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WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

MARCH | 2026

ON THE HILL

WAWG leaders, staff travel
to D.C. to advocate
for industry

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

AMMO recaps: Combatting Italian ryegrass;
tools to deal with herbicide resistance;
finding financial balance

Make a marketing plan, Part 2

Wheat in Latin America:
Reflections from ALIM 2025

The Catch, Part 2

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President's Perspective



Searching for financial viability in today's ag

By Gil Crosby

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Washington agriculture has long been a cornerstone of the state's economy. Today, however, the question facing farmers is not how much we can produce, but whether we can remain financially viable while doing so. One of the biggest challenges is rising input costs, while wheat prices remain roughly the same as they were 40 years ago.

Agricultural viability has become an increasing concern over the last several years. While farming has always faced difficult cycles, we are now losing more farmers than ever before. In Washington alone, we are losing an average of two farms per day, more than 3,700 farms between 2017 and 2022. During that same time, the state lost over 102,000 acres of farmland. Washington agriculture is overwhelmingly family-based: 96% of farms are family-owned and operated, accounting for 93% of total production and contributing 12% to the state's economy.

Agricultural viability can be defined as "the ability of a farming operation or system to remain functional, profitable, and sustainable over the long term." On my farm, we are constantly working to meet these standards, knowing that each of these components depends on the others for long-term success. Since returning to the farm full time in 1993, I have seen and helped implement significant changes, from updating farming practices to improving crop marketing strategies. We strive to be good stewards of the land, remain resilient in the face of economic and climate challenges, and maintain the capacity to sustain production over time.

Right now, profitability is the greatest challenge. We have been in a downward economic slide for more than three years, with Washington state agriculture ranking last in profitability compared to other states. Meanwhile, input costs such as fertilizer, fuel, seed, pesticides, and wages have risen at alarming rates. For many wheat farmers, margins have turned negative. As a result, farms have become increasingly reliant on government payments, which have made up a significant portion of income in recent years. Most farmers do not want to depend on government support to survive. Long-term reliance on subsidies is not a sustainable model for agriculture, nor is it the future most farmers envision for their operations.

There aren't any easy answers. Wheat trades on the global market, so farmers can't set their own price. Controlling input costs, including worker wages, is also out of our hands, and we have to rely on the state and federal government to help regulate those. Passing a farm bill would help provide some certainty, as would making sure crop insurance remains a viable safety net. It's a depressing outlook and will likely remain so until the global market has an upturn. Unfortunately, for that to happen, there will have to be a negative event that threatens the world's wheat supply. That likely means some wheat farmer somewhere will have to lose much of their crop, and I don't wish that on anybody.

For now, Washington wheat farmers will keep moving forward, doing our best to keep costs down and working to keep the farm viable another year. ■

Cover photo: Washington leaders and staff made several trips back to Washington, D.C., last month to advocate for the wheat industry and the lower Snake River dams. See pages 8 and 26. 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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Non-Voting Membership						
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Industry Associate \$250	X	X	X			

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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WAWG at WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

Growers report good moisture, little snow

At the Feb. 20, 2026, Washington Association of Wheat Growers' (WAWG) state board meeting, counties reported nice winter wheat stands with good moisture overall, although the repercussions of such a mild, wet winter were showing up in the form of stripe rust and wheat grain mites. Spring fieldwork, especially in the warmer counties, had begun.

Dennis Koong, regional director of the National Agricultural Statistics Service's (NASS) Northwest office, and Roylene Comes At Night, Washington state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), both called into the meeting. Koong told growers that the regional office would no longer be repackaging national reports into state and regional reports. The information is still available in the national reports or through the Quick Stats database on NASS's website. Data collection for the Ag Resource Management Survey is currently

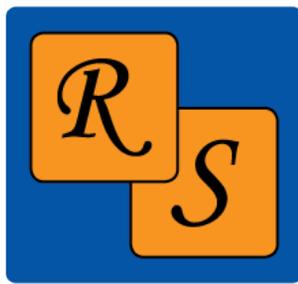
happening. Koong assured growers that the data is only published in aggregate form and is 100% confidential.

NRCS staff is busy working through program applications. Last year, Comes At Night said they obligated about 300 contracts, and there is more interest than there is funding available. The state NRCS office lost more than 40 employees, and they are working to fill those holes. Comes At Night also reported that NRCS is making changes to many programs, especially the Conservation Stewardship Program, and told growers to "stay tuned" for those changes, as well as improvements in field offices and getting more staff out in the field.

Diana Carlen, WAWG lobbyist, also called into the meeting to give a state legislative report. As of Feb. 20, state legislators are 40 days into a 60-day session. One of the bills WAWG has been tracking, an ag unionization bill, was not brought up for a vote in time for the last cutoff, so



SPOKANE AG EXPO. Washington Wheat Ambassador Luke Goetz (left) and Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) board member Matt DeGon took turns sharing wheat facts with our many wheat wheel spinners at WAWG's Spokane Ag Show booth last month.



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***CARLSSON CL:** New Two-gene Clearfield hybrid with high fall vigor. Medium-early maturity. Excellent plant health with stay green characteristics. Enhanced resistance to blackleg and pod shatter. Good lodging resistance. Very high yield and oil potential

***COLIN CL:** hybrid with medium maturity. High cold tolerance. Excellent root development. Good drought tolerance and plant health. Superior tolerance to pod shattering compared to Plurax CL. Multi-gene Blackleg resistance. High yield and oil content potential.

PNWVT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	PNW	2023	2024	2025
LBS PER ACRE							LBS PER ACRE			
Control Mean	3743	3399	2683	3128	4711	4403	Private trials			
Rubisco Seeds' Hybrids										
KICKER	4972	4701	4383	3505	5841	5394	KICKER	4678	6667	6828
MERCEDES	4419	4359	3756	3881	5393	4798	MERCEDES	4945	6569	6167
AKILAH					5876	5201	AKILAH	5686	5455	6094
PHOENIX CL	4611	4043	3398	3454	5093	4780	DRIFTER	4856	6795	6449

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

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it is dead. Another WAWG priority, a carbon tax exemption for lubricants, is still alive, and right before the cutoff, the Senate reintroduced the environmental crimes bill from the 2025 session and passed it. The “millionaire’s tax” is still moving, and Carlen said the ag lobby is working with accountants to try to understand how it might affect farmers. See more on the 2026 legislative session on page 20.

In other state matters, WAWG signed onto a letter to Gov. Bob Ferguson; Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture; and House and Senate leaders highlighting the fact that Washington is 50th in farm profitability. Ag organizations asked lawmakers to consider why the state is losing farms and associated businesses, and how the trend could be reversed. The letter included a list of recent closures of businesses and their impact on their local economies, such as the Del Monte pear cannery in Yakima, Lamb Weston in Connell, and Great Western Malting in Vancouver.

Since the last board meeting in January, WAWG leaders had returned from several trips to Washington, D.C. The first trip was in conjunction with National Association of Wheat Growers’ (NAWG) winter meeting. Andy Juris from Klickitat County said despite a snowstorm that snarled travel all along the East Coast, the meetings went very well and included several visits with White House officials. See page 26 for more on that trip.

Just a week later, Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director, was back in D.C. with a group of Marine Highway 84 stakeholders to advocate for the lower Snake River dams. See page 8). The group met with many Congressional offices from outside the Pacific Northwest,



PNW stakeholders discuss dams in D.C.

Washington Association of Wheat Growers Executive Director Michelle Hennings was back in Washington, D.C., in February, advocating for the lower Snake River dams, along with a group of river stakeholders. They met with many legislators and staff, among which were Reps. Michael Baumgartner (R-Wash.), Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.), Addison McDowell (R-N.C.), Jeff Hurd (R-Colo.), and Cliff Bentz (R-Ore.), and Sens. Jon Hustad (R-Ohio) and Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.). They also met with agency leaders such as Timothy Petty, deputy NOAA administrator and assistant secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere.

Joining Hennings for the trip were Captain Jeremy Nielsen, Columbia River Pilots; Neil Maunu, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association; Anthony Peña, National Association of Wheat Growers; Kurt Miller, Northwest Public Power Association; Leslie Druffel, The McGregor Company; Scott Corbitt, the Port of Lewiston; and Danielle Nelson, Torrey Advisory Group. Hennings said the group of stakeholders is dedicated to volunteering their time and effort to proactively reach out and educate others on Marine Highway 84.

“The group represents diverse stakeholder interests up and down the Columbia-Snake River System, which demonstrates the importance of this critical infrastructure and the reliance much of the Pacific Northwest economy has on it. It makes a big impact when we all walk into a congressional office together,” Hennings said. “I feel this trip was very successful, as we had productive discussions with both officials outside the Pacific Northwest delegation and those within the Pacific Northwest who oversee the lower Snake River dams on key committees. It’s crucial not to become complacent regarding the dams and our river system, even with a supportive administration.” ■

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with a special emphasis on offices that sit on committees that might have oversight on the dams. Hennings told the board that the meetings went very well. Hennings also updated the board on the latest lower Snake River dam litigation news. Both sides were back in court at the beginning of February, and U.S. District Judge Michael H. Simon was expected to issue a ruling on Feb. 23.

Hennings said Farm Bill 2.0 text has been released by Glenn “GT” Thompson (R-Pa.), chair of the House Agriculture Committee, but so far (as of Feb. 20), it hasn’t been scheduled for floor action. State and national ag groups are pushing Congress to get the farm bill across the line. Hennings also told the board that Farmer Bridge Assistance enrollment will open on Feb. 23 and close April 17, 2026. Growers will either have to apply online or go into their local Farm Service Agency office to sign paperwork. Payments will not be factored; wheat payments are set at \$39.35 per acre.

Both NAWG and WAWG signed onto a letter to Lee Zeldin, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with more than 200 grower organizations across the country, to urge the EPA to continue to provide access to pesticides that have been through the agency’s rigorous, science-based registration process.

Matt Horlacher, the state representative for the National Barley Growers Association (NBGA) and a Spokane County grower, reported on the recent NBGA meetings in D.C. Horlacher also sits on the board of U.S. Grains Council (USGC), which helps develop export markets. Horlacher said Washington state, for the first time ever, will play host to a barley malt school this summer. The event, which will be held in August and include stakeholders from across the brewing supply chain, will start in Seattle, travel to Pullman, and end in Spokane with the GRAINMAKER Festival.

Casey Chumrau, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), reported that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has made its first purchase under the Food for Peace program of 31,000 metric tons of wheat, although it is unlikely that any of it was soft white wheat. The WGC just finished its annual Research Review, which went very well, and is currently interviewing for several open positions in the office. Chumrau and several commissioners will be making a trip to Japan and Taiwan in April in conjunction with U.S. Wheat.

The next WAWG state board meeting is scheduled for March 16 at the Wheat Foundation building in Ritzville. ■

CAHNRS dean meets with Whitman County growers

Whitman County wheat growers had the opportunity to share lunch with **Raj Khosla**, dean of Washington State University’s (WSU) College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS), at their February meeting in Colfax.

Khosla joined the CAHNRS team in September 2025. He is a member of the WSU Systemwide Co-Design Council, which is an effort to understand what is needed for long-term sustainability, how to align resources with priorities, and how to evolve institutional models that are innovative, budget-informed, and regionally responsive. The council has been soliciting feedback through interviews and surveys. Khosla said they expect to have an action plan ready in June to “set the path going forward.”



Khosla also touched on current and upcoming vacancies in the wheat-supported endowed chairs. Filling those positions are a priority, and the college is currently accepting applications for several of them.

In budget news, WSU is expecting a 3-4% cut in state funding. Khosla said the majority of money goes towards hired salaries, so cuts will hit “warm bodies.” He asked growers to be a voice and advocate for CAHNRS. Another issue WSU is dealing with is student recruitment and retention. The retention rate at the land-grant university after one year is about 80%, and the college is looking for ways to engage students. One of the programs Khosla discussed is a Farm to Table dining program that would be developed and staffed by CAHNRS students. Profits would be used for scholarships and community support.

Morgan Menaker, the WSU regional Extension agronomist for Whitman, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties, said stripe rust is “out to play” this year due to the warm winter. Growers are also reporting the presence of grain mites. Menaker said he has been busy this winter doing grower workshops and meetings, and he is working on filling positions on his team, although a lack of funding is an obstacle.

Commissioner Ben Barstow gave a Washington Grain Commission update. The newly formed research advisory committee is off and running. Work on identifying falling number issues and testing continues. Barstow said some

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research is showing unexpected starch damage prior to known triggers. The WGC is planning to fund an effort to rank varieties for low falling numbers, much like their quality brochure.

Larry Cochran said there is legislation before the state Legislature that would change the makeup of the State Conservation Committee and how elections are held, which he is opposed to. ■

AgForestry Leadership program adopts 9-month curriculum

Washington’s premiere agriculture leadership program, AgForestry, is transitioning to a nine-month format in an effort to improve accessibility for prospective applicants and their organizations. The change will take effect beginning with Class 47, which is currently accepting applications through April 30, 2026.

The Class 47 time commitment is September 2026 through May 2027. Applicants must have lived or worked in Washington for at least one year and be at least 25 years old. Applicants must plan to remain employed in agricul-

ture, forestry, or a related natural resource industry for the duration of the class. Scholarships for wheat producers are available. For more information, visit agforestry.org.

The format change comes after a comprehensive, multi-pronged assessment conducted over the past several years. Feedback from organizational leaders and prospective participants indicated that the original 18-month format was not feasible for many due to operational and time constraints. ■

Scholarship offered

The Fraternal Beneficial Association (FBA, rural fire insurance) Legacy of Eastern Washington and Idaho is pleased to offer 25 \$10,000 scholarships to children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and dependents of former FBA members, many of whom are or were farmers and rural residents in our area. Requirements for applicants include:

- Be high school seniors or high school graduates who are planning to attend college, trade school, vocational school; college undergraduates; or current trade and vocational school students.
- Have a minimum GPA of 2.5. ▶



HIGHLINE GRAIN GROWERS UPDATE. Michelle Hennings (standing), executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, spoke at a February meeting of HighLine Grain Growers in Odessa. She discussed state and national priorities and talked about wheat growers’ January trip to Olympia to meet with state lawmakers.



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- Provide a current sealed and certified transcript with their signed application.

Applications end March 31, 2026. Go to fbalegacy.info for more information and an application form. ■

General, continuous CRP now open for enrollment

Last month, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the enrollment periods for agricultural producers and landowners to submit offers for the continuous and general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for continuous CRP now through March 20, 2026. Enrollment for general CRP will run from March 9, 2026, through April 17, 2026. FSA will announce dates for Grassland CRP sign-up in the near future.

"We're still very close to the 27-million-acre statutory

cap with 1.9 million acres available for all CRP enrollments this fiscal year, so enrollment is likely to be competitive," USDA's Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Richard Fordyce said. "This isn't about the total number of acres enrolled, it's about producers and landowners offering and USDA accepting the acres that can best deliver real, lasting benefits to soil, water and wildlife."

