I think so.” Except to Mac, who was “just resting his eyelids,” an incredible thing was happening. He could see Harper and Sammy were talking to each other! His jaw dropped open, both eyes opened, and he jumped to his feet.

“I heard that! Are you alive, my old friends?”

Harper replied, “We’ve been alive since we were made at the factory.”

Mac pinched himself and slapped his cheeks just to make sure he wasn’t dreaming. But the pinch and slap hurt, so he knew he wasn’t asleep. Besides, he could see that they were surely looking at him.

“Why have I never heard you before? We spent so much

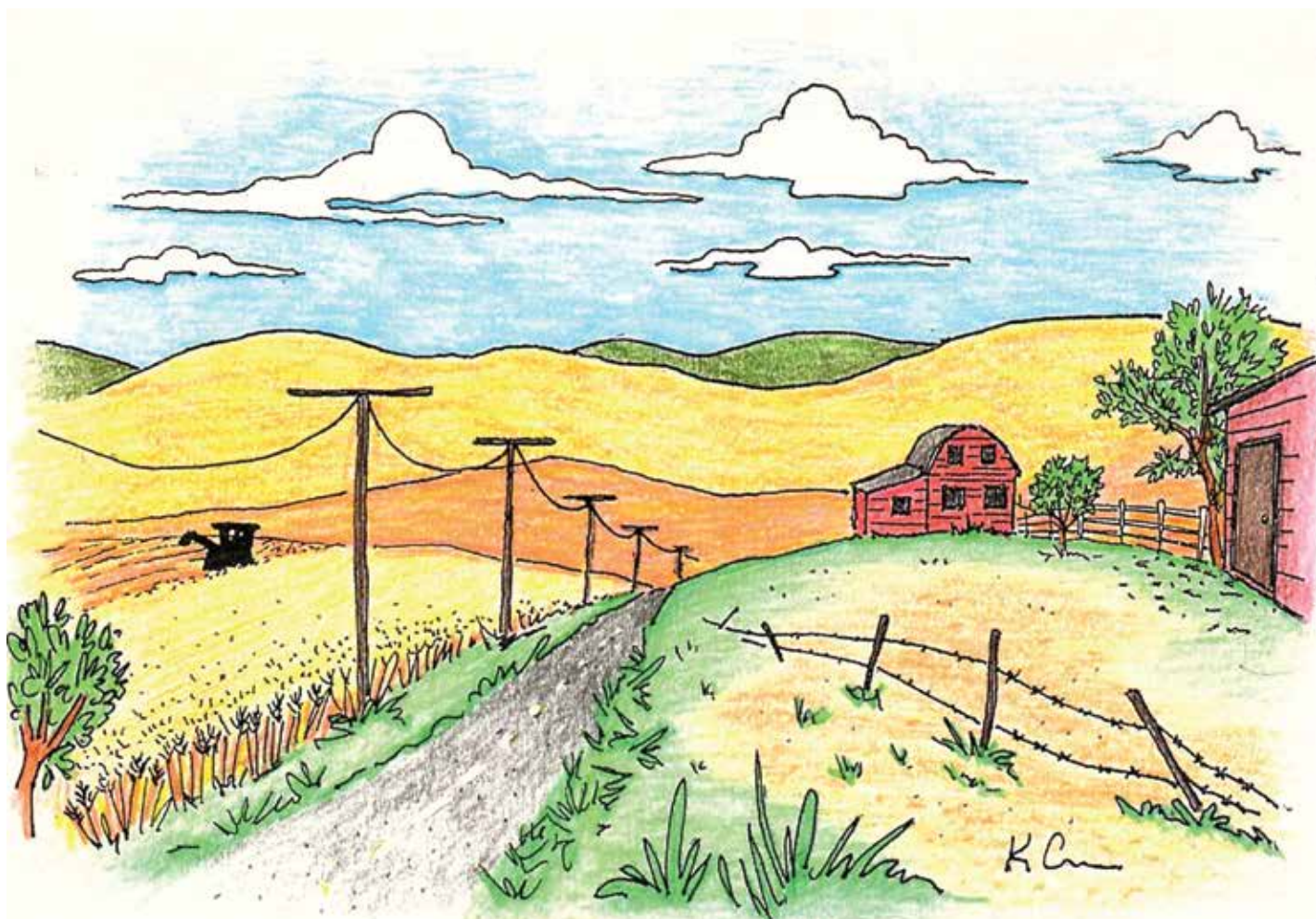


ILLUSTRATION BY KAREN CARLSON

time with each other through the years, and now I hear your voice? What gives?" Mac asked.

