

# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

**APRIL | 2025**

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Growers worry that CRP seeding window  
is too narrow

AMMO recaps: Mental health, markets,  
USDA agency updates

2025 Preferred Variety Brochure

Stripe rust update

"The Operator's Manual"

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# WHEAT LIFE

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The official publication of



**WASHINGTON  
ASSOCIATION OF  
WHEAT GROWERS**

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# President's Perspective



## Trying for certainty in an uncertain world

By Jeff Malone

*President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers*

Uncertainty has always been part of farming, but lately, it feels like we are being tested at every turn. The latest round of tariffs on wheat, along with those on corn and soybeans, has sent prices tumbling down 10% in just a short time. China has imposed significant barriers, and our closest trading partners, Canada and Mexico, have followed suit. This is not just about wheat; it's about the viability of American farms in an increasingly volatile global market.

We have always known that agriculture is tied to policy, but right now, the connection feels like a noose. The Natural Resources Conservation Service funding freeze is creating roadblocks for conservation programs that many farmers rely on. Meanwhile, employment instability at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) caused by mass firings and resignations has left many of us without clear guidance on critical issues and a lot of our county USDA offices understaffed.

These challenges come at a time when input prices continue to rise. As we prepare to get into the fields, every farmer I talk to is feeling the pinch. Fertilizer, fuel, equipment ... everything costs more. Yet, our commodity prices are lower, our market access is restricted, and the uncertainty about what comes next is enough to keep anyone up at night.

The idea of subsidies often sparks debate, and I know most farmers would rather operate without them. What we really want is fair pricing, open markets, and the ability to compete. But when policies, both at the state and federal level, make it impossible to break even, let alone profit, we are left with little choice but to rely on whatever support is available. The reality is, if these trade disputes continue and input costs stay high, some farmers won't make it through.

Last month, I wrote about the importance of research. By the time that article was published, Washington State University had already faced funding cuts. This is just another example of how quickly things change, and how often those changes seem to work against us. Research is key to improving yields, reducing input costs, and staying competitive, yet it's often the first thing to suffer when budgets tighten.

So where do we go from here? For now, we do what farmers have always done: adapt, work hard, and push for policies that actually support agriculture. We need our leaders to understand that these trade decisions have real consequences, not just on balance sheets, but on families, communities, and the future of farming itself.

We can't control global markets, but we can keep speaking up. We can keep working together to make sure our voices are heard. And, most importantly, we can keep farming, even when the world seems determined to make it harder than ever. ■

**Cover photo:** Winter wheat fields greening up under a setting sun along Highway 195. Photo by Lori Maricle, Washington Grain Commission. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.



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## WAWG's current top priorities are:

- ✓ Preserving the lower Snake River dams.
- ✓ Fighting mandatory climate/carbon regulations.
- ✓ Lobbying the state Legislature for a seasonal overtime exemption.
- ✓ Maintaining a strong, reliable safety net by preserving crop insurance and making sure farm commodity programs work.
- ✓ Maintaining a safe, sound transportation system that includes rail, river and roads.

*If these priorities are important to you, your family and your farm operation, join WAWG today and help us fight.*

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# A trial by trials: WSU program in reset mode

By Andy Juris  
Bickleton, Wash.

For those of us who grew up watching “Hee Haw” on Saturday nights in the 1970s and 80s, we all remember Grandpa Jones, Roy Clark, and Gordie Tapp singing “Gloom, Despair, and Agony on Me.” It was a catchy tune culminating in “if it weren’t for bad luck, I’d have no luck at all,” a song tailor-made for farming, of course! Trials are no stranger to wheat country these days; it seems every week brings a new one.

Speaking of trials, some of you may have noticed that the Washington State University (WSU) Cereal Variety Trial Program has been dealing with some ... er ... “trials” of its own lately, for lack of a better term. The issues facing the program really seemed to culminate this fall with some of the winter plots being cancelled, including the one in our community. The reasons for all of this are, as usual, complex. Between the pressures of manpower, logistics, administration, far-flung locations, and the fickle nature of the weather, it seems that the program is in a bit of a reset mode right now as WSU and the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) work to find a permanent solution.

I don’t envy the job of those who are working hard to fix this. It has to be a bit like painting a barn that’s right by the main road to town — everyone who drives by is a critic! However, as we face a year without winter wheat trials in some locations, and, perhaps, spring trials as well, what are the implications farmers need to be aware of?

First, these test plots do far more than simply identify the highest yielding varieties. They are quite literally one of the central data generating mechanisms for quality and baking characteristics, disease resistance, soil health, nutrient management, and a host of other things I’m probably unaware of. And all of this gets to happen in our own backyard, in our dirt, in our rainfall, with our microclimate.

It’s an amazing opportunity for WSU and farmer cooperators to work together to build data, put lab research in

the dirt, and, at the end of the day, hopefully help keep us all running.

Second, the program is one of the best ways for farmers, wheat breeders, researchers, and WSU Extension to meet, ask questions, build relationships, and have practical conversations about what is working and what isn’t. Many times, there feels like a disconnect between the lab and the field, and this program brings those two together. We are fortunate to have some excellent folks at WSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service. This is an opportunity to meet them in our own backyard! Last year, talking with Mike Pumphrey for a few minutes changed my entire approach to the rest of the crop year. We, as farmers, get as much from these trials as the researchers do, maybe more. As genetics get more complex and we all strive to meet the disease, climate, and health challenges of tomorrow, these trials play a vital role on my farm every single year.

With that as a backdrop, we now watch with a bit of concern as the program pulls back temporarily to restructure. Times are hard for public universities these days, and everything is being analyzed. While the value of the variety trial program is well known, it is also very time consuming and expensive, takes a lot of manpower, and is a logistical nightmare to administer. As WSU and the WGC work to reset this program, let’s all do our part by participating in it. Many of these plot tours and field days have low attendance; some are completely unattended. That has to be disappointing for the hard-working folks at WSU. Let’s help them make the investment in this program by making the investment of our time at a minimum. I know on our farm, we will be doing our best as cooperators to make sure they have everything they need for a successful spring trial. This summer, let’s enjoy the warm weather, have conversations with the breeders and neighbors, and work together to figure out the future of wheat in Washington, and, hopefully, avoid the “deep dark depression, excessive misery” (really, kids, check out that song) that comes when research and development stops. ■





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## River stakeholders meet with White House official

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, spent a week in Washington, D.C., last month, participating in the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association's (PNWA) 2025 Mission to D.C. While she was in the nation's capital, Hennings and a group of river stakeholders were able to score a meeting with Jason Becker from the White House Office of Public Liaison.

The group, which included Scott Corbitt from the Port of Lewiston, Captain Jeremy Nielsen from Columbia River Pilots, Neil Maunu from PNWA, and Ashley Smith from the Torrey Advisory Group, talked about the importance of the lower Snake River dams, tariffs and potential tariffs, and the necessity of getting a farm bill done this year. The group also met with officials at the Department of the Interior.

"We had a great conversation with Jason and were able to highlight many of the issues important to Washington wheat growers, and how those issues could impact growers," Hennings said. "I feel our message was very well received, and I look forward to building on this relationship in the future." ■

## Board meets in February before spring work break

Busy travel schedules and numerous grower meetings delayed February's board meeting until the end of the month, where warm-



(Above) River stakeholders Scott Corbitt from the Port of Lewiston; Captain Jeremy Nielsen from Columbia River Pilots; Michelle Hennings from the Washington Association of Wheat Growers; and Neil Maunu from Pacific Northwest Waterways Association met with Jason Becker (center) from the White House Office of Public Liaison. (Below) Ashley Smith (right) from the Torrey Advisory Group joined the river stakeholders.





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ing weather and the itch to get out in the fields led board members to cancel March's meeting. The board generally doesn't meet in April, so the next regularly scheduled board meeting will be in May.

Several special guests made the trip to Ritzville in February to speak to the board. Roylene Comes At Night, state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), updated the board on the agency's funding situation, telling them that farm bill funds had been released, while Inflation Reduction Act money had been released for existing contracts only, adding that about half of the agency's budget had been put on hold. The Washington state NRCS team lost more

With spring fieldwork kicking off and farmers itching to get on the tractor, no April Washington Association of Wheat Growers' board meeting will be held. The next scheduled meeting will be Tuesday, May 13, beginning at 10 a.m. in the Wheat Foundation annex in Ritzville.

than 30 employees in the Trump Administration's workforce reductions, and Comes At Night said she was working to shuffle her staff around.

"Please say thank you to field office staff," she told growers, adding that they are dealing with a lot of uncertainty.

Andy Pittenger, agriculture program manager for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, said while the office is under new leadership, the ag department personnel hasn't changed.

Sydney Balderston, representing the Douglas County Voluntary Stewardship Program, told growers that funds have been set aside for county growers to help combat weeds, including insects to address toadflax. She asked growers survey questions to help inform the state's ag viability study.

Anthony Peña, government relations manager for the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, called in with an update on both the lower Snake River dams litigation and a status report on the Columbia River Treaty.

Counties all reported plenty of moisture and large temperature swings. In some counties, the ground was still frozen, so flooding and erosion were issues. In most cases, growers didn't think there would be too much winterkill, and overall, winter wheat was in good shape.

In state legislation, lobbyists Diana Carlen and Mark Struelli reported that the ag overtime bill didn't make it out of committee, but efforts to address agriculture's Climate

Commitment Act fuel exemption were ongoing. The new director of the Washington State Department of Ecology, Casey Sixkiller, has been meeting with stakeholders and seems to want an open door policy with the ag industry.

Casey Chumrau, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), said the industry is pushing to have the U.S. Food Aid program moved to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and emphasize purchasing U.S.-grown crops. If food aid is counted as a soft white wheat customer, it would be the fifth largest buyer.

Chumrau said tariffs on Mexico and Canada are coming back into the conversation, which could have a huge impact on agriculture as 90% of the fertilizer for the western U.S. comes out of Canada. Mexico is U.S. wheat's top market. Russian wheat is making inroads into Mexico. Russian wheat is very cheap and can be blended with high quality wheat, and it still costs less than U.S. wheat.

"If Mexico gets used to that, it could be hard to claw back that market," she added.

Growers also discussed the issues Washington State University's (WSU) Variety Testing Program has been having lately. Several of WSU's wheat breeders will run the program temporarily, but some of the far-flung spring wheat test plots may not be planted this year. Mary Palmer Sullivan, WGC vice president, said growers in those locations need to speak up so the WSU administration doesn't get the idea that those sites are unimportant.

In national legislation, WAWG leaders recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend National Association of Wheat Grower meetings and meet with members of Washington's congressional delegation, as well as several USDA agencies, including the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director, said the group discussed the economic aid package that was passed in December's funding bill while meeting with FSA, but no details were available. The group also emphasized the importance of getting an FSA state executive director appointed as soon as possible. ■

## Spokane, Franklin county growers join WAWG board

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) welcomed two new board members since the first of the year representing Franklin and Spokane counties.

### Andrew Schafer, Franklin County

Schafer, along with his wife, Jessica, and their three chil-





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dren, is the fourth generation to farm on his family's farm near Kahlotus where they grow soft white wheat for seed. He graduated in 2005 from Washington State University and moved back to the farm in 2013, joining his parents. Outside of the WAWG board, he is chair of the Franklin County Farm Service Agency Committee and serves on the CHS SunBasin growers board.

After leaving school, Schafer was involved in the hospitality industry with no firm plans to return to the farm. That decision was made when he and his wife decided to start a family.

"The career I was in was not conducive to being around while raising a family," he explained. "I wanted my kids to have the same upbringing I did, in a rural community where there's a sense of community."

Schafer inherited the Franklin County board seat when he became the Franklin County wheat growers' president. He said he'd already been thinking about getting more involved in WAWG.

"Farming is a rather solitary lifestyle," he said. "I was interested in being able to have some time to speak with other people, see what they are doing on their farms, but I'm also a strong proponent that we need to be engaged actively in policymaking and anything that could affect the future of farmers. If I'm not willing to do it, who will?"

### **Matt DeGon, Spokane County**

DeGon has worked on his family's Fairfield farm from the time he was little, helping his grandfather move hay. The family, which includes DeGon's parents and his twin brother, grow wheat, barley, canola, peas, lentils, garbs, alfalfa, timothy, and orchard grass. DeGon also does custom haying and spraying. He graduated from Walla Walla Community College in 2021 with a degree in ag systems. He took over the board seat from his aunt, Laurie Roecks, who is currently going through the WAWG chairs.

"It's good for me to learn this side of the wheat industry," DeGon said, referring to WAWG's policy and advocacy efforts. "I didn't know much about what WAWG did. I think even more people, especially young people in the farm ag community, should be part of not just WAWG, but those style of associations. I think they are overlooked."

DeGon said at first he wasn't sure he needed to be part of WAWG and questioned what he could bring to the asso-

ciation, but now hopes he can help bring awareness about what's happening in farming to others. ■

## **Farm Service Agency news**

If you have experienced delays in receiving Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments, Loan Deficiency Payments, or Market Gains on Marketing Assistance Loans, it may be because you have not filed form CCC-941, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certification.

If you don't have a valid CCC-941 on file for the applicable crop year, you will not receive payments. All farm operator/tenants/owners who have not filed a CCC-941 and have pending payments should immediately file the form with their recording county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. Farm operators and tenants are encouraged to confirm that their landowners have filed the form.

FSA can accept the CCC-941 for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. Unlike the past, you must have the CCC-941 certifying your AGI compliance before any payments can be issued.

### **Update your records**

FSA is cleaning up their producer record database and needs your help. Please report any changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address, or an incorrect name or business name on file to your local U.S. Department of Agriculture service center. You should also report changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase. You should also report any changes to your operation in which you reorganize to form a trust, LLC or other legal entity.

### **ARC/PLC deadlines approaching**

Growers are reminded that FSA is accepting enrollments and elections for the ARC and PLC for 2025 through April 15.

Although election changes for 2025 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multiyear contract on the farm it will continue for 2025 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the April 15 deadline, their election remains the same as their 2024 election for commodities on the farm from the prior year. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a shared interest in the cropland. ■





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# Natural resources, conservation focus of winter meetings

Andrea Cox, conservation coordinator for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, attended an Endangered Species Act/pesticide workshop at the William A. Grant Water & Environmental Center in Walla Walla in March (top photo). This was the last of a series of workshops throughout the Pacific Northwest with the goal of getting involved parties up to speed on the changes in the Environment Protection Agency/Endangered Species Act/pesticide space.

Attendees worked through a series of activities designated to encourage conversation and generate information to inform the national conversation. Attendees learned more about pesticide mitigations for endangered species and worked through several activities aimed at assisting them with understanding and implementing these mitigation requirements. Participants provided feedback on supporting implementation, and the workshop concluded with growers ranking priorities.

In February, a joint conservation district meeting was held at the Palouse Empire Fairgrounds to highlight the accomplishments of the Pine Creek, Rock Lake, Whitman, and Palouse conservation districts (middle photo). In addition to 2024 highlights from each conservation district, the program featured a panel of local growers and an overview of funding opportunities and programs from local agencies.

Also in February, growers attended a Conservation Practices for Pesticide Use meeting at The McGregor Company Training Center (bottom photo). The meeting was



organized by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), the Palouse Conservation District, and a panel of industry leaders to learn about how to meet new pesticide label requirements. The program featured a panel discussion with industry leaders from WSDA Compliance, Natural Resources Conservation Service, WSDA Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, and Yara. The agenda also included a workshop and case studies surrounding runoff/erosion mitigation, discussion surrounding WSDA future activities, and an overview of incentives. ■



# Assessment confirms environmental benefits of wheat

From the National Association of Wheat Growers

In mid-March, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) announced the results of a comprehensive life cycle assessment (LCA) showing significant progress in the sustainability of U.S. wheat production. The study highlights substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, water usage, land use, and soil erosion on a per-bushel basis over the past several decades.

In collaboration with the National Wheat Foundation and U.S. Wheat Associates, NAWG commissioned the LCA to assess the environmental impact of wheat production across the U.S. from raw inputs through to the delivery of grain, with a focus on local farming practices, from 1978 to 2018.