FSA will batch continuous CRP offers submitted by interested agricultural producers and landowners. Offers to re-enroll expiring CRP continuous acreage will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. New acreage offered in continuous CRP practices will be considered for acceptance on a first-come, first-serve basis if they support USDA conservation priorities including but not limited to practices that address water quality, such as filter strips and grass waterways, and practices that restore native ecosystems or target specific resource concerns.

General CRP offers are submitted through a competitive bid process. After the enrollment period closes, General CRP offers are ranked and scored by FSA, using nationally established environmental benefits criteria. USDA will announce accepted offers once ranking and scoring for all offers is completed. In addition to annual rental payments, approved general CRP participants may also be eligible for cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving vegetative cover.

Producers and landowners interested in participating in CRP should contact their local FSA county office. ■

WAWG thanks members

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers would like to thank each and every member of our organization. You, the members, keep the organization strong. The grassroots WAWG is built on keep the leadership, committees, and board members moving forward in a positive way. Without your support and activity, WAWG would not be the efficient and effective organization it is today. Thank you for your time and support.

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POLICY MATTERS

Legislature passes midpoint in 2026 session

By Diana Carlen

Lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

The Washington State Legislature continues its work in this short session. Several deadlines were reached in February, most recently (as of press deadline) the House of Origin cutoff on Feb. 17. To be considered alive, House bills had to have been voted off the House floor and sent to a Senate committee, and Senate bills must have been voted off the Senate floor and sent to a House committee. After the cutoff, legislators returned to policy committees to hear bills from the opposite chamber. It is important to remember that bills considered “necessary to implement the budget” are not subject to legislative deadlines.

On Feb. 16, Washington state budget writers finally got some good news in anticipation of their upcoming budget release. Revenue collections are predicted to increase \$827 million in the current two-year budget compared to expectations from November, according to a forecast from the state’s Economic and Revenue Forecast Council. Looking forward to the 2027-29 budget period, the council projected an increase of more than \$1 billion in revenue. These are the final numbers lawmakers will use as they craft a supplemental budget.

In February, the long-anticipated “millionaires tax” or “income tax” proposal was officially introduced. SB 6346/HB 2724 would impose a 9.9% tax on income exceeding \$1 million starting in 2028, with the first taxes due in 2029. It is estimated to bring in about \$3.5 billion a year from an estimated 30,000 taxpayers, according to a legislative staff analysis. The tax does not include the value of an individual’s home or retirement savings. Notably, a floor amendment was adopted to the bill that rolls back expanded retail sales taxes lawmakers adopted last year on certain services such as IT, temporary staffing, and live presentations. Lawmakers increased the exemption for charitable deductions from \$50,000 to \$100,000. On Feb. 16, the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 27-22. Three democrats joined all republicans in voting against the bill. Agriculture groups are working on some specific exemptions that would be helpful to the industry.

A bill from last year has resurfaced. The Environmental Crimes (Second Engrossed Substitute Bill 5360), sponsored by Sen. Yasmin Trudeau (D-Tacoma), is a comprehen-

sive environmental enforcement bill that creates a tiered system of criminal penalties for violations of Washington’s key environmental statutes, including the Water Pollution Control Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Hazardous Waste Management Act. The Senate brought it up as the final bill before the deadline and passed it out by a vote of 27-22. The bill was amended on the floor. One of the floor amendments exempts odors or fugitive dust caused by ag activities consistent with good agricultural practices from the state Clean Air Act violations. The bill has significant opposition from business and agriculture groups who argue it could open individuals up to criminal prosecution who unwittingly or unintentionally break the laws.

An exemption for lubricants from Climate Commitment Act compliance was amended onto Second Substitute House Bill 2215, sponsored by Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon (D-West Seattle), which lowers the threshold for fuel suppliers that began importing and selling fossil fuels after Jan. 1, 2023. This was a priority for the ag community and will provide some relief to farmers when purchasing lubricants beginning in 2027. The bill passed out of the Senate Environment, Energy and Technology Committee on Feb. 20.

The ag industry was watching Substitute Senate Bill 6045, which would apply collective bargaining rights just to farmworkers. The bill was on the Senate floor calendar but never was brought up for a vote of the full Senate and is dead for this year. Agriculture was united in opposing this legislation because of the fragile agricultural economy and the uniqueness of the industry.

Other notable bills that failed to pass out of committee before deadlines this month include:

- Small Farm Equipment Tax Exemption (House Bill 2584), sponsored by Rep. Tom Dent (R-Moses Lake), would have created a temporary sales and use tax exemption for high value farm machinery and equipment purchased and used directly in production by agricultural producers with no more than \$2,000,000 in prior year gross farm income, aggregated with affiliates. The exemption applied to qualifying farm machinery and equipment with a sales price of \$10,000 or more used directly in crop production, applied to sales and uses on or after Oct. 1, 2026, and expired Oct. 1, 2036. Because this bill has fiscal impact, it



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could be deemed “Necessary to Implement the Budget” and could be revived this session.

- Rodenticide Use Moratorium (House Bill 2516), sponsored by Rep. Lisa Parshley (D-Olympia), would have temporarily prohibited the use of anticoagulant rodenticides and rodenticides containing bromethalin, except for narrowly defined emergency uses, and directs a comprehensive scientific study of their impacts, data gaps, and safer alternatives, with both the moratorium and study authority expiring in 2029.

- PFAS in Agricultural Inputs (House Bill 2279), sponsored by Rep. Lisa Parshley (D-Olympia), would have directed the Department of Agriculture to evaluate and create standards for the use of perfluoroalkyl and poly-fluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances in fertilizers and pesticides, and authorized refusal or cancellation of product registrations that do not meet those criteria.

- Paraquat Herbicide Ban (Senate Bill 6330), sponsored by Sen. Marko Liias (D-Lynnwood), would have prohibited the sale, distribution, use, application, or handling of any herbicide containing paraquat statewide beginning Jan. 1, 2027, while allowing the director administering the state pesticide program to permit tightly controlled research uses under strict safety and reporting protocols and to adopt implementing rules.

- Diesel Fuel Tax Reduction (HB 2404), sponsored by Rep. Alex Ybarra (R-Quincy), would have rolled back the state special fuel tax on diesel to its July 1, 2016, rate, cancelled scheduled per-gallon increases beginning in 2025, and adjusted alternative-fuel license fee calculations to reflect the lower tax rate by tying 2026 fees to the 2024 cumulative fuel tax. The bill never received a hearing or other action.

Please visit wawg.org for weekly legislative updates. ■

Wheat industry responds to Florida’s glyphosate report

In response to the recent announcement by Florida officials regarding glyphosate and bread products, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), North American Miller’s Association (NAMA), and American Bakers Association (ABA) issued the following joint statement:

“Our nation’s farmers, millers, and bakers proudly serve families and communities as they champion safe, consistent, accessible, and affordable bread. Food safety is the top priority for the grain we grow, the flour we mill, and the bread we bake for all Americans. We appreciate Healthy Florida First’s stated purpose of improving the

lives of Floridians. Unfortunately, their recent announcement needlessly scares consumers about trace levels of glyphosate that don’t present genuine risks. Glyphosate is regulated and continuously reviewed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure levels are safe for all consumers, from adults to children.”

EPA’s limits are set well below levels that could pose a risk to human health, typically with at least a 100-fold safety margin. At the highest level reported in recent testing of 191 parts per billion, an adult would need to eat approximately 600 loaves of bread every day for life and a child 300 loaves every day for life to reach the limits set by U.S. health authorities.

This statement from NAWG, NAMA, and ABA comes after the Florida Department of Health tested eight bread products across five national brands commonly available in Florida grocery stores, claiming glyphosate was detected in six of the eight products tested.

The safety of glyphosate has been evaluated extensively through decades of scientific research and regulatory review in the U.S., and several other countries including the European Union, Australia, Korea, Canada, New Zealand, and Japan. The EPA affirms that glyphosate, when used in accordance with approved agricultural practices, does not pose a risk to human health through dietary exposure. EPA has reviewed and reassessed its safety and uses, including undergoing registration review, a program that re-evaluates each registered pesticide on a 15-year cycle. Departing from this nationally consistent, science-based approach in favor of isolated testing results undermines scientific consensus and distorts public understanding of food safety. NAWG, NAMA and ABA will continue to work with federal regulators to ensure that food safety policy remains grounded in standardized, national scientific consensus. ■

Farm Bill 2.0 text released

On Feb. 13, the House Agriculture Committee released legislative text for Farm Bill 2.0, formally titled the “Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026.” National Association of Wheat Growers staff has highlighted three major wins for wheat producers.

The bill more than doubles Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program funding. MAP increases from \$200 million to \$410 million annually, and FMD rises from \$34.5 million to \$82 million annually, alongside increases for other trade promotion tools.

Authorities for the Food for Peace program are transferred from USAID to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), restoring the program’s alignment with American

agriculture and strengthening its focus on U.S.-grown commodities. The legislation ensures USDA has full authority to administer the program and reserves a significant portion of resources for the purchase and shipment of U.S. agricultural products

The bill reaffirms that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the sole authority for making pesticide safety determinations under FIFRA, based on science and risk-based analysis, while preserving states' ability to regulate use within their borders. It also clarifies the role of state-led agencies in implementing EPA regulations, protecting farmers from a patchwork of conflicting safety standards, and reinforcing national consistency in interstate commerce. ■




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Two seasons, one staple: Understanding spring, winter wheats

Most Americans encounter wheat every day without ever thinking about how that wheat was grown. As with every wise investment, growing wheat requires diversification. Spring crops and winter crops help farmers diversify their crop portfolio and protect their soil health. Rotating fallow, spring, and winter wheat can vastly improve a soil system. While these two types of wheat come from the same species and end up in many of the same foods, their growing cycles and characteristics influence farming practices, availability, and, ultimately, the consistency of products consumers rely on every day.

The most basic difference between spring and winter wheat is when they are planted. Winter wheat is planted in the fall, survives through the cold winter months, and resumes growth in the spring before being harvested in early summer. Spring wheat, by contrast, is planted after winter has passed and completes its entire life cycle in just a few months. These crops are bred specifically for their timing: winter wheat requires exposure to cold in order to flower and produce grain (vernalization), while spring wheat would freeze and die if planted in the fall.

For consumers, this difference matters less in flavor and more in reliability. Winter wheat typically produces higher yields and helps protect soil from erosion by keeping living roots in the ground throughout winter. This makes it especially valuable in regions like Eastern Washington, where farmers rely on rainfall rather than irrigation. Higher yields and healthier soils help stabilize the wheat supply, which supports steady pricing and consistent availability of wheat-based foods in grocery stores.

Spring wheat plays a different but equally important role. Because it is planted later, spring wheat allows farmers to take advantage of spring moisture and adapt their crop choices based on weather conditions. It is often used as part of a crop rotation system that reduces weeds, pests, and disease without overusing chemicals. For consumers, this means wheat grown with fewer inputs and more sustainable practices.

In terms of end products, spring and winter wheat can both be used to make familiar foods like bread, cookies, and crackers. What matters most is not whether wheat is spring or winter wheat, but how it is managed, tested, and



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINTER & SPRING WHEAT

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE: Some wheat seeds grow better when planted in the spring, and some need to be dormant under the snow for them to vernalize.

WINTER WHEAT	WHEAT	SPRING WHEAT	WHEAT
SEPT	Planted and grows to be about 3" tall	APRIL	Planted after the snow has melted off the fields
NOV	Cold weather causes the plant to go dormant under the snow	MAY	Vernalizes more quickly than winter wheat
MARCH	Vernalizes after the snow melts	JULY	Quickly grows and ripens during the heat of summer
AUGUST	It's harvest time!	AUGUST	It's harvest time!

IN WASHINGTON STATE
Soft white wheat is grown from both winter and spring varieties.

YUM!
It is used to make a variety of pastries, cakes, and noodles.

DID YOU KNOW
Spring and winter wheats are often blended in order to achieve the ideal characteristics for absorption, mix time, and gluten strength?

This method is used to give the finished bread the desired texture, volume, and appearance!

matched to its final use. Farmers, millers, and researchers work closely to ensure that the wheat grown in the field performs well in the bakery or kitchen, linking farm decisions directly to food quality on the shelf.

Ultimately, for the average American eater, the difference between spring and winter wheat shows up not as a label on a loaf of bread, but as confidence in a safe, reliable, and affordable food supply. Behind everyday products is a careful balance of timing, climate, and stewardship. This helps ensure wheat remains a dependable and affordable staple in American diets year after year. ■

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Hill advocacy

WASHINGTON GROWERS TAKE AG VIABILITY MESSAGE TO THE WHITE HOUSE

By Trista Crossley
Editor, Wheat Life

Despite a major late January snowstorm that disrupted travel through much of the country, leaders and staff of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) trekked to Washington, D.C., to take part in national wheat organization meetings and spend time on the Hill, meeting with congressional offices and administration officials.

“The trip was very productive, and we were able to meet with many offices of our state’s congressional delegation,” said Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director. “We emphasized the problem of ag viability in Washington state and the fact that our state is ranked 50th in take-home pay for growers based on USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) data.”

Growers also discussed wheat price vs. input costs, the change in the food pyramid that puts grains at the bottom, and the importance of moving forward with a Farm Bill 2.0 that includes reauthorization of conservation programs, expanding and modernizing the farm credit title,

and codifying the transfer of the Food for Peace program to USDA.

Ag viability in the state was also very much on the minds of the Washington group during the first of two visits with White House officials: Jason Becker from the Office of Public Liaison and William Kelleher, domestic policy advisor. Hennings said the administration representatives were eager to learn about the factors contributing to farmers’ challenges and discuss potential solutions on how to bring input costs down. They also talked about the lower Snake River dams and the Conservation Reserve Program.

The second White House visit was arranged by the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) to allow wheat growers from across the country to engage directly with administration officials at the White House, including senior officials from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Domestic Policy Council, National Security Council, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

“It was very informative for growers to have access to



While in Washington, D.C., last month, a group of Washington Association of Wheat Growers leaders and staff had the opportunity to meet with Jason Becker from the White House Office of Public Liaison (second from left) and William Kelleher (third from left), domestic policy advisor, to discuss ag viability and why the state is 50th in the U.S. for farm take home income; lower Snake River dams; and conservation programs, specifically the Conservation Reserve Program.

senior administration officials and hear those officials recognize the issues wheat farmers across the country are facing,” Hennings said.

Another topic growers discussed with lawmakers was the need for science-based policies when it comes to pesticides. Gil Crosby, WAWG president and a grower from Spokane County, has been working closely with the Modern Ag Alliance to stress the need for the Agricultural Labeling Uniformity Act, which would provide clarity and consistency on pesticide labels and reinforces the EPA’s role as the national authority on pesticide labeling and packaging requirements.