"You were so busy making a living and raising a family you didn't have ears to hear the sounds of the story going on around you. Not that your deafness toward us was a bad thing. You were a wonderful dad to your children, a great farmer, and you treated us very well. We heard what you said to us, but to hear what we say to you takes a kind of hearing not many people want to have."

"Why is that?" Mac asked.

"Because it can make the story of their life more complicated, and most people prefer a simpler version. Besides, what would your friends and family think of you if you told them you can talk to machines?"

The small group erupted into laughter over the thought, but somewhere in the back of Mac's mind, he thought of one person who wouldn't think he was crazy.

Harper continued, "Until now, you haven't had that kind of hearing."

"Listening takes practice," Sammy said.

"And peace is a gift," finished Harper.

Just then, the red-tailed hawk came and landed on Harper and began to speak to Mac.

"I've been watching you for years now. My name is Henry, Henry Hawk. By the way, thank you for saving my family from the junk dealer!" Mac couldn't believe his ears, but still enjoyed talking to his old friends anyway.

Mac, keeping his new secret to himself, hurried every day to the corner of the field to talk to his friends. He would move his arms wildly when telling big stories and dance around when he sang an old country song. His

son, who was farming nearby, would see him carrying on and wonder about his dad. Mac never let on what he was experiencing, but just told everybody he liked to be alone, as he laughed silently to himself. He cherished his secret!

As Jack drove by in the new combine, Mac waved and asked Harper if she had ever talked to that machine. She said she had tried.

"I introduced myself, but all the combine would say back to me was 'No error codes.'"

And all the tractor pulling the wagon of wheat up the hill would reply to Sammy when Sammy asked how it was going, was, "Ninety-five percent power." Both new machines could do an amazing amount of work, but Harper and Sammy were sad their replacements didn't have any personalities.

Years passed, and a grown-up Avery left the farm to study agriculture at the university, for she really wanted to learn how to run the family farm. She studied hard, and most of the schoolwork she completed outside,

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weather permitting, just so she could enjoy the fragrances of nearby farming. The smell of freshly cut alfalfa or the sweet odor of a pile of weeds being burned made her long to be back at the farm. She was a good student, but concentration on homework was hard this time of year. As spring break started, she hurried home in her red pickup to help her dad with the planting of spring wheat.

But with her first distant view of the homestead in the dim light of sunset, she saw an ambulance pull out of her grandpa's driveway, emergency lights flashing, and her dad's pickup following it. Scared to tears, she sped up to catch them. As she came around the corner, she could see that they had pulled over in the road near the spot where she and her grandpa had talked to the junk dealer so many years ago. She later learned that grandpa had demanded the driver, a local volunteer and friend of the family, stop the vehicle.

"Please open the door and let me see the stars!" Mac asked.

Just outside the back of the ambulance, Avery found her dad hugging grandma and surrounding Mac, who lay on a gurney.

"It's bad, honey," her dad said as she approached.

"Grandpa! Oh, grandpa!" she called out as she fell on his chest.

Mac peeked at her with one eye and said, "G---ot a bad breakdown..., m---echanic can't fix. Park me in the corner of the field with the bushes by the creek."

"No, no, no!" Avery cried upon his chest.



ILLUSTRATION BY KAREN CARLSON

And as Mac looked up at the heavens, he said, "I wish I had..." Then there was silence.

"What? You wish you had what?" Jack asked him. Mac whispered to Avery, "Listen-just lisss..." And somewhere in the dimness overhead, the screech of a hawk was heard.