U.S. wheat yields per acre are up 25% since 1993 while converting 68% of total planted area to no-till and other conservation tillage systems. Other key findings include:

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

More information is on NAWG's website at [wheatworld.org/wheat-lifecycle-assessment/](http://wheatworld.org/wheat-lifecycle-assessment/). ■



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# POLICY MATTERS

## State Democrats release House, Senate budget proposals

By Diana Carlen  
*WAWG Lobbyist*

We wrapped up the 10th week of the session on March 22. This past week, committees focused on hearing bills passed by the opposite chamber. The next deadline is April 2 when all bills must pass out of their policy committee.

Legislators have shifted to budget mode. Earlier in the week, the Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council released its latest revenue forecast, projecting a decrease of \$845 million in state revenue through 2029. Estimates of the state's actual budget deficit for the next four years range between \$7 billion and \$15 billion, depending on whether new proposals such as the state employee collective bargaining agreements are included that former Gov. Inslee negotiated last fall.

Budget writers will use the latest revenue forecast to finalize their budget proposals. Operating (HB 1198/SB 5167) and transportation budget proposals (HB 1227/SB 5161) were scheduled to be released on March 24. Hearings were planned on the operating budget on March 25 in each chamber with plans to vote them out of their respective fiscal committees on March 27. The Senate plans to pass their budget on the floor on March 29 and the House on March 31. The proposed capital budget (HB 1216/SB 5195) is slated to be released on March 31.

This week also saw Senate and House Democrats each unveil their proposed revenue packages, including record tax increases, to deal



with the budget shortfall. Senate Democrats went first, proposing a \$17 billion revenue package, followed by House Democrats with a \$15 billion revenue package. Democrat leadership in the Senate and House have publicly stated they do not plan on taking major votes on tax policies until the two chambers agree on which ones to pursue. The governor has not publicly commented on either revenue proposals, although previously he has been skeptical of a wealth tax, which both proposals include.

Some of the notable tax policies in the Senate and House democrats' proposals include:

- **Wealth Tax.** The Senate version targets individuals with wealth over \$50 million by imposing a tax of \$10 on every \$1,000 of assessed value of financial assets like stocks, bonds, exchange-traded funds, and mutual funds; taxes the entire amount, instead of anything over \$50 million; generates \$4 billion per year starting in fiscal year 2027; and is estimated to impact 4,300 individuals. The House version targets individuals with wealth over \$50 million by imposing a tax of \$8 on every \$1,000 assessed value of financial assets like stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and index funds with the first \$50 million exempt from the tax; exempts pensions, retirement accounts, and education savings accounts; generates \$2 billion per year beginning in fiscal year 2027; and is estimated to impact 4,300 individuals.
- **Property tax.** The Senate version removes the 1% cap on property tax growth limit and changes to the combined rate of population growth plus inflation; does not set a cap of 3%; and raises \$779 million to the state over the four-year budget cycle. The House version allows an increase in annual property tax growth from the current 1% cap to the combined rate of population growth plus inflation, not to exceed 3%; applies to the state's common school levy and for cities and counties, as well as special purpose districts; and raises \$779 million to the state over the four-year budget cycle. ▶





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- **Repealing tax preferences.** The Senate version repeals 20 tax exemptions and generates more than \$1 billion over the four-year budget cycle. Notable preferences impacting agriculture include repealing the B&O tax preference for packing agricultural products and eliminates a public utility tax exemption for the intrastate transportation of goods, commodities, and agricultural products. There is no similar House proposal.
- **Reduces the state sales tax.** The Senate bill reduces the state sales tax from 6.5% to 6% starting in 2027, which is estimated to decrease state revenues by \$1.3 billion per year. There is no similar House proposal.

For more updated legislative information, please visit [wawg.org](http://wawg.org). ■

## NAWG hires policy manager

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) welcomed **Anthony Peña** as its new policy manager.

"We are thrilled to welcome Anthony to our policy team at this critical time for wheat growers," said Chandler Goule, NAWG CEO. "His combination of association advocacy experience and congressional background will be invaluable as we work to advance policies that support the vitality of America's wheat industry."



Peña most recently spent three years as government relations manager at the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA). Before PNWA, Peña served as U.S. Sen. Patty Murray's regional district director and representative. At PNWA, Peña developed expertise in issues directly relevant to wheat producers, including transportation infrastructure, waterway maintenance, and international trade logistics. His understanding of the Pacific Northwest's role in agricultural exports will bring an important perspective to NAWG's policy initiatives.

"I'm honored to join the National Association of Wheat Growers and build on my experience advocating for the infrastructure that wheat growers depend upon," Peña said. "I look forward to working directly with wheat producers to learn more and advance the policies that enhance their competitiveness and profitability." ■

## 2025-26 NAWG officers begin one-year terms

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) welcomed its new officer team in March at Commodity

Classic 2025 in Denver, Colo. These officers will begin their one-year terms, continuing NAWG's mission to promote the needs of our nation's wheat growers.

Pat Clements of Kentucky will serve as president, Jamie Kress of Idaho will serve as vice president, Nathan Keane of Montana will serve as treasurer, and Chris Tanner of Kansas will serve as secretary. Keffy Felty of Oklahoma will take on the role of past president. ■

## Bill introduced to protect dams, strengthen hydropower

Last month, Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash) introduced a package of legislation to protect the lower Snake River dams and strengthen hydropower as a reliable, affordable source of base load energy. The legislation is co-sponsored by Reps. Michael Baumgartner (R-Wash.); Cliff Bentz (R-Ore.); and Russ Fulcher (R-Idaho). Many Pacific Northwest industry groups supported the legislation, including the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. The legislation includes:

### H.R. 2073, the Defending Our Dams Act

This legislation protects the lower Snake River dams while ensuring that safeguards are implemented to protect ratepayers and the greater Pacific Northwest economy from the irreparable harm that would occur if the dams were breached. The legislation also prohibits the use of federal funds from being used in breaching, studying the breaching of, or altering the lower Snake River dams and does not allow spillage operations on any of the lower Snake River dams unless such operations are approved by the Secretary of the Army and the administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration.

### H.R. 2074, the Protecting Our Water Energy Resource Act

This legislation protects ratepayers and the economy from the irreparable harm that would occur if a hydroelectric dam was breached or an energy generation source was removed from the grid by prohibiting the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from retiring an energy generation source if that retirement would raise customer electricity rates and decrease regional energy reliability by more than 5%.

The legislation would also prohibit the breaching of federally operated dams if such action would result in an increase in carbon emissions by more than 5%, would negatively impact navigation for commerce, and would result in an increase of at least 5% of the cost of goods being shipped. ■



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## Tillage practices help balance productivity, sustainability

With the spring comes planting season for farms across Eastern Washington. Using the latest research and technology, farmers work the hills and draws of every microclimate in meticulous fashion. Each microclimate demands different precision from farmers. Farming methods that work on one farm may not work on a farm just 10 miles away. As you see tractors work the fields this spring, we hope you notice differences beyond the red, green, and yellow paint. These differences come after generations of knowledge passed along the way. One major practice that you will notice is how farmers till, or work, their ground. Washington's tillage practices have evolved with every generation. Methods that once depended heavily on brute strength and horse-drawn machinery are now dictated by rainfall and research.

Different approaches to working the soil now balance productivity, soil health, and environmental sustainability. Three common methods used in agriculture are conventional tillage, minimum tillage, and no-till farming.

**CONVENTIONAL TILLAGE** is a traditional method using mechanical implements to work the soil, providing good seed-to-soil contact but can lead to soil erosion and loss of organic matter. Implements pulled behind the tractor break up the wheat stubble, turn the top few inches of soil, and incorporate organic material into the soil. Weeds are controlled mainly by mechanical process and tilling the soil. Less chemicals are used on the field, but more fuel

is used as it requires multiple passes through the field.

**MINIMUM TILLAGE**, as the name suggests, minimizes soil disturbance compared to conventional tillage, but it also uses some herbicides and pesticides to control weeds. This practice conserves soil moisture and reduces erosion.



A no-till seeding operation west of Spokane, Wash. Photo courtesy of KR Creative Strategies.






**NO-TILL FARMING** is a practice that eliminates mechanical soil disturbance, relying on herbicides and pesticides and a specialized drill for seeding, which reduces erosion and fuel use but requires more chemical applications.

Each of these farming practices has its own set of advantages and challenges. Rainfall, soil type, slope, and profitability dictate which practice best suits each farm. Some farmers use a combination of methods to balance productivity and sustainability on each field, with the ultimate goal of producing healthy, safe, and productive crops while preserving the land. ■

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# CRP seeding window narrows

WHEAT GROWERS ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN POLICY

By Trista Crossley  
*Editor, Wheat Life*

Planting a successful Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) stand depends heavily on adequately preparing the ground, but some growers in the driest parts of Eastern Washington are concerned their preparation window is being closed too early.

According to the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) policy, conservation plans must be seeded within 12 months of the CRP effective date, which is usually Oct. 1 of any given year, with options to extend if approved by the FSA county committee or county executive director. However, if the ground is not seeded with the approved permanent cover within 36 months of the effective date, the contract may be terminated.

Last year during a statewide review, the FSA state office in Spokane discovered some Eastern Washington con-

servation plans were being created that went beyond 24 months to seed because some plans were written using a two-year chemfallow rotation with seeding planned for the following late fall and spring. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which writes the conservation plans for CRP, requires seeding during a dormant period, usually from late fall to early spring.

Chris Herron, a farmer in Franklin County who custom seeds thousands of CRP acres, says that even a 24-month seeding window is too short, especially if late fall and winter precipitation is below average.

Herron explained that he waits until spring, after his area has received the majority of its yearly precipitation, to work CRP ground for the first time — mowing followed by spraying. This allows him to catch the first winter's cheatgrass and any volunteer wheat or other annuals that began growing in the spring. Russian thistle starts show-



Some growers in the dryer regions of Eastern Washington are worried that deadlines for seeding Conservation Reserve Program ground leave them too little time to adequately deal with weeds.



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ing up with the heat in May or June, so Herron generally hits the ground with at least one more chemical application before fall.

"We had enough moisture to treat cheatgrass and volunteer wheat in the spring. We rarely get enough rain to do it twice," he explained. "In Franklin County, we've always pushed that ground preparation into the second spring growing season where we get another chance to kill cheatgrass and weeds."

If growers take two springs to make sure the weeds are dealt with, by the time the next window for seeding rolls around, which for Herron begins in November, they are entering month 25 or 26 of their contract. Herron said trying to seed in November is tricky, and if conditions aren't right, they will have to wait until February to seed.

"When the fall is dry, CRP seeding should be delayed until soil moisture is adequate and soil temperatures are below 42 degrees," he said. "In order to abide by the window of two years, that only gives us one chance, the spring of that first year, to kill weeds and make a good seed bed. If Mother Nature cooperated, and it rained in the summer and fall of year one, and I could get two crops of cheatgrass up and dead, then I could seed on month 13 or 14, but Mother Nature doesn't often cooperate in Franklin County."

When CRP was first instituted, Herron said those who seeded after the first year saw failure rates of over 70% because of weed complications. Growers who don't meet stand requirements will have their CRP contracts terminated. In some cases, the county committee may grant a second chance at reseeding, although the cost of preparing the ground and reseeding generally falls mostly on the farmer at that point.

"That is why, in the beginning, you want to pull out all the stops to prepare the ground and get it as clean as you can the first two spring seasons, so your grass has every chance to grow," Herron said. "The rules need to be flexible enough to deal with the variabilities of farming."

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers has been working with the state FSA office and the state's congressional delegation to modify the deadlines so that they work better for Eastern Washington's dry climate. In the meantime, FSA advises growers to carefully select practices that are achievable in their area; understanding the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) is critical to offering land into CRP. ■

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# Healthy mind, healthy farm

AMMO session focuses on farmer mental health

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Last month, a group of Washington wheat growers took steps to overcome the stigma of mental health by addressing suicide myths, learning to recognize the signs of suffering, and finding help for somebody in crisis. The session concluded the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's winter schedule.

The session was led by **Darla Tyler-McSherry**, founder of Ask In Earnest. Tyler-McSherry grew up on a wheat farm in Montana and spent 30 years working in student health at Montana State University Billings. Despite her experience, even she was caught off guard when her father died by suicide in 2016. A few years later, Tyler-McSherry began Ask In Earnest, an initiative addressing mental health in agriculture. Ask In Earnest trains people to recognize the signs of somebody struggling with mental health and provides tools and resources to start a difficult conversation.

"We are here to change the culture, the landscape, change that current, long-standing, and pervasive issue of mental health and poor mental health, farming, and suicide," she told the group. "I used to believe that suicide was this horrible, awful tragic event, and that it happened to other people. That all changed for me. My dad, Dick Tyler, was a wheat farmer in Big Sandy, Mont. Dad was born on the farm in the farmhouse that my brother and I were raised in. My dad spent his whole life on the farm. He died on the farm by his own hand."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has



found that agriculture has one of the highest rates of suicide when compared to the general working population. Across the nation, between 2002-22, suicide rates increased 30%, while in rural America, they increased 46%.

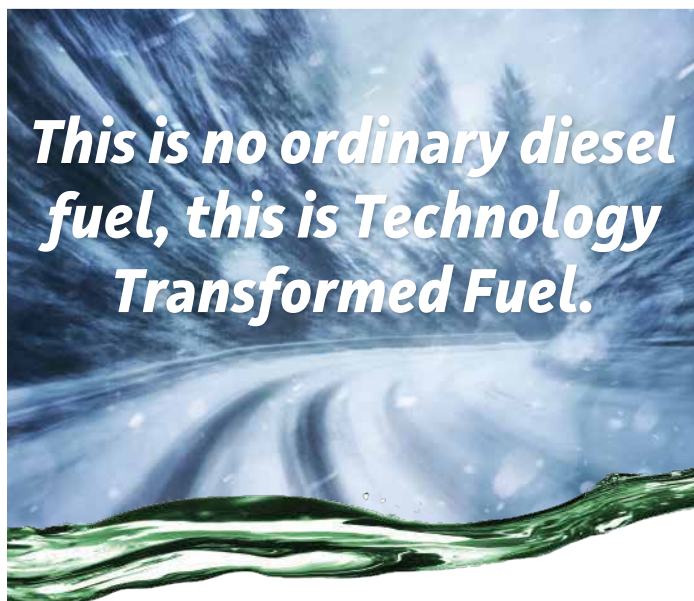
In Washington state, suicide rates have increased 12% in the past 20 years. Age matters, when dealing with suicide. Older farmers are more at risk, with 45% of suicides involving farmers 65 and older, with health issues being one of the primary risk factors. Younger farmers are also more at risk, with that age group's primary risk factor being the loss of a relationship, such as a death or divorce.

Tyler-McSherry referred to an idea from Iowa psychologist and farmer, Michael Rosmann, called the Agrarian Imperative, about why farmers are more at risk for mental health problems: Like many animal species, humans have a basic need to acquire sufficient territory and the necessary resources (e.g., capital, equipment, buildings, livestock) to produce the food and shelter required by their families and communities ... This genetically programmed instinct drives farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to tolerate unusual pain and adversity, to trust their own judgment, and to take uncommon risks.

"Those qualities that make you a good farmer also make you susceptible to mental health problems," she said. "That can put farmers at an increased risk because they are so used to doing things alone." ■

**See pages 28-29 for more information about suicide myths, risk factors, and resources**





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## Myths about suicide

- Most suicides happen without warning. *False.* Most people display some signs, but those signs can be easily missed or go unrecognized. The day before Tyler-McSherry's father died, he said something that sounded odd, and the family didn't pick up on it. "We know what we know at the time, but the key thing to helping prevent suicide is to look and hear things in a different way so we can pick up on those signs. If somebody is going to telegraph it, they will say something to somebody specific, probably someone close to them."
- People who die by suicide are selfish and take the easy way out. *False.* In reality, they are in so much pain, their judgement is so clouded that they can't think rationally. They can't make good decisions when they are under that much stress.
- Once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal. *False.* Up to 90% of people who live through a suicide attempt won't go on to make a second attempt, especially if they get connected to professional help.
- Talking about suicide causes it. *False.* There's no research to support this idea, and the opposite may actually be true. Asking if a person is suicidal can give that person a sense of relief; it can throw a lifeline to them.
- Strong people don't kill themselves. *False.* It's a myth that it is a sign of weakness if one is struggling mentally, or it is wrong to have a mental health condition. "Just like we all have physical health, we all have mental health."