“Pesticides are a critical part of farmers’ toolboxes and restricting access to them could do serious damage to our food supply system,” Crosby said. “We were able to impress upon legislators and Make America Healthy Again advocates the importance of grains in consumers’ diets and making decisions based on sound science and research.”

Besides the opportunity to meet with legislators, the annual national winter conference brings together wheat growers from across the country to take part in NAWG committee meetings where they discuss trade, transportation, budgeting, and planning for the future. WAWG Past President Jeff Malone sits on NAWG’s Environment and Research Committee, while WAWG Secretary/Treasurer Ryan Poe sits on the Domestic Trade and Policy Committee.

Prior to the D.C. trip, the WAWG board approved the organization’s 2026 national priorities at the January board meeting. Those national priorities focus on preserving food security; protecting markets; nutrition guidelines; promoting and protecting infrastructure; protecting food systems with safe and innovative pesticides; and supporting innovation, research, and sustainable food systems:

- **WAWG strongly supports modernizing future farm bills and continuing to offer agriculture and nutrition support programs.**

- **WAWG supports a do no harm approach, which includes maintaining the current structure of the crop insurance program and current cost-share levels.** Crop insurance is a critical risk management tool for farmers. Farmers pay their portion of the crop insurance premium, and without cost-share support, coverage would be cost-prohibitive, and the system would not function effectively. Without the safety net, it causes uncertainty for the future of agriculture and for the safe, reliable and abundant food supply the American public currently experiences.

- **WAWG supports the reauthorization of the farm bill and to make necessary adjustments to Price Loss**

Coverage (PLC) and Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) so they can function effectively.

- **WAWG supports prioritizing working lands conservation programs in the conservation title.** Voluntary programs like CSP, EQIP, and CRP have functioned well and provided an important incentive to producers to undertake practices that are good for the environment and good for their operations.

- **WAWG supports efforts to strengthen competition in agriculture input markets and reduce the cost**

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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.

- Funding through the Agricultural Trade Program (ATP) has been a boost to USDA cooperators, such as U.S. Wheat Associates, to help them operate at the needed capacity to maintain robust market presence for U.S. wheat farmers in the face of well-funded global competitors. **WAWG supports continued and increased strong federal funding through the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program to maintain the progress achieved with the ATP funds.**

- WAWG recognizes the importance of food aid to meet humanitarian needs across the globe. **WAWG supports purchasing U.S. wheat for U.S. food aid programs, rather than purchasing wheat from competitors.**

- WAWG supports full implementation and enforcement of existing trade agreements to allow fair trade to occur within the export marketplace.

- WAWG strongly supports the enforcement of Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreements with its trade partners.

- 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 keeping the lower Snake River dams intact as they are vital to Washington and the nation’s economy and transportation infrastructure. WAWG also supports funding for maintaining the Columbia River System. Removal of the four lower Snake River dams would significantly increase carbon emissions that contribute to climate change and jeopardize health, safety and livelihoods in already economically

fragile local and regional economies. **WAWG supports the findings in the 2020 Federal EIS and opposes any state, legislative, or administrative effort to remove or disrupt the Snake River dam system.**

- WAWG supports funding to maintain and improve Washington road, river, and rail systems.

- WAWG supports continued action regarding the Columbia River Treaty, which protects viability of U.S. navigation, hydropower, irrigation, and flood control.

- WAWG opposes cancelling crop protection product labels or uses unless equivalent replacement products are available. We support science-based research in these products.

- WAWG supports the professional use of pesticides and best management practices for their use.

- WAWG opposes legislation that would restrict or limit the use of pesticides through bans or by setting residue tolerance levels that are not based on science.

- WAWG supports incremental funding increases for USDA that cover mandatory pay costs and the rising costs at ARS research facilities, reducing funding for research and the ability to address stakeholder needs, unless covered in the salary and expenses budget. ■



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White House briefing



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Combatting Italian ryegrass

NEW REGIONAL AGRONOMIST OFFERS LESSONS FROM NORTH CAROLINA RESEARCH

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Cereal rye might not be the answer to Eastern Washington growers' Italian ryegrass problem, but **Morgan Menaker** is hoping there might be a few lessons to be gleaned from his work in North Carolina with it.

Menaker is the new Washington State University Regional Extension agronomist covering Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties. He previously worked as a field crops Extension agent for North Carolina State University where he worked closely with growers on managing herbicide-resistant ryegrass. He was presenting to growers in January as part of the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's 2026 winter schedule.

"Italian ryegrass is the exact same species here that we were dealing with on the East Coast. Some of the things that we were doing there, I think could translate here," he said. "It's an all-crops issue, not just a small grains issue."

Morgan said most North Carolina growers are no-till, get 40+ inches of rain annually, and work with clay soils that are very prone to erosion, even on no-till ground. Growers there typically follow a two-year rotation: corn planted in the spring and harvested in the fall, followed by winter wheat harvested in June, immediately followed by double-cropped soybeans that are harvested in the fall. The ground is then left fallow over the winter.

"Here's the rotation that I believe got us into a lot of trouble: winter wheat to soybeans to winter wheat to soybeans using the same grass herbicide in both crops," Menaker explained. "It was nice to pay the bills and get those paychecks and keep landowners happy, but I think that is what gave rise to our group 1 and 2 resistance."

Italian ryegrass has purple or reddish coloration at the base of its stem. The leaf blade is shiny and flat with ridge-like veins, and the seedhead is shiny, flat, and smooth with alternating seeds. In North Carolina, researchers have found that there are two biotypes: one that emerges



in the fall and another that emerges in the spring. Italian ryegrass seeds can't emerge from deep soil and has a high seed loss, offset with high seed production. On average, 60% of seeds shatter before wheat is harvested, and what's left is easily spread by combine. It has known resistance to four sites of herbicide action. Research has shown that for every Italian ryegrass plant per square meter, growers are losing a third of a bushel of wheat.

Menaker said growers back east have tried using residuals, such as Anthem Flex or Valor; mechanically ripping the plants out of the ground using light

discing or shallow tillage; or burning the plants down multiple times with "crazy" tank mixes. Research is showing some success with cover crops, specifically cereal rye, and fall residual herbicides.

"I don't think we're going to do this exact same thing here, but it worked for us there. Maybe it allows you guys to think outside the box and get a different perspective," Menaker said. "Trying to navigate our way through this is going to take a lot of folks thinking together."

Most of the North Carolina research has focused on a cereal rye variety called "Abruzzi," which has some allelopathic properties that suppress germination of other plants. The cereal rye is terminated chemically before planting summer crops. The research found that all treatments that included cereal rye reduced the number of Italian ryegrass seeds. In fact, cereal rye alone controlled Italian ryegrass 85% and 61% at 24 weeks after planting at one location and 82% in another.

The next stage of the study explored planting date, seeding rate, and pre-emergent herbicide combinations, as well as fertilization rates for the production of cereal rye for hay and straw production. Menaker said key takeaways from that study included:

- Timely planted cereal rye outcompetes Italian ryegrass.

- Intense management of cereal rye provides superior suppression of ryegrass compared to minimal management. “Trying to just cheaply get a cover crop was not going to work, unfortunately, and we had to give it the Cadillac treatment of that residual as well.”
- Planting a forage variety of cereal rye, such as “Abruzzi,” may allow lower seeding rates and dual purpose as a forage.

“That’s just what we saw from year one. We’ll see if year two yields the same result,” Menaker said. “Could you move the needle economically and maybe stomach this sort of thing? That was what we were looking at. Growers had a lot of questions for getting this crop in and using it for a forage.”

In talking to Eastern Washington growers, Menaker said some of the things he’s hearing are:

- Growers are already using residuals.
- They are terminating field edges to stop Italian ryegrass from getting deeper into fields.
- They are using nonselective herbicides post-emergence in cash crop.
- They are tracking the size and location of “resistant weed islands” around the Pacific Northwest.
- They are already using some allelopathic crops in rotations, such as triticale and oats.

Growers with questions can reach Menaker at morgan.menaker@wsu.edu. ■

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Start clean, stay clean

EXTENSION AGENT'S MESSAGE IS ANOTHER TOOL TO DEAL WITH HERBICIDE RESISTANCE

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Aaron Esser's message to growers at a workshop in January was fairly simple — the key to controlling weeds is starting clean and staying clean. Unfortunately, the way to accomplish that is anything but.

"I've been doing this for 28 years now. Everyone remembers Maverick Herbicide, right? When that first came out, pow. That stuff just smoked cheatgrass. It made our lives easy. We've forgotten about a lot of stuff since then, and what we used to do to control weeds. We've gone through 25 years of a lot of easy buttons," he said. "There's no more easy buttons."

Esser's presentation was part of the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's 2026 winter schedule. He manages the Washington State University (WSU) Wilke Research and Extension farm in Davenport, Wash. The 320-acre farm gets no money from WSU, so Esser has to make planting decisions like a farmer to support the farm and fund research. He uses various crop rotations across the farm to help with research: a three-year crop rotation (no-till fallow, winter wheat, spring cereal); a four-year crop rotation (no-till fallow, winter wheat, broad-leaf crop, winter wheat); and a continuous rotation. He told growers they need to look at integrated weed control that includes mechanical, cultural, and chemical components. That might mean some light tillage or changing up when and how chemicals are applied.

"When I talk about chemical, instantly, our minds go to post-emergent applications, because that's what we've been accustomed to," he said. "We've got the sprayers, the tanks, and we just like to get our wheat up, start in the spring in the same field, and go. You've got to figure how to change something up."

Growers should consider pre-emergent/residual herbicide applications, using chemicals with various modes of action. Esser mentioned a new winter wheat release, Rydrych MZ, that has tolerance to high label rates of Metribuzin to help control Italian ryegrass.

One of the main components of Esser's "start clean, stay clean" philosophy is having a plan. He encouraged growers to create a spreadsheet that tracks what crops were planted where, and what chemicals were applied. He handed out a worksheet and asked growers to pick their worst field and list the previous crops that were planted



and the top three worst weeds on it. Then he asked them to consider what they are going to do on that field in the future.

"What you've done here (pointing to previous crops) is why you have this (pointing to weeds). Ask yourself what you can do different," he said.

One suggestion, if downy brome is a problem, is to seed a little earlier in order to get bigger wheat that can handle a fall or a split herbicide application or even a higher application rate. Esser noted that weed control tends to be more difficult in his three-year rotations.

"I think having what you want to do down on a piece of paper is really important so you and your team are always on the same page," he said. "Rotation does matter. That cultural piece does matter long term."

Other weed control research projects taking place at Wilke include using herbicide-tolerant canola in rotations and using residual herbicides along with spot spraying to reduce winter annual grassy weed pressure. Esser has been using a Weed-It spot sprayer on the farm to reduce sprayer fatigue and stay on top of weeds, especially in mid to late-season no-till fallow management and postharvest seed control. He said the piece of equipment has saved him money by allowing him to target just the weeds and lets him use chemicals with different modes of action.

Esser said research in Oregon showed that downy

brome growing in winter wheat produced an average of 425 seeds per plant. Under ideal environments, the weed has the potential to produce 125 million plants per acre. Most downy brome seeds remain viable in the soil for two to three years.

“This is 100% a numbers game. One in a million downy brome plants are naturally resistant to Aggressor herbicide. I hate those odds. You need to look at long term viability and profitability over short term profitability and efficiency,” he said. “Don’t give one of those guys a chance to even make it to reproduction.”

Esser can be contacted at aarons@wsu.edu. ■

Editor’s note: A few weeks after this AMMO workshop, Esser gave another AMMO presentation in Ritzville that repeated much of the same information. He then spent time talking about winter annual grassy weed control. He covered the Clearfield and CoAXium technologies, Aggressor, and Metribuzin.

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Finding financial balance

ECONOMIST HELPS GROWERS FIND STABILITY IN TOPSY-TURVY AG ECONOMY

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

It can be hard to find stability in today's topsy-turvy ag economy, but an accurate balance sheet could make all the difference.

That was the message growers heard in January at a workshop focused on "The Business of Farming," presented by **Jon Paul Driver**. Driver is an ag economist with a background in ag risk management. He is a Washington State University (WSU) Extension economics specialist and is the founder and host of Hay Kings, a podcast and producer network of more than 90,000 members. He was presenting to growers as part of the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's 2026 winter schedule.

"I want you to take away that these are communication tools that demonstrate your capacity to survive in agriculture," Driver said. "One of my mantras is it's never just a bad year that takes down a farm. It's a bad year and something else. The strategy is to use cash flow and asset

management to build a buffer for the 'something else.'"

That something else could be a death or a divorce, insurance errors, worker injuries, or relationship strain during financial stress.

Driver said most growers will likely have multiple balance sheets for multiple entities. Growers need to inventory assets and liabilities, and those inventories should be updated regularly.

Assets

Driver said most producers can't provide a current, itemized list of assets. A grower's asset list should be used for accurate reporting on personal property taxes, proper insurance coverage, and internal management.

"If you don't build it (the asset list), you don't understand it," he said. "You lose the ability to perform your own financial analysis. These records are for us first, then insurance, and then bankers."

Assets are broken down into three categories: short term, intermediate term, and long term. The biggest long-term asset is land. Driver recommended listing all parcels, leased and owned, on a spreadsheet ("It doesn't cost anything extra to list them all") and include information such as the name the grower uses, landowner's name, lease details, mailing address, phone number, and legal description. Growers should audit this information annually to make sure details are correct. Buildings will generally be valued with property and should also be evaluated annually. Growers may even have different balance sheets based on cost basis and market value that they can use to do some stress testing.

Equipment is an intermediate-term asset. Driver suggested growers do an equipment audit and list make, model, serial number, hours, acres, and miles and then compare that to their insurance list. He also suggested that growers ensure that VIN numbers match on insurance and lender paperwork.

"If the values are coming down, that's lower premiums. If your replacement costs are truly lower, that could be lower premiums," he explained. "You're going to find something on your insurance agent's list that you got rid of a long time ago, that you've been paying for the whole time."

Current assets include investments made in a growing crop, consumables, and products for sale.



“If you haven’t previously inventoried fuel and pesticides and fertilizer as part of your balance sheet, that’s a note that you need to make. Those things should absolutely be on your balance sheet as a short-term asset,” Driver said.

Liabilities

Growers need to understand what they owe to protect what they own. Like assets, liabilities are broken down into current, intermediate term, and long term. Current liabilities are things growers are going to convert to cash in the next 12 months. They represent the immediate pressure on cash flow, such as operating loans, internal loans between business entities, accounts payable, and the current portion of long-term debt.

Intermediate liabilities are due over one to 10 years. These usually track alongside the life of equipment or livestock and include machinery and equipment loans, debt taken to expand livestock herds, and vehicle loans.