Life does go on, and the forms of loved ones long gone can be seen mixed in our own shadows as we walk in the light. Now, a much older Avery stops her tractor and, wearing her "clod-hoppers," walks over to her grandpa's kitchen chair and sits down to "rest her eyelids" and listen in the corner of the field, with the bushes, by the creek, where the three friends found rest. ■

Parts I and II ran in the August/September and October issues, which can be downloaded at wheatlife.org/pastissues.html. Daniel Moore is a fourth generation family farmer in the Dusty, Wash., area. The particulars of this story came from a lifetime of his experiences, but the inspiration to bring all the parts together in story form came from seeing an old kitchen chair by a creek on an early spring day. The website for Moore's books is authordanielmoore.com.



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Relationships key to being a successful landlord

By Trista Crossley

In an industry where keeping the family farm in the family is often paramount, Jan Abrams' father, George M. Miller, gave her a gift.

"My father made it clear that the farm is a business. He said, 'I don't want you, out of some sense of sentimentality, to hang onto the farm if it needs to be sold. If you need to, you sell it,'" she said. "I've tried to pass along that same philosophy to my children, both of whom worked for their grandparents on the farm when they were in school. They feel a more romantic attachment (to the farm) because they weren't there all the time. It was their big summer adventure."

Abrams owns approximately 465 acres in Whitman County that was part of the farm purchased by her grandparents, John E. and Maud Miller, around 1918. John Miller was working as a banker in Albion, Wash., when he decided he'd rather be a farmer. He purchased land between Garfield and Palouse, Wash., and moved his family there to become dryland wheat farmers. Like other farms at the time, the family depended on horses to work the land and raise crops.

"When father was in the fourth grade, the family had a discussion that included him and his twin sister. They were trying to decide if they should buy a tractor or stick with horses. My grandfather was a progressive kind of fellow and thought the tractor was a good idea and was going to be the coming thing. Father loved the horses, so he argued most vociferously for them, but lost out," Abrams said.

Over the years, the Millers expanded the farm by purchasing neighboring properties. George went to college, married Gertrude Haight in 1940 and moved away to work, first in Wenatchee and then with Boeing on the west side of the state. Abrams said after a few years in the Renton area, the family wanted to move back to the farm, but because of the war, they couldn't.

"The moment the war was over, he quit (Boeing). They loaded up the car and came over to the farm," she said. "Grandfather and father farmed together. It wasn't always harmonious, but they made it work."

When John and Maud retired and moved to Spokane, Abrams' father took over the farm. Abrams' husband, also named George, spent a summer there working as a hired

The Miller family circa 1949. Front row, from left is Sandra Ayars, George Miller, Janet Miller (now Abrams) and John Miller holding Jeffrey Ayars. Back row from left is Ella (Miller) Ayars, Gale Ayars, Maud (Kraus) Miller and Gertrude (Haight) Miller. George Miller and Ella Ayars were twins. Photo courtesy of Janet Abrams.



man, and her family would often spend vacations and holidays on the farm with her parents.

As the elder George neared retirement, he began co-farming with his neighbors, Rich and Judy Olson. When George and Gertrude retired and moved to Colfax, Wash., they sold the family's home and much of their farming equipment to the Olsons and became landlords under a crop share agreement. The Olsons also farmed George's sister's portion of the farm.

"My father was still fairly involved in the farm. When he died in 1997, I was the only heir, so now, I'm a landlord. I continued on with Rich and Judy," Abrams said. "I had learned a fair amount of marketing from my father. I went to a lot of ag expos and other things. I felt like I've been able to make informed decisions (as a landlord)."

These days, the Olson's son, Jon, leases Abrams' land. While their lease agreement gives Jon final management decisions, Abrams says he'll often share his plans with her, especially when he wants to try something new.

"It's more him advising me than me being involved in the decision making. He keeps me informed," she explained. "I still like to market my own wheat, lentils, whatever."