## Risk factors

- Work/life balance. Farmers don't have the physical and psychological division from work, since they usually live on the farm or ranch. Their work is also their entire life, and it's hard to have that separation.
- Economics. There's been a 23% decrease in farm income in recent years, making it harder to make a living as a producer.
- Language/culture of farming can also place one at risk. Many farmers don't have the language or the culture to ask for help when it comes to mental health. Our culture doesn't make it easy for men to say they're hurting psychologically and need help.
- Lack of or a reluctance to seek mental health services.
- Alcohol use as a coping strategy.
- Access to lethal means. On a farm or ranch, there are lots of ways to harm oneself and take your own life.
- Climate stress. No matter where you land on what you think about climate stress, the data shows it is stressing farmers out. A survey of 100 Montana farmers, found that 70% agree that climate change is impacting their bottom line. Nearly 75% said they have moderate to high anxiety when they think about climate change.
- Lack of Vitamin D. Studies show that if you live in places with lots of cloud cover, lower levels of Vitamin D are correlated with higher levels of depression. It might be worthwhile to have a conversation with a medical care provider about supplements.
- Mental health condition. Up to 90% of people lost to suicide have an untreated condition, such as depression or alcoholism.
- Social isolation. When you are isolated, you have fewer opportunities to make connections. Farmers have a lot of rural space and a lot of isolation; people are social creatures.
- Stigma. Farmers talk about their knee replacement, but find it difficult to talk about struggling with anxiety or depression.

## Warning signs

- Listen. Pay more attention to what people are saying, doing, or how they are behaving. There are three specific things to pay attention to. They talk about being a BURDEN, even if it is only a perceived burden. They talk about LOSING HOPE. They don't see a FUTURE FOR THEMSELVES. "It might not be direct, it might be veiled, so we need to slow down and listen."
- Mood. Pay attention to people's moods. Do they seem depressed and not themselves, with no laughter or lightness? Conversely, if a person seemed depressed for a long time and then, suddenly, they aren't, they may have been struggling with thinking about suicide and have decided they are going to make an attempt. "This is not happiness, but it's coming out as relief."
- Actions. Is that person talking about buying another gun, or are they stockpiling medications? Are they more angry and expressing that anger? Is that anger out of character for that person? You might also see a lot of withdrawal from friends and activities they used to enjoy.



## Action steps

- Restrict access to lethal means.
- Put TIME and DISTANCE between suicidal thoughts and actions.  
Research has found that the time from planning to attempting suicide is short, counted in hours, not days. Suicidal thoughts come in waves. In Washington, about half of all suicides involve the use of a firearm. A conversation around that might sound like, "I'm really worried about you. I know you are having a bad time lately, and things not going well. If you are thinking about suicide, let me babysit your guns and ammo for awhile. Let's get you in a better spot, and then I'll give them back to you." You might think that person would never give up their guns and ammo, but you might be surprised at how much relief that person might feel because it takes that risk away.
- Call 988 before that moment of crisis. You can call 988 and tell them you are really worried about a friend and think they might be thinking about suicide. You can get solid advice and concrete steps to start that conversation. You can also text "go" or "start" or "help" to 988 or chat online at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).
- Go to your local emergency room.
- Help that person connect with help.
- Gatekeeper training, such as QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer, which is like CPR for suicide), or COMET (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory). "Let's make it normal to get trained in programs like QPR and COMET."
- Look for training opportunities from places like the county health department or the county Extension office.



## Resources

- American Farm Bureau State of Mind ([fb.org/initiative/farm-state-of-mind](https://fb.org/initiative/farm-state-of-mind)).
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention ([afsp.org](https://afsp.org)).
- Togetherall ([togetherall.com/en-us/](https://togetherall.com/en-us/)).
- AgriSafe Network ([agrisafe.org](https://agrisafe.org)).
- Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program ([farmstress.us](https://farmstress.us)).
- Ask in Earnest ([askinearnest.org](https://askinearnest.org)).
- Farm Aid Call Center (800-FARM-AID 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. MST).
- AgriStress Helpline (833-897-2474).

# Marketing at a glance

AMMO session delves into wheat markets at macro and micro levels

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

In mid-February, producers had the opportunity to hear marketing updates at both the macro and micro levels from two experts: Allison Thompson, owner of The Money Farm, and Randy Fortenbery, a professor and the Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Grain Economics at Washington State University. The session was part of the 2025 Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's winter schedule.

## Marketing at the macro level

As of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) February report, the U.S. was sitting on some pretty big wheat ending stocks, over 700 million bushels, primarily because of higher production in 2024. Winter wheat seeding for 2025 was higher than in 2024, which was surprising.

"That doesn't necessarily mean we will be booming with production," Thompson said. "This is just an initial outlook. Higher acres don't equate to higher yields. When you start getting higher acres, often you are planting more of the fringe areas that aren't higher yielding."

The condition of the winter wheat crop varies, but it is down in Kansas and Nebraska. Montana had great seeding conditions, but the crop is still dormant. Thompson told producers to keep an eye on Texas, which had an increase in winter wheat acres, but cold temperatures across the southern part of the U.S. could leave damage.

"There's a lot of unknowns for the production of wheat," she said.

Demand remains strong and is running about 9% over last year. Regarding tariffs, Thompson thinks demand will remain, especially in the U.S.'s top market, Mexico, which is losing wheat acres to agave and dealing with drought. Other top markets are also staying strong, including South Korea and Japan.

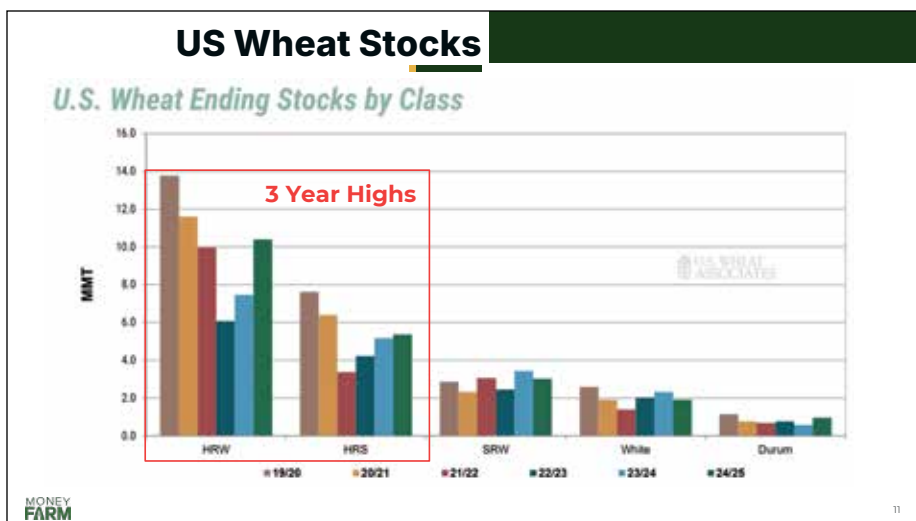


"I think there is demand out there for quality wheat that will keep things on pace," she said. "Overall, we are seeing really good demand, and I expect to see that continue going forward."

Globally, it's a completely different picture. Ending stocks are moving lower, and the world is looking at the lowest global stocks since 2016. Thompson thinks that should be getting attention, but the market is getting used to tight stocks. Her advice to growers was to watch the global producers carefully.

"I think we are one bad crop, one bad production (year) from an exciting wheat market," she said. Some of the U.S.'s global competitors to keep an eye on include:

- **China.** The Chinese are reporting a bumper crop last year despite rumors of lower production, and Thompson expects they will fall to a five-year low for imports. They've been importing a good amount of corn from the U.S. and South America, and Thompson wondered, if they have a surplus of wheat, why wouldn't they be using that instead of importing expensive corn? If you take China out of the picture, global stocks look much tighter.
- **India.** India is the world's largest wheat producer and largest wheat consumer. Like China, they don't generally export their wheat. The country is looking at record production in 2025, but if that doesn't happen, it could force them to import wheat, which would be positive for global wheat exchanges.
- **Russia.** Russia has been in the





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news recently because their exports are slowing, which has a lot to do with production losses over the last few years. If a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine happens, Thompson doesn't see that having much impact on markets.

- **EU.** Due to adverse weather, the EU saw lower production in 2024. A lot of their wheat was feed quality. They've had similar winter conditions this year, and if they have a second year of lower production, there's a good chance they might lose their spot as the 6th largest exporter to Argentina.

Currently, the U.S.'s wheat price is competitive with Canada and Australia. Outside influences to watch for include a lower U.S. dollar, food prices, inflation, weather, and outside investor activity.

"I feel like there are so many moving pieces in the background that haven't gotten market attention that could support market prices going forward," Thompson said. "I could easily see wheat being the sleeper of 2025."

## Markets at the micro level

Fortenbery said the U.S. is sitting at about a 40% stocks to use ratio, with USDA forecasting an average farm price of \$5.55 for 2024-25 (*Editor's note: USDA lowered this to \$5.50 in March*). Even with a great export environment, it's unlikely ending stocks will fall below last year because world trade is also down, which is keeping prices lower. One bit of good news is that the U.S.'s global wheat export share has risen over the past four years.

"That's good for us, getting a larger percentage of total sales. The bigger part of the world market we account for, anything that happens to us affects the world price. That helps us," he explained.

In white wheat news, carryout is expected to be down significantly while total demand is up, which is positive for the white wheat market. Wheat yields in



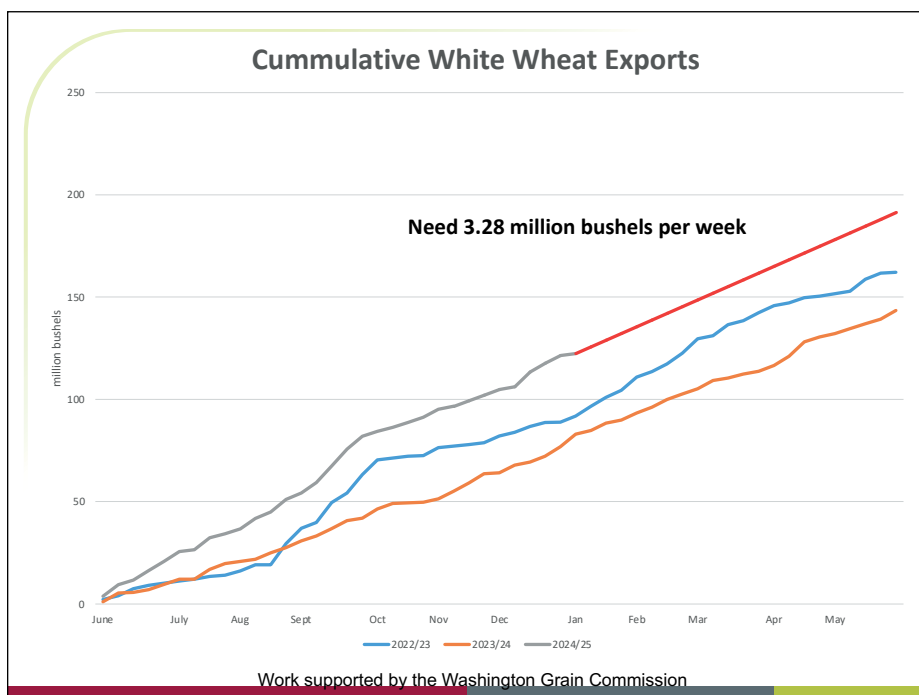
Washington tend to be more volatile than the national average. The state's 20-year winter wheat yield average has remained fairly flat at 65.1 bushels per acre. That volatility also translates to average marketing year white wheat prices. Fortenbery said the higher Washington's percentage to total U.S. winter wheat production, the lower the price premium is over the national price.

"That matters because when USDA tells us their forecast for ANY price, we should be thinking that will be my average year price, so I should beat that. Maybe not \$8, but if I beat it by \$.50, I should take it," he said, recommending that producers who are holding last year's wheat start thinking about how to market it.

The USDA is improving the white wheat forecast, and prices have moved up since the middle of January. Fortenbery thinks the USDA will increase the total white wheat exports over the coming months, which strengthens the argument that basis will improve. The traders say there's a 75% chance the average December soft red wheat futures price will be below \$6.90 and a 25% chance it will be below \$4.90 by late fall 2025.

"If I see \$6.70 on December 2025 futures, I think that is a place to start thinking about selling some of the 2025 harvest, even though the trades think it might go higher," he said, adding that growers still holding 2024 wheat should consider pricing it with hedges to arrive.

Regarding Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs (sign-up ends April 15, 2025), Fortenbery said current prices suggest PLC will not pay, unless Congress agrees to a retroactive increase in the reference price. For PLC, December 2025 futures need to be near \$5.75 per





bushel at sign-up to suggest a payment.


Some of the risks and opportunities going forward include:

- U.S. domestic policy: New farm bill with possibly a higher reference price; a new ag secretary, which is good because leadership needs to push Congress to get a farm bill on track; tariffs; and management of crop insurance.
- U.S. foreign policy: Our trade position on China and

Mexico; Russia/Ukraine conflict ("The market is not even paying attention to that anymore. It's more about how much wheat will Russia produce, and will they stop exports?"); Middle East; and energy prices.



- Macro-economic factors: Inflation, interest rates, and relative currency values. "We have no influence on these things, but they matter." ■


*Editor's note: A more recent market update from Fortenbery is on page 52.*



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# USDA agency updates

AMMO session features latest information from FSA, NRCS state leaders

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Wheat growers took over two Washtucna, Wash., institutions last month as part of the Agriculture Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) winter schedule. Growers met at the local Lion's Club to hear updates from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) officials and then gathered at Sonny's Tavern for lunch afterward.

Roylene Comes At Night, state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Chris Werner, then-deputy state executive director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), both told growers that there is a lot of uncertainty between the funding freeze and the dismissal of probationary employees and employees taking the government's offer of early retirement.

"Lot of things are changing daily," Comes At Night said. "I've been through eight presidents during my career, and I've never seen something change as quickly as it is changing now."

The session was repeated two days later, at USDA headquarters in Spokane Valley (without lunch at Sonny's, unfortunately). This recap covers the Washtucna session.

## NRCS

NRCS has been hit particularly hard by the funding freeze. At the time of the AMMO session (Feb. 19), all Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding had been suspended. A week later, USDA Secretary of Ag Brooke Rollins announced the release of approximately \$20 million of IRA money to fulfill contracts that have already been signed. While the fate of the rest of the IRA funding is still in question, there's better news on funds provided by the farm bill. Comes At Night said the agency has been given the green light to move forward on farm bill-funded contracts, and she urged growers who weren't sure which pot of money they were working out of to contact their local NRCS office.

Thanks in large part to the IRA, NRCS has seen a very large increase in funding over the past few years; the agency went from \$5 billion to \$21 billion. One of the agency's biggest challenges has been to get the funding on the ground.



"We can't get it in your hands without letting you know what is available and getting applications in the system," Comes At Night said.

In 2024, NRCS obligated \$20.6 million to Washington wheat growers, covering nearly 120 million acres, mainly through the agency's three flagship programs:

- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the "fix-it" program. EQIP focuses on 32 resource concerns and includes 131 practices. Because the 2018 Farm Bill keeps getting extended, the program's payment limitation has been reset. Two years ago, NRCS implemented the Act Now program, which works to get contracts in place in as little as 45 days on specific practices identified by local working groups.
- The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) or the "enhance-it" program. CSP only covers eight resource concerns and is used to continue practices implemented under EQIP. Example practices include cover crops and nutrient management. A new interim CSP practice is conservation harvest management, which gives an incentive for leaving high stubble. The practice is based on one in Montana, and Comes At Night said the office is still working on some of the details, such as what is considered "high" stubble, and how will NRCS employees verify it?

"I'm hoping we can help prove that this is a practice we need to adopt nationwide as a permanent practice," she told growers.

- The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) or the "protect-it" program. Washington state trails only California and Montana in the West Region in the number of conservation easements. Washington is one of the few states that has a dedicated, full-time team that does nothing but easements. An easement is a voluntary real estate transaction that restricts development on wetlands or working lands in return for financial incentives for landowners, based on land values. Easements on wetlands run for at least 30 years; they are perpetual on ag working lands and are attached to the land's title, so if the land is sold, the easement goes with it. For working lands, a land trust has to provide 50% of the financial incentive, with NRCS supplying the other 50%.