Long-term liabilities are usually due beyond 10 years. These are often the biggest burdens of an operation and include real estate mortgages, land contracts, and loans for buildings and improvements.

The balance sheet

“So now, as we think about the balance sheet that we have in front of us, we’ve looked at assets and liabilities — current portion, intermediate term, and long term. What do we do with it? The most basic use of this is to figure out our equity. If we take our assets and subtract out our liabilities, what we have, what we own, versus what we owe, the difference is equity,” Driver said. “This is really important why we have at least an annual update. Do it consistently. If you find that you’re in some financial trouble, update it every six months, then you start to add granularity to that data.”

The first thing lenders tend to look at on a balance sheet is the total debt-to-asset ratio. A ratio under 30% is considered strong. Over 60% is usually a red flag for a bank.

Liquidity, or cash flow, is another thing banks will be looking for. That value is found by dividing current assets by current liabilities. A ratio of 2 or higher is considered strong. Growers below a ratio of 1.1 could be left short on cash if something goes badly.

Cash flow

Driver likes to start new farmers out with the IRS Schedule F form that lists some standard categories for income and expenses and asks users to allocate amounts each month.

“The whole point for cash flow management is not run-

ning out of money, because that’s actually how your farm ends,” he said. “It’s not an asset problem. It’s a cash flow problem in every single liquidation ever. The only way to avoid a cash flow crisis is to plan ahead.”

Growers should be trending some items over time, like insurance costs, repairs, and maintenance.

“That’s absolutely something we can manage and have control over. It’s one of the bigger levers we can pull on to change the outcome,” he explained. He also suggested leaving ad hoc government payments out of cash flow planning.

At some point during the year, growers will usually find that their cash flow plan is wrong. Despite making growers feel “the worst,” Driver said it’s actually a great learning opportunity.

“Plan, do the things, and figure out why you were wrong. That figuring out why you were wrong is the most valuable part of all of this,” he said.

As part of his WSU Extension role, Driver does one-on-one farm management planning across Eastern Washington. He can be reached at jonpaul_d@wsu.edu. ■



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Let's make a marketing plan (Part 2)

TECHNICAL, FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS GO INTO MAKING A MARKET OUTLOOK

By Howard Nelson
Special to Wheat Life

This article continues our marketing plan discussion from the February 2026 issue of Wheat Life.

The next step in making a marketing plan is to form a market outlook. It is hard to do this objectively because our natural inclination is one of hope — for higher prices — but hope is not part of our marketing plan. We need to take a cold hard look at the market and try to be objective. Our market outlook is formed by looking at both technical and fundamental factors. The technical factor that we look at is what the trend is going to be this year.

For more information on trends, see my article in the October 2025 issue of *Wheat Life*.

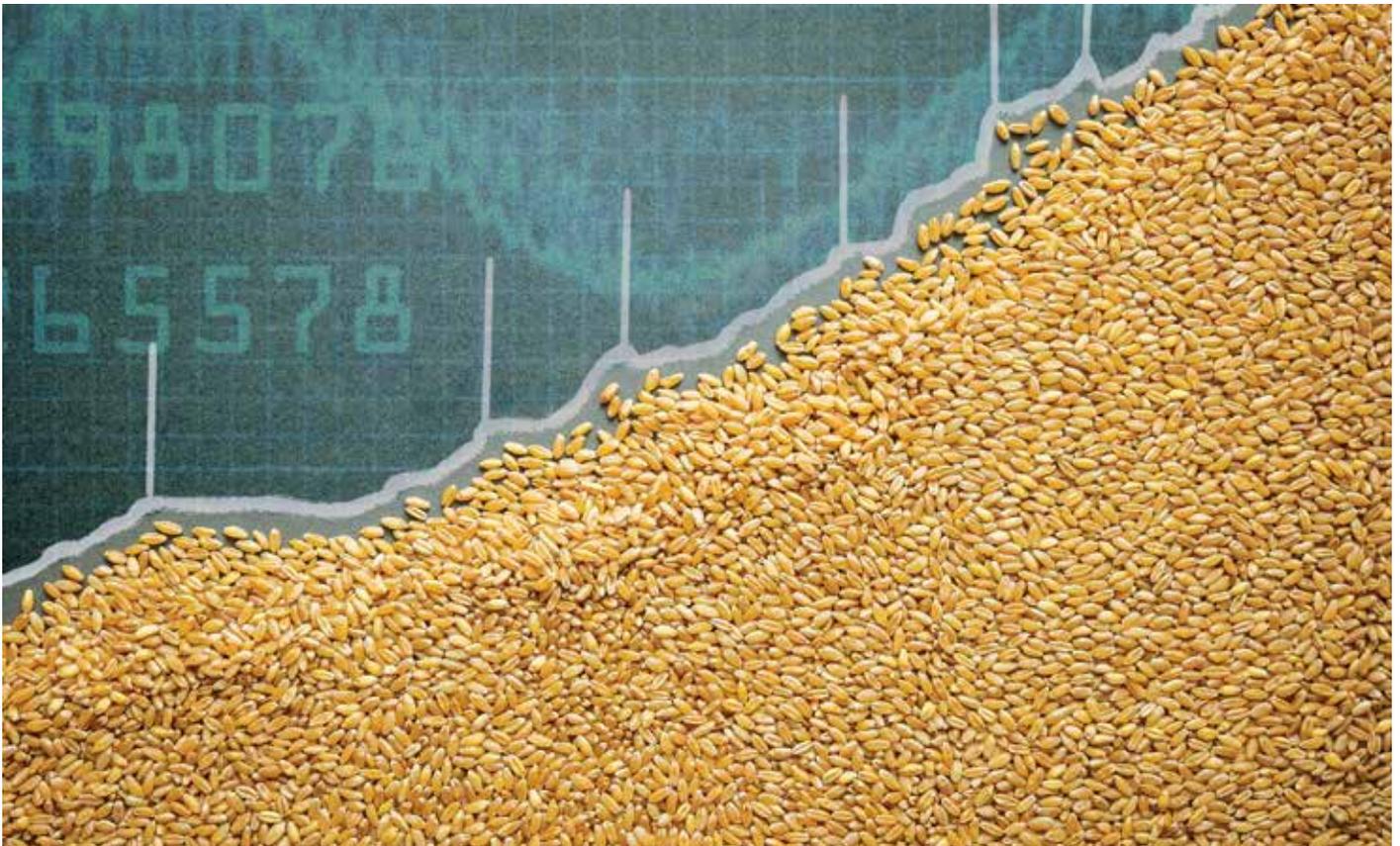
The fundamental factor that we look at is the stock-to-use ratio (STU). The STU ratio is a result of interactions between supply and demand and is calculated when you divide the projected ending stocks (carryout) by the projected demand. It can be shown as a formula: $STU = \text{carryout}/\text{demand}$. Carryout is determined when the projected demand is subtracted from the projected supply.

If we substitute this into the formula, it becomes: $STU = (\text{supply} - \text{demand})/\text{demand}$

The STU ratio is an indication of scarcity. If the STU ratio is moving lower, then the grain is getting more scarce, and if the STU ratio is moving higher, less scarce. It's when the STU ratio makes big changes that things get interesting! Now, if that isn't enough, there are three different STU ratios to watch: the world STU ratio, the U.S. STU ratio, and the white wheat STU ratio. By watching the changes in STU ratios, we get an idea what the trend may be for the year.

In my first article, which appeared in the March 2025 issue of *Wheat Life*, I showed the relationship between the STU and the price received by the farmer. This relationship showed a good inverse relationship of -72%. It also showed that the R squared value for this relationship was 52%. What this means is that while there is a good inverse correlation, we are not able to accurately project a price based on this relationship. To say this more simply, market trends can be predicted but market prices are not predictable.

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can we expect the top third of the market range in an upward trending market or the top third of the market range in a downward trending market? Chart one shows the marketing window with the highest probability that the top third of the market range will be achieved in an upward trending market. Chart two shows the marketing window with the highest probability that the top third of the market range will be achieved in a downward trending market.

In addition to looking at market trends, we can look for analogue years, or past years that had similar trends, STU values, and changes in STU values. For the 2025-26 marketing year, there are four analogue years, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2023-24 and 2024-25. Chart three shows when the probability of the top third of the market range occurred using those analogue years.

Chart four is a flow chart to help us make marketing decisions and choose the best marketing tool based on the projected market trend. By using the flow chart, you recognize that in an upward trending market year, the best probability of good prices come late in the marketing year, during the winter months, and in a downward trending market year, the best probability of good prices come early, before harvest. In upward trending years, your best marketing strategy is to hold and delay marketing or to use minimum price contracts. In downward trending years, your best marketing strategy is to forward contract or sell futures contracts (hedge) or use hedge-to-arrive contracts. Trends usually continue for multiple years, so we may use the same marketing tools again in following years until the trend changes.

There is one thing missing from this discussion on wheat marketing: cash flow needs. This is not a

Chart 1: SWH prob top third upward trend, 2006-2024



Chart 2: SWH prob top third downward trend, 2006-2024



problem in downward trending markets because if a grower follows its seasonal pattern, the marketing window comes early, and there will be cash from forward pricing. There is little advantage to holding grain in a downward trending market, so any remaining wheat should be sold shortly after harvest. Cash flow can be a problem in upward trending markets as the desire to hold for the marketing window is met by the need for cash. Growers may want to consider minimum price contracts to maintain the ability to profit from higher prices that could occur after the crop is marketed.

How does crop insurance fit into our plan? If we've taken the revenue cover-

age type of crop insurance, we've had protection from the time the policy was taken out until the following August when the harvest price is set. Once the harvest price is set, we are again at risk if prices go lower. We still need to be aware of the market trend and time our marketing sales according to that trend.

Now comes the hardest part of the plan: implementation or selling your crop using the marketing plan that was developed. This is where you need to "keep your head in the game" or "keep your eye on the ball" or maybe "don't blink." Remember, we're not trying to sell at the market top, but in the top third of the market range. A goal is something that we are trying to achieve that isn't easy, but something that can be reached. If we fall short of the goal, take a look at why it wasn't achieved and make adjustments for next year. Was it something that was in our control or out of our control?

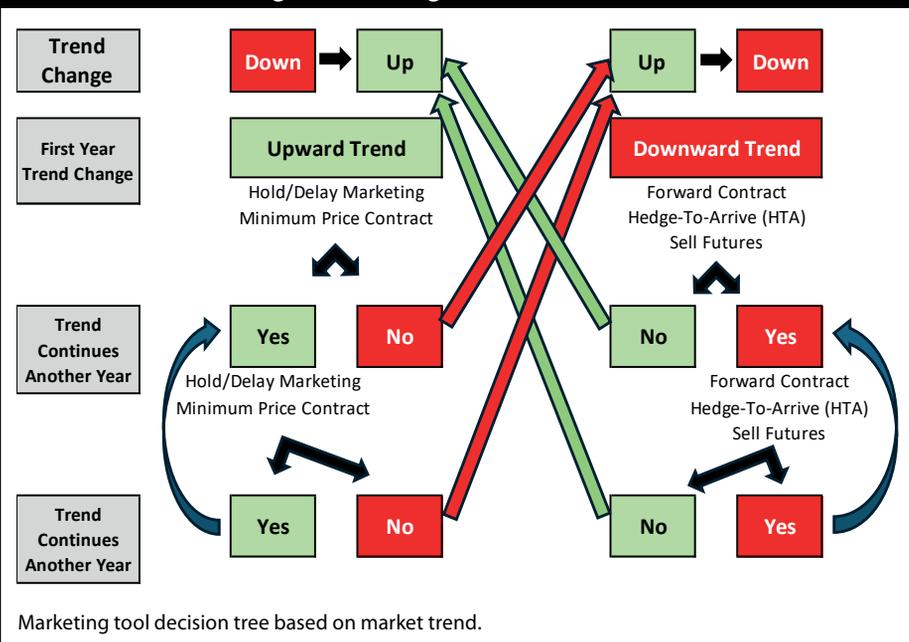
This concludes my series of articles on marketing. This was a project that I started as a way to fill my time during the "Covid Era" and has taken four years and three versions to put together. Luckily, I already had daily price data for the Portland wheat market going back to 1980 and weekly price data before that to 1972. A thank you goes to Curtis Evandenko of McGregor Risk Management LLC that provided me the current crop insurance data for my farm. The other information that I needed was available on the internet. I hope that you have found the information that I presented helpful and helps you make better marketing decisions on your farm. ■

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

Chart 3: SWH probability top third, 2025 analogue years



Chart 4: Trend change marketing flowchart



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.

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.

Disease, pest pressure increasing

AFTER WARM, WET WINTER, GROWERS SHOULD BE ON THE LOOKOUT

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

An unusually warm, wet winter appears to be increasing the pest and disease pressure Eastern Washington growers are facing going into spring, and at the top of the list is stripe rust.

According to the last update from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service research plant pathologist, Dr. Xianming Chen, stripe rust in the 2026 growing season is predicted to be in the upper range of severe epidemic level (40-60% yield loss on susceptible varieties).

"Stripe rust has been persistent across the region, and I've even heard reports of it in Whitman County, southwest of Pullman. We're definitely seeing it, even on varieties that are rated very highly," said Morgan Menaker, the Washington State University (WSU) regional Extension agronomist for Whitman, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties. For varieties that have high-temperature adult-plant (HTAP) resistance ratings, an initial infection is not uncommon, but any secondary cycle should be diminished as the HTAP takes over.

According to information from WSU Extension's website, striperust.wsu.edu, the primary method for controlling stripe rust is to grow resistant varieties. Fungicide treatments can also be used to manage stripe rust, especially when growing moderately susceptible varieties.

Other control activities include managing volunteer wheat and grassy weeds that could serve as a source for overwintering fungi. Avoid early plantings as larger plants tend to intercept more stripe rust spores than smaller plants. Manage nutrients for expected yield potential and avoid overfertilization. Manage irrigation water to minimize the amount of time dew is present on leaves, which is required for infection.

WSU Extension agents are also getting reports that wheat grain mites are spreading in the Odessa, Wilbur, and Davenport areas. Mite damage may be mistaken as winter damage, due to yellowish leaves and stunted plants. In an alert published on the small grains website, smallgrains.wsu.edu/26mites/, WSU Extension agronomist Aaron Esser noted that the fields with heavy mite damage had a winter wheat, fallow, winter wheat rotation, while fields with winter canola, fallow, winter wheat rotations are showing little to no damage (as of mid-February).

Because mites are more closely related to spiders than insects, most insecticides will not work.

"(Mite damage) almost looks like the damage you get if you went over a bunch of weak volunteers and sprayed them with glyphosate. It's just yellowing out as that pest is a piercing, sucking insect," Menaker added. "I would encourage folks, if they see damage like that, to look at our timely topic, because we do give recommendations for chemical control in there, things to look at, and learn more about that pest."

