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WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

DECEMBER | 2025



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President's Perspective



Why do I farm?

By Gil Crosby

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Over the years, I've lost count of how many times someone has asked me, "Why do you farm?" Is it the long hours, the hard work, the low pay, or maybe the camaraderie of having a beer cooler in the back of every pickup?

For me, the answer is simple. I farm because it makes me feel connected to something older and bigger than myself.

Farming has a way of teaching life lessons you can't learn anywhere else. It pushes you to grow through the daily, weekly, and seasonal frustrations, but it also rewards you with those small victories that make it all worth it. It's not always easy, but it's the life I've chosen, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

I've grown up on a family farm just south of the town of Fairfield, in south-east Spokane County. Other than my time away for college and a short stretch in Europe, the farm has been the constant thread in my life. Over the years, my reasons for farming have changed as much as the landscape itself, shaped by shifting mindsets, evolving practices, and the innovation of new technology. Farming has transformed at a remarkable pace over the last 30-plus years. We've moved from conventional tillage to direct seeding, adopted precision tools and smarter equipment, and faced a steep learning curve every step of the way. Each change has challenged not only how we work, but how we think about sustainability, efficiency, and what it means to be good stewards of the land. Yet, through all that change, some things remain the same: the satisfaction that comes from working the soil, watching the seasons turn, and knowing that this land still has more to teach me.

As president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), I hope to carry on the association's core principles and continue working to ensure the livelihood of Washington's wheat growers and rural communities. During my time in the WAWG chairs, I have truly enjoyed nearly every aspect of what we do, from advocating for our growers in Olympia and Washington, D.C., to collaborating with partners at the Washington Grain Commission and the National Association of Wheat Growers. My involvement with WAWG has provided many memorable experiences, but one of the most memorable was receiving a private, after-hours tour of the House of Representatives from a sitting member of Congress, a moment that reminded me how far-reaching our advocacy efforts can be, and how important our voice is in shaping agricultural policy.

Looking ahead, my goal is to strengthen the connections between our growers, our communities, and the policymakers who influence our industry's future. I believe the success of Washington wheat depends on more than good yields. It depends on strong relationships, shared knowledge, providing people a deeper understanding of our industry, and creating a united voice that represents all who care for this land. As president, I'll work to build on the legacy of those who came before me, embrace innovation where it benefits our farms, and ensure that the next generation has the same opportunities and pride in farming that have shaped my own life. It is a true honor to serve, and together, we will drive agriculture toward a thriving, more sustainable tomorrow. ■

Cover photo: Washington wheat growers gathered in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, to celebrate the state's small grain industry. See coverage beginning on page 22. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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| Convention \$720 (2 individuals) | X | X | X | | X | X |
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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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Although wireworms may be small pests, they can have a big impact on wheat yield.

"I've seen cases of wireworms where we've had from 40-100% crop loss," Aaron Esser, Extension Agronomist from Washington State University Extension, said.

Wireworm populations can grow rapidly if left unchecked, with two adult click beetles capable of producing 1,000 wireworms in just three years. They can also be a persistent threat, year over year. In their larval stage, wireworms can survive in the soil for up to seven years and cut yield potential in half.¹

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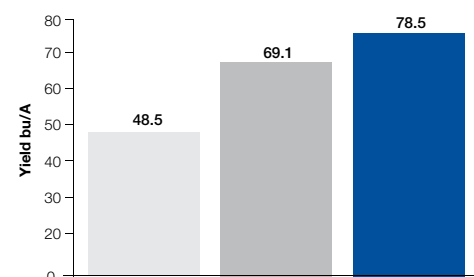
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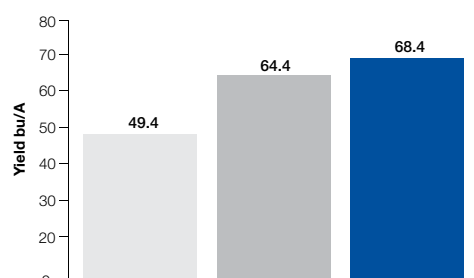
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"We finally get at the heart of this pest and really work at that population in the soil."



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¹Agri-Facts, Alberta Government, 2014

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Annual convention honors growers, industry

In between the breakout sessions, casino night, and silent auction at last month's annual grain growers convention, Washington growers found a few moments to get some work done and honor their fellow farmers.

Anthony Smith from Benton County was named the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) Member of the Year, while Franklin County was named WAWG County of the Year. WAWG President Jeff Malone from Douglas County passed the gavel to incoming President Gil Crosby from Spokane County. Laurie Roecks from Spokane County moved into the vice president's seat, and members welcomed Ryan Poe from Grant County as the next secretary/treasurer.

Members also heard presentations from the 2025-26 Washington Wheat Ambassadors, Isabella Huntley of Colfax and Luke Goetz of Coulee City. Read more about them on page 10.

For more on the convention, see pages 22-28.

"Our annual convention is a wonderful opportunity to chart WAWG's course for the next year with the help of members throughout the state," explained Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG. "Our board went through a strategic planning session to help us set our state and national legislative priorities. We reviewed our resolutions and heard from members about issues they are facing. We also recognized those outstanding members and counties that support the



The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) introduced the 2025-26 leadership team at the 2025 Washington Grain Growers Convention. From left are Ryan Poe from Grant County, secretary/treasurer; Jeff Malone from Douglas County, past president; Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director; Laurie Roecks from Spokane County, vice president; and Gil Crosby from Spokane County, president.

Washington wheat industry. Thank you to everyone who attended our meetings and gave input."

WAWG members help support the association by donating to the Legislative Action Fund (LAF). Members who donated to the LAF were eligible to participate in drawings during the state annual banquet. LAF prizes were donated by counties and individuals.

The main avenue for getting business done at the convention is the all-committee meeting. Members heard from U.S. Department of Agriculture agency leaders and got a preview of the upcoming 2026 Washington State Legislative Session.

Ben Thiel, director of the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) Spokane Regional Office, told growers that crop insurance continued working in the background even though RMA offices were closed during the government shutdown. RMA employees have returned to the office and are getting caught up.

The One Big Beautiful Bill, passed in July, made some improvements to crop insurance by increasing coverage and making it more affordable. It changed the definition of a "beginning farmer or rancher" from five to 10 years of experience. It increased the maximum coverage level for Whole-Farm Revenue Protection from 85% to 90%. Premium support rates for individual-based crop insurance policies (yield and revenue) have increased by 3% to 5%, and the premium subsidy rate for the Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) and Enhanced

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Coverage Option has increased from 65% to 80%. In addition, farmers who have enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage program can now purchase SCO.

New for this year is a Margin Coverage Option that provides spring wheat producers with coverage against an unexpected decrease in their operating margin, with a 86% to 95% band of insurance.

Aubrey Hoxie, area conservationist for Eastern Washington with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), also gave a brief update. See page 26.

Danielle Nelson, director of government affairs for the Torrey Advisory Group (TAG), reviewed the firm's efforts over the last year in regards to the lower Snake River dams. TAG helped organize several river user fly-ins, attended meetings in the White House and with members of Congress, and monitored bills for potential impacts to the dams. Looking forward, Nelson said the Water Resources Development Act, or WRDA, is up for reauthorization in 2026. Any efforts to remove the dams begin with WRDA legislation, so TAG will be watching that closely.

In Olympia, wheat lobbyists Diana Carlen and Mark Streuli previewed the upcoming 2026 state legislative session, which starts on Jan. 12 and will last 60 days. Like last year, the big issue is expected to be the state's budget shortfall, which is estimated to be about \$2 billion. Carlen said growers can expect to see more taxes on the agenda. One of WAWG's main priorities for the upcoming session will be to defend growers' ag tax incentives. Other bills on WAWG's radar could include environmental crimes, a bill to create a wildfire fund, and siting power lines across ag land.

Streuli told wheat growers that other priorities will likely involve food security and distribution and, of course, riparian buffers

WAWG's Olympia Days is scheduled for Jan. 18-20, 2026. All WAWG members are encouraged to participate. For details, call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.

Following the agency and legislative updates, growers reviewed and updated WAWG's resolutions, which help guide the association's advocacy efforts throughout the year. A complete set of WAWG's resolutions can be downloaded from the website at wawg.org/about-us/. ■

Spokane County meeting

More than 20 growers from Spokane County gathered in Spangle last month to hear industry updates.

Casey Chumrau, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), explained some of the changes the commission is making in regards to research. A Research



WAWG members welcomed the 2025-26 Washington Wheat Ambassadors Isabella Huntley from Whitman County and Luke Goetz from Grant County.



WAWG President Gil Crosby (left) congratulates Anthony Smith from Benton County who was named WAWG member of the year for his work and dedication to the state's wheat growers.

Advisory Committee is being formed that will help evaluate and manage research projects supported by the WGC to ensure alignment with the strategic priorities of the Washington grain industry. Members of the 10-person committee will be assigned two to four research projects to follow to completion, providing a line of communication between the researchers and industry.

The WGC has hosted seven trade teams this year, representing the majority of the state's markets. Chumrau and commissioners recently returned from a trip to southeast Asia, where they were able to hear directly from customers. One topic Chumrau heard throughout the trip was concerns around sustainability. She also heard that

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customers are reluctant to accept GMO wheat, so the commission has decided not to invest money for GMO breeding programs. Looking at the market, Chumrau said all U.S. wheat exports are up 22%, but soft white is down 5% compared to last year.

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), said

many growers had received information about pesticide license renewals that was confusing. At renewal time, most growers will need to take a safety quiz, which can be done online, or attend a course; growers won't need to retake the whole exam. WAWG is working with the Washington State Department of Agriculture to get clarity and potentially offer the course. ►

Washington wheat welcomes 2025-26 ambassadors

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers is proud to welcome the 2025-26 Washington Wheat Ambassadors, Isabella Huntley and Luke Goetz. Huntley and Goetz gave presentations at the 2025 Washington Grain Growers Convention and were awarded scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 for Huntley and \$4,500 for Goetz.

Luke Goetz

Goetz is a senior at Almira-Coulee-Hartline High School in Coulee City, Wash., where he plays football and baseball, is active in FBLA and FFA, and is the Associate Student Body president. Outside of school, he is active in his church; Scouting; loves to spend time with his dog, Jacques, and friends; and enjoys following politics and analyzing polls, opinions, and pundits. He said he is most looking forward to visiting legislators in Olympia.



"I'm really excited to talk to legislators, to provide a face for what rural life looks like and how policies affect us," he said. "Being the son of a farmer, I understand the importance of the agriculture industry to life in Eastern Washington."

Goetz is active on his family's farm, which raises wheat and cattle. He has shown pigs in FFA for 10 years. After graduation, Goetz plans to attend Baylor University, double majoring in international business and political science. A few months ago, he wasn't sure if those future career plans would intersect with agriculture, but a day spent shadowing Washington Grain Commission CEO Casey Chumrau as she met a Japanese trade team might have given him some ideas. Besides learning more about international trade and business, he also got a look at how important club wheat is to the Japanese market.

"I learned how our product is very niche and specific to the needs of Japan. They were very specific on what kind of wheat style they want for sponge cakes and

crackers. I didn't know how specific our wheat was in meeting some of the cultural needs of Japan," Goetz explained.

Goetz is the son of Jennifer and Kevin Goetz.

"I'm excited to be an advocate and show legislators in Olympia and people in the state how important this industry is to the state's economy and our way of life," he said.

Isabella Huntley

Huntley is a senior at Colfax High School in Colfax, Wash. She plays volleyball, basketball, and softball and is heavily involved in FFA. In fact, her team ended up placing 2nd in the nation for ag sales this year, while individually, she placed 1st. In her free time, she enjoys baking, playing the piano and flute, spending time with family and friends, and helping out around her family's farm. As an ambassador, Huntley is looking forward to hearing different perspectives from the ag community.



"Growing up in Whitman County, I have a good sense of what ag is like, but I know there's a lot of different perspectives I don't know about," she said. "I'm passionate about ag. It's not just a big part of my family, but it's a big part of who I am, and it's important to the nation and the world."

Huntley is planning a career in the medical field. She hasn't decided where she'll be attending college, but she's certain it will be out of state. She said she's taking the opportunity to experience different parts of the country and broaden her perspectives before returning to the Palouse and hopefully settling close to home.

"I'm excited to go to Olympia (with the wheat growers) and see the government side," she said. "I'm really excited for this opportunity to represent Whitman County and Washington wheat growers in general."