"There's a lot of complications, but for some people, this fits for them," Comes At Night explained. "Working lands means it (the land) is not being restored. It remains as working land and has to be worked."



## FSA

Werner, who was acting state executive director at the time of the session, encouraged growers to get their reporting done as early as possible, rather than waiting for deadline, as he anticipates staffing issues at county offices. Growers shouldn't expect a register. The next major deadline is April 15, for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs. Growers have to enroll, even if they aren't changing their selection from last year.



The state FSA office has submitted their proposed Conservation Reserve Program rental rates to the national office, but that doesn't mean there will be a sign-up.

FSA is struggling with getting the Internal Revenue Service to process adjusted gross income forms in a timely manner. Werner said growers should submit their forms as early as possible in case of delays.

Werner had no news on the economic and disaster aid that was included in the continuing resolution passed by Congress in December. ■

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# USDA releases ECAP funding details

Prefilled forms will be mailed to producers who have eligible 2024 acreage

Just days before the March 21 deadline, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released details on the \$10 billion Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP), which will provide one-time payments to help producers dealing with increased input costs and falling commodity prices. The program runs from March 19 through Aug. 15, 2025, and applies to the 2024 crop year. Payments are based on acreage not production.

Eligible acreage and payment rates for wheat are \$30.69 per acre. Other crop payments are barley at \$21.67; canola at \$31.83; chickpeas at \$31.45 (small) and \$24.02 (large); and lentils at \$19.30. ECAP payments will be calculated using a flat rate for the eligible commodity multiplied by the eligible reported acres. Initial payments will be factored by 85% to ensure total program payments do not exceed available funding. If additional funds remain, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) may issue a second payment.

To be eligible, producers must:

- Be actively engaged in farming.
- Have an interest in input expenses for a covered commodity.
- Have reported acreage of eligible commodities to the FSA for the 2024 crop year, planted and prevent plant acres, to FSA on an FSA-578, Report of Acreage form.
- Have reported acres that were prevented from being planted to FSA for the 2024 crop year on an FSA-576 Notice of Loss form (if applicable).

Producers who have not previously reported 2024 crop year acreage or filed a notice of loss for prevent plant crops must submit an acreage report by the Aug. 15 deadline.

Acreage that has been reported with both an initial commodity and a double crop commodity will be eligible for payment on both plantings if in an approved double cropping combination. Acreage that has multiple intended uses will only be eligible for payment on one intended use. If multiple producers have an interest, the payment is limited to the applicant that has the interest in input expenses.

Producers will be eligible for payment on both plantings in situations where producers graze small grain acreage

and then still could timely plant a spring commodity with a reasonable expectation to produce a normal yield, therefore making use of both commodities if there is an Risk Management Agency short rate policy in effect for 2024.

In cases where an initial eligible commodity failed or was prevented from being planted and the producer planted a subsequent eligible commodity for the 2024 crop year, eligible acreage will be limited to the initial crop if not in an approved double crop combination. Volunteer acreage, experimental acreage, and acreage with an intended use of green manure or left standing are not eligible for payment under ECAP.

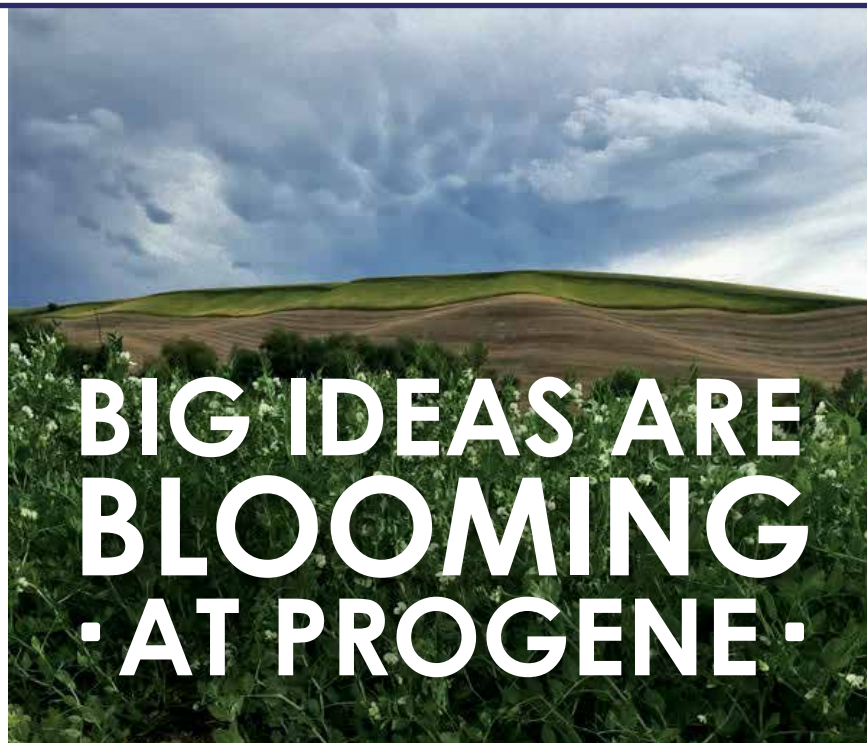
Prefilled ECAP applications will be mailed to producers with a reported eligible commodity. After verifying and completing the form, producers should submit their application to their local FSA county office either in person, electronically, or by fax. Producers who have a login.gov account will be able to access the application online without waiting for their prefilled application to arrive. Applications must be submitted by Aug. 15, 2025.

The total amount of ECAP payments received, directly or indirectly, by a person or legal entity (except a joint venture or general partnership) may not exceed:

- \$125,000, if less than 75% of the average gross income of the person or legal entity for the 2020, 2021, and 2022 tax years is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry activities.
- \$250,000, if not less than 75% of the average gross income of the person or legal entity for the 2020, 2021, and 2022 tax years is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry activities.
- Gross income will be calculated based on the applicable three-year average (2020, 2021, and 2022) of the reported "total income" on IRS forms 1040, 1041, 1065, and 1120, or similar forms.

These payment limitations are separate from the payment limitations that apply to other programs. For more information, contact your local FSA county office or visit [fsa.usda.gov/ecap](https://fsa.usda.gov/ecap). ■





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## Homegrown scientist returns to PNW wheat industry

Cat Salois, Director of Research and Technology, The McGregor Company

By Kevin Gaffney  
*Special to Wheat Life*

It would seem **Cat Salois** was destined to be involved in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat industry. Her father was raised on a farm near Goldendale, and Salois was born in the fertile Willamette Valley in Oregon.

Both of her parents earned degrees from Washington State University (WSU). Before the family moved to North Dakota for her father's employment at North Dakota State University, Salois graduated from Pullman High School in 1999.

"I was interested in crop genetics from a young age, partially due to my father's involvement in the Future Farmers of America," said Salois. "The science of how plants grew and developed was always fascinating to me."

The family spent several years in North Dakota until they moved back to Pullman when her father accepted a faculty position at WSU. Salois' interest in wheat breeding grew stronger during high school and college when she worked on a Pullman area wheat farm. She also had the unique opportunity to meet and work with WSU crop breeder Kim Kidwell on local field trial test plots.

"That time spent working with Kidwell and later with Steve Ulrich only strengthened my strong determination to become a plant breeder," explained Salois. She earned her bachelor's degree in crop genetics at WSU and her master's degree in crop genetics from Montana State University in Bozeman, Mont.

Salois, who is in her 10th year as director of research and technology for The McGregor Company, returned to the Palouse after working in the Midwest for a decade. Her first employment after college was as a soybean plant breeder for Pioneer Seed in Ohio. She was eventually downsized out of her position when the company merged with Dow Agrosciences. That same company has since merged again and become Corteva Agriscience.

"It was interesting, because all my work and studies at WSU had been with wheat. Before accepting the posi-



tion with Pioneer, I had hardly even seen a soybean plant," said Salois. "There was a lot to learn, but it worked out well for me with Pioneer Seed for those 10 years. However, the company had to layoff 1,500 workers, and I was one of them."

Fortunately, she was given a severance package that allowed her some time to contemplate her career path.

"Fate sometimes takes us to places we don't expect on timelines we don't anticipate," she said. "I thought long and hard about my career, and I decided to contact my Pullman High classmate, Ian McGregor, to see if there might be a position available for someone with my skills and experience at The McGregor Company."

"That call turned out to be fateful, as the long-time director of research for The McGregor Company was ready to retire. The position didn't exactly match what I had been doing, but I was up to the challenge and believed I could handle the job. I was able to return to my roots with my family and the wheat industry I grew up in. I guess you could say the rest is history."

Her office is located at the company headquarters in Mockonema, just west of Colfax, Wash. She has three full-time employees working in her research department. The company has its own research farm with 320 acres of cropland near their offices.

"Our mission is to identify and understand problems facing wheat growers here in the PNW and to solve them," said Salois. "It is our duty to understand the impacts of these problems and find solutions that work for our growers. That means we are working with wheat varieties, seed treatments, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, plant fertility, basic agronomy, precision ag, and everything in between."

Salois explained that with over 35 retail locations in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, the company has 2.5 million acres of dryland crops under their retail management.

"I believe this really helps us to have our fingers on the





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### Hard Red Spring Wheat

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pulse of the regional wheat industry and provide optimum services to our growers," she said.

The McGregor Company acquired D & M Chem last year, which added many irrigated growers. That company, based in Moxee, Wash., works with growers producing apples, hops, cherries, blueberries, and other irrigated crops.

D & M has continued operating with their staff of over 30 professionals as part of The McGregor Company. It expands the McGregor territory into the Yakima Valley and includes growers that produce about 70% of the hops grown in the U.S.

Salois explained that The McGregor Company works with all wheat breeders, both public and private. The main objective is to identify the best wheat varieties to help growers be as profitable as possible. With the wide variety of soil types, terrains, and moisture ranges across the expanse of the PNW, what works well in one area may not work at all in other regions.

*"Soft white is a great niche product for our region. It could be argued that we have the highest yields and the best quality white wheat in the world right here in the PNW."*

—Cat Salois  
The McGregor Company

"Our account managers are professional agronomists. They have a clear view of the best ways for our growers to maximize profits," said Salois. "They provide a direct conduit to the growers. We have an effective tool set that allows us to do excellent whole-field agronomy. The next step is to use all the precision ag equipment and technology available to go to the next level for a more site-specific system of crop management."

"Only about 20% of our growers are currently using variable rate fertilizing as part of their operation. While auto-steer and other GPS technology is being widely used, we'd like to see more growers complete the circle by using crop yield data to set up five-zone fertility systems to determine the level of nutrients, herbicides, fungicides, and other inputs. Every farm and even every individual field has enough variables to make this system pay for itself in a short time frame."

With growers in such diverse regions of the PNW stretching from central Washington east into Idaho and



LCS Shine



LCS



LCS Jet

# TOPPING THE CHARTS

## National Wheat Yield Contest Winners

<b>1st Place</b> Winter Wheat (Washington) Garrett Warren <b>LCS Shine/Jefe</b>	<b>1st Place</b> Winter Wheat (Idaho) Clint Zenner <b>LCS Shine</b>	<b>Bin Buster</b> Winter Wheat (Dryland) Steve Van Grunsven <b>LCS Shine</b>	<b>Bin Buster</b> Winter Wheat (Irrigated) Phillip Gross <b>LCS Jet</b>	<b>2nd Place</b> Winter Wheat (Idaho) Harlan Zenner <b>LCS Shine</b>	<b>3rd Place</b> Winter Wheat (Idaho) Mike Stout <b>LCS Shine</b>
--	--	---	--	---	--



south into Oregon, crop varieties and rotations vary widely. The drier regions will often have a winter wheat/summer fallow rotation. Other areas might employ a winter wheat/spring crop/summer fallow rotation.

“Our direct seed growers generally use chemfallow as part of their rotation systems,” said Salois. “We have some growers who have begun using a winter wheat/winter wheat/spring crop rotation. The spring crop is usually canola or camelina. Others are trying out a winter wheat/spring wheat/spring canola/spring pulse crop rotation. When growers are planting consecutive annual wheat crops, we recommend certain precautions to avoid disease and weed problems. This includes rotating herbicides, fungicides, and seed treatments.”

Salois mentioned that including spring canola in rotations has helped many growers to reduce grassy weed problems. Also, employing both soil and foliar applications and using herbicides with different modes of action has been helpful to avoid diseases and weed resistance to herbicides.

In the PNW, soft white wheat is still the king of all wheat classes. Salois doesn’t expect that to change.

“Soft white is a great niche product for our region,” she explained. “It could be argued that we have the highest yields and the best quality white wheat in the world right here in the PNW. We can grow identity-preserved wheat for specific traits or milling qualities incredibly effectively.”

Salois pinpointed being able to help PNW wheat growers solve their problems as the most satisfying part of her work. The toughest choices involve deciding exactly which direction to channel the work of the company’s research team to effectively improve profitability for growers. There is never enough time or staff to find solutions to all the challenges facing wheat farmers.

Salois spends much of her off time with her dogs and her horses. She and her daughter, Lyla, compete regularly in barrel racing competitions, and as often as possible, Salois rides with her mother and daughter, enjoying a remarkable three-generation connection that is priceless to them.

To learn more about The McGregor Company research team or to contact Cat Salois, find them online at [mcgregor.com](http://mcgregor.com) or call (509) 397-4355. ■

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## When industry is united, we get things done

Hello, I am Kevin Klein, your Barley District 7 grain commissioner, as some of you have seen with the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) postcard mailing this winter. I am a fourth-generation dryland wheat farmer in the Edwall area. The majority of what I raise is winter and spring wheat, but I also include barley in my rotation and now some canola as well. I have been very blessed to be married to my wife, Karen, for 27 years. We have been blessed with three young-adult children; the oldest two are now starting their careers in the ag industry, and the youngest is still in college.

I started serving on the commission back in 2018. During the last WGC meeting in Spokane, I found myself as the new chairman of the grain commission board. This is something I have been preparing for over the past four years as I moved through the officer positions. My biggest goal for the coming years is to improve communication with our fellow ag partners, associations, and growers. I say this because when the ag industry is united on issues and we carry our message to Olympia or Washington, D.C., we get positive results. This has been true since I started serving the ag industry, shortly after my return home to start farming back in 1998.

Let me be more specific when I say “ag industry.” This includes wheat, barley, canola, potatoes, apples, fruit, and everything else. And, at the national level, when wheat growers from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho speak as a tri-state effort, it carries a greater voice as well. Farming is becoming more challenging every year. Being able to diversify has been helpful to spread out the workload and find some additional income, depending on the year. With the price of wheat below the cost of production, and the input prices and labor rates on the rise, all of us are trying to survive somehow. Just like crop diversification, when the ag industry is united on communication, it helps to strengthen our voice when addressing challenging issues.

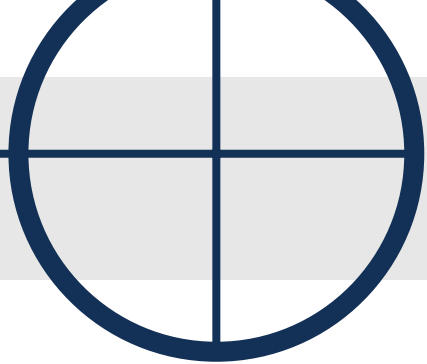
The WGC helps with these issues as well. As commissioners, we attend meetings and participate in grower activities to educate ourselves on the issues here in the state, and also nationally and internationally, to make sure the collective voice of Washington’s wheat and barley producers are represented. The WGC is uniquely positioned to invest in research, marketing, and education efforts that individual farmers couldn’t take on alone.

On the research side, maintaining current programs and job openings within the Washington State University College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences has been quite the challenge recently. The WGC has prioritized efforts to retain key people at the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service’s Western Wheat Quality Lab, recognizing that these experts are critical to maintaining the region’s competitive edge in wheat quality. Ensuring continuity in the Variety Testing Program, the Pacific Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative, and WGC-funded endowed professor positions is another key focus, as these roles directly impact growers’ ability to make informed decisions about seed selection, agronomic practices, and much more.