Another pest that has reared its head in Walla Walla-Milton-Freewater winter wheat fields is spring Hessian fly. While the reports haven't been officially confirmed, Menaker said the photos of damage he's seen strongly indicate Hessian fly. The telltale sign of Hessian fly damage is randomly aborted tillers in small patches. After hatching, the worm crawls to the base of the plant stem and eats the stem tissue and leaf tissue, which causes the tiller to collapse.

"It wouldn't surprise me, given that we did not have a very cold winter," he said. "It's alarming in seedling wheat because the damage can be really significant. Keep your ear to the ground. If it is Hessian fly, there will probably be a timely topic about it."

There are also reports of army worms being found in the Lewiston-Clarkston area in south-facing canyons, specifically the yellow underwing moth.

If growers have questions or need to report a problem, they can email small.grains@wsu.edu or contact their local Extension office. Menaker said the small grains email is closely monitored, and messages generally get answered quickly. Growers can monitor smallgrains.wsu.edu for timely topics or subscribe to its mailing list.

Growers need to be aware of disease and pest cycles, and Menaker advised growers to start scouting their fields now as knowing is half the battle. In most cases, there is still time to impact some of these pests and diseases.

"The warm winter just let a lot of these things persist, whereas cooler, harder winters would probably have cleaned this stuff up," he said. "I know folks may not be used to scouting their wheat this early in the year, but they need to get out and look. We've seen disease issues on winter peas, disease issues in wheat. We're seeing pest pressure in wheat that is kind of uncommon. Things are occurring earlier than usual." ■



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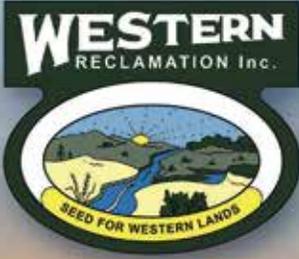
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Wheat industry leader is still a Pennsylvania farm kid at heart

Sam Kieffer, CEO, National Association of Wheat Growers

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Three months into his role as CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers, **Sam Kieffer** finds it “exhilarating” to focus all his advocacy efforts on a single commodity.

“It’s interesting and exciting to be able to dig deeper into wheat-specific challenges and provide more thorough explanations for a single commodity than I was doing before,” he explained. Before coming to NAWG, Kieffer was vice president of public policy at the American Farm Bureau Federation. “It’s also a little scary, but in a good way. At Farm Bureau, every day, there was a news cycle that had something with agriculture, and there were always challenges that needed to be worked on. Sometimes, they were very divergent. In this position, I get to focus on one commodity and dig deeper than I ever have before.”

Kieffer grew up on a family farm in Pennsylvania that grows corn, soybeans, and wheat; the farm is currently operated by his brother. Before working for the American Farm Bureau Federation, Kieffer held leadership roles at the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and is a former U.S. Army and Pennsylvania Army National Guard officer. Kieffer holds degrees from Dickinson College, Widener University, and Delaware Valley University.

The move from Farm Bureau to NAWG has given Kieffer the opportunity to focus on the finite details of a commodity rather than take a 30,000 foot view of a general farm organization, but politically, he said it hasn’t changed his approach.

“Farmers are well respected by rank-and-file consumers as well as elected officials, and most wheat growers are also growing other commodities as well,” he said. “Across the board, most of the issues in agriculture and challenges that are trying to be solved cut across several different commodities, so I’m still working with many other farm groups and other commodity groups, as well as general farm organizations.”

Kieffer described NAWG’s role as keeping a finger on the pulse in Washington, D.C., and making sure that the grower’s voice is presented and considered when officials



are making decisions that might impact food, farming, small businesses, and rural communities.

“There’s a lot of conversations that impact farmers, and farmers don’t have enough time to do it,” he said. “We are humbled to help and be the watchdog, if you will, while farmers are doing the great work back home.”

In order to make that impact, one of Kieffer’s short-term goals is to fill out the NAWG team. He will also be looking for ways to increase wheat growers’ reach through partnerships and contracting. Growing membership within NAWG is another top goal.

“Not all wheat-growing states are represented by NAWG,” he said. “And those states represent very important congressional officials. Every state provides additional access and opportunity to help make sure that the grower voice is heard in Congress, so engaging beyond our membership will certainly help amplify our message and access to elected officials in Washington.”

Kieffer said most of NAWG’s conversations with elected officials right now revolve around the farm economy and the challenges growers are facing, such as ag profitability, fertilizer prices, and the impact inflation has on inputs, particularly the cost of credit and capital.

“There are many other things that government can do, like passing a long-term farm bill rather than kicking the can down the road, that would provide certainty to growers when it comes to accessing credit and knowing what their business climate is going to look like for more than nine months or 12 months down the road. So, the farm economy is one of the biggest conversations we’re having,” he said.

Trade is another major topic of conversation, especially because half of every bushel grown by U.S. farmers is exported. The administration is gearing up to review the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement this year, and NAWG is ready to continue supporting U.S. Wheat Associates, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative in their efforts to find new markets and solidify current ones. Making sure elected officials understand the value of federal investment in ag research

is also on NAWG's watch list. Kieffer pointed out that the U.S. is being outspent two to one by China when it comes to public investment in ag research, and that lawmakers have an opportunity to narrow that gap in the next farm bill.

"We're also holding a lot of conversations about food and nutrition and making sure that elected officials understand the wheat grower's role and the care that wheat growers take growing the crop that ultimately ends up as a loaf of bread or another edible product. We also want to make sure that rules, like dietary guidelines, don't negatively impact domestic demand down the road and make sure that everybody understands the nutritional value of wheat and wheat-based foods."

Michelle Hennings, the executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, was involved in the CEO hiring process. She said she was impressed by Kieffer's deep understanding of ag policy.

"Sam is a good fit for NAWG, and we look forward to working with him to amplify wheat growers' priorities in Washington, D.C.," she said. "I'm confident he will continue leading NAWG forward, building coalitions and connections that will help shore up the agricultural industry."

While Kieffer's contribution to his family's farm may be limited by his day job (he helps out on weekends and when he can), he still sees himself as a farm kid at heart.

"I wake up every morning to make sure that our growers can do what they do well. Sometimes that involves us being able to tell their story. Sometimes that involves us asking the growers to help weigh in because their voice is certainly more valuable than ours. Growers have been and will always be our best advocates," he said. ■

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



Heading into another year, is it time to think differently?

By Kevin Klein
Chairman, Washington Grain Commission

As we head into another crop year, I've found myself thinking about a question that seems to come up more often lately: is our game plan going to stay the same, or is this the kind of year where we need to think differently?

For me, already having to "sharpen the pencil" every year for the past several years, it is pretty difficult to find an obvious area to spend less! Every line item already gets a hard look. Like most of you, I'll be watching expenses closely across the board. But if there's one area I'll be paying extra attention to this year, it's fertility, particularly the amount of fertilizer going down at seeding. Input costs continue to demand discipline and making thoughtful adjustments without sacrificing yield potential is always a balancing act.

Of course, we all know the biggest variable remains the same: weather.

I know many of us look forward each year to the forecasts given at the Spokane Ag Expo. There are plenty of other meteorologists and outlooks we follow as well, and they all tend to compare current conditions with similar conditions from past years.

Some folks have an impressive memory for those years, but I sometimes struggle to keep track. I thought it would be interesting to look back at recent production history to refresh my memory (see chart). Keep in mind that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's reporting year runs from June 1 through May 31.

Lately, we are hearing a lot about the dry winter and lack of snowpack in the mountains. Forecasts suggest it could be a warm and dry summer and fall. I'm concerned it could be

another year of extremely dry conditions and high fire danger.

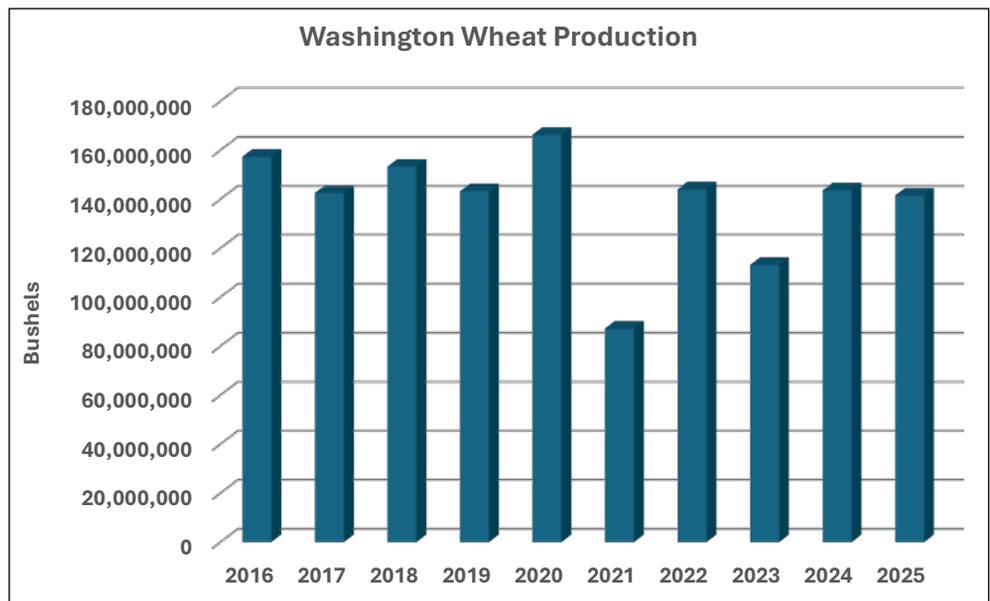
While none of us can control the weather, we can control how we prepare and where we focus our efforts.

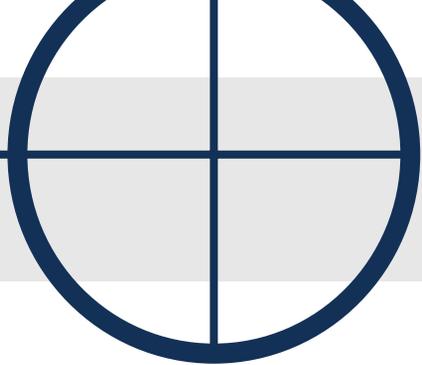
At our March Washington Grain Commission (WGC) meeting, we will begin preparing for the next budget cycle by reviewing several of our educational and outreach investments. One of our longstanding commitments has been Wheat Week, a fourth grade classroom program, which the WGC has supported for more than 15 years. Programs like this play an important role in connecting consumers, educators, and communities with Washington agriculture.

This year, we are also joining the Washington State Potato Commission as co-sponsors of the TV series, *Washington Grown*. Collaborative efforts like this allow us to broaden the story of agriculture in our state and highlight the value of the crops our farmers produce.

These programs are funded by growers, and they exist to serve growers. If you have thoughts on these programs — or ideas for others you believe would provide value — we encourage you to reach out.

Wishing you a safe and successful start to spring work and, as always, hoping for timely moisture. ■





REPORTS

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

What Latin America is saying about wheat

Reflections from ALIM 2025 in Cartagena, Colombia

By Jake Liening

Market Development Manager, Washington Grain Commission

In late November, I traveled to Cartagena, Colombia, to attend the 43rd Annual Conference of the Latin American Association of Milling Industries (ALIM). The event brought together more than 500 participants, including hundreds of wheat millers, bakers, processors, equipment suppliers, and commodity representatives from across Latin America. For Washington wheat, having a presence in this growing market is vital. ALIM is not only about moving wheat today, it's about protecting and building demand for tomorrow. It is a place to hear directly from customers about what is changing in their businesses, and what they will need from wheat suppliers moving forward. It is also a place to hear from our competitors — Canada, Argentina, Australia — about their harvest outlooks, trade policy shifts, sustainability

messaging, and expected export volumes.

A consistent theme throughout the conference was risk. Latin American millers are operating in an environment shaped by geopolitical conflict, trade uncertainty, freight disruptions, and inflationary pressure, all of which affect their ability to source wheat predictably. From conflicts in the Black Sea and disruptions in the Red Sea, to shifting trade policies and volatile freight markets, buyers are focused less on chasing the lowest price and more on securing a reliable supply. For Washington wheat, this matters because reliability, transparency, and a stable export system are increasingly part of the value customers are buying, in addition to protein, falling numbers, or test weight.

Another message that came through clearly at ALIM was how quickly sustainability expectations are moving in wheat markets, and how aggressively some competitors are responding. Canada, in particular, is already

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION



The U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) delegation at ALIM 2025 in Cartagena, Colombia, included representatives from USW's stateside, Mexico, and Chile offices, along with the Washington Grain Commission.

quantifying and promoting the carbon footprint of its wheat using life cycle assessments, and those numbers are being used directly in conversations with millers and food companies in Latin America. Sustainability is no longer a future concept or a niche premium, but for many customers, it is becoming a basic requirement for doing business. What stood out, however, was that millers are not just asking about sustainability in general, they are asking how it works across the entire value chain, including what value, if any, flows back to the farmer.

For Washington growers, this conversation should feel familiar. Many of the practices customers are asking about — reduced tillage, diverse rotations, efficient fertilizer use, and strong environmental stewardship — are already common across much of our wheat production. The challenge is not practice, but proof. As sustainability becomes more data-driven and more visible in the marketplace, customers are looking for quantified, comparable information they can use in their own reporting and brand commitments.

Despite economic pressure and ongoing inflation across much of Latin America, one thing was clear at ALIM: wheat-based foods remain central to daily diets. Bread, pastries, and baked goods continue to be staples, in part, because food carries emotional value, comfort, tradition, and small indulgences during uncertain times. While consumers are more price-conscious, they are not willing to sacrifice quality, which keeps functional performance at the center of purchasing decisions. For Washington wheat, this reinforces the importance of consistency. When millers and bakers are trying to manage costs, reduce waste, and deliver reli-



Brian Liedl, vice president of overseas operations for U.S. Wheat Associates, presents on U.S. wheat classes and production regions at ALIM 2025 in Cartagena, Colombia.

able products to their customers, wheat that performs the same way every day continues to earn a place in the blend.

Another clear signal from ALIM was how quickly milling technology is advancing, and how that changes what millers need from wheat. Discussions around automation and artificial intelligence focused on practical applications — energy efficiency, quality monitoring, food safety, and labor training — rather than abstract concepts. As mills rely more heavily on digital systems, consistency in wheat quality becomes even more important because variability creates inefficiencies and added costs. There was also strong interest in expanding product flexibility, including the use of soft white wheat flour in applications like pasta, made possible by improvements in processing and drying technology. For Washington soft white wheat, these developments point to opportunities beyond traditional uses, particularly in multiproduct mills looking for reliable, adaptable inputs.