Huntley is the daughter of Tara and Jason Huntley. ■



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WAWG has submitted comments on the state's riparian buffer workgroup. Hennings also touched briefly on the government shutdown, the sudden firing of Jon Wyss, state executive director of the Farm Service Agency, and the positives for wheat in the One Big Beautiful Bill, including raising the wheat reference price, improvements to crop insurance, and trade promotion funding. Unfortunately, funding for the Conservation Reserve Program wasn't included.

In county news, growers discussed attending the upcoming annual convention, changes to WAWG resolutions, and how estate taxes in Washington are much higher than federal estate taxes. ■

Adams County growers meet

Over breakfast last month, Adams County wheat growers heard policy updates and discussed red flag warnings during harvest, the timing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) herbicide applications, and supporting research positions at the Lind Dryland Research Station.

KayDee Gilkey, outreach coordinator for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), discussed how the government shutdown is affecting U.S. Department of Agriculture offices and programs, the upcoming Olympia Days trip, and the Washington State Department of Agriculture's pesticide licensing update. Growers whose pesticide licenses are up for renewal will be required to take a new law and safety course. WAWG is working with Washington State University to offer an online course or an in-person event early next year. Some licensees may also need to take an exam to meet the requirement.



Washington Association of Wheat Growers staff and leaders who attend the 2025 National Association of Wheat Growers' fall conference were (from left) Laurie Roecks, secretary/treasurer; Andy Juris, past president; Gil Crosby, vice president; Ryan Poe, past president; Michelle Hennings, executive director; and Jeff Malone, president.

WAWG leaders attend fall conference

In November, Washington Association of Wheat Growers staff and leaders were in Austin, Texas, for the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) fall meeting to discuss resolution and wheat grower policies. Past President Andy Juris serves on the NAWG Budget Committee, while Past President Ryan Poe serves on the Domestic Trade Policy Committee. President Jeff Malone serves on the Environment and Research Committee.

Wheat producers from across the nation addressed issues including rising input costs, potential economic assistance, rail consolidation concerns, expanding wheat trade opportunities, and the effect of tariffs on U.S. wheat. The NAWG fall conference includes a joint meeting with U.S. Wheat Associates (USW). The two organizations use the opportunity to "align the industry's domestic and global market strategies," said Mike Spier, USW president and CEO. ■

Washington Association of Wheat Growers leaders, Ryan Poe and Jeff Malone, take part in the National Association of Wheat Growers' meeting in Austin, Texas.



A discussion was held about the feasibility of stopping harvest activities during red flag weather warnings to avoid stretching fire response resources too thinly. Growers agreed that they need to do what they can to minimize risks. Sen. Mark Schoesler added that he had met with the insurance lobby to explore the possibility of offering voluntary insurance incentives to growers who suspend harvest activity during red flag warnings.

Another issue brought up by Schoesler was that many CRP contracts prohibit spraying from April 1 to July 1, but growers up north often can't get into their fields before April, meaning they are unable to control weeds in their CRP ground. The senator advised the group to submit a request to the Farm Service Agency county committee to change the dates to May 1 to July 1.

Growers also heard from Surendra and Shikha Singh. Surendra is the director of the Lind Research Station, while Shikha holds a research position. The station received a grant to purchase equipment that allows them to do testing in-house, rather than using a third party, saving money and providing student training. With grower support, the Singhs are stilling working with WSU leaders to make Shikha's position permanent.

In county business, Jake Klein will continue as president, with Ron Jirava as vice president. Growers nominated and approved Brian Baumann as the new treasurer. ■

Wheat growers seek answers on FSA director's dismissal

At the end of October, the White House dismissed Washington State Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Director Jon Wyss with no explanation.

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is working with our congressional delegation to seek clarity regarding the circumstances surrounding this decision and to better understand the implications for the future leadership of the state FSA office. We recognize that this development comes at a time of continued uncertainty within the agricultural economy and may add to the concern felt by producers across the state.

"Jon Wyss has won the support of many growers for his unwavering, farmer-first mentality," Hennings said. "His firing increases uncertainty for farmers in some of the most challenging conditions we've seen in a generation." ■



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WAWG membership reviews, updates resolutions

During the annual meeting at the 2025 Washington Grain Growers Convention, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) membership updated and approved the 2026 resolutions that direct policy for the next 12 months. New resolutions are listed here. For the complete set of resolutions, visit wawg.org/about-us/.

NATIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

- WAWG encourages policies that bring rural communication (voice and internet) to service levels comparable to that available to urban citizens.
- WAWG supports science-based dietary guidance that upholds the nutritional value of whole, refined, and enriched grain foods as part of a balanced diet and opposes policy frameworks or public messaging that mischaracterize them as unhealthy or “ultra-processed.”
- WAWG supports efforts to strengthen competition in agricultural input markets and reduce the cost of production. WAWG supports policies and actions that promote competitive pricing, supply chain resilience, and fair access and pricing for fertilizer, seed, fuel, pesticides, equipment, and other essential inputs necessary for wheat production.

FARM PROGRAM

- WAWG supports permanently eliminating the annual ARC/PLC election. Instead of requiring producers to choose each year, WAWG supports an automatic trigger that selects whichever program provides the higher payment.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

TRADE

- WAWG supports USDA administration and funding of all in-kind food assistance programs.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

- WAWG supports CRP stand requirements to correlate to rainfall zones.

WATER

- WAWG encourages the Washington State Department of Ecology to continue to convene the agriculture and water quality advisory committee and WAWG remains a member.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- WAWG supports the Washington State Conservation Commission efforts to develop BMPs for nonpoint pollution and riparian areas.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

- WAWG supports the formation of a Research Advisory Committee by the Washington Grain Commission to steward the annual investment of grower dollars allocated to research. The committee will ensure that funded projects align with the strategic priorities of the WGC and provide meaningful, relevant, and beneficial outcomes for Washington grain growers. It will also oversee the allocation of funds and research initiatives to maximize impact and return on investment. Furthermore, this approach aims to enhance grower participation in research funding decisions and encourage greater involvement in leadership roles.

- WAWG supports changing federal regulations regarding gene editing to be consistent with the number of events required for a trait to be expressed in the target species. For example, wheat, a hexaploid, requires three edits.

STATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

LEGISLATION

- WAWG supports an effective and efficient food distribution system to both food banks and families across the state.

TAXES

- WAWG opposes a state income tax.

STATE AGENCIES

- WAWG supports the Conservation Commission to remain as an independent agency with the board remaining at 10 members to reflect the current makeup of the Commission. (Department of Agriculture)
- WAWG supports maintaining the permanent exemption for motor vehicle fuel used exclusively for agricultural purposes by farm users under the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) and making the temporary exemption for fuel used to transport agricultural products on public highways (including barging) and special fuels used exclusively for agricultural purposes permanent under the CCA. (Ecology)
- WAWG supports exempting lubricants under the Climate Commitment Act. (Ecology)
- WAWG supports repealing the Climate Commitment Act. (Ecology)
- WAWG opposes employers with less than 50 employees having to pay into the paid family medical leave program for their employees. (Employment Security)
- WAWG supports a lower dollar threshold for overtime exemption for salary employees for agriculture. (Labor & Industries)
- WAWG opposes policies that unreasonably restrict the hiring of minors in agriculture. (Labor & Industries)
- WAWG supports creating an ag minor work permit. (Labor & Industries)

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

RAIL

- WAWG opposes any further rail mergers in the United States unless the parties involved in the merger can demonstrate increased competition which would provide greater access and more competitive rail rates for shipments.

RIVERS

- WAWG supports the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative’s (USTR) targeted implementation of Section 301 actions on Chinese maritime practices in a manner that preserves U.S. wheat export competitiveness and avoids unnecessary or retaliatory export costs for our overseas customers. ■

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POLICY MATTERS

Farm Bill 2.0 details top NAWG's priority list

By Trista Crossley
Editor, Wheat Life

Despite the end of the government shutdown and passage of this summer's One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB), the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) still has plenty of things on their Washington, D.C., to-do list. At the top of the agenda is getting a Farm Bill 2.0 passed as soon as possible.

"Wheat got a lot of wins in the One Big Beautiful Bill, but there's lots of conversations about what the future of the farm bill looks like," said **Anthony Peña**, NAWG policy manager, explaining that including traditional farm bill items in a reconciliation bill may be a potential workaround if a regular farm bill package can't pass through Congress. "Long term, we may see a potential re-arranging of how we usually do a farm bill."

Peña was speaking to growers at a breakout session during the 2025 Washington Grain Growers Convention,

Wheat industry wins in the OBBB include:

- A stronger safety net. The wheat reference price rose from \$5.50 to \$6.35 per bushel beginning with the 2025 crop year. Payment limits were increased from \$125,000 to \$155,000, beginning with the 2025 crop year and indexed to inflation. The bill also added 30 million new base acres nationwide beginning in 2026. The Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs were reauthorized through 2031 with annual election flexibility maintained.
- Long-term conservation flexibility and the removal of climate-focused restrictions. Unobligated Inflation Reduction Act conservation funds were transferred into other Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program, and established permanent baseline increases for many of them.
- Expanded trade promotion funding by creating the Supplemental Agricultural Trade Promotion Program that compliments wheat's traditional marketing programs.



- Extended tax and credit relief by permanently increasing the estate tax exemption to \$15 million per individual and \$30 million per couple, indexed for inflation. It extended the Section 199A pass-through deduction for farms and co-ops, and incorporated Agriculture Credit Relief Exclusion Act provisions such as making 25% of interest income on ag real estate loans excluded from taxation.

While the OBBB included many of the wheat industry's farm bill priorities, the bill wasn't a full farm bill reauthorization; instead, a later reconciliation bill extended

the 2018 Farm Bill through September 2026. A farm bill is needed to modernize programs that were ineligible for reconciliation bill inclusion, such as the Conservation Reserve Program. According to Peña, the House Ag Committee is drafting Farm Bill 2.0 language, while the Senate Ag Committee is expected to act in early 2026.

NAWG's priorities for the new farm bill include:

- Expanding and modernizing the credit title.
- Supporting the transfer of the Food For Peace program to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Rolling the new Supplemental Agricultural Trade Promotion Program into the Marketing Assistance Program and the Foreign Market Development program.
- Reauthorization of the Conservation Reserve Program.
- Supporting the Agricultural Labeling Uniformity Act to prevent conflicting state pesticide labeling and to reaffirm the EPA's science-based authority.
- Increased funding for the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative.

Outside of the farm bill, NAWG is also monitoring discussions about an ad hoc payment to provide short-term relief to farmers; the proposed Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern rail merger, which would create one of North America's largest rail networks and could potentially reduce competition and drive up rates; and the upcoming mandatory review of the U.S.–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA). Peña said the review is shaping up to be a rene-

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gotiation rather than just a procedural check-in. NAWG's priorities for the USMCA include maintaining zero-tariff access for U.S. wheat going into Mexico and Canada; ensuring Canada fully complies with grain grading and treatment conditions for U.S. wheat; and preserving seamless cross-border milling and supply-chain integration.

Peña wrapped up his presentation with a MAHA (Make American Healthy Again) Commission update. The commission released its first report in May, with a follow up "strategy report" in September that places grains and crop-protection practices under review. The May report linked ultra-processed foods and pesticide exposure to negative child health outcome, but failed to define "ultra-processed." Wheat and grain-based foods, particularly enriched and refined grains, were labeled as potential ultra-processed foods. A change in the definition of "ultra-processed" could potentially distort dietary guidelines that are used for school lunches, leading to fewer wheat products being used.

"There's a lot of stuff in our industry going on," Peña said. "I think we do have leverage, but it is important to continue to have advocacy efforts, not just to the White House, but to Congress as well." ■

Democrats sweep state elections

By Diana Carlen

Lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

While nationally there were significant elections this November, Washington state also had some notable races in an off-year election. Nine legislative races were on the ballot for members who were appointed to their seats and were running to retain them. Of those nine races, three candidates were running unopposed, two were considered safe for the incumbent, and four were competitive.

Both nationally and within Washington state, the Democrats did well. Senate Republicans were hoping to flip two Senate seats, but were unsuccessful. As a result, the current makeup of the legislature will remain the same. In addition, there were a couple of races pitting two Democrats together, and in both of these races, the more progressive Democrat prevailed.