Talking through the HB4 gene at grower meetings this winter has been our way of finding out if you, as growers, think this is a good path to go down, or if there is a better avenue. Your input has been a vital part to shaping WGC’s direction on this issue, ensuring that future decisions align with what Washington growers truly need. By hearing your feedback now, the commission can prioritize research, education efforts, and market considerations that reflect the realities of farming in our state.

Over the years, I have found that change does not happen quickly, especially in government. It takes time, persistence, communication, and everyone working together with the same goal in mind. There was a time when an individual might be able to get away with just staying home on the farm and “keeping their head down,” but that era of agriculture doesn’t exist anymore. The number of acres in production may be holding steady, but the number of farmers is declining and continues to decline. We need to work together and involve the younger generation. Whether that’s being willing to answer questions about basic agricultural concepts from people who do not have a farming background — the key here being patient with them — or stepping up to serve as a voice for agriculture at the county, state, or national level, we need every grower to be involved.

If you have questions or concerns for the WGC, please send an email and let us know and maybe think about how you would be able to help and get involved. You can reach out to the WGC office at [wgc@wagrain.org](mailto:wgc@wagrain.org), or you can reach me directly at [district7@wagrain.org](mailto:district7@wagrain.org). ■



# REPORTS

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## Washington wheat in a week

School program educates students about ag and Eastern Washington's favorite grain

By Meghan Stewart

*Franklin Conservation District Education Director*

Wheat Week is a series of five lessons delivered over the course of one week educating fourth and fifth grade students about water, soil, energy, systems, and wheat, as well as how they impact our daily lives and the lives of wheat farmers. Each lesson is thoughtfully designed to include hands-on components: students build a wheat terrarium, model the water cycle as a drop of water, explore three particle sizes of soil, extract DNA from wheat germ, thresh a wheat head, and chew the kernels to try to make wheat gum.

Started in 2007, Wheat Week was created by Kara Kaelber, manager of the Franklin Conservation District, and reached 1,381 students with two educators. Each year it has been updated and modified to complement the Next Generation Science Standards,



Riley Gillan, Wheat Week educator, teaching a lesson about soil in Lynden. Photo courtesy of the Franklin Conservation District.

the science content standards that teachers in Washington use for their own science lessons, as well as social studies learning standards. Students learn to think critically as scientists while understanding the mindset and challenges of a wheat farmer. Thanks to the Washington Grain Commission's continued support, Wheat Week has been able to expand and reach more students across Washington state each year. In the 2023-24 school year, Wheat Week reached 20,089 students, thanks to 16 educators that taught the program in 250 schools.

In the fall of 2024, Franklin Conservation District Education Director Meghan Stewart was able to meet with the Dairy Farmers of Washington to share about Wheat



Week, the program's impact, and future potential. The Dairy Farmers saw the value in the program and decided to contribute funds for a new educator to bring Wheat Week back to Whatcom and Skagit counties (when the COVID pandemic swept through in 2020, the program was scaled back to a handful of educators around the state). With an educator back in the Whatcom and Skagit areas, as well as an educator in Kitsap County for the first time, Wheat Week is reaching even more students this year.

"This was a wonderful experience. Like a field trip without the cost of a bus!" Bremerton teacher Katherine Harris said after seeing Wheat Week in the classroom for the first time. "The kids had such a great time and were so engaged in the learning!"

Teachers in Kitsap County had previously only been able to participate in the online "do-it-yourself" version of Wheat Week. Classroom teachers in Whatcom and Skagit counties are thrilled that Wheat Week is back in their area as well.

"Thank you so much for bringing this program back to the classroom in person," said Christine Gish, a Lynden teacher, "We already cannot wait for next year!"

Teachers have also noted the addition of talking about dairy cows, appreciating the connection to agriculture in their area. Incorporating dairy into the daily lessons has been effortless. You might say that wheat and dairy go together like cookies and milk! Students learn that wheat straw can be a nice cozy bed for a dairy cow. The cow manure can become fertilizer for the wheat farmer's soil. Washington farmers working together, using natural resources, and providing food for communities everywhere. Students realize that many of the



Josh Hernandez (right) of CHS SunBasin Growers answers questions from high school students about working in a grain elevator. Photo courtesy of the Franklin Conservation District.

foods they consume every day, could be coming from a Washington farmer.

"It (Wheat Week) is not just about science standards, natural resources, or food, it teaches students about the agricultural system we have in Washington. Many of our students have no idea where their food comes from until they participate in Wheat Week," Shoreline teacher Julie Fredrickson said when talking to Stewart about how much she appreciates the curriculum. "In fourth grade, students learn about Washington state history, but with your lessons, they really get a better understanding of their state now."

While Wheat Week exposes fourth and fifth graders to different facets of Washington state agriculture, the Franklin Conservation District, with the Washington Grain Commission, is committed to helping students of all ages explore the opportunities in their communities. The third annual Tri-Cities STEM Career Academy will take place June 23-26 in Pasco. Twenty-five high school students from the mid-Columbia region will spend four days learning from professionals in the hydropower, agricultural, science, and trades industries.

Along with daily field trips to see STEM careers in action, students participate in hands-on challenges: building and racing a solar car, building and flying a drone, and building and testing a hydropower turbine model. They learn about the different pathways to good-paying careers they might be interested in: internships, apprenticeships, community college, and four-year college. One-on-one conversations with these local professionals really help students reflect on their strengths and make a plan for their own futures.

One field trip is a tour of CHS SunBasin Growers in Kennewick. Students get a tour of the grain elevators, learn about different types of wheat, and see how grains are loaded onto barges. This tour has even led to a summer job for a student each year as well.

The Tri-Cities STEM Career Academy is a Foundation for Water & Energy Education (FWEE) event hosted by local innovators in clean energy, agriculture, and conservation. For more information about the Tri-Cities STEM Career Academy, go to [fwee.org/events/](https://fwee.org/events/). ■

# 2025 quality rankings

## NINE NEW VARIETIES JOIN LIST FOR 2025 AS QUALITY REMAINS HIGH IN PNW

The Washington Grain Commission is pleased to provide the 2025 wheat quality rankings for the Pacific Northwest (PNW). Considering about 80% of PNW wheat production is exported each year, producing a high-quality crop that meets customer demands is critical to maintaining export markets.

The Preferred Wheat Variety Brochure ranks Eastern Washington, Oregon, and Northern Idaho wheat varieties using not just one, but six components to evaluate end-use quality. Washington was the first state in the U.S. to rank varieties for quality, with Oregon and Idaho joining the effort soon after. Wheat growers are encouraged to reference these rankings when deciding between varieties.

End-use quality determinations are based on results from grain, milling, and product quality tests. The most desirable ranking characterizes varieties that have high test weights, appropriate protein content (kernel properties), and excellent milling and end-use properties. Desirable ranked varieties range from good to very good kernel, milling, and end-use qualities. Acceptable varieties have qualities ranging from acceptable to good and may contain potential minor flaws but are acceptable in international trade.

Of the components used in evaluating quality, 10% of the score is assigned to a variety's test weight and protein, while milling attributes receive 30% of the focus. The largest consideration is end-use functionality (baking performance), where 60% of a variety's score is assigned. The scores are reviewed yearly as new data becomes available and are subject to change.

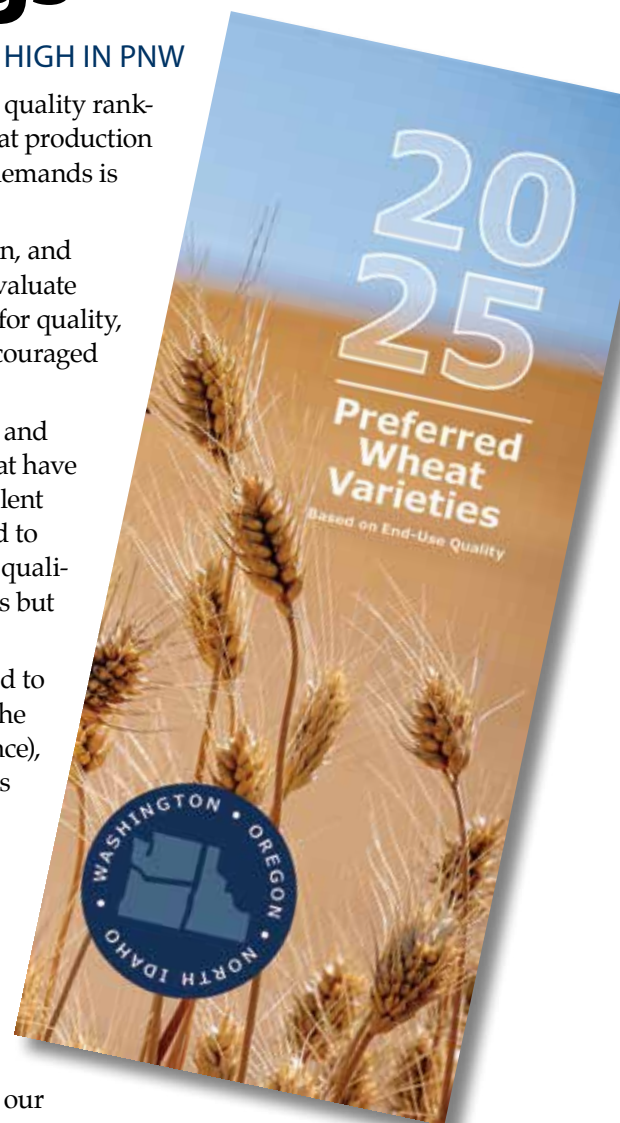
There are nine new entries to the Preferred Wheat Variety Brochure for 2025. The new entries for soft white winter wheat include: Gale and VI Gem, with a rating of Most Desirable; and WB1720, AP Olympia, Rydrych MZ, GS Bounty, and Mallory CL+, with a Desirable rating. There was one new entry for hard red winter wheat: WB4510CLP, rated Acceptable. There was one new soft white spring entry: Bush, rated Most Desirable. Most of the new entries are at the Desirable and Most Desirable levels, so we continue to hold steady with the high-quality varieties in the PNW that our customers expect and appreciate.

These rankings are based on the results of the genotype and environment study (G&E) quality testing conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Western Wheat Quality Laboratory, the Washington State University Wheat Quality Program, the University of Idaho Wheat Quality Laboratory, and the Oregon State University Cereal Quality Laboratory, including relevant breeding nurseries.

The quality scores presented here reflect a minimum of three years' data in the G&E Study, using a reference variety for each class. Therefore, varieties may be in commercial production before they are included in the list. The list is reviewed annually and includes the top varieties currently in production. Varieties not listed have not been tested or have less than three years of data. For complete results, please visit [wwql.wsu.edu](http://wwql.wsu.edu).

All classes have shown dramatic improvements in quality since the G&E study first began gathering data in 1997. The Preferred Wheat Varieties Brochure is provided courtesy of the Washington Grain Commission, the Oregon Wheat Commission, and the Idaho Wheat Commission. ■

*Alecia Kiszonas, U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service research biologist, contributed to this article.*





# 2025 Quality Rankings

Varieties are listed by statistical quality rankings by class. When making a decision between varieties with similar agronomic characteristics and grain yield potential, choose the variety with the higher quality ranking. This will help to increase the overall quality and desirability of Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat.

**Most Desirable (MD)**—These varieties generally have high test weights, appropriate protein content (kernel properties), and excellent milling and end-use properties.

**Desirable (D)**—The kernel, milling, and end-use qualities of these varieties range from good to very good. The quality attributes of these varieties are desirable in international trade.

**Acceptable (A)**—The kernel, milling, and end-use qualities of these varieties range from acceptable to good. Individual varieties may possess minor flaws. The quality attributes of these varieties are acceptable in international trade.

**Least Desirable (LD)**—These varieties have displayed low quality characteristics for this class of wheat. The intrinsic quality of PNW wheat will be improved if these varieties are not planted.

## Hard Red Spring

Jefferson .....	UI .....	MD
Hale .....	WSU .....	MD
SY605 CL .....	AP/SY .....	MD
Net CL+ .....	WSU .....	MD
SY Selway .....	AP/SY .....	MD
Glee .....	WSU .....	MD
SY Coho .....	AP/SY .....	MD
Alum .....	WSU .....	MD
SY Gunsight .....	AP/SY .....	MD
Chet .....	WSU .....	MD
AP Renegade .....	AP/SY .....	D
WB9303 .....	WB .....	D
Kelse .....	WSU .....	D
WB9668 .....	WB .....	D
WB9662 .....	WB .....	LD

## Hard White Spring

UI Platinum .....	UI .....	MD
WB-Hartline .....	WB .....	D
Dayn .....	WSU .....	D

## Hard Red Winter

LCS Missile .....	LCS .....	MD
Guardian .....	PG .....	MD
Scorpio .....	WSU .....	MD
Gemini .....	WSU .....	MD
Sequoia .....	WSU .....	D
WB4311 .....	WB .....	D
SY Touchstone .....	AP/SY .....	D
Keldin .....	WB .....	D
LCS Jet .....	LCS .....	A
WB4510CLP .....	WB .....	A
WB4303 .....	WB .....	A
WB4623CLP .....	WB .....	A
LCS Evina .....	LCS .....	A
LCS Rocket .....	LCS .....	A
WB4394 .....	WB .....	A
LCS Helix AX .....	LCS .....	A
Battle AX .....	Montech .....	A
LCS Blackbird .....	LCS .....	LD

## Hard White Winter

UI Silver .....	UI .....	MD
Millie .....	OSU .....	MD
Irv .....	OSU .....	MD
Earl .....	WSU .....	A

## Spring Club

Roger .....	WSU .....	MD
Melba .....	WSU .....	MD
JD .....	WSU .....	MD
Hedge CL+ .....	WSU .....	MD

## Winter Club

Cameo .....	ARS .....	MD
Castella .....	ARS .....	MD
ARS Crescent .....	ARS .....	MD
Cara .....	ARS .....	MD
Pritchett .....	ARS .....	D
Bruehl .....	WSU .....	D

## Soft White Spring

Tekoa .....	WSU .....	MD
Bush .....	WSU .....	MD
Diva .....	WSU .....	MD
WB6341 .....	WB .....	MD
Butch CL+ .....	WSU .....	MD
Louise .....	WSU .....	MD
UI Cookie .....	UI .....	MD
Alturas .....	UI .....	MD
AP Mondovi CL2 .....	AP/SY .....	MD
Ryan .....	WSU .....	MD
Seahawk .....	WSU .....	MD
WB6121 .....	WB .....	D
TMC Lochaven .....	TMC .....	D
WB6211CLP .....	WB .....	A

## Soft White Winter

Sockeye CL+ .....	WSU .....	MD
Bobtail .....	OSU .....	MD
LCS Shine .....	LCS .....	MD
UI Vixen .....	UI .....	MD
Nova AX .....	WSU .....	MD
Nixon .....	OSU .....	MD
Nimbus .....	OSU .....	MD
Gale .....	OSU .....	MD
WB1621 .....	WB .....	MD
VI Gem .....	LCS/UI .....	MD
AP Exceed .....	AP/SY .....	MD
Jameson .....	WSU .....	MD
LCS Jefe .....	LCS .....	D
Piranha CL+ .....	WSU .....	D
WB1720 .....	WB .....	D
VI Encore CL+ .....	LCS/UI .....	D
AP Olympia .....	AP/SY .....	D
Rydrych MZ .....	WSU .....	D
OR2x2 CLP .....	OSU .....	D
VI Presto CL+ .....	LCS/UI .....	D
TMC M-Pire .....	TMC .....	D
SY Ovation .....	AP/SY .....	D
UI Magic CL+ .....	UI .....	D
Appleby CL+ .....	OSU .....	D
Stingray CL+ .....	WSU .....	D
VI Voodoo CL+ .....	LCS/UI .....	D
WB1922 .....	WB .....	D
SY Assure .....	AP/SY .....	D
GS Bounty .....	GS .....	D
LCS Blackjack .....	LCS .....	D
Norwest Duet .....	OSU/LCS .....	D
TMC M-Press .....	TMC .....	D
Mallory CL+ .....	OSU .....	D
YSC-93 .....	YSC .....	D
Rollie .....	WSU .....	D
Inspire .....	WSU .....	D
Stephens .....	OSU .....	D
LCS Hulk .....	LCS .....	A
SY Dayton .....	AP/SY .....	A
AP Iliad .....	AP/SY .....	A
LCS Artdeco .....	LCS .....	A
Norwest Tandem .....	OSU/LCS .....	A
Curiosity CL+ .....	WSU .....	A
LCS Kamiak .....	LCS .....	A
Rosalyn .....	OSU .....	A

## Abbreviations

**AP/SY:** AgriPro/Syngenta  
**ARS:** Agricultural Research Service  
**GS:** GeneShifters  
**LCS:** Limagrain Cereal Seeds  
**Montech:** Montech Seed Group  
**OSU:** Oregon State University  
**PG:** PlainsGold  
**TMC:** The McGregor Company  
**UI:** University of Idaho  
**WB:** WestBred/Bayer Crop Sciences  
**WSU:** Washington State University  
**YSC:** Yield Star Cereals

\* Hard white wheats are scored for export quality requirements such as bread quality and potential noodle quality. \*\* Analysis parameters for dough mixing strength have been modified to better reflect suitability in commercial bakeries. Quality designations of the strongest and weakest mixing lines have changed because of this.