ALIM also reinforced just how competitive the global wheat market has become, particularly in Latin America. Argentina is expanding production and export capacity, supported by favorable freight and a renewed focus on pro-export trade policy. Australia continues to position itself as a reliable supplier of clean, white, food-grade wheat with strong quality assurance systems. At the same time, freight costs and logistics remain volatile, shaped by geopolitical disruptions and shifting trade flows. For buyers, futures prices are only one piece of the puzzle, as basis and freight reflect confidence in an origin's ability to deliver. This is where Washington wheat continues to differentiate itself through dependable logistics, established relationships, and a supply chain that performs when markets are stressed.

For the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), trips to ALIM ultimately serve one purpose: protecting and growing demand for Washington wheat. The conversations held at events like this help shape how wheat is sourced and priced in the months to come. They also inform WGC on how best to invest grower dollars for maximum impact. Market development is not about chasing short-term sales; it is about staying present, listening early, and making sure Washington wheat remains relevant as customer expectations evolve. What I heard in Cartagena was encouraging, and it also reinforced the need to stay engaged. In a market defined by volatility and competition, demand does not take care of itself. It has to be earned and maintained. ■

Wheat Week founder recognized

CONSERVATION DISTRICT LEADER INDUCTED INTO THE MID-COLUMBIA AG HALL OF FAME

By Meghan Stewart
Education Director, Franklin
Conservation District

For nearly two decades, **Kara Kaelber** has been a driver of agricultural and conservation education in Franklin County and across Washington state. From the start of her career, Kaelber understood that agriculture is more than a livelihood — it is a legacy of stewardship, resilience, and innovation. That belief has guided her work ever since.

After earning her degrees from Washington State University and Heritage University, Kaelber joined the Franklin Conservation District in 2005. Over the years, she has worked her way up as an educator to education director, and now district manager, bringing vision, empathy, and unwavering dedication to both people and the land.

Kaelber is perhaps best known for her leadership in building programs that connect classrooms to agriculture. Wheat Week began as a simple idea and has grown into a statewide program reaching tens of thousands of fourth and fifth grade students each year. Wheat Week is a series of five lessons delivered over the course of one week, educating fourth and fifth grade students about water, soil, energy, systems, and wheat, as well as how they impact our daily lives and the lives of wheat farmers. During the 2024-25 school year, the Wheat Week program was taught in 24 counties across Washington state, reaching 21,631 students. By the end of this current school year, Wheat Week will have reached over 300,000 students in total.

On Jan.15, 2026, Kaelber was inducted into the Mid-Columbia Ag Hall of Fame with the Ag Advisor Award. Upwards of 350 people attended the Ag Hall of Fame dinner and ceremony at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, Wash., to support and cheer on this year's inductees. The 2026 Hall of Fame inductees also included Mike Meads, Steve Lancaster, Mike Poulson, and Fred and Lura Harris.

The Mid-Columbia Agriculture Hall of Fame was formed in 2000 to recognize and honor distinguished individuals that have made significant contributions to



the ag community in the greater Franklin County region and its immediate surrounding areas. It is an event put on by the Pasco Chamber of Commerce and Port of Pasco, with a selection committee comprised of individuals from across the agricultural industry. Induction candidates are nominated by their peers and selected based on their outstanding achievements in the agriculture industry and their steady support of local and rural communities.

Kaelber joins recognizable names in the Ag Hall of Fame such as Doc Hastings, former U.S. representative, who was inducted 2024 with the Visionary Award. Walt and Tonie Neff of Neff Ranch were

also inducted in 2024 with the Pioneer Award. Jim and Ann Moore of Kahlotus were inducted in 2018 with the Pioneer Award. Nicole Berg, District 5 Washington Grain Commissioner, was inducted in 2015 with the Young Agribusiness Woman of the Year Award.

Kaelber's vision continues to grow each year, bringing conservation science lessons to schools across the state. Teachers and students alike enjoy the week's lessons and learn something new.

"It is one of the highlights of our school year! It (Wheat Week) is so engaging, and students learn so much. We look forward to it every year!" said Kelli Black, fourth grade teacher at McDonald International School in Seattle.

"It would be awesome if the sessions were longer — students getting hands-on activities while learning about where their food comes from. Wheat Week is great!" said Eric Eddy, fifth grade teacher at Grant Elementary in East Wenatchee.

With the continued support of the Washington Grain Commission, Wheat Week is going to enter its 20th school year this coming September! ■



Scan the QR code to view the video of Kara Kaelber that was played during Ag Hall of Fame dinner and ceremony.

Stretching growers' dollar

WHY U.S. WHEAT ASSOCIATES' UES MEETINGS MATTER TO WHEAT GROWERS LIKE ME

By Mike Carstensen

District 1 Commissioner, Washington Grain Commission, and Vice Chairman, U.S. Wheat Associates

In early January, I had the chance — and I'll admit, the humbling experience — to attend the 2026 U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) Unified Export Strategy (UES) meetings for the organization's Asian offices in Siem Reap, Cambodia. I left home on Jan. 4 and got back on Jan. 17. That's a long way and a long time away from home, but it didn't take long to figure out why this meeting mattered.

First, a little background. The UES meetings aren't a tourist trip overseas. This is where USW lays out how our wheat is going to compete in key export markets. The UES process helps plan, justify, and secure federal cost-share dollars from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for overseas market development. In plain terms, it's how our assessment dollars are multiplied and put to work in markets that buy our wheat.

The Asian regions covered in these meetings are a big deal for U.S. wheat demand and especially for the Pacific Northwest. We talked about established markets like the Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, along with fast-growing markets across South and Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Myanmar. Every one of those markets is different, but all of them matter when it comes to long-term demand for the wheat we grow in our backyards!

What stood out to me was how the UES process connects the dots between producers, overseas buyers, and trade policy. From a grower standpoint, it helps secure federal support that stretches every assessment dollar further. From the buyer's side, it delivers solid data, technical support, and confidence in the quality and reliability of U.S. wheat. From a trade policy perspective, it helps keep U.S. wheat aligned with broader U.S. agricultural trade goals so we can match up wheat's long-term goals with national priorities.

This was my first UES meeting, so I couldn't compare it to previous years, but the value was immediately



Washington Grain Commissioner Mike Carstensen (far right) attends a U.S. Wheat Associates' (USW) Unified Export Strategy meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia. This meeting process helps USW plan, justify, and secure federal cost-share dollars for overseas market development.

apparent. The meetings were organized, focused, and detailed. USW laid out clear priorities and expectations for each region, and there was plenty of honest discussion — not just about what's working, but also about challenges that still need attention. One theme that came up more than once was the importance of sticking with the strategic plan while leaving room to be nimble as markets change.

What impressed me most, though, were the people. The UES process really showcased the dedication and talent of the USW staff. You can tell they put a lot of time and effort into planning and executing these programs. Things like professionalism, ethics, passion, dependability, and competence weren't just talked about, they were obvious throughout the meetings.

I came away with a lot of respect for the men and women representing U.S. wheat overseas. They really are top-shelf people, the go-to folks, and often the first call when it comes to protecting and promoting U.S. wheat in global markets. Most of us don't see that work from our seat on the combine, but it plays a big role in making sure buyers keep choosing U.S. wheat year after year.

Bottom line, the 2026 USW Asia UES meetings were a success. I came home with a better understanding of how global market development actually works, confidence in plans laid out, and a lot more appreciation for the people carrying the load. Most of all, I came back humbled and thankful for the work USW does on behalf of U.S. wheat farmers, work that helps maintain strong markets and steady demand for the wheat we grow every year. ■

Recent wins for wheat, barley

From market growth to leadership at the national level: What it means for Washington growers

By Jake Liening

Market Development Manager, Washington Grain Commission

Across global markets, competition for grain has never been more intense. At the same time, Washington producers are navigating rising input costs, labor pressures, and increasingly complex regulatory environments. In moments like these, it's easy to focus only on what feels uncertain.

But recent developments across wheat and barley offer a different perspective: momentum is building in key markets, sustainability credentials are strengthening, and investments in market development continue to deliver real value for growers. Many of the developments highlighted here were originally reported by U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) and partner organizations, whose ongoing work provides much of the foundation for these market successes.

While the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) is not directly responsible for every one of these wins, each success strengthens the broader demand environment Washington depends on. Together, they highlight why long-term market development, quality validation, and strong international relationships remain critical.

Bangladesh emerges as a major growth market for U.S. wheat

One of the most tangible successes this year comes from South Asia.

In January, U.S. wheat shipments arrived at Bangladesh's main port in Chattogram as part of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in mid-2025 between USW and the government of Bangladesh. The agreement commits Bangladesh to purchase up to 700,000 metric tons (MT) of U.S. wheat annually for five years.

So far, Bangladesh has already purchased nearly 675,000 MT in the 2025-26 marketing year, vaulting the country into the top 10 export markets for U.S. wheat.

Importantly for Washington, these shipments included significant volumes of soft white wheat shipped from

Pacific Northwest ports, alongside hard red winter wheat from Gulf ports. One vessel alone carried more than 57,000 MT, and multiple shipments departed the U.S. in December.

Beyond the tonnage, this development represents something bigger: a shift from Bangladesh being a swing buyer to becoming a long-term partner focused on quality, reliability, and food security. USW staff are now working directly with Bangladeshi millers and bakers to help them maximize value from U.S. wheat through technical support and hands-on training.

For Washington growers, this kind of engagement matters. Sales are rarely secured on price alone. Long-term demand is built through performance in end-use applications, customer trust, and consistent quality, areas where soft white continues to stand out.

Building capacity in fast-growing regions

Supporting this type of growth requires boots on the ground. Earlier this year, USW announced several strategic staff promotions and additions across Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. These moves expand technical expertise and market development capacity in regions where wheat consumption is rising quickly.

Of particular note for Washington is the promotion of Joe Bippert — formerly of the WGC and the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) — to regional director for South and Southeast Asia. Many Washington



U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent T. Christensen (center, blue jacket) joins officials at the port of Chattogram as U.S. wheat is unloaded under a new five-year trade agreement. Photo courtesy of U.S. Wheat Associates.

growers know Bippert well, and his new role places familiar leadership directly in one of the world's most dynamic wheat markets.

These staffing investments ensure that U.S. wheat customers receive consistent technical support while strengthening relationships with millers, bakers, and government partners abroad.

For growers, this translates into stronger demand foundations and better positioning against global competitors.

Federal market development funding reinforces export infrastructure

Behind every overseas success story is a less visible but essential component: funding.

In February, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced more than \$212 million in Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) funding for 2026. These programs match farmer checkoff dollars with federal resources to support export promotion, technical assistance, and trade barrier removal.

State wheat commissions, including Washington, contribute checkoff funds that help unlock these federal dollars through USW. This public-private partnership has powered decades of market development work, from baking seminars and noodle schools to regulator engagement and customer training.

While MAP and FMD may not generate headlines like ship arrivals, they provide the backbone that makes those shipments possible.

Washington leadership at the national level

Washington's influence also continues through farmer leadership. At its January board meeting, USW elected its 2026-27 officer team, with WGC Commissioner Mike Carstensen moving into the role of vice chairman. Carstensen has previously served as treasurer, vice chair, and chair at the state level and now helps guide the national export strategy.

Strong grower leadership ensures USW's priorities stay



Joe Bippert

grounded in production realities while addressing the needs of global customers, an important bridge between farm gate and foreign market.

Barley sustainability data strengthens market confidence

Sustainability continues to shape purchasing decisions worldwide, and U.S. barley producers recently took a major step forward.

The American Malting Barley Association released the first emissions baseline report for U.S. barley, verified with real farm data from 33 operations across primary growing regions. The study confirmed the crop's environmental performance while identifying opportunities for further improvement, particularly around nitrogen fertilizer use and irrigation energy.

The project gives maltsters and brewers credible, farmer-sourced data to support their own climate goals and provides producers with tools to track progress over time. For Washington barley growers, this type of validation helps protect access to premium markets and reinforces the sustainability story behind U.S. grain.

Why these wins matter now

These developments come as Washington agriculture faces serious headwinds. A newly released baseline assessment from the WSDA, "Washington Agriculture at a Crossroads: A Baseline Assessment of Agricultural Viability," underscores rising production costs, shrinking margins, labor shortages, and increasing pressure on farmland statewide. Against that backdrop, every new market, expanded relationship, and technical breakthrough matters.

Demand doesn't grow by accident. It's built through long-term investment in people, partnerships, research, and trust, often years before a single bushel is sold.

For Washington growers, these recent wins reinforce the value of continued market development and the importance of staying competitive in a crowded global marketplace. They also highlight how collaboration across state commissions, national organizations, federal agencies, and industry partners works together to turn opportunity into results.

The work is ongoing. But momentum is real, and Washington wheat and barley remain well positioned to benefit. ■



Mike Carstensen

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Forecast predicts falling world wheat stocks



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

In late January, the International Grains Council (IGC) released their estimates of world wheat supply/demand conditions through the 2030-31 marketing year. The estimates show world wheat production increases through 2030-31, but at a slower rate than total world consumption. As a result, IGC forecasts that this year (2025-26) will be the peak in world wheat carryout stocks (wheat left over at the end of the marketing year) for at least the next five years.

Figure 1 shows the balance sheet projections for world wheat based on the IGC forecasts. Global production is expected to fall slightly in 2026-27 compared to the record crop harvested in 2025-26 but increase again in 2027-28 and continue to rise through 2030-31. The increased production is entirely due to increased yields. Total planted acreage for the 2026-27 marketing year is expected to drop slightly compared to the current year (about .2%) but then remain stable through 2030-31. The decline in acres next year is the result of low world wheat prices, and if realized, it will mark the lowest global plantings in seven years. Most of the reduction comes from lower Russian acres, but that decline is partially offset by increased acres in India, Ukraine, and North Africa.

The IGC world wheat production estimates assume there are no production issues anywhere in the world over the next five years, so the wheat supply estimates should be interpreted as upper bounds. Any significant acreage declines in countries other than Russia or wheat production issues somewhere in the world will result in the total production forecasts being overly optimistic.

IGC has forecast that world wheat consumption will increase about 1.1% per year over the next five years. In general, total consumption will be reduced in mature markets (the EU and China, for example) but increases in Africa and other parts of Asia offset these declines. India is expected to become the largest consumer of wheat for food over the forecast period. Even though wheat consumption increases in each of the next five years, the growth rate lags the increased consumption rate over the previous five years.