Counties certified results on Nov. 25 and will be followed by statewide certification by the Secretary of State in early December.

Here are the results from the key legislative races:

- Legislative District 5 – Senate: Appointed Democrat Sen. Victoria Hunt defeated Republican former House member Chad Magendanz.
- Legislative District 26 – Senate: Appointed Democrat

Sen. Deborah Krishnadasan defeated Republican House member Michelle Caldier. This was the key legislative race to watch and the most expensive race this fall. The 26th Legislative District is a true swing district. While Rep. Caldier was unsuccessful in her Senate bid, she had a free pass to run for this Senate seat as it was an off-cycle year and will continue to serve in the House.

- Legislative District 48 – Senate: Appointed Democrat Sen. Vandana Slatter defeated Democrat House member Amy Walen. Rep. Amy Walen was considered the moderate, business friendly candidate in this race. Walen will retain her House seat.
- Legislative District 33rd – House: Appointed Democrat Rep. Edwin Obras defeated Democrat challenger Kevin Schilling.
- Legislative District 41 – House: Appointed Democrat Rep. Janice Zahn defeated Republican John Whitney.
- Legislative District 48 – House: Appointed Democrat Rep. Osman Salahuddin defeated Republican Dennis Ellis.

Other notable ballot and local races:

- Senate Joint Resolution 8201 – Investment of WA Cares Dollars: This state ballot measure proposes a constitutional amendment that would allow the Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Trust Fund, also known as the WA Cares Fund, to be invested in a broader range of financial instruments, including stocks and other equities, rather than being limited to low-yield, fixed-income securities like government bonds and certificates of deposit. It is projected to pass.

Approved: 56.85% (843,412)

Rejected: 43.15% (640,145)

- Olympia Proposition 1: This local ballot measure would have required employers in Olympia to pay a \$20 minimum wage, enforce predictive scheduling requirements, offer available hours to existing workers before hiring new employees, and put other conditions on employers. It is projected to fail.

Approved: 46.87% (7,340)

Rejected: 53.13% (8,319) ■

Agriculture provides riparian buffer feedback

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) has signed onto a letter to the Governor's Office providing feedback on the state's Riparian Taskforce's work and weighing in on the group's future focus.

Besides WAWG, the letter was signed by the Washington Farm Bureau, the Washington State Dairy Federation, the Washington Potato Commission, and the Washington State Tree Fruit Association. The wheat industry lobbyists, Diana Carlen and Mark Streuli, also signed the letter.

According to a memo sent from the Governor's Office, the taskforce plans to focus on "using collaborative problem solving to develop mandatory strategies and tools that would be used if voluntary riparian restoration and protection programs do not meet their restoration goals."

In the letter, the signees ask for clarification of the next phase, pointing out that the budget proviso does not limit future discussions to only mandatory measures.

"Your memo indicates that the goal of the next phase is to develop majority support for a legislative proposal, but that is unlikely to happen if the focus of the next phase of the workgroup is limited to only discussing mandatory measures, i.e. regulatory backstop," the letter states. "We have been very clear that we think it is premature to be discussing a regulatory backstop if voluntary measures do not work. We continue to maintain that incentives for voluntary efforts are the best path forward, and we need to give them time to work."

The groups expressed reservations with the firm leading the taskforce, Plauché & Carr, saying many of the issues raised during the taskforce meetings have not been included in the firm's final recommendations.

"The taskforce members should be given a chance to discuss their current level of confidence in the process. The Governor's Office and the Legislature deserve to know where stakeholders have differing opinions and recommendations so that they are better informed about the political and policy landscape surrounding these issues," the letter states. ■



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How bread making methods affect what your gut feels

Bread has long been a staple in America — from morning toast to lunchtime sandwiches to Christmas dinner rolls. Here in Washington, most wheat grown is the soft white class, characterized by low protein and weak gluten strength. While soft white wheat is prized for pastries, cookies, and flat breads rather than traditional high-rise loaves, many Americans still consume bread made from blends and all-purpose flours derived from various wheat classes. As consumer interest in gut health grows, scrutiny has turned to what is in our bread, and how it may influence digestion.

Gluten is the network of proteins in wheat dough responsible for the distinctive chew and rise of bread. It's composed primarily of gliadin (which provides extensibility) and glutenin (which provides elasticity). Together, they allow dough to trap carbon dioxide released by yeast. When baked, this network solidifies and delivers the familiar final loaf structure. Because these proteins are rich in amino acids, they resist full digestion by human enzymes. Commercial bakeries often add vital wheat gluten — a concentrated form of the wheat proteins — to strengthen doughs and improve rise and texture, particularly in whole-grain or lower-protein flours.

While most people digest wheat and gluten without issue, some have conditions such as Celiac disease (an autoimmune disorder) or nonceliac gluten sensitivity. In celiac disease, gluten ingestion triggers small-intestine damage; in other cases, the underlying basis is less clear. It is also possible that other wheat components — such as FODMAPs — play roles in symptoms for some individuals.

Fermentation is central to bread making: yeast and, in the case of sourdough, lactic acid bacteria (LAB) convert sugars into simpler compounds, producing carbon dioxide (for rise) and flavor-forming acids. The two main processes are

rapid commercial yeast fermentation (short proof times) and traditional sourdough fermentation (extended times). The longer fermentation in sourdough allows microbial enzymes and flour's own enzymes to break down gluten proteins into smaller fragments, potentially improving digestibility.

FODMAPs are short-chain carbohydrates poorly absorbed in the small intestine. They are fermented by large-intestine bacteria, producing gas and other by-products that can trigger bloating and pain in sensitive individuals, such as those with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). Wheat contains fructans, a type of FODMAP. Because many people consume wheat repeatedly, it is a meaningful contributor to overall FODMAP intake. Importantly, gluten (protein) and fructans (carbohydrate) are distinct, though they co-occur in wheat products. Research shows that sourdough fermentation, especially with appropriately selected LAB and longer proofing, can reduce fructan levels significantly — studies show reductions of 60-75% or more in fructans compared to bread produced with short yeast fermentations. This means that for some people, the digestive symptoms attributed to “gluten” may be due to fructans.

In the U.S. commercial baking industry, speed, efficiency, and consistency are priorities. That often means short proof times, reliance on commercial yeast and dough improvers, and the addition of vital wheat gluten to bolster dough strength. Such processes yield breads that are consistent in texture but do not allow as much enzymatic breakdown of gluten or FODMAPs as long-fermentation methods.

By contrast, slow-fermented sourdough breads allow more time for microbial and flour enzymes to act — modifying gluten networks, breaking down gluten



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fragments, and degrading fructans and other FODMAPs. They may be better tolerated by certain individuals with digestive sensitivity, even if they are not suitable for those with celiac disease.


For individuals with celiac disease, the rule remains firm: avoid all wheat-based breads, regardless of fermentation method or added gluten. For those with nonceliac sensitivity or IBS, choosing bread made via long, traditional fermentation may reduce exposure to harder-to-digest gluten fragments and lower FODMAP content, potentially easing symptoms. Commercial breads utilizing fast processes and added vital gluten might increase the gluten “load” and retain higher fructan levels, which could contribute to symptoms in susceptible individuals.

In Washington state, the dominant wheat class is soft white wheat, valued for its weak gluten and low protein and is ideal for pastries, cookies, and flat breads rather than high-rise pan breads. That suggests breads incorporating local soft white may inherently have lower gluten strength (though actual bread formulations often blend multiple wheats). Understanding how bread was made can help one make informed choices.

Ultimately, the way our bread is made has meaningful implications for gut health. Traditional sourdough breads, with long fermentation and minimal additives, may offer better digestibility for some individuals by partially breaking down gluten and FODMAPs. Commercial breads deliver convenience and consistency but may retain more of the compounds that challenge sensitive guts. While most people digest wheat fine, increased awareness gives all of us an opportunity to choose bread that aligns better with our individual digestive systems. ■




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Growers celebrate Washington small grains industry at 2025 convention

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Last month, Washington wheat growers gathered at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, to celebrate the state's small grain industry and the people that make it grow.

"We had a great turnout this year," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). "We were able to take care of some WAWG business and prepare leaders and staff for the year ahead by updating our resolutions. We also held a strategic planning session focused on state and national legislative priorities that was very successful and valuable."



RAY STARLING was back at the convention three years after his first appearance to ask, "Is the food system still broken?" If you ask the internet, yes, but Starling doesn't agree. Data shows that farmers are using about the same amount of inputs as they did in the 1940s, but they are producing nearly three times as much today. For one hour of productivity, in 2010, they are making 1,600 times the output they were in 1947. Since 1964, the amount of money people have spent on food has consistently gone down. "No other industry comes close to this sort of gains and efficiency," Starling said. "Does this food system feel like it isn't working?" He told the crowd that they've got to figure out how to navigate in a new era where trust in institutions is falling, geopolitical tensions are rising, and the value of trade is being questioned. He suggested keeping the farmer out front, more cooperation and collaboration between ag sectors, and using data to prove agriculture is doing a good job.



Washington's favorite convention meteorologist, **ERIC SNODGRASS**, is predicting a snowier-than-average start to winter, thanks to La Niña. Some models are predicting a La Niña collapse by the end of December, and if that happens, colder, dryer conditions could set in. The Pacific Northwest needs seven sizeable winter storms between now and April to "load" the mountains. "Good winters are not necessarily enjoyable winters," Snodgrass said. Meteorologists are projecting two to three feet of snow in the headwaters of the Columbia River, which is good news for the Columbia Basin water supply. "If Whistler is having a great year, so are you," he said. For more agricultural weather insights from Snodgrass, visit ag-wx.com

The convention was held Nov. 17-19 and included keynote presentations from legislative guru Ray Starling, ag humorist Jolene Brown, economist Arlan Suderman, and meteorologist Eric Snodgrass. Anthony Peña, policy manager for the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) led a breakout session focused on the farm bill, NAWG priorities, and other updates from Washington, D.C. See page 16 for the NAWG update. Other breakout sessions covered the global wheat trade, marketing, Natural Resources Conservation Service updates, a wheat market outlook, an update on the Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative, taxes, and marketing wheat products directly to consumers. See page 26 for a brief recap of some of the breakout sessions.

The Washington Wheat Foundation's dinner and silent auction was moved to the convention's second night so

2025 WASHINGTON GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION



JOLENE BROWN kept the audience in stitches while imparting some words of wisdom. In between reading excerpts from her book, "Holy Crap I Married a Farmer," she told the crowd that farmers are great at production but bad at communication, asked them if they knew how to neighbor, and listed three things that will kill a family business: silence, presuming a conversation is a contract, and operating the farm as a family, not a business. "You need to make realistic business plans that will allow the business to continue," she said, adding that if it isn't written down, it doesn't exist. A family's legacy can continue even if the farm isn't being operated by a family member, and she encouraged growers to think of "ROI" as a return on integrity rather than a return on investment. She wrapped up her presentation with three suggestions to bring joy and laughter: accept the things you can't control or change; find the humor and write those funny things down; and associate with folks who enjoy their journey.

exhibitors could more easily participate. Items donated by growers, county organizations, and industry supporters were auctioned off to raise money for the foundation to use for scholarships and for grants that help support small grains research. Throughout the convention, drawings were held for a free registration to the 2026 convention, gift cards, and other items. A photo submitted by Sandy Jamison won the photo contest, and she received an Amazon gift certificate. The final night's dinner featured a Casino Fun Night, where growers used funny money to play games for raffle tickets.

While all the lights and Christmas decorations filled the convention with the holiday spirit, some important business was conducted. Growers attended an all-committee meeting where they heard updates from U.S. Department of Agriculture agency leaders, as well as federal and state legislative updates from WAWG's lobbyists. WAWG members reviewed and updated the association's resolutions

and approved a familiar face to the leadership team: Ryan Poe from Grant County. This will be Poe's second trip through the leadership chairs; he previously served from 2018-21.

"We are very grateful to Ryan for agreeing to step up and serve his fellow growers for another term," Hennings said. "He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the leadership team as we fight for a farm bill, seek solutions to rising input costs, and deal with overwhelming regulatory burdens."

Updated WAWG resolutions can be found on page 14. See more convention photos on page 24-25.

"We'd like to thank our sponsors, industry supporters, and exhibitors who helped make this convention successful. I'd also like to recognize all the time and hard work by the WAWG staff that made this year's event run smoothly," Hennings said.