# Control of stripe rust in wheat, barley

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In the 2024 crop season, stripe rust started early and developed into a severe epidemic level in the Pacific Northwest. As early as Nov. 14, 2023, stripe rust was observed in a winter wheat field in Lincoln County, Wash. Due to the relatively mild winter of 2023-24, the fungal pathogen survived the winter and started developing very early in the spring. Active stripe rust appeared in that same field, another field in Adams County, and our experimental field in Walla Walla in late February of 2024. The widespread application of fungicides at the herbicide application timing largely kept the rust under control, except for a few fields that needed a late application of fungicides.

In our experimental fields around Pullman, Central Ferry, Walla Walla, Lind, and Mount Vernon, natural infection of stripe rust developed to epidemic levels (Figure 1). This allowed us to obtain reliable stripe rust data in the germplasm screening nurseries for supporting breeding programs to develop stripe rust resistant varieties and in other nurseries for assessing yield losses of commercially grown varieties and yield benefits of various fungicide treatments.

In 2024, we evaluated over 50 nurseries each consisting of 30 to over 1,000 wheat or barley entries. All nurseries were planted at the Palouse Conservation Field Station (for wheat) or the Plant Pathology Farm (for barley) near Pullman, Central Ferry, and Mount Vernon, and the variety trials and regional nurseries were also planted at the Spillman Farm near Pullman, Lind,



**FIGURE 1.** Stripe rust developed to a severe level in an experimental field near Pullman, Wash., in the 2024 crop season, which allowed collecting reliable data of wheat germplasm for stripe rust response to support breeding programs for developing new resistant varieties.

and Walla Walla. In addition to the field tests, the variety trials and regional nurseries were tested in the greenhouse at both seedling stage under a low-temperature profile (39-68 F) and adult-plant stage under a high-temperature profile (50-86 F) with multiple races of the stripe rust pathogen to determine whether the entries have all-stage resistance (ASR) and/or high-temperature adult-plant (HTAP) resistance, the spectra of ASR, and levels of HTAP resistance. Table 1 summarizes the stripe rust ratings based on the field data and the levels of HTAP resistance based on the greenhouse tests of the Washington State University Wheat Variety Trials.

In general, varieties with ratings of 1 (most resistant) to 4, or in the categories of resistant (R) to moderately resistant (MR), should be selected to plant, while those with the ratings 5 to 9 (most susceptible), or in the categories of moderate susceptible (MS) to susceptible (S), should be avoided if possible. This data is also available for download from our stripe rust website at [striperust.wsu.edu/nursery-data/2024-nursery-data/](http://striperust.wsu.edu/nursery-data/2024-nursery-data/). Please find the file name of "24102\_WEDN" for the Winter Wheat Variety Trial and the file name of "24202\_SEDN" for the Spring Wheat Variety Trials on the 2024 nursery data page.

To determine yield losses for individual wheat varieties, 23 winter wheat and 23 spring wheat varieties were selected based on their planted acreages in the previous years. The selected varieties cover 72.2% of 2023 and 60.4% of 2024 winter wheat acreages, and 96.3% of 2023 and 94.2% of 2024 spring wheat acreages in Washington state. The winter wheat varieties, together with the stripe rust susceptible (S) check PS279, were seeded on Oct. 30, 2023, in an experimental field at the Palouse Conservation Field Station, and the spring wheat varieties, with the S check AvS, were seeded on May 1, 2024, in an experimental field at the Spillman Farm. The 24 varieties in each experiment were arranged in a randomized complete plot design with a split-block



**Table 1. Stripe rust responses of wheat varieties/breeding lines of the WSU Winter and Spring Wheat Variety Trials in 2024**

Variety or breeding line	Stripe rust response <sup>a</sup>		
	Category	Rating	HTAP resistance
<b>CLOAX Winter</b>			
Appleby CL+	R	3	Moderate
Curiosity CL+	MS	6	Low
LCS Dagger AX	S	9	Low
LCS Hydra AX	MR	4	High
LCS Kraken AX	MR	5	Low
LCS Reaper AX	R	3	High
LCS Scorpion AX	R	1	High
LWWA22-D33 (AX)	R	1	Moderate
LWWA22-H22 (AX)	S	8	Moderate
LWWC21-0119 (CL+)	R	1	High
LWWC21-0317 (CL+)	R	1	Moderate
LWWC21-0331 (CL+)	MR	5	Moderate
LWWC21-0494 (CL+)	R	1	High
LWWC21-5070 (CL+)	R	1	Moderate
OR2190025 CL+	R	1	High
Piranha CL+	MR	5	Moderate
Resilience CL+	R	1	High
Sockeye CL+	R	1	Moderate
Stingray CL+	R	1	Moderate
UIL 17-7706 (CL+)	R	1	High
VI Presto CL+	R	1	High
VI Voodoo CL+	MS	6	Moderate
WA8345AX	MS	6	Moderate
WA8346AX	MR	4	Moderate
WA8420AX	MR	4	Moderate
WA8421 CL+	R	1	High
WA8427 CL+	R	1	High
<b>Hard Red Winter</b>			
Allegiant 3412	R	2	Moderate
Canvas	MR	4	Moderate
Gemini	MR	4	Low
GSH22-3	MR	4	Low
GSHR5	MR	5	Low
HSG 108	MR	4	Moderate
HSG 124	R	1	Moderate
Kairos	MR	4	Low
Keldin	MS	6	Moderate
Kivari AX	S	9	Low
LCS Blackbird	MR	5	Low
LCS Eclipse AX	MR	4	Low
LCS Helix AX	MR	5	Moderate
LCS Jet	MS	7	Low
LCS Missile	R	2	Low
LWH20-0490	MR	4	Low
LWH20-4802	R	2	Moderate
LWH21-0760	R	1	Low
LWH21-5281	R	1	High
OR2190064R	R	1	Moderate
OR2190160R	R	1	High
OR2190165R	R	2	Moderate
Scorpio	MS	6	Low
Sequoia	MR	4	Low
WA8368	MS	6	Low
WA8399	R	2	Moderate
WA8401	R	2	Moderate
WA8403	R	1	High
WA8422	R	2	Moderate
WA8423	R	1	High
WA8424	R	1	High
WA8425	MR	4	high
WB4303	S	9	Low
WB4311	R	2	Moderate
WB4394	S	8	Low
WB4510CLP	R	1	High
<b>Soft White Winter</b>			
Whistler	S	9	Low
XF4303	S	8	Low
<b>Soft White Spring</b>			
AP Exceed	R	1	High
AP Iliad	R	1	High
AP Olympia	R	1	Moderate
ARS Crescent	MS	6	Moderate
ARS Selbu 2.0	R	1	High
ARS14DH1011-19CBW	R	1	High
ARS15X1496-7-2CBW	R	1	High
ARS16X0127-3-4CAW	R	1	Moderate
ARS16X0161-10-4CAW	R	1	Moderate
ARS16X022-2-3CBW	R	1	High
Cameo	R	1	Moderate
Castella	R	1	Moderate
CPX66251	S	9	Low
Devote	MS	7	Moderate
GS Bounty	MR	5	Low
GSW22-21	MS	7	Low
GSW22-40	MR	4	Low
Inspire	R	1	Moderate
Jameson	R	1	High
LCS Ardeco	R	3	Moderate
LCS Blackjack	R	2	High
LCS Hulk	R	2	High
LCS Jefe	R	1	High
LCS Kamiak	R	1	High
LCS Shine	R	1	High
LWW19-5862	R	1	Moderate
LWW20-2383	R	1	Moderate
LWW20-2867	R	1	Moderate
LWW21-1023	MR	4	Moderate
LWW21-1436	R	1	Moderate
LWW21-1554	R	3	Moderate
LWW21-1834	R	1	High
LWW21-5381	R	1	High
Nimbus	R	1	High
Norwest Duet	R	1	High
Norwest Tandem	R	1	High
OR2170559	R	1	High
OR5180071	R	2	High
OR5180072	R	1	High
Otto	MR	4	Moderate
Pritchett	R	1	Moderate
Purl	MR	5	Moderate
Rollie	R	1	High
SY Assure	R	1	High
SY Dayton	R	1	Moderate
TMC M-Pire	MS	6	Moderate
TMC M-Press	R	1	Moderate
UIL 13-046145A	R	1	Low
UIL 14-211120A	R	1	Moderate
UIL 15-028024A	MR	5	Moderate
UIL 16-007057A	R	2	High
UIL 17-550099A	R	1	High
UIL 17-995133B	R	1	Moderate
WA8364	R	3	Moderate
WA8394	R	2	High
WA8397	MR	4	Moderate
WA8404	R	1	Moderate
WA8405	R	1	Moderate
WA8416	MR	4	Moderate
WA8417	MR	4	High
WA8418	R	1	High
WA8419	MR	5	Moderate
<b>Hard Red Spring</b>			
Allegiant 6633	S	9	No
Allegiant 6765	R	1	Unknown
Alum	R	2	Moderate
AP Venom	R	1	Moderate
BZ920-136	R	1	Unknown
BZTR20-115	MS	7	Low
BZTR20-173	R	2	Moderate
Chet	MR	4	Low
CP3099A	R	2	High
CP3322	R	3	Moderate
CP3915	MS	6	Low
Dayn	R	1	High
Hale	R	1	Unknown
IDO2105S	MR	4	Low
IDO2202CL2	R	2	High
Jefferson	MR	4	Moderate
Kelse	MS	6	Low
LCS Hammer AX	MR	5	Moderate
MT Carlson	S	8	Low
MT Dutton	S	9	Low
MT2030	S	9	Low
Net CL+	MR	4	Moderate
ORS226518	MR	4	Moderate
ORS227913	MR	5	Moderate
WA8393	R	1	High
WA8406	MR	3	High
WA8407	MR	4	Moderate
WA8431	MR	4	Low
WA8436 CL+	MR	3	Moderate
WA8437 CL+	MR	4	Moderate
WB9623	R	1	High
WB9636	R	1	High
WB9662	R	1	Unknown
WB9668	MR	4	High
<b>Soft White Spring</b>			
Butch CL+	R	1	Unknown
BZTW20-303	MR	3	Moderate
BZTW20-343	MR	4	Moderate
BZTW20-345	MR	5	Low
Hedge CL+	R	1	High
IDO1902S	R	2	Low
Louise	MR	5	Moderate
Melba	R	1	High
Roger	R	2	High
Ryan	MR	4	High
Seahawk	R	1	High <sup>†</sup>
Tekoa	MR	4	Moderate
TMC Lochaven	MR	4	Unknown
UI Cookie	R	2	High
WA8327	MR	4	High
WA8351	MR	4	Moderate
WA8380 CL+	MR	4	High
WA8384	R	1	High
WA8408	MR	4	High
WA8433	MR	3	High
WA8434	MR	4	Moderate
WA8435 CL+	R	1	High
WB6211CLP	MR	4	Moderate

<sup>a</sup>For the category of stripe rust response, R = resistant, MR = moderately resistant, MS = moderately susceptible, and S = susceptible. For the stripe rust rating, 1 = most resistant and 9 = most susceptible. HTAP resistance determined based on the greenhouse tests, "Unknown" is denoted for the variety/ line that was resistant to all tested races of the stripe rust pathogen, and as such HTAP resistance cannot be determined

constraint, based on fungicide application, with four replications. Both fields were under natural infection of the stripe rust pathogen, and fungicide Quilt Xcel was applied at the rate of 14 fluid ounces per acre, mixed with 2.25% volume per volume M-90 (nonionic surfactant) in the sprayed plots twice with the first application at the early jointing stage (Feekes 5) and second application at the boot stage (Feekes 10). Application days were May 15 and May 30 for the winter wheat field and June 13 and June 28 for the spring wheat field. In the winter wheat field, stripe rust was 1-5% severity in the S check plots at the first fungicide application and developed to 25-40% severity in the nonsprayed check plots at the second application. In the spring wheat field, stripe rust was absent at the first fungicide application and reached 10-20% severity at the second application in the nonsprayed check plots. Stripe rust severity was scored for each plot four times from Feekes 5 to the soft-dough stage (Feekes 11).

The winter wheat plots were harvested on Aug. 2 and the spring wheat plot on Aug. 20. Grain yield and test weight were measured for each plot. The relative area under the disease progress curve (rAUDPC) was calculated for each plot based on the four sets of severity data, as a measurement of over-the-season stripe rust level. The rAUDPC, test weight, and yield were compared between nonsprayed and spray treatments for each variety, and their average values are presented in Table 2. The differences in these values between the treatments indicate the stripe rust damage and fungicide effect for each variety.

For example, the fungicide application reduced stripe rust rAUDPC by 90.4%, increased grain test weight by 5.2 pounds per bushel, and increased yield by 61.2 (127.8%) bushels per acre for the winter wheat S check. Similarly, stripe rust reduced test weight by 5.1 pounds per bushel and decreased yield by 52.6 (40.4%) bushel per acre for UI Magic. In contrast, many commercial winter wheat varieties (including SY Dayton, LCS Hulk, Resilience Cl+, M-Press, and SY Assure) did not have significant yield losses. The average yield loss of the commercial winter wheat varieties was 7.5%. The stripe rust damage was relatively low on spring wheat compared to that of winter wheat. The spring wheat S check had 29.6% yield loss, and the average yield loss of commercial spring wheat varieties was 4.5%. The results can be used to select stripe rust resistant varieties to grow and for making decisions for fungicides for individual varieties under different stripe rust levels.

During the 2024 crop season, we also tested the efficacies of 15 treatments involving four fungicides (Quadris, Tilt, Quilt Xcel, and Trivapro) on control of stripe rust. These experiments were in a similar way to the above yield loss experiments but with only the S check varieties

to compare among the various fungicide treatments. In the winter wheat experiments, all treatments significantly reduced the over-the-season stripe rust level and increased the grain yield. The nontreated winter wheat check PS279 had grain yield of 49.8 bushel per acre, while the yields of fungicide treatments ranged from 61.8 (Quadris at 6.0 fl oz/acre applied at Feekes 5) to 104.4 bushels per acre (Tilt 4.0 at Feekes 5 followed by Trivapro 13.7 at Feekes 10). The fungicide treatments increased yield by 24-110% compared to the nontreated check. All treatments of two applications at Feekes 5 and Feekes 10 provided better control than the treatments of only the early and only the late application. The exception to this was the treatment of Trivapro at 9.4 fl oz/acre applied only at Feekes 5 was better than the treatment of Quadris at 6 fl oz/acre applied at both Feekes 5 and 10. Among the sole treatments at Feekes 5, Trivapro was better than the other fungicides. Among the sole treatments at Feekes 10, Quilt Xcel at 14 fl oz/acre was the best. Among the treatments at both Feekes 5 and 10, the treatment of Tilt (4 fl oz/acre at Feekes 5) followed by Trivapro (13.7 fl oz/acre at Feekes 10) produced the highest grain yield, and the next two best treatments were that of Trivapro (4 fl oz/acre at Feekes 5) followed by Trivapro (13.7 fl oz/acre at Feekes 10), and the combination of Tilt (4) and Quadris (6) applied at both Feekes 5 and 10. For detailed data go to the stripe rust website at [striperust.wsu.edu/disease-management/fungicide-data/](http://striperust.wsu.edu/disease-management/fungicide-data/).

