

# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

APRIL | 2026

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'YEN'ing for more information

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109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, WA 99169

# WHEAT LIFE

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# President's Perspective



## Remembering why we farm

By Gil Crosby

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Lately, we've been hearing a lot of negative, doom-and-gloom talk, and to be fair, some of it is deserved. Costs are high, markets are unpredictable, and it can feel like farmers are constantly being squeezed from every direction. Still, agriculture has always had its ups and downs, and sometimes it's worth stepping back and remembering why so many of us chose this life in the first place. With that in

mind, I asked several of my friends who farm a simple question: why did you get into farming, and are you glad you are still doing it?

Some of the answers were what you might expect. Many said farming is simply in their blood. Their families have been farming for generations and continuing that tradition means something to them. They grew up riding in tractors with their parents and grandparents, helping during harvest, fixing equipment in the shop, and learning the value of hard work at a young age. For them, farming isn't just a job, it's part of who they are.

But there were other answers too. Several friends mentioned the people involved in agriculture. They said farmers are some of the most respected people you will ever meet, the kind who work long days without complaint, keep their word, and measure success not by what they take, but by what they provide for others. You see neighbors helping neighbors during busy seasons, equipment gets loaned without too many questions, and when someone is in trouble, the community shows up. More than one farmer also talked about raising a family in agriculture. Farming teaches responsibility, patience, and respect for the land. Kids learn early that their work matters and that the whole operation depends on everyone pitching in, doing their job, and doing it well.

When I asked the second question, "Are you glad you are still farming?" the answer from every one of them was yes. That doesn't mean they think everything is perfect. Like most farmers, they would certainly like to see better prices and lower input costs, but they also understand that agriculture has always been cyclical.

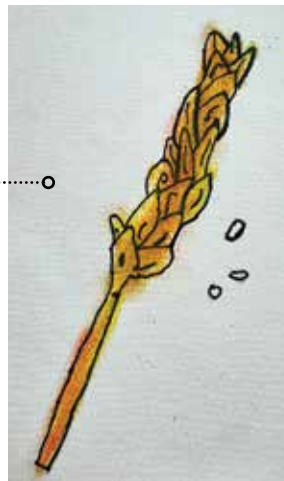
If you look back over the past few years, that point becomes pretty clear. We have seen wheat prices go from under \$6 to over \$12 in a relatively short period of time. Sure, it would be nice to have \$10 wheat all the time, but if markets stayed the same year after year, farming would look very different. The uncertainty, while frustrating, is also part of what keeps farmers paying attention, adapting, and finding ways to improve. Another thing farmers mentioned is the constant challenge of the work itself. Weather changes, markets change, and technology changes; farmers are always learning. Equipment gets better, farming practices evolve, and every season brings new decisions that can affect the outcome of the crop. For many farmers, that challenge is part of the appeal. Farming is one of the few professions where you can work your entire life and still feel like you are learning something new every season.

Even during challenging times, the people in ag believe in producing food, in caring for the land, and in continuing a way of life that has supported families and communities for generations. So, while there may be plenty of reasons to worry about the farm economy today, there are also plenty of reasons to stay optimistic. Agriculture has always been built on resilience, hard work, and a willingness to face challenges head-on, and if you ask most farmers, they'll tell you the same thing: even with all the ups and downs, they're still glad to be farming. ■

**Cover photo:** Spring fieldwork in Lincoln County. Photo by Josh Steward of Steward Farms. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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## WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

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# WAWG at WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

## WAWG testifies in support of river system

In late February, Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), testified in front of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) during a public hearing on the draft 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife program. The NPCC is congressionally mandated to update its program every 10 years and is funded by a percentage of customers' electric bills.

Hennings told the council that average fish returns have been increasing, which supports the idea that the dams and salmon can coexist and demonstrates that coordinated investments and improved operations can produce real gains for fish populations. She highlighted the importance of the dams to wheat farmers, explaining that more than 55% of all U.S. wheat exports move through the Columbia-Snake River System.

The dams also provide low-cost hydropower to the region, helping to stabilize the electrical grid during peak seasonal demands. That dispatchability supports irriga-

tion infrastructure and grain-handling facilities during critical times, such as seeding and harvest, reducing the need for costly on-farm backup energy generation.

"At the same time, maintaining and improving hydropower operations must go hand in hand with strong measures to protect and restore salmon, such as fish passage improvements, flow management and operations when appropriate, habitat restoration, and monitoring predation management," she said. "Continued investment in modernized dam operations and habitat will help sustain both energy reliability and healthy fish populations. When balanced effectively, these efforts sustain regional energy affordability and reliability while protecting fisheries, tribal resources, and the economic resilience of Washington wheat farmers and rural communities."