Next year, Oregon wheat growers will be joining Washington growers at the 2026 convention, which will take place Nov. 30-Dec. 2 in the Tri-Cities. ■

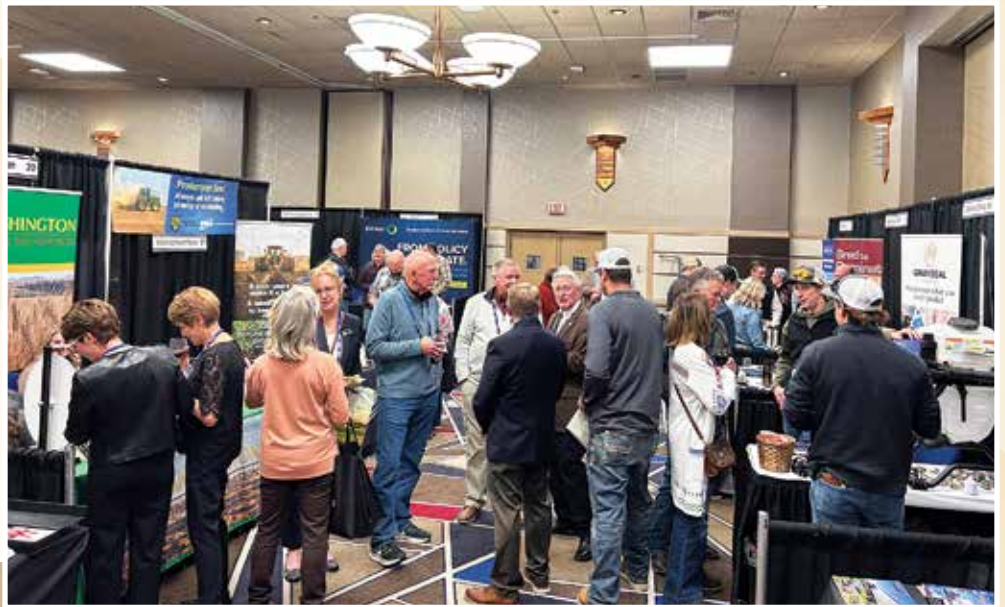


Economist **ARLAN SUDERMAN** touched on a number of topics impacting the wheat markets, including unemployment (looking pretty good right now); inflation (may be trending higher in the short term); uncertainty created by the Trump administration ("Trump loves uncertainty. It keeps his opponents guessing, both politically and in trade negotiations."); national debt (sitting at \$38 trillion); and tariffs. But looming over everything is China. Suderman said relations with China have de-escalated, but they will likely continue to try to restrict U.S. access to rare earth minerals. They've made big commitments to buy U.S. commodities but have a poor track record of keeping promises, and the Supreme Court's decision on Trump's tariffs could change the picture where China is concerned.

2025 WASHINGTON GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION



2025 WASHINGTON GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION



2025 WASHINGTON GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION

Breakout session roundup

A major goal of the annual convention is to provide growers with updates and educational opportunities through the breakout sessions. Here's a short summary of some of those sessions.

Dams update

Adam Ratliff, director of the Center for Sustainability and Working Rivers, spoke about recent developments surrounding the lower Snake River dams litigation, and how its proposed operational changes would affect growers. His message was that it doesn't necessarily take an act of Congress to disable the lower Snake River dams; all opponents have to do is make it illegal to use the dams as designed!

Marketing wheat products

Jaimie Appel, Appel Heights; Bill Myers, Joseph's Grainery; and Karl Scheuerman, Palouse Heritage, gave growers a first-person account of what it takes to sell wheat and wheat products directly to consumers.

All three experts said it's important to differentiate yourself from your competitors. Other advice from the panel included knowing where your funding is going to come from and being willing to consider new avenues.

"Never give up, but be ready change," Myers said. "It will become apparent if it is working. You never know where your opportunities are going to come from."

Appel's business venture began with an offhand comment from her father about milling some of the family's grain and selling the flour. She opened a storefront in downtown Colfax that sold grain, flour, baking mixes, and products made by others, but a busy family life limited the hours the store could be open. Appel pivoted to a farm fridge, which is open 24/7 and has been successful.

Myers started testing his grain at the Pullman Farmers Market. From there, he was able to get his product in some grocery stores, although he said initially, he basically had to give it away. Eventually he built up a route and began selling on the internet. He has also partnered with Linc Malt and provides them with malting ingredients for their brewery.

Scheuerman's story is a little different than the other two. Palouse Heritage was started by his father and uncle, and he is just starting to get involved with the business. He said you have to be willing to roll up your sleeves, step out, and embrace the challenge.



(From left) Jaimie Appel, Appel Heights; Bill Myers, Joseph's Grainery; and Karl Scheuerman, Palouse Heritage, gave growers a first-person account of what it takes to sell wheat and wheat products directly to consumers during a breakout session at the 2025 Washington Small Grains Convention.

For all three businesspeople, social media is a key part of their marketing strategy.

Looking ahead, Appel said she is excited to explore grant funding and networking with people who might invest in her business.

"I have all these ideas, and we could reach so many people, but that takes money," she explained.

Scheuerman would like to see changes in the broader food supply system so that consumers are closer to the food they rely on.

"It's great to have a global export market, but a lot of vulnerabilities exist in a global system" he said. "A lot of people around the world are dependent on imports for food staples. That's not necessarily a good thing."

Myers sees a lot of growth opportunity on the malting side of his business. He encouraged growers to buy a little mill and experiment with it.

"Be a supply for your neighbors," he said.

For more information on the three panelists and their businesses, visit appelheights.com, palouseheritage.com, and josephsgrainery.com.

NRCS update

Aubrey Hoxie, east area conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington state, provided an update to growers. NRCS Chief Aubrey Bettencourt's focus is farmers first and keeping farmers

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farming, partnerships, and precision agriculture, in addition to focusing on internal affairs and ensuring field office staff have the tools they need.

Preliminary data shows that the biggest jump in program assistance in FY2025 was in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which increased from \$25,878,132 to \$58,404,638. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) numbers increased from \$1,235,287 to \$3,161,000. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) decreased slightly from \$13,815,000 to \$13,396,297, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) went down from \$7,720,654 to \$7,595,234. Totals will be finalized in January.

CSP has been revamped, and details should be available soon. The national program deadline has been extended to Jan. 15. FY2025 CSP contract renewals will not go forward and will instead rollover to a classic signup. Easements have a new team that is up and running, and the program has a Jan. 15, 2026, deadline. Applications continue to be accepted for EQIP year-round, and the application ranking time frame will be Jan. 15, 2026.

Global wheat market outlook

Brian Liedl, vice president of overseas operations for U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), outlined current global supply and demand factors, including increased world wheat production and strong ending stocks, such as the consistently large crops from the Black Sea and Australia. With increased production, U.S. ending stocks are also rising.

Meanwhile, demand trends across Asia present meaningful opportunities. Rapid population growth, economic expansion, and shifting diets are driving a sustained increase in wheat consumption. Over the past two decades, per-capita wheat demand in the region has grown by more than 60%. As a result, milling demand continues to rise sharply. Overall, these forces underscore the importance of developing and maintaining connections in export markets. Liedl highlighted the need for continued engagement, quality differentiation, and maintaining a reliable supply of high-quality wheat, especially as global competition continues to intensify.

At the close of his presentation, Kevin Klein, chairman of the Washington Grain Commission, presented Liedl with an honorary plaque to thank him for his five years of service as an industry representative.

"I'm proud of my years of service at the Washington Grain Commission, not just because I accomplished something, but because I helped continue something — the legacy of wheat farming and its positive global impact — alongside dedicated growers like you. I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue to do so in my new role at U.S. Wheat Associates and look forward to continuing serving you," Liedl said. ■

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The Washington wheat industry organizations would like to thank those who made this year's convention possible, especially our sponsors, industry supporters, and exhibitors.

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Mitigation education

Growers attend Endangered Species Act pesticide workshop in Walla Walla

By Andrea Cox

Conservation Coordinator, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Last month, more than 40 growers attended a workshop at the William A. Grant Water and Environmental Center in Walla Walla, Wash., focused on the Endangered Species Act and pesticide labels. Attendees participated in activities designed to encourage conversation and generate information to inform the national conversation around pesticide labeling. Participants learned more about pesticide mitigations for endangered species and worked through several activities aimed at understanding and implementing mitigation requirements. Attendees also worked through calculation worksheets on pesticide run-off/erosion mitigation and pesticide ecological spray drift buffers. Workshop attendees' main crops included wheat, alfalfa seed, potatoes, apples, wine grapes, tree fruit, and turfgrass.

Besides myself, the event was organized by Annie

Byerley, district manager of the Walla Walla Conservation District; Grace Cooper, conservation scientist at the Walla Walla Conservation District; Abbey Nickelson, natural resource scientist at the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA); and Chris McCoullough, WSDA pesticide usage and stewardship scientist.

The workshop also featured a panel that included Nick Scrivner, Walla Walla alfalfa seed grower; Jeremy Petty, consulting vineyard manager and winemaker; Justin Casebier of Pratum Co-op; Chris Clemens, agronomy service manager at Syngenta; Perry Beale of Meadow Creek Ranch and former WSDA representative for the Washington State Conservation Commission; and Tim Stein, WSDA pesticide compliance program manager.

Panel discussions focused on several topics including when participants first heard about the Environmental Protection Agency's mitigation menu/Bulletins Live Two!/Endangered species lawsuits and the impact of this regulation on growers and customers considering the number



More than 40 growers attended a workshop in Walla Walla, Wash., to learn about pesticide mitigation for endangered species. The workshop was organized by the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, the Walla Walla Conservation District, and the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

of regulations already in place for farmers. Participants also shared how they currently interact with conservation practices, endangered species compliance issues other than pesticides, implementing conservation measures, common problems seen among their constituents, and how they solve them. Attendees were able to earn three pesticide credits. Existing conservation programs offered through conservation districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service were briefly discussed. The event was sponsored by AgWest Farm Credit. ■



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Options to market grain

MINIMUM PRICING CONTRACTS FOR GROWERS OF SOFT WHITE WHEAT

By Howard R. Nelson
Special to Wheat Life

This article is my last one covering marketing basics before we put everything together to develop a marketing plan. Unfortunately, it covers a difficult subject that is hard to cover in a short article. First, what is a minimum pricing contract (MPC)? It is a marketing tool that combines a cash sale with the purchase of a call option in the futures market. The cost of the call option is deducted from the cash price, giving you your minimum price. This type of contract allows for growers to benefit from higher prices after selling wheat in the cash market if the futures market goes up during the period that the call option is in effect.

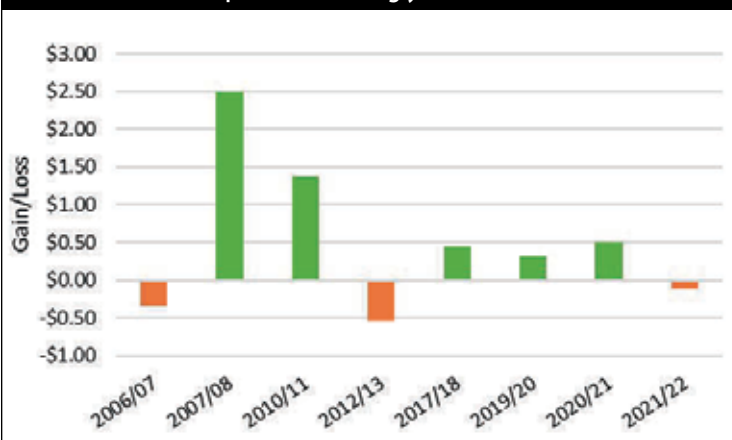
When you start working with option contracts, the first thing that you notice is that they use a lot of unfamiliar terms. What does “out-of-the-money” mean? What is a “strike price?” What is “intrinsic value?” These are all terms that you need to understand when you use MPCs. I am not going to be able to fully explain the ins and outs of MPCs in this article, but I will do my best. This will be more of a “Cliff Notes” version to explain the basics. I would recommend that growers read the “Self-study Guide to Hedging with Grain and Oilseed Futures and Options” for more information, and it is available on the internet. You should also find an advisor that will help you make decisions when an MPC is initiated. Another issue that you will see in the following discussion is that futures prices are given in dollars per bushel (\$/bu), but option prices are given in cents per bushel (¢/bu) and often the “per bushel” is omitted and considered to be understood.