For the 2024-25 crop season, we have checked winter wheat fields in the early-planted areas in Washington. On Nov. 5, we found stripe rust in a field in Lincoln County. However, the rust fungus might not survive the winter as we did not find stripe rust in the same fields and in all other checked fields on March 4. In January, we predicted stripe rust to cause 41% yield loss on highly susceptible winter wheat varieties in 2025 based on the weather conditions in November and December of 2024. In March, the prediction dropped to 18% due to the cold period that occurred in February. According to this prediction, commercially grown varieties will likely have 0 to 13% yield losses, or 2.4% yield loss on average without fungicide application. Thus, fungicide application is generally not necessary in the early spring. However, growers still need to check their winter wheat fields. Once stripe rust is found, the fields should be sprayed with fungicides. For spring crops, stripe rust resistant or moderately resistant varieties should be planted. We will continue conducting field surveys and providing updates for managing stripe rust throughout the crop season. If you have any questions for stripe rust management, please contact me through email at [xianming.chen@usda.gov](mailto:xianming.chen@usda.gov) or [xianming@wsu.edu](mailto:xianming@wsu.edu) or by phone (office: 509-335-8086; cell: 509-432-5852). ■



**Table 2.** Differences in relative stripe rust value, grain test weight, and yield between nonsprayed and fungicide-sprayed plots of wheat varieties in 2024

Variety	Stripe rust rAUDPC (%) <sup>a</sup>			Test weight (Lb/Bu)			Yield (Bu/A)			Yield change (%)	
	No spray	Spray <sup>b</sup>	Difference	No spray	Spray <sup>b</sup>	Difference	No spray	Spray <sup>b</sup>	Difference	Loss by rust	Increase by spray
<b>Winter wheat</b>											
PS279 (S check)	100.0	9.6	90.4 *	52.4	57.6	5.2 *	47.9	109.0	61.2 *	56.1	127.8
UI Magic	36.9	3.9	33.0 *	54.5	59.6	5.1 *	77.6	130.2	52.6 *	40.4	67.8
Curiosity CL+	21.1	6.7	14.4 *	52.5	52.4	-0.2	112.4	138.4	26.1 *	18.8	23.2
LCS Jet	19.2	5.1	14.1 *	58.7	60.0	1.3	114.0	139.2	25.1 *	18.1	22.0
Otto	12.3	4.5	7.8 *	53.6	52.9	-0.6	119.7	144.2	24.5 *	17.0	20.4
Keldin	17.0	4.0	13.0 *	60.3	61.2	0.9	103.9	119.1	15.2	12.8	14.7
Mela CL+	15.7	6.9	8.8 *	56.1	57.4	1.3	118.7	134.8	16.0	11.9	13.5
LCS Helix AX	20.9	6.2	14.7 *	61.8	62.7	0.9	105.1	117.7	12.6	10.7	11.9
Northwest Duet	3.4	3.2	0.2	57.8	58.2	0.5	145.0	159.0	14.0	8.8	9.7
ARS-Crescent	13.8	2.8	11.0 *	55.8	55.9	0.1	116.1	125.2	9.1	7.3	7.8
Stingray CL+	6.8	6.3	0.5	54.9	55.1	0.2	112.8	121.0	8.1	6.7	7.2
LCS Shine	1.7	1.6	0.1	59.3	60.0	0.7	138.1	147.9	9.8	6.6	7.1
Castella	14.2	4.5	9.7 *	58.1	59.1	1.0	116.7	121.9	5.1	4.2	4.4
Northwest Tandem	2.3	2.8	-0.6	58.4	58.6	0.1	133.8	138.5	4.8	3.4	3.6
AP Iliad	2.4	2.2	0.3	60.1	59.9	-0.3	137.6	141.5	3.9	2.8	2.8
Pritchett	5.5	2.0	3.5	56.2	56.8	0.7	141.6	145.4	3.8	2.6	2.7
LCS Blackjack	3.7	3.4	0.3	55.3	56.4	1.1	142.0	145.0	3.1	2.1	2.1
LCS Artdeco	8.5	3.8	4.7	56.3	57.2	1.0	126.4	129.1	2.7	2.1	2.1
Piranha CL+	2.2	1.5	0.7	56.3	57.3	1.0	135.8	137.3	1.5	1.1	1.1
SY Assure	2.4	2.3	0.2	61.5	61.5	0.0	130.8	131.5	0.6	0.5	0.5
M-Press	4.5	4.3	0.3	58.6	58.7	0.1	131.6	131.2	-0.4	-0.3	-0.3
Resilience CL+	6.1	6.1	0.0	57.9	58.4	0.5	131.6	130.2	-1.4	-1.1	-1.1
LCS Hulk	8.3	9.8	-1.5	58.8	59.8	1.0	137.1	135.6	-1.5	-1.1	-1.1
SY Dayton	5.1	4.0	1.1	58.0	57.5	-0.6	125.4	122.4	-2.9	-2.4	-2.4
Average <sup>d</sup>	10.2	4.3	5.9 *	57.4	58.1	0.7	124.1	134.2	10.1	7.5	8.1
LSD (P = 0.05)			4.8			2.7			25.0		
<b>Spring wheat</b>											
AvS (S check)	100.0	6.5	93.5 *	59.4	62.5	3.1 *	47.9	68.0	20.1 *	29.6	42.0
UI Stone	48.3	7.5	40.7 *	59.1	61.0	1.9 *	66.9	85.9	19.0 *	22.1	28.5
Kelse	62.0	8.5	53.5 *	58.9	60.1	1.2	59.6	70.1	10.5	14.9	17.6
Net CL+	33.9	8.2	25.7 *	61.1	61.6	0.5	60.5	68.7	8.2	11.9	13.6
Espresso	9.5	9.1	0.3	59.8	60.6	0.8	56.2	63.6	7.5	11.7	13.3
Roger	28.0	6.0	22.0 *	61.1	61.5	0.4	64.8	71.9	7.1	9.9	11.0
UI Cookie	31.8	4.5	27.3 *	58.3	59.2	0.9	76.1	84.3	8.1	9.7	10.7
Alum	20.0	6.6	13.3 *	59.9	60.3	0.4	63.4	69.4	6.0	8.6	9.5
WB9668	5.0	8.0	-3.0	60.3	60.6	0.3	53.4	58.1	4.7	8.1	8.9
Chet	19.2	5.9	13.3 *	61.7	61.4	-0.2	66.2	70.8	4.6	6.5	7.0
Buck Pronto	41.1	8.2	32.9 *	59.1	61.1	2.0 *	68.0	72.1	4.1	5.7	6.0
Melba	8.7	5.9	2.8	59.9	59.6	-0.3	65.9	69.0	3.1	4.4	4.7
Louise	17.0	9.6	7.4 *	57.3	57.6	0.2	62.7	65.4	2.7	4.2	4.4
WA 8351	8.4	7.0	1.4	61.5	61.6	0.1	71.7	73.7	2.0	2.8	2.8
AP Mondovi CL2	11.6	7.6	4.0	59.0	58.8	-0.2	71.0	72.5	1.5	2.1	2.1
Ryan	25.3	6.4	18.9 *	58.7	59.5	0.8	88.4	89.9	1.5	1.7	1.7
Seahawk	4.1	4.8	-0.7	59.6	58.8	-0.8	73.6	73.7	0.1	0.2	0.2
Hale	4.5	8.5	-4.0	61.1	61.3	0.2	69.9	68.7	-1.2	-1.8	-1.8
Hedge CL+	8.6	7.5	1.1	60.6	60.5	-0.1	71.7	70.3	-1.4	-1.9	-1.9
AP Venom	9.8	4.9	4.9	59.8	58.0	-1.8	68.7	66.7	-2.0	-2.9	-2.9
Glee	35.7	8.9	26.8 *	59.7	60.3	0.6	69.0	66.5	-2.5	-3.8	-3.6
Tekoa	7.7	8.6	-1.0	60.8	60.8	0.0	79.5	75.5	-3.9	-5.2	-5.0
JD	6.8	8.0	-1.2	59.7	59.1	-0.5	63.2	59.9	-3.3	-5.5	-5.2
WB9662	9.6	8.8	0.8	60.0	59.9	-0.2	60.9	57.7	-3.2	-5.5	-5.3
Average <sup>d</sup>	19.8	7.3	12.5 *	59.9	60.1	0.3	67.5	70.6	3.2	4.5	4.7
LSD (P = 0.05)			5.7			1.9			10.9		

<sup>a</sup>rAUDPC = relative area under the disease progress curve, calculated using the four sets of severity data as an indication of the over the season stripe rust level.<sup>b</sup>For winter wheat, Quilt Xcel at 14.0 fl oz/A was sprayed first time at early jointing stage (Feekes 5) on May 15 when stripe rust was 1-5% in the field, and second time on May 30 when plants were at boot stage (Feekes 10) and the non-sprayed PS279 plots had 25-40% stripe rust severity. For spring wheat, Quilt Xcel at 14.0 fl oz/A was sprayed first time at early jointing stage (Feekes 5) on June 13 when stripe rust was absent in the field, and second time on June 28 when plants were at boot stage (Feekes 10.1) and the non-first spray AvS plots had 10-20% stripe rust severity.<sup>c</sup>Significant difference between the nonsprayed and fungicide spray plots at  $P \leq 0.05$  are indicated by \*\*.<sup>d</sup>The average was calculated by excluding the susceptible (S) check.

# WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## Wheat expectations reduced for 2024-25



By T. Randall Fortenbery  
Professor and Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair, School of Economic Sciences, Washington State University

Expectations for wheat exports and wheat prices for the 2024-25 marketing year were both reduced in the March World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) now expects U.S. wheat exports to total 835 million bushels for 2024-25, down about 1.8% from the earlier forecast of 850 million bushels. The marketing year average wheat price was lowered from \$5.55 per bushel to \$5.50 per bushel. This is equal to the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) trigger price. With less than two months left in the marketing year, any further price reductions seem unlikely, but if there is an additional reduction in the estimated marketing year's price, it would result in triggering a PLC payment for the 2024 harvested crop. It is important to note that USDA does not consider any potential changes in U.S. policy when it generates its WASDE forecasts, so the reduction in export expectations is not the result of any tariff activity as no tariffs were in effect when the March estimates were generated. The export revision is primarily based on the census export figure through January and projections of a softer export pace through the end of the year.

Figure 1 shows accumulated wheat exports by class for last year's top five U.S. wheat buyers through March 6 this year compared to year ago levels. Note that both hard red winter and white wheat exports are showing year-over-year increases in export volume, while soft red and hard red spring export levels are both trailing last year. In aggregate (and including durum), total U.S. exports were about 17% above year ago levels through the first week of March, with white wheat exports exhibiting the largest year-over-year percentage increase. The white wheat increase is largely explained by purchases

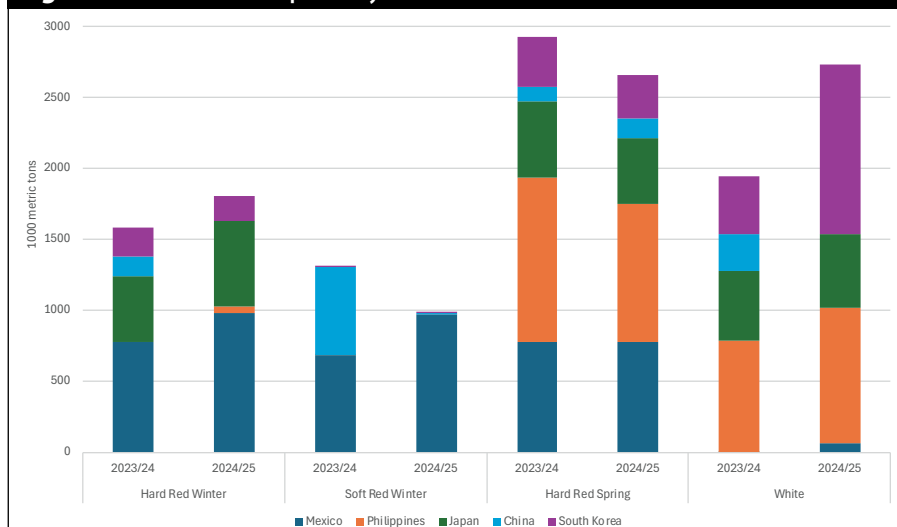
from South Korea. Through early March, they increased purchases of U.S. white wheat by 193% compared to year ago levels. In contrast, China has purchased no U.S. white wheat this year after accounting for almost 9% of all U.S. white wheat exports though the first week of March last year.

Based on the March WASDE estimates, white wheat and soft red wheat are the only two classes that are expected to have lower ending stocks this year compared to last. In total, U.S. wheat stocks on May 31, 2025 (the end of the current marketing year), are projected to reach 819 million bushels, up from the February forecast of 794 million and almost 18% higher than the ending stocks in 2023-24. In contrast, soft red ending stocks are expected to drop 12% this year compared to last, and white wheat stocks are projected to drop 18% year-over-year.

USDA also increased its estimate of world wheat ending stocks for the 2024-25 marketing year in the March WASDE but is still projecting a decline in ending stocks compared to last year. Their current world ending stocks forecast is for 260 million metric tons, compared to their earlier forecast of 258 million metric tons. They estimate world wheat stocks at the end of the 2023-24 marketing year totaled just under 270 million metric tons, with China accounting for just over half of that.

On Feb. 27, USDA released their first crop estimates for the 2025-26 marketing year at their annual Agricultural Outlook Forum. Their current forecast is for U.S. wheat

**Figure 1: U.S. wheat exports by class and destination**



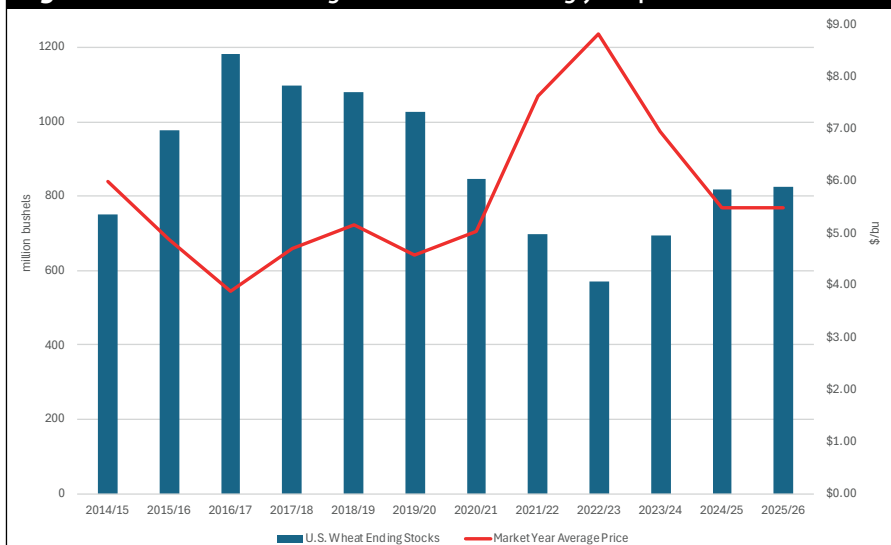
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service



acres to total 47 million compared to 46.1 million last year. In several producer meetings in January and February this year, I had forecast total U.S. wheat acres would be about 45 million even though winter wheat seedings for fall 2024 exceeded year ago levels. They estimate 38.4 million wheat acres will be harvested this summer (slightly below year ago levels) and with trend yields projected for a total U.S. wheat crop of 1.926 billion bushels. In contrast, I had forecast a 1.9-billion-bushel crop for this year — about 1.3% less than USDA's estimate. They projected total wheat exports for 2025-26 would be 850 million bushels and that U.S. ending stocks would once again increase on a year-over-year basis by the end of the 2025-26 marketing year. If realized, this would result in the largest U.S. wheat ending stocks since the 2020-21 marketing year — the last year the market year average price was below the PLC trigger price (Figure 2). USDA's average annual price for 2025-26 is forecast at \$5.50 per bushel, equal to their estimate for the 2024-25 marketing year. We will not get another USDA update in the 2025-26 marketing year until the release of the May 2025 WASDE.