Growing up, Janet Abrams' two children, Kristi and Mark, would often spend Christmas at the Miller farm in Whitman County. They enjoyed romping through the snow with Muffin, the border collie. Photo by George Abrams.

Abrams feels a crop share agreement is better than a cash rent one because it's a more equitable way of running the farm and makes the landlord part of the success (or not) of the enterprise.

One of the issues she's run into as a landlord is staying current on alternative crops, such as barley, that aren't a regular part of her operator's crop rotations. She believes her children will choose to continue as landlords and said, as a landlord, it is important to have family support and to be able to discuss farm issues and decisions with those who may ultimately inherit the land.

"It's really important to develop a trusting relationship with your farmer, and it goes both ways," she said. "It may be that you have to do most of the reaching out for communicating. Don't depend on the farmer to do that, because he's busy doing other things." ■

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THE BOTTOM LINE

A view of the farm from the road, cyberville

By Dr. David M. Kohl

The song, "On the Road Again," by Willie Nelson would be very appropriate for my summer travels engaging with producers, lenders and agribusinesses. The spectrum of audiences and events ranged from multiday young farmer and rancher conferences to lending schools, online events and the occasional strategic planning venue where I have gained new perspectives and viewpoints.

The post-pandemic hibernation phase has brought many attendees hungry for engagement and information to better operate their businesses. Many of the producers' views of the future could be sized up by one word: anxious. While the past two years have been rather positive due to commodity prices and government checks, many are concerned that inflating expenses, uncertainty and possible lower commodity prices may result in margin compression. As one producer stated, "We have gone from market-



ing for dollars to quarters, dimes and nickels."

Follow the plan and process

A producer in his early 40s was a panelist at an agriculture lender conference. He stated that by following a marketing and risk management plan in 2021, he left \$500,000 of potential net profit on the table. However, he quickly pointed out that in the 12 years he has been in business on his own, he has made a profit nearly 90 percent of the time by developing a plan and following the process. A disciplined approach to marketing and risk management has allowed him to purchase land every year he has been in business, except one. He also utilizes a projected cash flow that is monitored monthly in order to make adjustments given changing weather and economic conditions.

Positive trend in management skill sets

There is a positive trend in the management mindset of producers, as observed by an online survey of lenders. The lenders were asked to rate producers overall on their production, marketing and financial management skills using a sliding scale from one, indicating very poor skills, to 10, indicating very strong skills. Of course, production skills led the way, often in the six-to-nine range. However, the marketing and financial skills of producers were generally rated in the five-to-eight range. Increased management skills have been a trend in recent years, specifically for young farmers and ranchers under 45 years of age. This bodes very well for the expected future economic and financial volatility, combined with margin compression.

Focus on the future

Engagement and interaction during young farmer and rancher events has been very uplifting. This group is very resourceful, utilizing their talents and skill sets to garner revenue and income streams from a wide variety of farm

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and nonfarm sources, such as welding, trucking, marketing consultation and agribusiness professionals. They are able to multitask using technology and an entrepreneurial mindset to start and grow their businesses. Some are start-ups, others are family businesses, and some are aspiring to go into business with an existing farmer who has no next generation.


It has been inspiring to observe these progressive groups with a management mindset that will be needed for the 2020s. A few of their notable characteristics are:


- They are very growth oriented with written short- and long-term goals for their business, family and personal life.
- They use financial statements as a management tool and have a desire to develop an action plan for improvement. As one young farm family member indicated, every line on the financial statement counts.
- Engagement with a team of advisors and peers is a very important management strategy for this segment. Seeking another set of eyes and being able to accept coaching and guidance seems to be built into this group's DNA.

Finally, what keeps young farmers and ranchers awake

at night? Unpredictable weather, inflating costs and uncertain prices were mentioned as worrisome. However, the number one factor mentioned by a majority of family operation participants was uncertainty in transition management as a result of limited or nonexistent planning and communication by the senior generation.