Let’s go through an example of the use of an MPC during the 2025-26 marketing year. A grower decides to sell some wheat to pay some bills after harvest. Today’s date is 9/3/25, and the price of Portland soft white wheat is \$6/bushel. Wheat’s trading range to date this year has been narrow, and since April 1, it has ranged only \$.40/bushel between the market high and low. The grower’s cost to hold wheat is about \$.055/bu (storage + interest). He talks to his advisor, and they take a look at the CBOT December call options. That contract is currently trading at \$5.22/bushel. The cost of a 520 (¢/bu) December call option (closest strike price to the futures market or at the money) is just under 22¢/bu. The 520

Chart 1: December CBOT futures gain/loss from Sept. 1 (or closest date) in upward trending years



Chart 2: March CBOT futures gain/loss from Nov. 1 (or closest date) in upward trending years



option is slightly in-the-money, which gives it intrinsic value of 2¢/bu (522 futures price minus 520 option strike price equals 2 cents intrinsic value). The balance of the cost of the option, 20 ¢/bu, is called time value. The time value slowly decreases each day as the option contract moves towards its expiration date. On the day the options expire, out-of-the-money options expire worthless, and in-the-money options are valued at their intrinsic value. This choice, the 520 call option, gives the grower a minimum price of \$5.78/bushel Portland (\$6/bu Portland minus 22¢/bushel option cost). The grower would like a higher minimum price, so he takes a look at an out-of-the-money 540 call option (the December futures market needs to go up \$.18/bushel to reach the 540 level, which makes that option out-of-the-money (no intrinsic value). The cost of this option is 14¢/bu, which would give us a minimum price of \$5.86/bu Portland (\$6/

bu Portland soft white wheat minus 14¢/bu option cost). Option contracts expire in the month prior to the futures contract month, and the December options expire on Nov. 21, 2025.

Let's compare the break-even prices for the two choices or the price that the futures contract must reach where if the call option was exercised (converted to a futures contract) the gain in the futures market would cover the cost of the purchase of the call option. The break-even price for the December 520 call option is \$5.42/bushel (520 strike price + 22¢/bu call option cost). The December futures contract will need to go up 20¢/bu to reach the break-even price. The break-even price for the 540 call option is \$5.54/bushel (540 strike price +14¢/bu call option cost). The December futures contract will need to go up 32¢/bu to reach the break-even price.

The majority of the time, wheat growers will utilize MPCs during the fall or early winter as they market their grain in the cash market. The strategy of using an MPC would be to generate cash flow for the grower by selling wheat in the cash market and replace those bushels with paper bushels in the futures market. Those paper bushels will increase in value if the futures markets go up. Selling those bushels stops your cost of holding grain, which helps justify the cost of the call option.

We would generally be utilizing CBOT December options that expire in November or CBOT March options that expire in February. Let's look at the increase in the futures markets if we had chosen to implement an MPC in the eight years we have had upward trending markets since 2006. We would expect the intrinsic value of the option to match the futures market gain. We'll look at the December and March CBOT futures gain/loss if we had implemented MPCs on Sept. 1 (or closest trading day) using the December futures contract and Nov. 1 (or closest trading day) using the March futures contract. Chart 1 shows the upward trending years and futures change for the December futures, and Chart 2 shows the change for the March contract for the period we are interested in.

The first thing you will notice is there were futures gains for the December contract 50% of the years and 62% of the years for the March contract for the eight years. In addition, the futures increase doesn't necessarily mean that an MPC would have returned a gain. A gain would require that the futures price exceeds the break-even price for the option strategy that was chosen. If you paid 18¢/bu for a call option that was 20¢ out-of-the-money, the futures gain would need to exceed 38¢/bu for you to break even. This lowers the number of years that this strategy would be successful. One strategy that we have used to limit losses is to evaluate our position when the value of the call option reaches 50% of the purchase price. We may decide to buy our call option back at that time rather than

continue holding and take the whole loss.

I hope that you have been able to get through this discussion without too much trouble. As you can see, MPCs are more complicated than other marketing tools. I used the marketing year 2025-26 to help explain the terms and prices that were experienced, but an MPC would not have been recommended this year. MPCs would not be used when the market is downward trending. MPCs are advertised as a way growers can add to their price if the market goes up after they have marketed their wheat. In reality, the actual results don't always match the expectation. My next article will be about making a marketing plan, putting together the marketing tools we have discussed, and utilizing them in their proper marketing situations. ■

Howard Nelson is a retired agronomist and commodity broker. He worked for 31 years in the PNW grain industry and retired in 2020 from HighLine Grain Growers. He has a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Washington State University and currently lives in Kennewick, Wash., with his wife, Cheryl. Nelson can be contacted at howardnelson73@gmail.com.

The information in this presentation should not be considered a solicitation. Past performance, whether actual or indicated by simulated historical tests of strategies may not be indicative of future results. Trading advice reflects good faith judgment at a specific point in time and is subject to change without notice. There is no guarantee that the advice given will result in profitable trades. Any strategy that involves trading futures or option contracts can involve losses that may be substantial and not suitable for everyone. Each person should carefully consider if trading futures is appropriate because of your financial condition.

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



Working together to improve Washington small grains

By Kevin Klein
Chairman, Washington Grain Commission

As I reflect back on 2025, I see a year of both challenge and positive change. This fall, I felt more stressed trying to determine when

to sell my wheat, knowing the current price levels will not cover all the input expenses I invested into raising and delivering this wheat crop to my local grain warehouse. What do we do as growers? I'm not entirely sure, but I believe we can all work together to identify and enact solutions. I also know from my many years serving wheat growers that when we work together, we have been successful in solving the issues we're all facing. I believe we are now at that time once again.

The Washington Grain Commission (WGC) has been working through some challenges as well. For instance, the Variety Testing Program (VTP) at Washington State University (WSU), which is part of the commission's invested research dollars, was struggling to deliver desirable levels of reliable data and has undergone some positive changes. Thank you to all WSU wheat breeders for working together to keep the program going and also finding a new program manager. As a result, the VTP has improved efficiencies and is delivering more consistent, reliable data.

As programs like these continue to become more costly each year, our research dollars are not going as far as they once did. But with thanks to Mike Pumphrey and Kevin Murphy, who took it upon themselves to investigate how WSU's multidisciplinary Soil to Society program might benefit from extra dollars from the Washington Research Foundation (WRF), the VTP will be one of several WSU programs benefiting the WRF's BioInnovation Grant. This initiative has been awarded a \$19 million boost, including \$10 million from the WRF, \$3 million from WGC, and matches from other partners, to develop new wholegrain crop varieties, expand infrastructure (like storage and milling), and create a commercial kitchen at University of Washington for entrepreneurs and private businesses to bring new wholegrain foods to market.

Speaking of our invested dollars in research programs,

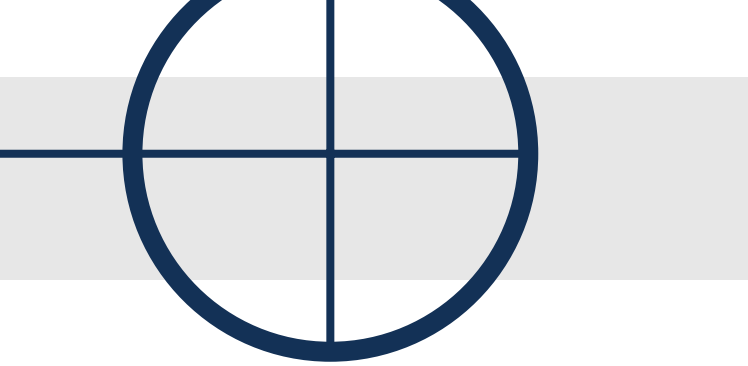
the commission is pleased to announce we've launched our first ever Research Advisory Committee (RAC) with the goal of strengthening grower involvement in our research investment decisions, starting with our annual research review in February 2026. We'll continue to share updates as the RAC takes shape and implements changes, and we thank Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) Research Chair Jim Moyer for chairing this new committee and moving it forward.

In terms of market development, we haven't experienced a lot of changes in our soft white (SW) wheat markets. The commission remains committed to visiting our overseas customers in their regions, including North Asia, South and Southeast Asia, and South America, to show appreciation for their business and help address their questions and barriers.

We also continue to prioritize hosting trade teams from existing and emerging markets right here in Eastern Washington, for hands-on experience of how our SW is handled here before being shipped to them. Through the partnership of U.S. Wheat Associates and other state commissions, the WGC proudly hosted teams from eight countries in 2025. We thank every farmer, researcher, exporter, and industry partner who helped make these visits a success. Please look for opportunities to join us next year!

As part of our education efforts, in 2025, the commission joined over 20 grower meetings with the goal of personally connecting with growers and gathering survey responses. Your participation has been very valuable as the U.S. wheat industry assesses how to move forward with GMO wheat research within the continental U.S. and strike the delicate balance between new technologies and customer acceptance. Though change is inevitable, I trust our work will focus on figuring out how to incorporate this research into what we already do, so growers can improve their yields while still being mindful of the genetic process.

In 2026, the commission will again work to join grower meetings to provide updates and hear your concerns and perspectives. We hope you join us in conversations at these meetings, and thank you again for another great year of partnering together for the greater good of the Washington wheat industry. ■



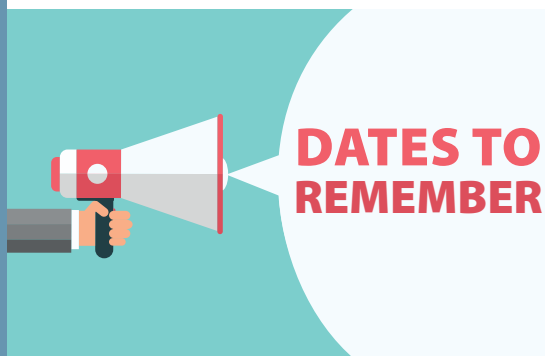
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WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Looking ahead at the second half of FY 2025-26

As we prepare to close the first half of fiscal year 2025-26, the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) is looking forward to kicking off 2026 with new opportunities to connect with customers, advance research, and gather with growers on the topics that matter most to the Pacific Northwest wheat industry. Keep reading for an overview of key WGC events to watch for from January to June 2026 and scan the QR code below to sign up for our monthly grower newsletter, Commission Matters, for regular updates.

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION



Grower meetings (January – February 2026)

Multiple locations across Eastern Washington

From January to February 2025, WGC staff presented at 18 grower meetings across 12 counties. Along with providing an update on HB4 and holding discussions on the acceptance of GMO wheat to approximately 950 attendees, the WGC collected 422 questionnaires for growers to share their top wheat industry concerns and how they want WGC to invest grower dollars.

Following the success of the 2025 grower meeting tour, the WGC will again work to attend grower meetings across the state in early 2026, focusing on market trends, soft white wheat uses in different markets, and commission updates. If you'd like to schedule us to speak at your meeting, please email jake@wagrain.org. For a detailed schedule and updates, look for our December issue of Commission Matters and follow us on Facebook (@washingtongrain).

Annual Research Review (Feb. 19, 2026)

Courtyard by Marriott, Pullman, Wash.

Research is a pillar of the WGC mission of enhancing the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Washington grain farmers. The Washington State University (WSU) Research Review is the annual progress report on WGC-funded projects and evaluation of new project proposals. All statewide wheat and barley producers are encouraged to participate. Grower participation helps keep projects focused on real-world grower challenges and helps strengthen relationships with the WSU faculty and staff.

Spokane Ag Show (Feb. 3-5, 2026)

Spokane Convention Center, Spokane, Wash.

Each year, the WGC sponsors the keynote address of legendary weatherman Art Douglas at the Spokane Ag Show. In addition, this year, we will be presenting trends in our top export markets at one of the educational breakout sessions. Join more than 4,500 attendees, over 225 exhibiting companies, and 1,800 exhibitor representatives at what is always a fun and valuable experience.