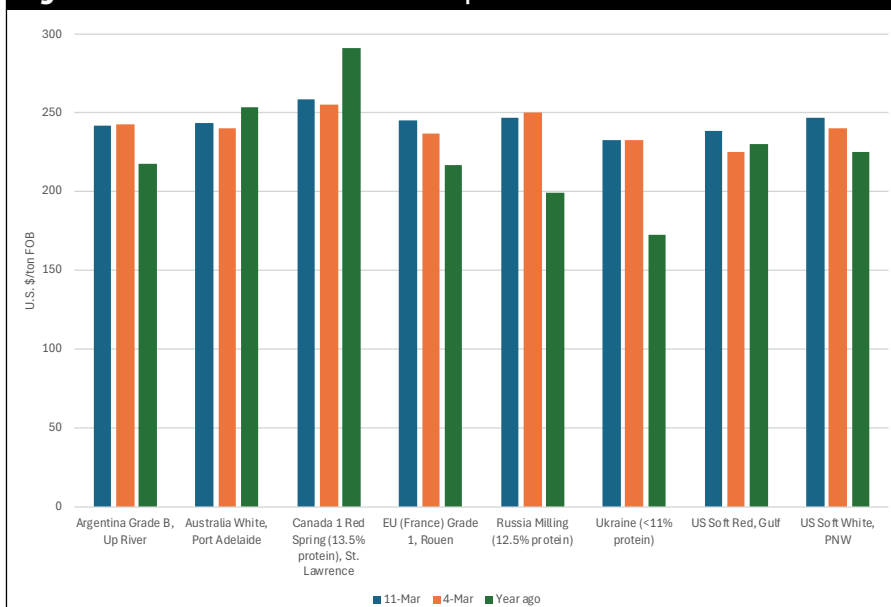
Despite the bearish USDA outlook, data from the International Grains Council (IGC) suggests U.S. wheat is both competitive in the international market and, as of mid-March, priced a bit above year ago levels. Figure 3 shows the IGC reported export prices in U.S. dollars per ton, FOB, for several wheat exporters the first couple of weeks of March this year. For several export competitors (Australia and Canada), prices for exported wheat are lower on a year-over-year basis while U.S. prices are higher. In addition, U.S. prices are still competitive with those of our competitors. The ability of U.S. prices to increase year over year and remain competi-

**Figure 2: U.S. wheat ending stocks vs. marketing year price**



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

**Figure 3: Prices for wheat at various export terminals**



Source: International Grains Council

tive is at least partially due to recent weakness in the U.S. dollar. Year-to-date, the dollar index was down about 4.4% through mid-March. However, the impact of increased tariff activity is less clear regarding both U.S. wheat export movement and domestic wheat prices as we move into the next marketing year. At the time of this writing, the tariff picture was still uncertain, but there was some discussion among U.S. trading partners of boycotts of U.S.-exported goods in general (not specifically wheat) as well as retaliatory tariffs if U.S. tariffs go into effect. The greatest risk for U.S. red wheat producers will be the general impact of trade frictions on trade with Mexico (our largest overall wheat buyer), while white wheat producers will be impacted more by any trade disruptions with the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan. ■

**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.

# 'The Operator's Manual'

By Daniel Moore

He never farmed very large,  
Just enough to raise a family.  
Yet his funeral set records  
At the church in the country.

After purchasing his property,  
I began to make it mine.  
The machinery was all spent,  
But, oh, the land was fine.

It wasn't much of a shop,  
Too little for equipment.  
So few were the tools  
To repair an implement.

Rather simple was the scene,  
It made me sad to ponder:  
How did he farm this way?  
On what did his time wander?

In the corner was an office,  
A bench below a window.  
An old, kitchen bar stool,  
And a clock in the shadow.

I saw a few dusty books  
Highlighted by the sun.  
Three with clean edges,  
The fourth, a dirty one.

Their colors spoke volumes:  
A bright green and yellow,  
Followed by an orange,  
And a red and white below.

These finds were the first  
Turned over by my hands.  
They were operator's manuals  
For three major brands.

The last book was duct-taped,  
A mystery in gray binding.  
Fat from excessive usage,  
Dirty, greasy finger finding.

On what farm tool did it advise?  
What directions in this manual?  
Why referencing for this machine  
Needed views more than usual?

When grabbing for this book,  
I dropped it on the bench.  
Its poor, shop-fixed binding  
Flipped open on a wrench.

It soon became so clear to me  
Why this unpretentious farmer  
Was known and loved by all,  
For it was circled with a marker:

**"Do unto others as you would  
have them do unto you."**

As I stared out the window  
I commenced to consider,  
His land and his neighbors  
Is where his time did wander.

The Manual's wise command  
For me, began to burn.  
My reflection displayed to me  
Time to begin my turn. ■



Painting by Vicki Broeckel, Dusty, Wash.





# THE BOTTOM LINE

## 5 ways to (finally) kick-start your financial plan

By Jordan Thayer  
CFP, Morgan Stanley

For many people, the idea of long-term financial planning may seem like that dentist visit or home repair project you keep putting off — you know you'll have to do it eventually, but actually sitting down and organizing your budget, portfolio, estate, and retirement plans, all while juggling a career, family life, and a never-ending roster of other responsibilities, always seems to fall to the bottom of the list.

Often, the first step towards unwinding anxiety around managing your personal finances is working with a financial advisor who can help you understand where you stand and, more importantly, where you could be. Here are five topics for you to consider and discuss with a financial advisor:

### How do I maximize my retirement savings?

Planning for a long retirement often brings up questions. How can I ensure my nest egg lasts? Am I on track to meet my goals? The first step is checking in on your retirement savings to see if the amount you're saving is on pace to provide financial stability in retirement.

This is where a financial advisor can provide valuable insight. If you're on track, a financial advisor can help you identify ways to improve returns without magnifying risks. If you're off track, your financial advisor can help you determine why.

### Keep your portfolio on track toward your goals

Are you confident that your portfolio is set up to meet your goals? Whether you've been making the investment decisions for your household up until now, or you're wondering how to get started, a financial advisor has access to tools and services that can help ensure your portfolio is keeping you on track toward your long-term financial goals.

Your financial advisor will evaluate the level of potential return needed to achieve your goals, the amount of risk you're willing to take in your invest-

ments, and your time horizon, among other factors, to help ensure you have an appropriate asset allocation (i.e., mix of stocks, bonds, and other types of assets) in your portfolio. They can also help select securities or funds in each of these asset classes.

Also remember that your financial goals and risk tolerance will evolve over time, so your financial advisor will work with you to revisit your portfolio and adjust where necessary.

### Implement tax-smart strategies

Taxes can act as a big drag on your portfolio. But did you know tax-smart investing techniques may potentially add up to 2% to your annual returns? Strategies like tax-loss harvesting, income smoothing, and certain approaches to giving to loved ones and donating to causes you care about may help you keep more of what you potentially earn. However, these strategies can take time and are often highly complex. A financial advisor has access to special tools, resources, and thoughtful leadership on changing tax policies to help you implement such strategies so you don't have to.

### Create an estate plan

It may be difficult to think about what happens after you're gone. Having a well-thought-out estate plan can help alleviate your worries about the future. With the help of a financial advisor, you can take steps to plan how your assets will be distributed to your loved ones and charitable causes after your death so you don't have to navigate the process alone.

By taking these steps with help from your financial advisor and legal counsel, you can help ensure your legacy is preserved according to your wishes, providing a sense of security and certainty for the future.

### Plan for aging parents

Preparing for your parents' future, as well as your own, can be a crucial part of financial planning. This is a significant responsibility that requires careful thought and planning and is often top-of-mind for women. In fact,

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women are more likely to focus on the costs of elder care compared to men (86% vs. 75%) when working with a financial professional, according to Morgan Stanley's 2021 Investor Pulse Poll of High Net Worth Women.

One of the first steps you can take is to sit down with your parents and a financial advisor to discuss their estate plan. This conversation should include discussions about a will, healthcare directives, long-term care, and power of attorney. Having these discussions early on will not only help your parents outline their wishes, it can eliminate

uncertainty around any medical and financial decisions you may need to make on their behalf.

### Working with a Financial Advisor

Working with a professional who specializes in creating and maintaining financial plans may relieve any stress you feel around making the right decisions for you and your family. Whatever your goal — paying for college, buying real estate, planning for retirement, engaging in philanthropy — your financial advisor will work with you to create a tailored plan that aligns with your objectives and provide you with a roadmap to get there. ■

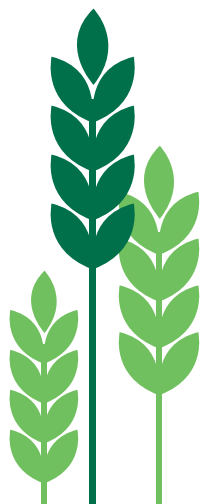
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**Jordan Thayer** is a financial advisor in Seattle, Wash., at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC. He can be reached by email at [jordan.thayer@ms.com](mailto:jordan.thayer@ms.com) or by telephone at (206) 628-4681.

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# Your wheat life...



Melvin Talbott's (7 months) first combine ride with father, Matthew, in Dayton. Photo by Ada Talbott.



Jaycee (2) and Hayes (1), with dad, Trevor Smith, waiting for the combines to come back in to haul to the elevator for Lightning S Inc. north of Odessa. Photo by Paige Smith.



Chris and Andrew Plucker helping out during the last family harvest on the Robert Plucker Farm in Touchet. Photo by Tami and Megan Plucker.

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Please include location  
of picture, names of all  
people appearing in the  
picture and ages of all  
children.





Christopher "Bubba" Wiley and his son, JJ Wiley (5 months) during harvest in Benton County.



Larry Miller, farming for over 70 years near St. John. Photo by Sandy Martin.



Kamryn Schroeder (5) helping out during harvest at Schroeder Family Farms south of Wilbur.  
Photo by Alli Schroeder.



Jeremy Gering has been driving combine since he was 12 years old for Schoesler Farms in Adams County. On this day, he had two helpers, son, Sam (7), and daughter, Ellie (4). Photo by Stephanie Gering.



# HAPPENINGS

All dates and times are subject to change.  
Please verify event before heading out.

## APRIL 2025

### 12-13 EASTERN WASHINGTON AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM'S SPRING FARMING DAYS.

Free family event. Plowing usually begins at 9 a.m. each day. Lunch available for purchase each day 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily. Garfield County Fairgrounds in Pomeroy, Wash. Reserve camping spots at 509-843-3701. ewamuseum2008@gmail.com

### 19 ST. JOHN EASTER EGG HUNT.

St. John City Park in St. John, Wash. stjohnewa.com/events

### 24-27 COMMUNITY FAIR.

St. John, Wash. stjohnewa.com  
**25-26 ODESSA SPRING FLING, QUILT SHOW, CAR SHOW, AND COMMUNITY WIDE YARD SALES.** Quilt show hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Car show begins 9 a.m. Saturday. Yard sales are various hours and include Sunday. Quilt show featured quilter is Robin Long of Robin Ruth Designs, plus over 150 quilts on display along with a Hoffman Challenge grouping, Contemporary Quilt Art Association display and quilting supplies vendors. odessaquiltclub.com

### 24-MAY 4 WASHINGTON STATE APPLE BLOSSOM FESTIVAL.

Parade, carnival, golf tournament, apple pie and

dessert bake-off, live entertainment, auction. Wenatchee, Wash. appleblossom.org

### 30-MAY 3 JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW OF SPOKANE.

Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. juniorshow.org

## MAY 2025

### 3-4 RENAISSANCE FAIR.

Music, entertainment, food, arts and crafts and maypole dances. East City Park, Moscow, Idaho. moscowrenfair.org

### 4 BLOOMSDAY.

Spokane, Wash. bloomssdayrun.org  
**9-11 WINTHROP '49ER DAYS.** Parade, cowboy poetry, dancing, Saturday dinner, Sunday cowboy breakfast. Winthrop, Wash. winthropwashington.com/events/old-west-festival/

### 13 WAWG BOARD MEETING.

Meeting starts at 10 a.m. at Washington Wheat Foundation Building, Ritzville, Wash. (509) 659-0610, wawg.org  
**15-18 SELAH COMMUNITY DAYS.** Carnival, car show, entertainment, vendors. Selah, Wash. selahdays.com

### 16-18 WAITSBURG CELEBRATION DAYS.

Classic car show, cornhole tournament, street dance, vendors, parade, soap box derby, music. Waitsburg, Wash. waitsburgcd.com

### 17 WATERVILLE COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE.

Event runs from 8 a.m. to ap-

proximately 3 p.m. Maps and a list of addresses will be available for pick up on W. Locust Street. The event is sponsored by Waterville Main Street Association. historicwatervillewa.org/

### 22-25 MOSES LAKE SPRING FESTIVAL.

Three on three basketball tournament, car show, parade, carnival, entertainment. McCosh Park in Moses Lake, Wash. springfestivalinmoseslake.com

### 23-25 LAST STAND RODEO.

Cowboy breakfast, fun run, parade, entertainment. Coulee City, Wash. laststandrodeo.com

### 24-25 WINTHROP MEMORIAL DAY RODEO.

1 p.m. at the Winthrop rodeo grounds in Winthrop, Wash.  
**24-26 METHOW VALLEY RODEO.** Saddle bronc, bareback, bulls, barrel racing, team roping and junior events. Held at the rodeo grounds, about halfway between Twisp and Winthrop beginning at 1 p.m. methowvalleyrodeo.com ■

## Submissions

Listings must be received by the 10th of each month for the next month's *Wheat Life*. Email listings to editor@wawg.org. Include date, time and location of event, plus contact info and a short description.

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Rubisco Seeds' Hybrids									
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MERCEDES	5145	4419	4359	3756	3881	5393	MERCEDES	4945	6569
AKILAH						5876	AKILAH	5686	5455
PHOENIX CL	4900	4611	4043	3398	3454	5093	DRIFTER	4856	6795

Data courtesy University of Idaho, Control Mean= Athena, Dwarf Essex, Ericka

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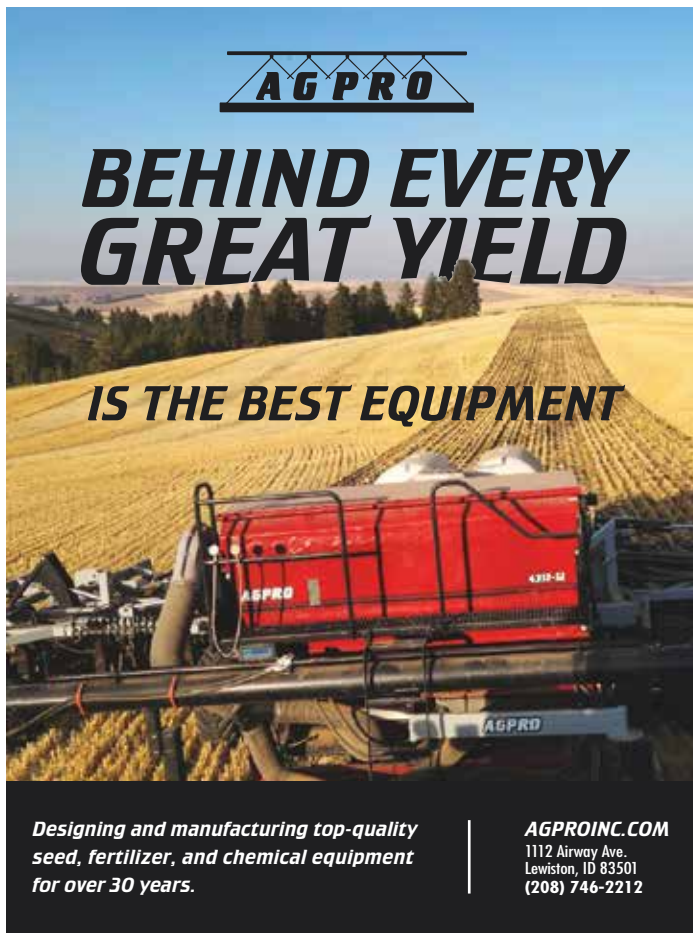
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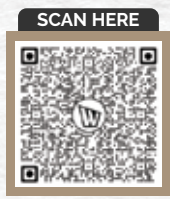
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