Unfortunately, not all of the views from the road and "cyberville" are positive. With the potential changes and uncertainty surrounding tax laws presenting challenges, transition and change management will be one of the highest priorities for farm and ranch businesses over the next few months and years. ■

Dr. David Kohl is an academic hall-of-famer in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. Dr. Kohl is a sought-after educator of lenders, producers and stakeholders with his keen insight into the agriculture industry gained through extensive travel, research and involvement in ag businesses. He has traveled nearly 10 million miles; conducted more than 6,500 workshops, speeches and seminars; and published more than 2,250 articles for leading publications. Dr. Kohl's involvement with ag businesses and interaction with key thought leaders provide a unique perspective into future trends of the ag industry and economy. This content was provided by  **Northwest**
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“In addition to research to better understand the interaction between soil, plants and human health, we want to develop flavorful products from each of these crops. One of the keys to success is releasing new varieties and having farmers grow them.

Another key is getting more nutritious and affordable foods out into the mainstream and into households.”

— Kevin Murphy, program director and Washington State University (WSU) associate professor in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, on a National Institute of Food and Agriculture \$10 million grant WSU received to increase the nutrient value in wheat, barley, peas, lentils, buckwheat and quinoa. (WSU Insider)

“I will continue to say we need to do everything possible to clear those ports out. Getting help from the administration there can be beneficial. Let’s not just overstate that we’re going to fix this overnight. It’s going to take time to work through many of the supply bottlenecks. And frankly, I think we will live with those supply bottlenecks for many months ahead. It’s not going to be a quick fix.”

—Scott Brown, University of Missouri agricultural economist, on the Biden Administration’s brokered agreement to expand operations 24/7 at the Port of Los Angeles. (agweb.com)

“...We write to urge you to utilize the full eligibilities provided in the statute to assist producers in our states hit hard by extreme heat, drought, wildfires, smoke exposure and related crop quality losses. Additionally, we request that USDA offer guidance as soon as practicable on what types of documentation will be needed for farmers so that they can be ready and able to access this assistance.”

— Reps. Suzan K. DelBene (D-Wash.); Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.); Kim Schrier (D-Wash.); Derek Kilmer (D-Wash.); Peter A. DeFazio (D-Ore.); Marilyn Strickland (D-Wash.); Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.); Adam Smith (D-Wash.); Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.); Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.); Jamie Herrera Beutler (R-Wash.); Rick Larsen (D-Wash.); and Sens. Patty Murray (D-Wash.); Ron Wyden (D-Ore.); Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.); and Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) in a letter to Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack regarding \$10 billion in funding the USDA received to help cover crop quality losses in 2020 and 2021.



“Regardless of the wheat production region, the most important consideration for wheat growers will be economics. The changes to management systems could impact the

quality of the wheat crop, and that impacts their long-term economic viability. If new market opportunities come with costs that don’t balance out, growers cannot afford to be involved. And the current uncertainty of costs and obligations for the growers is another layer of questions and not being able to make the scenarios pencil out.”

—David Milligan, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, in a House Committee on Agriculture hearing on voluntary carbon markets in agriculture and forestry.



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Trevor Smith seeds wheat fields under a magnificent Eastern Washington sunset in Cheney. Photo by Jill Weismann.



Jacob Heitstuman (15 months) cheering on his daddy, Brian, and his papa, Dale, as they fill the sprayer in Pomeroy. Photo taken by Stephanie Heitstuman.

Email pictures to editor@wawg.org.
Include location, names and ages of
all children in photo.



Mattie Schroeder (6) vacuuming the drills out north of Wilbur. Photo by Alli Schroeder.

Your wheat life...



Papa Scott taking a break to hang out with his granddaughter, Adelyne (21 months), at SLR Farms Inc in Rosalia. Photo by Aly Moles.



Annabelle (6), Ryleigh (2) and Duane (9 month) sitting with their papa, David Fletcher, on ND Fletcher Farms in Dayton. Photo by Christina Fletcher.



(Above) Wheat in the Horse Heaven Hills. Photo by Brady Smith. (Left) Harlan Appel (2) helping install the GPS. Photo by Jaimie Appel.

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