USW/Taiwan and USW/Tokyo Anniversary events (April 16-22, 2026)

Taipei, Taiwan, and Tokyo, Japan

U.S. Wheat Associates, supported by 17 state wheat commissions, is the industry's international market development organization working in more than 100 countries. In 2026, the Taiwan office will celebrate its 60th anniversary, and the Japan office will celebrate 70 years of representing U.S. wheat farmers. WGC commissioners and staff will participate in the celebrations, to recognize the consistent marketing efforts that have grown the markets into top 10 customers for Washington wheat and thank the customers for their ongoing purchases. ■



Washington's 2025 small grains summary

Washington's total wheat production in 2025 reached 141.5 million bushels (3.8 million metric tons or MMT), representing a 1.5% decline from 2024 but 12% above the five-year average. Winter wheat continued to dominate production, accounting for 86% of the state's total, while spring wheat held steady year-over-year. In contrast, barley production declined sharply by 48%, driven by lower profitability, reduced demand for malting barley, and the closure of regional processing facilities. Despite these fluctuations, Washington maintained 7% of total U.S. wheat output, underscoring its continued leadership in quality and reliability.



On Washington's rolling Palouse, efficiency is everything. A John Deere S680 with Hillco leveling technology unloads into a KB Manufacturing 800-bushel grain cart, pulled by a 9520R tractor delivering 520 horsepower to climb the slopes. From hillside stability to horsepower on the pull, each pass keeps wheat flowing from farm to elevator, barge, and ultimately to mills around the globe.

Washington wheat overview:

- Total wheat: 141.5 million bushels (3.8 MMT), -1.5% year over year, +12% vs. five-year average (125.9 million bushels or 3.4 MMT). Washington accounted for 7% of U.S. production.
- Winter wheat: 121.7 million bushels (3.3 MMT), -1% year over year, +14% vs. five-year average. Yields averaged 68 bu/ac (70 bu/ac in 2024).
- Spring wheat: 19.7 million bushels (537.2 TMT), -6% year over year, +1.5% vs. five-year average. Yields averaged 42 bu/ac (43 bu/ac in 2024).

U.S. total wheat production is projected at 1.9 billion bushels (54 MMT), a 0.3% increase year over year and a 9% gain over the five-year average.

Washington barley overview:

- Production: 2.4 million bushels (63.3 thousand metric tons or TMT), -48% year over year, and 37% below the five-year average (3.8 million bushels or 103.8 TMT).
- Share of U.S. production: Washington accounts for 1.7% of national barley output, a 1.5% decline from 2024.

Total U.S. barley production for 2025 is projected at 140.8 million bushels (3.8 MMT), a 2% decline year over year and 8% below the five-year average.

Despite modest yield reductions, Washington's wheat sector remains strongly supported by robust winter wheat performance and stable spring wheat volumes. Barley's contraction underscores ongoing challenges in

acreage, profitability pressures, and shifting market demand, particularly from declining malting use and regional facility closures. Still, Washington continues to play a vital role in U.S. and global grain supply, offering consistent quality, reliability, and value to domestic and export markets. ■

| Wheat Class | 2025 Production | % of Type | YOY Change | 5-Year Avg | % vs 5-Year Avg |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Hard Red Winter (HRS) | 12.2 M bu (331.3 TMT) | 10% | +16% | 10.4 M bu (284 TMT) | +16% |
| Soft White Winter (SWS) | 109.5 M bu (2.9 MMT) | 90% | +13% | 95.9 M bu (2.6 MMT) | +13% |
| Hard Red Spring (HRS) | 3.5 M bu (96.7 TMT) | 18% | -5.5% | 3.7 M bu (99.4 TMT) | -5.5% |
| Soft White Spring (SWS) | 15.8 M bu (429.8 TMT) | 80% | -0.6% | 15.9 M bu (435 TMT) | -0.6% |
| Hard White Spring (HWS) | 395,000 bu (10.7 TMT) | 2% | +43% | 256,000 bu (7 TMT) | +54% |

Note: M bu = million bushels; MMT = million metric tons; TMT = thousand metric tons.

Investing in global relationships

SOUTH AMERICAN CROP QUALITY SEMINARS HIGHLIGHT U.S. WHEAT EXCELLENCE

By Casey Chumrau

CEO, Washington Grain Commission

Each November, U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) invites representatives from the U.S. wheat industry to personally deliver the latest crop quality analysis to key customers around the world. Featuring detailed presentations on the quality of soft white, hard red winter, hard red spring, and soft red winter wheat, this annual global outreach effort is central to the industry's commitment to transparency, customer service, and strategic marketing.

This year, Washington Grain Commission (WGC) CEO Casey Chumrau joined the South America Crop Quality Seminar team, participating in five seminars across Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Chile. Each event welcomed approximately 40 participants from major wheat-buying companies, including mills and end-product manufacturers, where they learned how favorable weather conditions across key U.S. growing regions resulted in high-quality wheat and ample supply for all U.S. wheat classes.

South American markets are known for their price sensitivity and adaptability. As they strive to optimize cost and performance, buyers in the region are skilled at blending wheat classes and origins. For instance, in addition to using soft wheat for its standard application of cookies, crackers, cakes, and pastries, South American buyers also blend soft wheat with hard wheat for bread production. Because this practice allows buyers to reduce flour costs while maintaining product quality, Pacific Northwest soft white wheat remains a viable and steadfast option — even through fluctuations in demand for traditional soft wheat applications and constraints in storage capacity.

The crop quality testing and reporting process is one of the most significant annual investments made by USW and state wheat commissions. Throughout harvest, country elevators collect and ship samples to specialized laboratories: Wheat Marketing Center for soft white, North Dakota State University for hard red spring and durum, Plains Grains Inc. for hard red winter, and GPAL



The South America Crop Quality team in Cali, Colombia, one of five stops on the seminar circuit. Pictured from left are Claudia Gomez, U.S. Wheat Associates (USW); Maria Fernanda Martinez, USW; Casey Chumrau, Washington Grain Commission; Shawn Thiele, International Grains Program at Kansas State University; and Dr. Senay Simsek, Purdue University.

for soft red winter. USW then compiles the final data into their annual USW Crop Quality Report, which is translated into at least six languages and used as the foundation for seminar presentations. Customers then use this valuable information to help anticipate wheat performance in shipments and make necessary adjustments to their processing and formulations.

While low wheat prices have posed significant challenges for producers, they have created strategic purchasing opportunities for buyers. As of Sept. 18, 2025, the last report before the government shutdown, sales to South America were 19% higher compared to the same date the previous year.

USW's crop quality reporting and seminars continue to deliver a strong return on this grower-funded investment to Washington wheat growers. The technical support and marketing intelligence provided by USW's overseas offices ensures visibility, strengthens customer relationships, and measurably increases purchases and uses of all U.S. wheat classes to both existing and emerging markets. ■

Soft white on the move

WHAT SOUTHEAST ASIA TOLD THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

By Jake Liening

Market Development Specialist, Washington Grain Commission

From Oct. 4-11, 2025, the Pacific Northwest Soft White Wheat Market Development Team personally visited three pivotal markets — the Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia — on a trade mission coordinated by U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) and its regional staff. Traveling as a tri-state delegation of commissioners and staff leadership from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, the group returned home with a sharper view of where soft white (SW) wheat is positioned in Southeast Asia today, and where continued hands-on engagement from the Pacific Northwest (PNW) can have the greatest impact.

The Philippines: Quality first, consistency always

The Philippines remains a textbook example of how quality and technical performance drive loyalty. At a leading cracker manufacturer, the team toured a high-volume, world-class operation that relies on consistent flour functionality to achieve exacting textures in layered crackers and graham, utilizing five to six bulk flour trucks per day. The message was straightforward: for products where bite, layering, and “clean” labels matter,

SW is the wheat they count on. Gardenia, the country’s dominant retail bread brand, underscored the same quality-driven mindset for their white, wheat, and sweet breads. With multiple breadlines capable of thousands of loaves per hour, Gardenia’s scale is immense, and their stakes are high, given short shelf life and strict pull-back policies.

In short, when performance is non-negotiable, quality wins, and for Filipino millers and bakers, that almost always makes U.S. wheat their top choice.

Singapore: A hub for ideas, consumer signals

In Singapore, the meetings highlighted the two themes shaping demand across the region: sensory experience and smart packaging. Snack consumers, especially young adults, choose products with exceptional taste and texture and increasingly discover them through social media and gaming culture. While the team was visiting a global snacks company known for its portfolio of cookies, crackers, and baked snacks, management reported how they have addressed a simple barrier to gaming-time snacking. As players need both hands and want to avoid residue on controllers, this snack company now focuses on making packages “chopstick-friendly” and promoting gaming chopsticks so consumers can



The Pacific Northwest Soft White Wheat Market Development delegation toured Wellington Flour Mills flour storage facilities in Pasig City in the Philippines, where U.S. wheat is processed for a range of domestic and export flour products

keep playing without getting their hands messy. That kind of packaging rethink preserves product quality while creating new snacking occasions. Insights gathered in Singapore often spread to other markets, influencing how regional procurement and product teams make decisions.

Indonesia: Price pressure today, opportunity tomorrow

Indonesia tells a different story, one where price and proximity dominate, yet targeted engagement can open doors. Currently, Australia's location advantage and Canada's fit for hand-mixed doughs give them outsized Indonesian shares. Coming off three supply-challenged years, U.S. wheat market share has dropped to only 5% of Indonesia's wheat imports. Nevertheless, the country maintained its position as a top 10 U.S. wheat export market. SW has one of the strongest positions in Indonesia because several manufacturers prefer it, contracting flour specifications for high-end cookies and crackers that can only be met with SW flour. Hard wheats continue to face a challenge as many bakeries are still small and mix by hand, favoring the shorter mixing times and higher water absorption provided by Canadian wheat. As operations modernize and mechanize, consistency and mixing tolerances begin to matter



Delegates toured Bogasari's Jakarta production facilities to see firsthand the scale of Indonesia's milling industry and the importance of U.S. wheat in maintaining consistent flour quality

more — areas where U.S. wheat shines. That dynamic represents a medium-term opportunity for U.S. wheat classes and technical support and training by USW.

Engagements with APTINDO (the Indonesian flour millers' association) and leading companies, such as Bogasari, Holland Bakery, and a leading cookie and cracker manufacturer, reinforced the role of technical education. Short courses and baking schools offered by USW show measurable impact, helping customers optimize flour blends and adopt objective tools like Solvent Retention Capacity (SRC) to specify performance.

Notably, several Indonesian operations have incorporated SRC into their quality parameters, a favorable signal for SW's functional value proposition. Large manufacturers emphasized performance that is consistent on their equipment and shipment-to-shipment, exactly the kind of standardization U.S. suppliers are positioned to deliver.

Another promising development is the U.S.–Indonesia Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the U.S. wheat industry and Indonesian millers to bolster the Indonesian government's position in recent tariff negotiations. Indonesian shipments in 2025 have far exceeded their pledged level of 800,000 metric tons, and the PNW team assured millers of their continued support for the industry meeting the agreed purchase commitment of 1 mil-



Pacific Northwest wheat industry representatives meet with U.S. Wheat Associates' South and Southeast Asia team at their regional office in Singapore to discuss market trends, buyer feedback, and ongoing quality programs supporting soft white wheat exports

lion metric tons annually from 2026 to 2030. A strong PNW presence, through plant tours, lab visits, and hands-on training, will be key to translating the MOU into tangible results. These efforts can help turn sporadic purchases into consistent, long-term business, while creating opportunities for technical collaboration to flourish.

Cross-cutting challenges within reach

On pricing and logistics, Indonesian millers emphasized that U.S. wheat often lands at higher prices than competing origins, and storage realities (bagged inventory, pest pressure) can complicate quality management. While geography cannot be changed, exporters in the PNW can lean into predictability, transparent logistics, and blending guidance that helps mills hit specifications without waste.

When it comes to dough handling, SW's low-protein, low-ash attributes help produce world-class crackers and cookies, yet some mills report "stickiness" under certain conditions. Those issues are solvable; targeted moisture control, process adjustments, and blend tweaks coached by USW and technical partners keep SW performing and reduce scrap. Procurement standards are also evolving, with more buyers requesting sustainability and non-GMO certificates to preserve export options for finished goods. Coordinating with USW on streamlined documentation and clear talking points will help buyers meet downstream requirements without added burden.

Tariffs and policy shifts remain persistent wild cards. But despite this uncertainty, wheat organizations are holding steady to their core commitments: finding new



The U.S. Wheat Associates reception in Singapore brought together regional flour millers, trading partners, and Pacific Northwest industry leaders to reinforce relationships and highlight the 2025 U.S. wheat crop

market opportunities for U.S. wheat and helping our global customers meet their business needs. The most durable case for SW anchors in plant-floor performance — objective measures like SRC that correlate with desired textures and yields — so the value proposition endures bouts of tariff or freight volatility.