Figure 1: Balance sheet projections for world wheat (based on IGC forecasts in million metric tons)

	2024/25 est.	2025/26 f'cast	2026/27 proj.	2027/28 proj.	2028/29 proj.	2029/30 proj.	2030/31 proj.
Beg Stocks	273.6	264.0	275.1	273.5	272.2	271.6	270.6
Production	799.2	830.4	823.9	835.5	846.2	854.3	863.5
Total Supply	1072.8	1094.4	1099.1	1108.9	1118.4	1126.0	1134.1
Food	558.9	571.2	577.8	584.2	590.8	597.1	602.6
Feed	151.0	153.9	151.9	154.7	156.8	158.0	159.8
Industrial	28.8	28.6	29.3	29.7	30.2	30.6	31.1
Total Demand	808.8	819.3	825.6	836.7	846.8	855.4	863.9
Trade	196.4	208.3	208.8	211.8	215.9	219.7	223.5
Ending Stocks	264.0	275.1	273.5	272.2	271.6	270.6	270.2
Stocks To Use	32.65%	33.58%	33.13%	32.53%	32.08%	31.64%	31.27%

marketing year	2024/25 est.	2025/26 f'cast	2026/27 proj.	2027/28 proj.	2028/29 proj.	2029/30 proj.	2030/31 proj.
Beg Stocks	10,075	9,722	10,130	10,070	10,023	10,001	9,963
Production	29,424	30,573	30,336	30,761	31,155	31,455	31,794
Total Supply	39,499	40,294	40,466	40,830	41,177	41,456	41,757
Food	20,577	21,031	21,272	21,509	21,752	21,986	22,189
Feed	5,558	5,667	5,591	5,698	5,775	5,817	5,885
Industrial	1,059	1,054	1,078	1,094	1,110	1,127	1,144
Total Demand	29,778	30,164	30,397	30,808	31,176	31,493	31,809
Trade	7,233	7,671	7,686	7,797	7,949	8,090	8,231
Ending Stocks	9,722	10,130	10,070	10,023	10,001	9,963	9,948
Stocks To Use	32.65%	33.58%	33.13%	32.53%	32.08%	31.64%	31.27%

SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL GRAINS COUNCIL

Global wheat feeding is also expected to increase slightly over the forecast period (up to about .8% annually). Combining the increased world wheat production forecast with expected increases in total annual consumption each of the next five years leads to world wheat ending stocks falling about 1.8% between this year and 2030-31.

IGC is forecasting U.S. wheat production will decline about 6% between the 2025-26 and 2026-27 marketing years. They are also projecting total U.S. wheat demand will decline next year, but by less than total supply. As a result, they expect U.S. wheat ending stocks to also decline next year. U.S. wheat ending stocks are expected to continue to decline annually through 2030-31. In five years IGC predicts U.S. wheat ending stocks will be down 8% compared to 2025-26.

In February, the U.S. Department of Agriculture

(USDA) published forecasts of the U.S. wheat balance sheet for the next 10 years (they did not publish forecasts on international wheat markets going forward). Figure 2 compares the IGC and USDA forecasts for U.S. wheat production, total demand, and ending stocks through 2030-31. In addition to production and consumption data, USDA generated forecasts of the national average U.S. future wheat price, and these are also presented in Figure 2.¹

While there are some differences between the IGC and USDA forecasts, the general trends are consistent. They both expect wheat production and total consumption in the U.S. to fall next year and remain below 2025-26 levels through the 2030-31 marketing year. Both are also forecasting consistent declines in U.S. wheat ending stocks over the next five years.

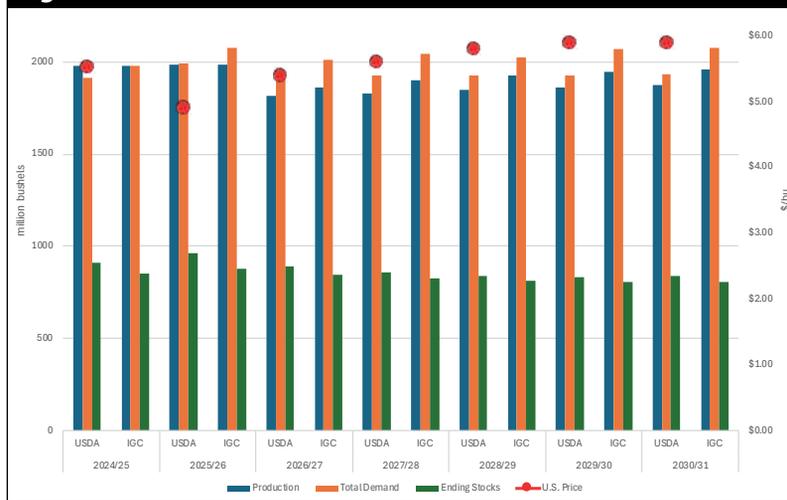
USDA is forecasting U.S. planted acres of wheat for the 2026-27 marketing year at 44 million compared to 45.3 million acres for the 2025-26 marketing year. Last January, USDA estimated total winter wheat acres planted by U.S. farmers in the fall of 2025 at 33 million. Historically, about 76% of all U.S. wheat acres are comprised of winter wheat. If this ratio holds for the 2026-27 marketing year, then total acres might end up being closer to 43.4 million compared to the current estimate of 44 million acres.

Based on the U.S. wheat balance sheet forecasts, USDA is forecasting some price improvement going forward, with 2025-26 prices representing the lowest levels over the next decade. However, the price improvements projected are not extreme. Prices for the 2026-27 marketing year are projected at \$5.40 per bushel, \$.50 above the current estimate for the 2025-26 marketing year. Prices continue to show some improvement each year following, reaching \$5.90 per bushel by 2030-31, and then peaking at \$6 per bushel through 2035-36.

The price forecasts are likely to be overly pessimistic because they assume no challenges to growing conditions going forward and no geopolitical disruptions that could lead to higher prices. It is unlikely these assumptions will hold through the entire forecast period, but it is also important to recognize that until there are significant concerns about production somewhere in the world, prices will remain subdued.

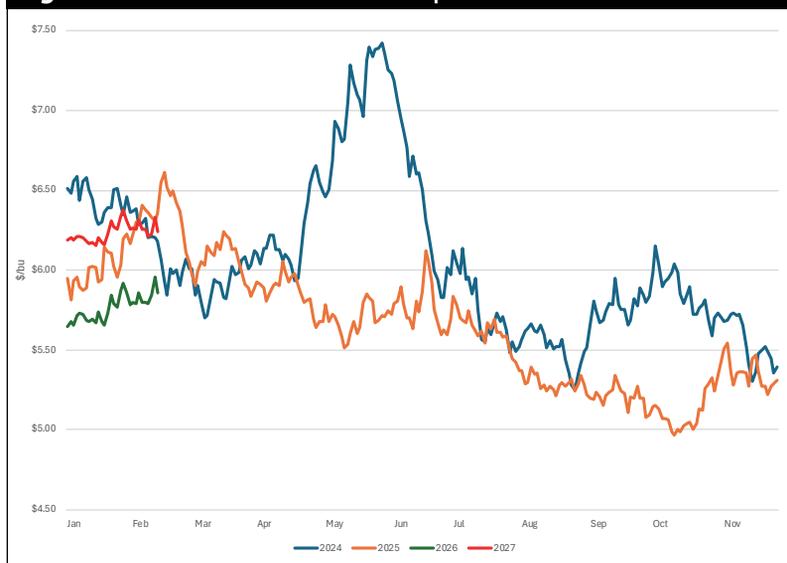
¹The data in figure 2 does include different definitions of the wheat marketing year. IGC defines the wheat marketing year as running from July 1 through June 30 of the following year. USDA defines the marketing year as running from June 1 through May 31.

Figure 2: U.S. wheat forecasts



SOURCE: USDA ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE, INTERNATIONAL GRAINS COUNCIL

Figure 3: December soft red futures prices



SOURCE: BARCHART.COM

As of now, it appears commodity futures traders are comfortable with the USDA price forecasts through the next couple of marketing years. Figure 3 shows prices for the December soft red wheat futures contracts for 2024 and 2025, and the prices for the 2026 and 2027 December contracts traded through late February this year. Note that prices for December 2026 are below where prices were for both the December 2024 and 2025 contracts in mid-February of those years. However, futures prices for December 2027 are almost \$.80 per bushel above the December 2026 price. Thus, while still not as attractive as prices a few years ago, wheat prices do show some signs of improvement moving forward. ■

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

The Catch (Part 2)

By Daniel Moore

Editor's Note: Part 1 of "The Catch" ran in the February 2026 issue of Wheat Life.

That last day of harvest was marked by the cutting of the border between the families' two fields. It was very early in the morning, earlier than usual, when Buck fired up his combine and started cutting, without even so much as a grease job. He wanted to be the first one to cut the border.

"Who else can cut it as straight as I can," he thought. As he lined up with the border post on top of the hill, he could see another combine headed towards him on the same line.

Mac Wilson yelled in the cab of his red combine, "I'll not be outdone by that green machine of his!"

The scene was viewed by both crews waiting in their grain trucks for the first load. They yelled to the other crew as both were parked near the border line, "Who's going to be chicken?" They laughed and got out of their trucks to hear the impending crash of two headers grinding metal instead of wheat.

Mary and John glanced at one another but quickly turned away lest someone noticed the gleam in their eyes and give them grief. This was serious business to the crews. The pride of each farm was at stake. Both combine drivers were intensely staring at the imaginary border line as the ends of their headers were about to meet. Buck grabbed the CB and switched the channel to talk to Mac, but Mac had already switched to Buck's channel, and both were claiming the right to cut the border and for the other guy to move over. The truck drivers were dying of laughter because they could hear the other boss talking on their CBs now. At the last second, both guys moved a couple of inches away so that the headers barely missed. In the end, they figured that it was more important for them not to crash and get the baseball game started — at least, that's what they told everyone. Just a tiny strip of uncut wheat was left on the border which, when viewed by both men, gave them a sense of pride as to their driving skills.

Harvest was over for both crews, and they gathered at the pasture that had been transformed into a baseball



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field. Buck parked his green machine behind the back-stop on the left side and Mac shut off his red combine on the right side. The preacher arrived to referee the game, but first he blessed the food and the game. After eating hamburgers and hot dogs with all the supporting salads, which were provided by the congregation, the coin was tossed. The Wilson family would be first at bat. The two patriarchs were the pitchers (who was going to question that decision). The lead changed numerous times throughout the game, and, by the seventh inning stretch, the teams were deadlocked at five each. Darkness had settled in, and the umpire was about to call the game over when he asked, "Maybe this is a good place to stop?"

"No way," yelled both patriarchs. "Turn the truck headlights on and the combine field lights on. We aren't stopping until someone wins!"

The preacher started laughing. "Are you two finally agreeing on something?"

So, engines started, lights came on, and the game resumed. Play continued until the final inning, when the contested call by Pastor Brown was declared that the runner from the Wilson family was out. That left the game tied but it was after 10 p.m. He boldly stood over home plate and declared, "Game over! Go home and get some sleep," much to the consternation of the two bosses.

Everyone from the two harvest crews was in church that morning after the big game. Far be it that anyone should be missing, lest it show weakness. The altar did not have the usual flower bouquet, but instead, the wooden cross trophy sat there with two bouquets of wheat resting against its arms. The left shock of wheat was tied with a green ribbon, and the right side sported a red one. The preacher gave his message and then walked to the altar. "I found this wheat out in the middle of a field that happened to be left standing on the border between two different farms," he said.

Mac and Buck glanced at each other. Pastor Brown took a couple of heads of wheat from each bundle and began to rub his hands together. Everybody was shocked to see the purple carpet of the church littered with chaff. The minister blew the last remaining awns and husks all over as he walked toward Buck and Mac and gave them each a half of what he had threshed.

"You can't tell which grain came from which side of the cross, can you? It's all been mixed together," he said. Still staring at them, he spoke slowly and with authority. "The Lord of the harvest once said, 'It is finished.'" The silence in the congregation was deafening.

The movie in John's mind called "Memories" came to an end. He continued speaking to Tommy, "Things were different between the two families after the game. In fact, we would play baseball every year and invite the whole community to watch and to enjoy a picnic afterward to celebrate the end of harvest. I started dating your grandmother, too. We knew right away, in our hearts, that we were going to get married, and we did, soon after graduation. After the ceremony, we headed out the door of the church to go on our honeymoon. In this area, wheat instead of rice is gently thrown on the departing couple as a symbol of blessing. However, we noticed that the kernels were being thrown a little too harshly, not at us, but at the guys to the left and to the right of us." John laughed and shed some happy tears.

"Grammy, I'll push you back to the car now," Tommy said.

Mary pushed her hat back into a more relaxed position and said, "Yeah, you better get us back before they send the authorities out to look for us escapees. Ha-ha!"

After Tommy got her seated and the air conditioner started, he headed back to where John was still standing behind home plate. "Grandpa, you've told me about the first game many times. I get all that, but you keep referring to 'The Catch' as the biggest thing about that game. You dropped the ball and the umpire called it a foul! Shouldn't you refer to your story as 'The Drop' or something like that instead?"

He looked at his grandson and put one hand on his shoulder and said,

"Son, you're wrong in thinking it's about the ball or the ballgame."

John turned and looked at Mary, now sitting in the back of the car, pointed with his cane and said, "It's about her. She is 'The Catch!'"

The End. ■



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THE BOTTOM LINE

Understanding state's estate tax farm deduction

By Norm Brock
Attorney, Brock Law Firm

The difficulty in writing this article and trying to explain the requirements for qualifying for the Washington Estate Tax Farm Deduction as it applies to you is that virtually every farmer or rancher estate and their operation is different than their neighbor. Just being a farmer or rancher is not enough to meet the complex rules associated with the farm deduction. Your estate must meet very specific conditions when you die, and in many instances, your estate may very well not end up qualifying for the farm deduction.

I remember (seems like yesterday) being 11 or 12 years old, selling my bunches of raised green onions for \$.03 to the local grocer, or walking the neighborhood and hocking them for \$.05 a bunch. I remember telling grandma I wanted to be a millionaire (not understanding, of course, what a millionaire really was).

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Table W. Computation of Washington estate tax

* Taxable amount	Rate	Tax owed
\$0 to \$1,000,000	10%	10% of taxable amount
\$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000	15%	\$100,000 plus 15% of the amount over \$1,000,000
\$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000	17%	\$250,000 plus 17% of the amount over \$2,000,000
\$3,000,000 to \$4,000,000	19%	\$420,000 plus 19% of the amount over \$3,000,000
\$4,000,000 to \$6,000,000	23%	\$610,000 plus 23% of the amount over \$4,000,000
\$6,000,000 to \$7,000,000	26%	\$1,070,000 plus 26% of the amount over \$6,000,000
\$7,000,000 to \$9,000,000	30%	\$1,330,000 plus 30% of the amount over \$7,000,000
\$9,000,000 and up	35%	\$1,930,000 plus 35% of the amount over \$9,000,000

Note: The tax is calculated on the Washington taxable estate, which is the amount after all allowable deductions, including the applicable exclusion amount.

*For dates of death July 1, 2025, and after.

Now, 70 years later, we add up what we have and being a millionaire isn't a very high threshold! In fact, most clients with even a \$3 to \$5 million estate do not classify themselves as "rich" at all. They worry about 10 years in assisted living at a cost of \$10,000-\$15,000 per month. Yet our legislature says you ARE RICH if you have over \$3 million net worth (\$6 million for a married couple with proper planning)!