Why these missions matter

The tri-state format works. The joint presence of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho signals unity among suppliers that leads to reliability for customers. Because soft white is grown in all three states, the delegation can hear the same feedback on quality and performance from overseas bakers, millers, and procurement teams. Additionally, all three commissions are members of USW, which helps represent PNW growers in these overseas markets. This coordination ensures the feedback customers tell USW in-country is delivered to the farmers, researchers, and marketers who can act on it.

This trade mission underscored that SW's advantage is the direct result of our growers' commitment to planting varieties with desirable end-use quality that result in the crackers, cookies, wafers, and breads enjoyed across Southeast Asia. On-farm commitment is one of the factors overseas customers notice, and that makes PNW SW difficult to substitute. The task for the Pacific Northwest industry is to keep showing up, keep solving, and keep proving why SW from the PNW is the dependable choice when product texture, process efficiency, and brand loyalty are on the line. Where mills and bakeries measure what matters, PNW SW earns its place. ■



The Pacific Northwest delegation joined Enzo Ladrado (second from right) of Atlantic Grains, Monde Nissin, and Suntrak Corporation for dinner in Makati City to discuss partnership opportunities and the importance of soft white wheat in the Philippine food industry

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Wheat: The sleeper crop that's waking up



By Allison Thompson
Owner, The Money Farm

In every market cycle, there's a moment when attention shifts, when the spotlight turns from the loudest market to the quiet one working in the background. That's where wheat finds itself right now. For most of the year, wheat has been the forgotten crop, overshadowed by soybeans, outtalked by "King Corn," and left to grind lower. But quietly, the tone is changing. Prices have firmed, export demand is picking up, and even the global headlines are starting to tilt in wheat's favor. What's happening now isn't a speculative flash or a headline-driven frenzy. It's a steady, data-driven reminder that wheat's role in the world grain economy is far more important — and far more durable — than the trade gives it credit for.

The spark that turned heads recently came from an old, familiar name: China. Rumors of fresh Chinese interest in U.S. wheat were first dismissed as noise. But when confirmation came that two cargoes had been

booked, the market took notice and for good reason. China

hasn't been an active U.S. wheat buyer, leaning instead on

Australia, the Black Sea, and the European Union. That

makes these purchases more symbolic than statistical, a signal that U.S. wheat

has finally priced itself competitively again on the world stage. The fact that

prices held after the news, rather than fading as they often do, suggests a stronger undercurrent of demand.

For years, U.S. wheat has been priced out of many destinations due to freight advantages and cheap competition from the Black Sea. But as global wheat bids have stabilized, and, in many cases, ticked higher, the spread between U.S. and world values has narrowed.

Even beyond China, U.S. wheat demand is quietly outperforming expectations. To date, U.S. wheat export inspections are running ahead of last year's pace only a few months into the new marketing year. That strength is notable because beneath all of this sits the larger, structural story: U.S. wheat's global importance hasn't faded, it's simply been drowned out by bigger, louder markets. Russia may be the world's largest exporter, but with every passing season, its dominance becomes more complicated. Fluctuating export taxes, shifting government quotas, and sanctions that snarl logistics make the Black Sea supply chain far from bulletproof. Ukraine's reduced capacity continues to reroute trade into the Middle East and North Africa, and every weather hiccup in the region reinforces why buyers can't afford to rely on a single origin.

That's where U.S. wheat re-enters the picture. Reliability, consistency, and quality still count, maybe more now than ever. Importers are learning that "cheap" wheat isn't always dependable wheat. As global buyers look to secure stable supply chains, U.S. exporters stand to benefit. Layer in the persistent backdrop of food security, with governments and millers showing less tolerance for hand-to-mouth inventories, and precautionary buying is quietly replacing just-in-time trading. That subtle shift is building a stronger floor beneath the market.

The result? Buyers are diversifying, not just for price, but for reliability. That's where U.S. wheat shines. U.S. exporters have proven their consistency and quality, especially as end users in Asia and North Africa show greater interest in blending high-protein wheats into rations and milling programs.

The demand story is often what separates a short-term rally from a structural base. And this year, that base looks more stable than it has in a long time. While demand headlines have given wheat a reason to perk



up, the supply side hasn't derailed the story. Harvest and crop development across the Southern Hemisphere are shaping up better than feared, but not bearish enough to change the tone.

In Australia, overall production looks solid, but likely smaller than last year's record harvest. If favorable rains continue through spring, Australia should remain a major exporter into Asia, with quality and logistics supporting demand. Argentina, meanwhile, is putting together one of its better crops in recent memory. After last season's drought and reduced acreage, improved rainfall and strong, early-season conditions have turned expectations higher. While frost and excess moisture in a few southern areas have caused some variability, overall production looks healthy — a far cry from last year's struggles.

Together, the two Southern Hemisphere producers are contributing steady, but not overwhelming, supply, which keeps the world wheat balance stable rather than heavy. In other words, global wheat production is "good enough" to calm bears, but not big enough to chase buyers away. That balance gives the market something it hasn't had for a while: a foundation.

While wheat's finding its own footing, it's also getting a little help from the throne. "King Corn" has caught a bid lately, and that momentum is spilling into wheat exchanges. Corn futures have pushed higher on tightening U.S. supply expectations and renewed export interest from key buyers. With ethanol margins holding up and South America's second-crop corn still to go into the ground, the tone in corn has quietly turned supportive.

Historically, when corn starts to firm, wheat doesn't stay quiet for long. The two commodities share more than acreage. They compete for feed demand, export market share, and fund positioning. A strong corn market helps validate broader ag sentiment, often giving wheat the tailwind it needs to sustain gains.

That's what we're seeing now. "King Corn" may be back on the move, and wheat is content to follow, not as a follower in fundamentals, but as a beneficiary of tone. When both feedgrains firm, the market narrative changes. Instead of searching for weakness, traders start looking for opportunity.

Wheat's personality is different from other crops. It doesn't reward panic. It rewards patience. This is not a market you sell because it's up 20 cents. It's a market you manage because it's finally showing signs of life. The best wheat rallies rarely happen overnight. They build

slowly, grind higher, and then, all at once, accelerate when no one's looking.

That's why so many seasoned producers call wheat the "sleeper crop." It's the one that tests your discipline the longest, and then rewards it the most when patience holds. The current setup fits that pattern perfectly. Futures have stabilized above early-autumn lows. Basis levels across the northern Plains are quietly firming. Export programs are gaining traction, and global buyers are re-engaging after a long hiatus. There are no fireworks here, just the steady construction of a base. And that's what real rallies are made of.

For producers, the message is simple: don't sell yourself short. Wheat tends to bottom when attention is elsewhere, when corn and soybeans dominate headlines. The same setup appears to be unfolding again. Historically, wheat prices often firm through winter and into early spring as global demand peaks and buyers cover forward needs. If the broader macro backdrop — including corn strength, a softer U.S. dollar, and seasonal export flows — stays aligned, there's reason to believe the trend could extend further than many expect.

This doesn't mean risk should be ignored. Wheat is still a market that rewards scaled-up selling and consistent hedging, but that doesn't mean it's a market to dump at the first sign of green. The better move? Let the "sleeper" wake up fully before you roll over and hit snooze.

Wheat doesn't shout. It whispers.

While traders fixate on soybeans and celebrate corn's comeback, wheat is quietly rebuilding its story, one rooted in real demand, global steadiness, and a shift in tone that's hard to ignore. China's return, firmer U.S. exports, balanced Southern Hemisphere crops, and support from "King Corn" all point to a market finding its footing again. Wheat's relevance never disappeared, it simply went quiet. And now, that silence feels more like strength.

For producers, the takeaway is simple: this isn't a market you sell just to be safe. It's a market you manage with patience, strategy, and confidence. Because when wheat wakes up, it doesn't tiptoe. It runs. And by the time the world catches on, those who stayed disciplined are already ahead of the crowd. ■

Allison Thompson is the owner of The Money Farm, a grain marketing advisory service located in Ada, Minn. She is also still actively involved in her family's grain farm, where her husband and father grow corn, soybeans, and wheat.

Keeping the grain trains rolling down the track

Brad Wiley, HighLine Grain Growers

By Kevin Gaffney
Special to Wheat Life

Having been raised in rural Montana wheat country, it's probably not surprising that **Brad Wiley** ended up with a career in the grain industry. Wiley is the foreman of HighLine Grain Growers' shuttle train loading facility in Four Lakes, Wash. He traveled a circuitous route in his career before joining the HighLine team in 2015.

Wiley's family farmed in his youth, but due to tough times in the early 1980s, his father took a job with the Cargill corporation. The family moved from the Judith Basin area to Chester, Mont. During Wiley's high school years, Cargill transferred his father to Arlington, Ore.

"It was about that time that I began to seriously consider the grain industry as a potential career path," said Wiley.

Wiley graduated in 1990 and attended college for a year before deciding to begin his working career in the grain industry. After accepting a position with Cargill, the company paid him to take classes at Panhandle State University in Oklahoma.

The opportunity to move back home to Arlington presented itself, so Wiley transferred to a position with Cargill there. Not only was he able to return to the Pacific Northwest (PNW), but he renewed a friendship with a former schoolmate, Melissa, and they were soon married. Three years later, Cargill transferred Wiley to Lakota, N.D.

"I really would have preferred to stay in the PNW, but by this time, I had extensive background in fertilizer handling and custom application. I had also worked handling grain commodities, including loading rail cars and river barges," said Wiley. "I was placed where my experience was most beneficial to my employer."

The next stop was Winchester, Ohio. This region had corn, soybeans, and soft red winter wheat as the main crops. Wiley was still working with custom fertilizer applications at this time.

"Ironically, about one year after moving to Ohio, I was transferred to Ord, Neb. I say it was ironic because I had previously said I never wanted to move to Nebraska," said Wiley. "However, those four years were some of my favorite ones. I worked with great people there. I was involved with building a new, 360,000-bushel annex facility, my first major construction project. It was my first shuttle train loading experience.

Cargill was moving about 8-12 million bushels of grain annually at that facility, most of which was corn.



Wiley then was transferred to nearby Albion, Neb. There was business growth there with a new ethanol plant being built adjacent to the Cargill facility. Wiley was involved with another facility expansion project there in preparation for being the primary supplier of corn for the nearby ethanol plant. It was at this time the first major change to Wiley's career path came about, and it was a significant move in geographic location and in the culture of his new company.

"I really didn't have any plans to leave Cargill, but I always kept my eyes open for an opportunity to return to the PNW if the right position came up," said Wiley. "That opening came at Mid-Columbia Producers (MCP) in Oregon."

Wiley first interviewed for a general manager trainee position, but didn't land that job. Before heading back to Nebraska, he was offered their operations manager post, which he accepted.

"It was an entirely different company structure for me," said Wiley. "I left a huge corporation where all the company culture and operational procedures were well established to a healthy smaller grain cooperative where my job entailed establishing new systems and programs and upgrading facilities throughout the company."

Wiley began building and refining new transportation

and safety systems and other training programs. Some of the MCP stations and facilities had not been upgraded or maintained in a timely manner, so Wiley worked diligently to upgrade the cooperative's stations and locations.

"Fortunately, MCP had a management team and board of directors that saw the value of reinvesting in their facilities to improve their value and reduce long-term operational costs," noted Wiley. "I enjoyed my eight years there very much."

Wiley spent one year as an MCP grain trader, which widened his experience and knowledge of the business side of the grain industry. Then came perhaps the most critical point in Wiley's entire career. He suddenly found himself without a job. When the MCP general manager who had hired Wiley finally retired, the manager trainee took over, and his management style did not mesh well with Wiley's. Wiley was terminated, and the new general manager brought in someone whose management style better fit what he wanted.

"Here I am, 23 years into my career, looking for a job," recalled Wiley. "I had been all over the country, had been exposed to nearly all aspects of the grain industry, including grain export. I had many years of management experi-

ence but was unemployed. Curiously, losing my job wasn't a totally negative experience. It may seem odd, but reflecting back, it gave me an opportunity for self-examination and personal growth."

At a unique crossroads in his career, Wiley had many good offers for new jobs, including his former employers at Cargill. Wiley decided to take a position with Haskins Construction, a company he had worked with over the years on grain station building and remodeling projects. While he enjoyed his year with Haskins, it didn't take Wiley long to realize how much he missed the grain industry. He began another job search.