(As an aside, for a couple, the goal between you is to keep the surviving spouse's estate at or under \$3 million in nonqualifying, agricultural-based assets as will be explained and an equal or greater value of qualifying agricultural-based assets that qualify for the farm deduction.)

Table W is the rate chart for Washington Estate Tax as of early January.

Specifically, a farmer/rancher will need to have the following requirements for their estate to qualify for the farm deduction:

- The farm property must pass to a qualified heir from the decedent.
- The farm property must have been used for a qualifying use (farm property used for a farming purpose) for five out of the eight years prior to the decedent's death by the decedent or a member of the decedent's family.
- The decedent or a member of the decedent's family must be using the farm property for a farm use on the date of the decedent's death.
- The farm assets must make up at least 50% of the total estate's adjusted gross value.
- The farm real property must make up at least 25% of the total estate's adjusted gross value, which is the total gross less any mortgages or indebtedness on such farm property.

Now, say you when you die you own \$10 million of assets. Applying the

above conditions, \$8 million of those assets qualifies as “property used for farming/ranching.” That leaves \$2 million of nonfarm assets, reduced by the \$3 million statutory exemption, resulting in \$0 estate tax being owed by your estate after your death.

But, fail the qualifying conditions tests — which are very strictly applied — and your estate under the above scenario suddenly owes tax on \$7 million (\$10 million less the \$3 million statutory exemption), and your estate must pay \$1,330,000 to the governor!

Our office has extensive experience in dealing with the Washington State Department of Revenue (Revenue) with respect to the ag deduction and the many nuances presented by some estates trying to qualify for the farm deduction.

The following is an overview of what we find Revenue typically requires each estate must furnish (when claiming the farm deduction on the Washington Estate Tax Return):

- Appraisals of all assets— farm, vehicles, equipment, cattle, residences.
- Breakdown of all assets within a closely held entity.
- If held in an entity, the business appraisal is necessary to determine the value of the business and substantiation for any discounts applied to the entity value.
- Determination of what assets qualify for the farm deduction, and why they qualify.
- Statements of all bank accounts in the month of death to prove nonfarm asset values.
- Documentation, including leases, to substantiate the predeath, material-participation requirements imposed on the decedent and/or their family member.

Then, debt must be applied to the percentage test equation:

- Each asset must be closely identified on any debt that may be securing it.
- Does the debt result in disqualifying the estate for the farm deduction by tilting the farm assets less than the nonfarm assets for the percentage tests?

Note: Revenue presently allows a married decedent to utilize the community property interest value of farm

real property owned by the surviving spouse for the sole purpose of determining whether the estate meets the farm deduction percentage test.

Pitfalls that our office has come across when representing an estate that attempts to qualify for the farm deduction include:

- Leasing part of the farm out to a neighbor for a specialty crop, such as irrigated wheat or potato crops. That land then fails to meet the rules.
- Farmer Ted goes into the nursing home a month before his death and prior to going into the nursing home, leases out the farm to the neighbor. Fail!
- Leasing the pasture land out to the neighbor who runs cattle, while the decedent owns no cattle. Fail!
- Growing potatoes in year one, but leasing out the land for wheat or alfalfa in years two and three and dying in year two or three. Fail!
- Failure to materially participate for five out of eight years prior to your death on the land, meaning it now doesn’t qualify for the farm deduction. Fail!
- The very interesting situation of a husband and wife married for 50 years. Husband’s brother is farming the land for 10 years prior to husband’s death after husband retired from farming. Husband dies first. Wife inherits the farm after death of husband and continues to lease the farm to brother of deceased husband. Brother of her husband is NOT a family member of wife according to Revenue’s definition, and wife doesn’t meet the farm deduction rules when she dies. Fail!

The opinions in this article are for general information and not intended to provide specific advice. This information is not intended to be a substitute for specific individualized tax or legal advice. The author suggests that you discuss your specific situation with a qualified tax or legal advisor. ■

Norm Brock has been representing farm families throughout Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Northwestern Oregon for more than 50 years. He works out of the firm’s Davenport and Spokane offices and can be reached at (509) 721-0392 or brocklf.com.

Your wheat life...



Dawson Green (2.5) dumping trucks with his grandpa, Lonnie Green, in Fairfield. Supervision provided by Chap the golden retriever. Photo by Hanna Green.



Ben Turner in the combine and Ethan Turner (14) in the wagon at Turner Farms in Dayton. Photo by Leah Turner.



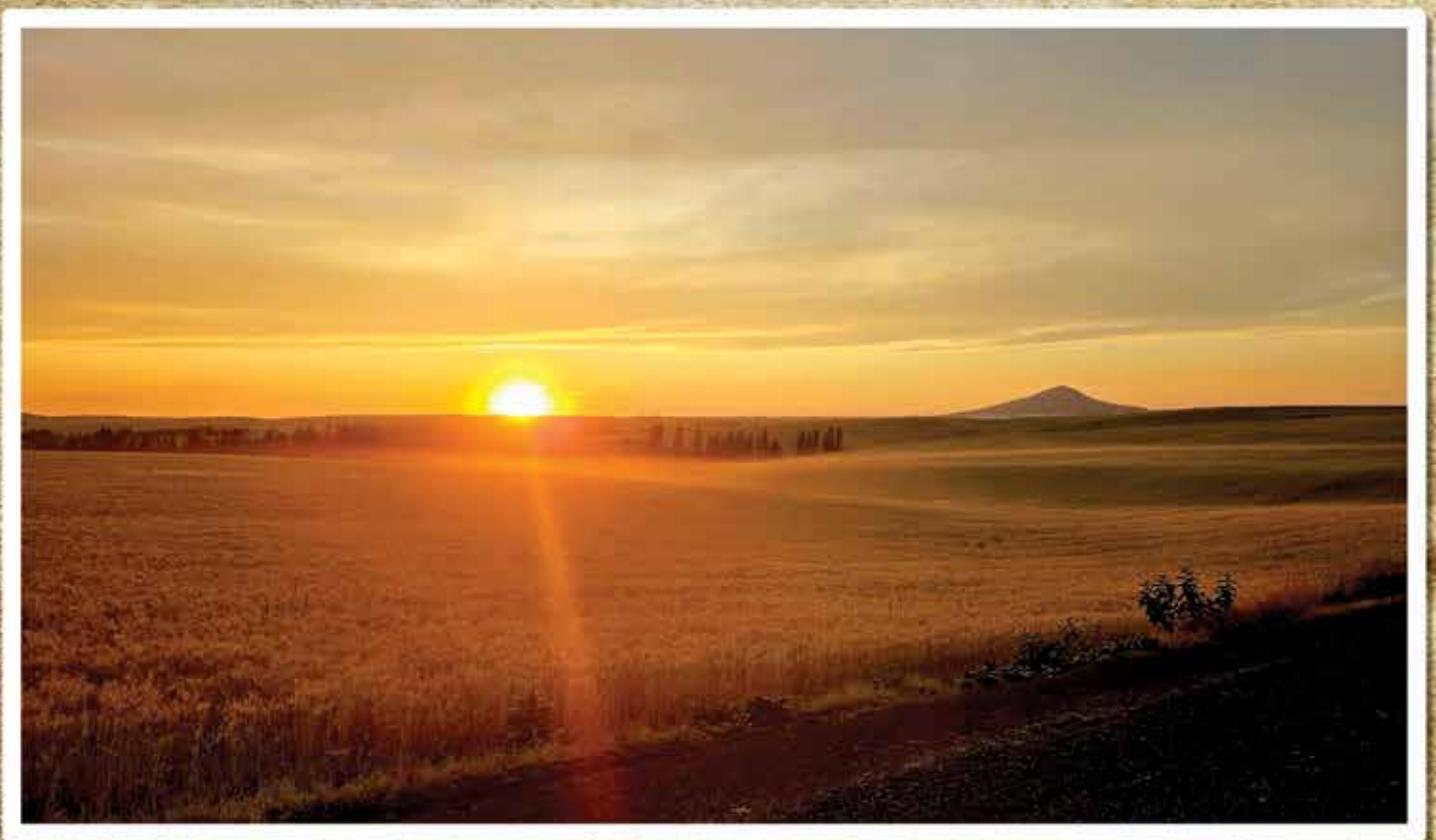
Marshall Jamison (6 months), future partner of Jamison Ag Enterprises in Garfield and son of Mitch and Hallie Jo Jamison. Photo by Hallie Jo Jamison.



Claire Heitstuman (3) and Jacob Heitstuman (5) riding with dad, Brian, during Harvest 2025 in Pomeroy. Photo by Stephanie Heitstuman.



Taking a little break from wheat harvest near Spangle are Grady James Howard (3) and his papa, Paul Sievers. Photo by Marshall Howard.



"East of West" in the Elberton area. Photo by Mark Lange.

HAPPENINGS

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

MARCH 2026

1 73RD ANNUAL UNIONTOWN SAUSAGE FEED. All you can eat sausage, potatoes, sauerkraut, beans, applesauce, roll, and a slice of pie. \$20 for adults, \$10 for kids 6-12, and \$5 for kids under 6. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cash or check only. Uniontown Community Building. uniontowncommunitybuilding.net

4 PESTICIDE RECERTIFICATION. AMMO webinar with Dr. Henry Wetzel. Two pesticide credits have been applied for. 11:30 a.m. Visit wawg.org/ammo-workshops/ to join webinar.

6-8 SPRING ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW. Professional artists and crafters from across the Northwest will display and sell their fine art, hand crafts and specialty foods. Spokane Fair and Expo Center, Spokane, Wash. custershows.com

16 WAWG BOARD MEETING. Meeting starts at 10 a.m. at Washington Wheat

Foundation Building, Ritzville, Wash. (509) 659-0610, wawg.org

17-18 WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION BOARD MEETING. Meeting begins at 10 a.m. on Tuesday and 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday at the commission building at 2702 W. Sunset Boulevard, Spokane, Wash. Contact wgc@wagrains.org for more information or access to the virtual meeting.

20-22 SPRING ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW. Professional artists and crafters from across the Northwest will display and sell their fine art, hand crafts and specialty foods. HAPO Center, Pasco, Wash. custershows.com

APRIL 2026

11 ST. JOHN EASTER EGG HUNT. St. John City Park in St. John, Wash. stjohnwa.com/events

11-12 EASTERN WASHINGTON AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM'S SPRING FARMING DAYS. Free family event. Plowing usually begins at 9 a.m. each

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

23-MAY 3 WASHINGTON STATE APPLE BLOSSOM FESTIVAL. Parade, carnival, golf tournament, apple pie and dessert bake-off, live entertainment, auction. Wenatchee, Wash. appleblossom.org

24-25 SPRING FLING QUILT SHOW. Janet Nesbitt, One Sister Design, will be the featured quilter, at the Odessa High School gym, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Quilting supply vendors, PTO Vintage Car Show on the 25th. Yard Sales throughout town both days. odessaquiltclub.com

29-MAY 2 JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW OF SPOKANE. Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. juniorshow.org ■

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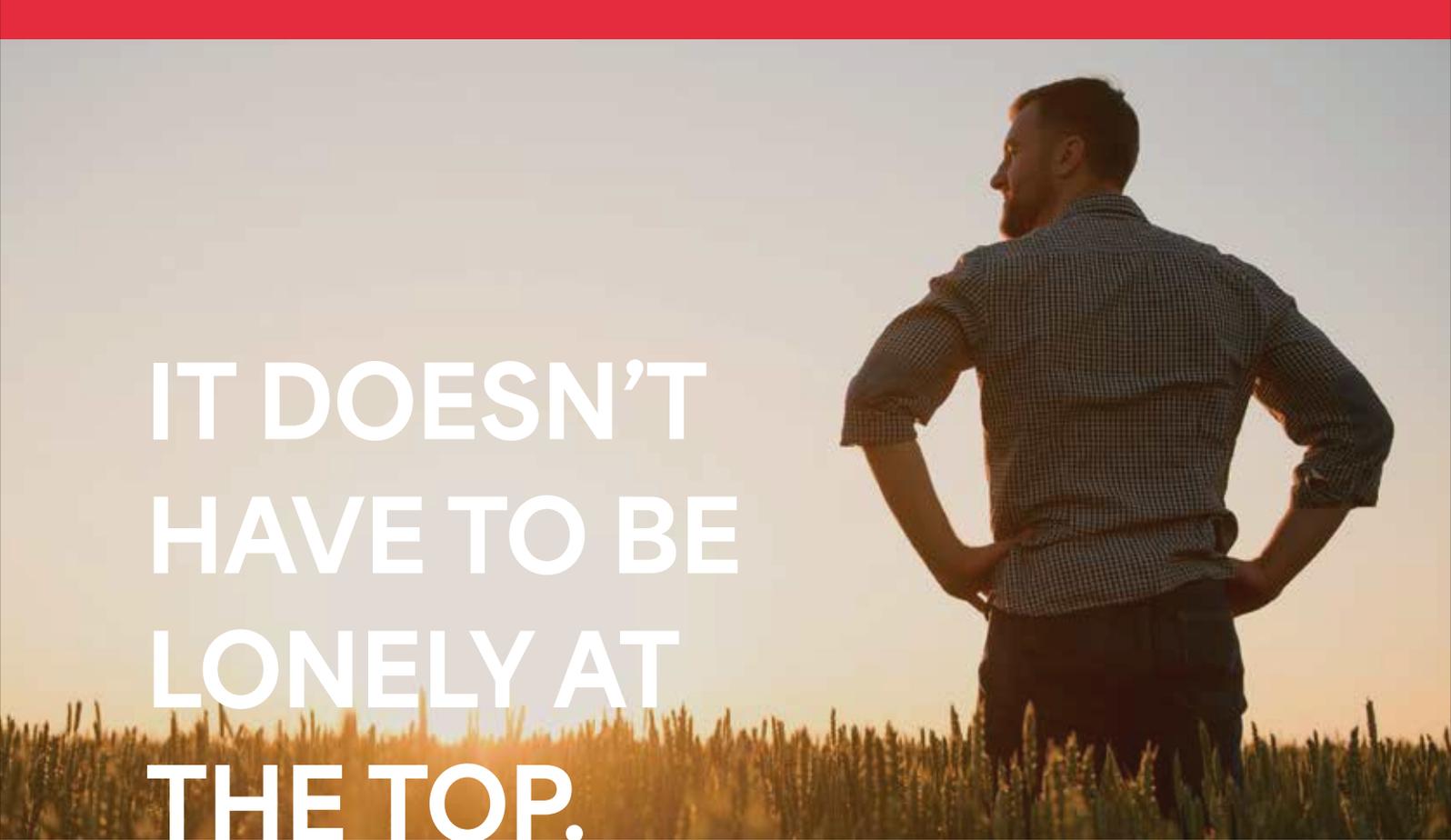
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