Wiley was hired by a group of grain companies, HighLine Grain Growers, to build a new rail loading facility at Four Lakes, Wash. HighLine had been formed by necessity. The potential loss of grain rail shipments to export markets for hundreds of central and eastern Washington growers was at stake. BNSF, the major rail carrier, had announced they could no longer serve their facilities with large train units because the track could no longer safely handle the traffic. A solution was needed, and after extensive research and planning, the decision was made to merge several grain companies and build

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a shuttle train loading facility that would have functional access to the main BNSF line.

By the time Wiley was hired, HighLine was already in the beginning stages of constructing their Four Lakes grain train loading facility.

"I wanted to stay in the PNW, so landing here at HighLine has been almost like a dream come true for myself and my family," said Wiley.

Wiley was established as the foreman of the shuttle train facility and later as the operations manager of the east region of HighLine grain stations and facilities.

"I was probably the only person interested in the Four Lakes position who had extensive experience running trains, shuttle loaders and also had experience managing grain facilities and construction project management proficiency," said Wiley.

Wiley hit the ground running, and with the essential assistance of Russ Felker, who had been with Almira Farmer's Warehouse Company for years, the facility was soon completed and ready to receive and ship grain cars.

Wiley is impressed with how HighLine was able to build the \$30 million facility at Four Lakes, and how efficiently it has operated the station from the very beginning.

"The very first shuttle train scheduled was an unload and reload job," said Wiley. "Normally, you expect a few minor glitches. In this case, we were the first shuttle facility to unload and reload back-to-back under the allotted time limit. We have never missed a shuttle train loading deadline in 10 years. We also have never had a loss of time accident in those 10 years.



HighLine Grain Growers' rail loading facility at Four Lakes, Wash.

"I admit I'm proud of our record and the great job done by our full-time, five-man crew here at Four Lakes. I can't say enough about the fantastic job they do every day."

Wiley believes HighLine made outstanding decisions in designing, planning, and operating the company.

"From east to west, most of the existing internal structure of the prior companies stayed the same. Foremen have the same crews, etc. A concerted effort was made to keep intact as many teams and working relationships as possible."

Total inside storage at Four Lakes is 2.1 million bushels. When they utilize two outside piles, that adds another 2.4 million bushels to the total capacity. About 22 million bushels of grain move through the Four Lakes facility annually. Each shuttle train of 116 cars hauls 432,000 bushels of grain. HighLine loads out about 50 unit trains each year. Wiley estimates they bring in about 500,000 bushels weekly and ship out one shuttle train weekly at around 432,000 bushels.

Most grain coming into Four Lakes is by rail, often in "scoot trains," which are generally 75-80 cars each. They will be filled up all along the Washington Eastern Railroad, a shortline rail running from Coulee City to Cheney. Grain from growers west of Coulee City is trucked for loading onto the scoot trains. HighLine operates over 40 station locations across their system. Once loaded, the BNSF trains will reach port facilities at Longview or Kalama within 24 hours.

Wiley reflected on changes he has seen in the grain industry over the decades.

"It is truly a global market more than ever before," he said. "It is critically important for any successful grain company to have a top-level general manager, an extremely strong grain trader, and an outstanding operations manager. Unlike in the past, grain companies don't make their profits off storage and handling fees paid by their growers. In order to be successful in the long run, a company must be able to earn profits through margin trading and wise investing. For a company to stay prosperous, it must be financially healthy enough to reinvest in their structures and facilities for the long term."

Wiley and his wife, Melissa, have three daughters: Danyelle, Alyson, and Kendyl. They have four grandchildren they enjoy spending time with and spoiling. For more information on HighLine Grain Growers, visit their website at highlinegrain.com. ■

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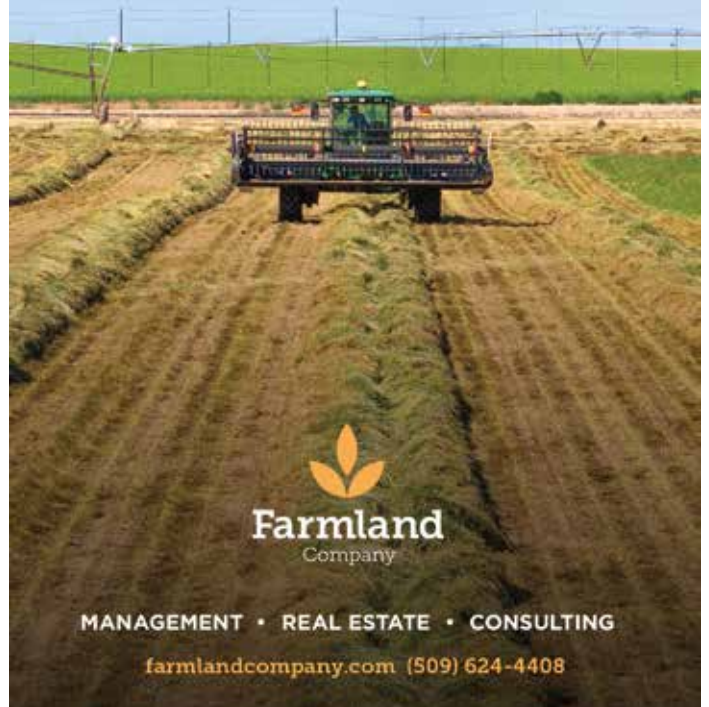
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THE BOTTOM LINE

What the One Big Beautiful Bill means for ag

By Ryan Janke

CPA, Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed with what appears to be a whole lot of changes from both a tax perspective and government programs affecting farmers. The bill has received substantial media coverage, but what are the key takeaways concerning ag? Some provisions sound good on paper but have limited usefulness to the bulk of ag producers. Other provisions may not sound like much but could have significant impact on some farm operations.

The bill strengthens the farm safety net and commodity support programs, like the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, raising reference prices by 10–21%, with wheat seeing an increase of about 15%. Attempting to make insurance more affordable, crop insurance premium support increased by 3–5% across coverage levels. Additionally, producers enrolled in ARC can now also opt for the Supplemental Coverage Option as a crop insurance alternative, offering potential planning advantages when evaluating crop insurance and Farm Service Agency programs. As part of these changes, there is opportunity to expand eligible base acres for operations where it makes sense. This may make a large difference to a limited number of farms for future payments.

Higher payment limits for ARC and PLC (\$155,000 up from \$125,000) will help operations that were close to limitations. Entity parity established in the bill may be one of the largest changes to payment limits in recent past. LLCs and S-corporations will be allowed to have multiple payment limitations based on ownership, which resembles general partnerships historically. C-corporations (not included) will remain within one payment limit.

There is still guidance that needs to be addressed and issued; we do not want to commit to knee-jerk changes of entity structures, but it is something that needs to be thought through during planning.

The federal estate tax exemption was increased to \$15 million (\$30 million/couple) and indexed for inflation

moving forward. This is a welcome relief compared to the prior \$5 million that was floated with prior administrations. This federal exemption will allow most operations to escape federal estate tax consequences, but everyone must be very aware of the Washington state exemption levels that could sting if not planned for.

Effective July 1, 2025, Washington state increased the estate exemption to \$3 million/individual (previously \$2.193 million), which will shield smaller estates from paying Washington state estate tax. With this increase in exemption, tax rates increased across the board. The top rate increasing to 35% for taxable estates above \$9 million represents the highest estate tax rate in the country and could still impact estates that do not have a federal estate tax problem. The farm exemption for Washington state estate tax remains in place with an enhanced allowance for a “qualified nonfamilial heir” that may apply in very limited circumstances.

The moral of the story is to continue to be vigilant and address potential estate issues even though there may not appear to be a federal problem with the increased \$15 million exemption.

Other tax provisions such as 100% bonus depreciation and enhanced Section 179 limits are a welcome relief within the ag community. The 20% qualified business income deduction (Section 199A) was made permanent and represents substantial tax savings for qualifying businesses.

The SALT deduction cap and “no tax on tips,” which seems to generate a large portion of the media coverage, have very little impact on the majority of Washington state ag producers.

Overtime tax exemptions will likely drive employee questions as we move to the end of year for farm operations that have employees. Overall, employees can deduct up to \$12,500 of “qualified overtime pay” from their federal taxable income as long as it is reported correctly on their annual W-2. It appears that farm overtime will not qualify as “qualified overtime pay.” Washington, Oregon, and California have farm overtime requirements at the state level, but qualified overtime

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pay is determined at the federal level under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). FLSA does not require overtime pay for agriculture workers, and as a result, the overtime paid to Washington state farm workers will not qualify for the deduction unless special rules are added to the law.

While the bill doesn't change every operation's plan moving forward, it opens doors to a large amount of discussion and strategic planning opportunities for ag producers around the country. When the farm economy is struggling, it may seem less necessary to hold advisor

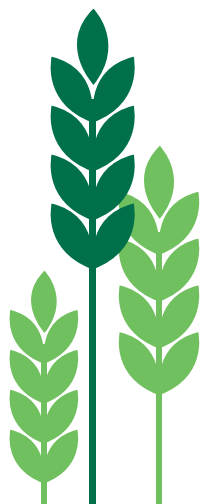
meetings and planning sessions. However, proactive planning and decision making are the key to operational success. Looking in the rear-view mirror doesn't give much of a picture about what lies ahead. I encourage you to sit down with your trusted advisors to review your situation and possible opportunities that may exist. ■

Ryan Janke, CPA is a shareholder at Leffel, Otis and Warwick P.S. He works out of the firm's Davenport, Fairfield, and Tekoa offices. Ryan works primarily with farmers and ag-related businesses. He can be reached at rjanke@low.cpa.

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In 1902, John Brown came to the Lamont area to start farming (above). Nearly 123 years later, the farm is still in the family (below), operated by fourth generation Charles (Adele) Brown, fifth generation Rowdy (Mackenzay) Brown, and fifth generation Beau Brown. Photos submitted by Beau Brown.



Sheila Howard inspecting the lentil crop on Sievers Farm near Spangle. Photo by Marshall Howard.



Harvest at Wagner Farms in Harrington, while swathing happens in the background by the Jacobsens. Photo by Travis Wagner.



Carlton Harvesters at Joe Thomas Farms in Prescott. Photo by John Thomas.



Your wheat life...



Harvest from Walla Walla County.
Photo by Mike Tardif.



First-time bank-out driver Madison Worden of Walla Walla for White Farms of Walla Walla. Photo by Amy White.

Email pictures to editor@wawg.org. Please include location of picture, names of all people appearing in the picture and ages of all children.

During harvest 2024, the Fagerholm cousins came to visit Poe Farms in Hartline for the day and spent time with cousin James and uncle Terry on the combine and with grandpa in the truck. Pictured from left to right are Hannah Fagerholm (8), Luke Fagerholm (10), James Poe (12), Nathan Fagerholm (12), Joshua Fagerholm (14), and grandpa John Poe. Photo by Susan Poe.



HAPPENINGS

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

DECEMBER 2025

5-7 HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS. Santa, parade, shopping. Waitsburg, Wash. waitsburgcommercialclub.org/events

9-10 WSU WHEAT ACADEMY. Increase your knowledge of disease diagnostics, insect pest management, herbicide decisions and nutrient management. Registration is required. Pullman, Wash. <https://smallgrains.wsu.edu/event/2025-wsu-wheat-academy/>

JANUARY 2026

13 WAWG BOARD MEETING. Meeting starts at 10 a.m. at Washington Wheat Foundation Building, Ritzville, Wash. (509) 659-0610, wawg.org

13-14 2026 CROPPING SYSTEMS CONFERENCE. Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, Wash. Registration and more info at directseed.org

16-19 LAKE CHELAN WINTERFEST. An event for the whole family! Ice sculptures, fireworks, ice slide, and more! Chelan, Wash. lakechelan.com/winterfest/

17 WINTERFEST. Experience the fun and excitement of winter games in Deer Park! A community celebration with events for the whole family. Deer Park, Wash. facebook.com/DPWAKiwanis/?fref=tag

18-20 OLYMPIA DAYS. WAWG's annual advocacy trip to Olympia needs grower participation from every county. Call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.

21-22 2026 NORTHWEST HAY EXPO. Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. For information visit wa-hay.org/northwest-hay-expo.html ■

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