Rising energy costs and declining reliability are squeezing wheat farmers during an already difficult period by increasing operating expenses and disrupting time sensitive activities such as irrigation, planting, and harvest. WAWG



**CRP CONCERNS.** In early March, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) hosted a meeting in Pasco, Wash., between growers and Roylene Comes at Night, state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Patrick Bell, state executive director of the Farm Service Agency, to discuss grower concerns with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), including rental rates, stand criteria, and seeding rules. WAWG believes CRP doesn't work for Washington growers as a one-size-fits-all program and needs to be structured on a more regional basis. Photo courtesy Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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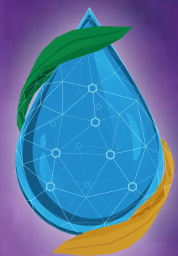
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supports solutions that preserve affordable, reliable hydropower while strengthening fish recovery efforts, both of which are essential to the long-term viability of Washington agriculture communities. ■

## WAWG seeks volunteers for Spokane farm fair

WAWG is looking for members who enjoy sharing wheat's story and facts with elementary school students. At the end of April, we will be participating in the Spokane Farm Fair on April 29-30. Please email KayDee Gilkey at [kgilkey@wawg.org](mailto:kgilkey@wawg.org) if you are interested in volunteering. Even if you can only participate one day, we'd welcome your help. ■

## Whitman County growers meet

At their March meeting, Whitman County wheat growers were advised to start scouting their fields as the region is facing the highest stripe rust pressure since 2011.

Morgan Menaker, the Washington State University Extension regional agronomist for Whitman, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties, said if growers planted varieties rated 3-9 in stripe rust resistance, they should be making herbicide application plans. Menaker also reported some leadership changes in the Variety Testing Program.

Jonelle Olson, county executive director at the Whitman County Farm Service Agency office, said staff is currently working through Supplemental Disaster Relief Program and Farm Bridge



**SUNNYSIDE CAREER FAIR.** Last month, WAWG Past President Anthony Smith took a break from spring field work in Benton County and manned a booth at the Sunnyside, Wash., school career fair for fourth and fifth graders. Susie Bennett, a school teacher in the district, coordinated the job fair.

Assistance Program applications. The agency is also taking applications for general and continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Continuous CRP enrollment has been extended to March 27 for the county, and general CRP enrollment ends April 17. She noted that CRP rental rates are down. Olson urged growers to create a login at [login.gov](http://login.gov) to access FSA and other U.S. Department of Agriculture programs.

In Washington Grain Commission (WGC) news, commissioners Ben Barstow and Art Schultheis discussed the decreasing barley acres in the state and asked the group their thoughts on whether or not the WGC should continue supporting barley research in the face of diminishing assessments. Barstow said an unusual trade team will be coming through the state in April. Shrimp and salmon farmers from Ecuador and Chile are looking into using soft white wheat as fish food. ■

## Growers disagree with dam decision

In late February, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) expressed disagreement regarding the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon's decision to grant a preliminary injunction in litigation involving the four lower Snake River dams. Overall, the ruling will increase the risk of harm to infrastructure, listed species, and public safety while failing to provide substantiated evidence that there will be benefits to listed salmon and steelhead. ►

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“We believe the court order to increase spill and lower reservoir elevations is simply manipulating the river system in a way that will appease environmental activists, but in the long term, threaten the overall viability of the Columbia-Snake River System,” said Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director, in a press release.

In addition to the myriad of benefits the Columbia-Snake River System provides for the Pacific Northwest, the economic and transportation benefits are vital to the prosperity of the region. Not only does the river system provide nearly 15,000 wheat industry-related jobs, over 60% of Washington wheat exports utilize the river system, allowing the region to lead the country in developing strong international trade relationships.

Wheat growers across the state of Washington have the utmost concern for the health of the ecosystem and believe that dams and a thriving salmon population can and do co-exist. We remain committed to working with other stakeholders and key decision-makers to ensure all actions are backed by sound science and extensive research. ■

## NAWG welcomes 2026-27 officer team

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) welcomed its new officer team at the 2026 Commodity Classic in San Antonio, Texas. These officers will begin their one-year terms, continuing NAWG’s mission to promote the needs of our nation’s wheat growers.

Jamie Kress of Idaho will serve as president, Nathan Keane of Montana will serve as vice president, Chris Tanner will serve as treasurer, and Auston Andersen of Colorado will serve as secretary. Pat Clements of Kentucky will take on the role of past president. These officers were elected on Jan. 16, 2025, during NAWG’s annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

“We are excited to welcome this dedicated and accomplished group of leaders to NAWG’s officer team,” said NAWG CEO Sam Kieffer. “Their experience, commitment, and passion for agriculture will strengthen our advocacy efforts and help us advance policies that support wheat farmers and rural communities nationwide.” ■

## 2026 wheat yield contest open for entries

The National Wheat Foundation’s National Wheat Yield Contest is now taking entries for the 2026 contest. Online registration deadline for winter wheat is May 15 and July 31 for spring wheat. Go to [wheatcontest.org](http://wheatcontest.org) to register and for more information.

The goal of the National Wheat Yield Contest is to improve the productivity, quality, and marketability of U.S. wheat. Its objectives are to educate and communicate to all segments of the wheat industry the importance of yield, quality, and profit and to develop and share best management practices to achieve high yield, high quality, and higher profits.

To be eligible, growers must be a state wheat grower association member (or a member of the National Association of Wheat Growers if entrant is from a state that has no state grower organization). Growers must use a certified or branded wheat seed variety; no bin-run seed accepted. The minimum contest plot is five

acres (20 for the digital yield pilot category). All information will need to be submitted online. Entry fee is \$100 per entry to be paid by credit card. Vouchers are available from some contest partners. See website for more details.

National winners will receive a trip to Commodity Classic where they will be recognized at a winners’ reception. Quality award recognition will be cash awards, and all contestants must save a 10-pound wheat sample for quality testing if they are a national winner. ■

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# POLICY MATTERS

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## Legislature passes millionaire's tax, adjourns

By Diana Carlen  
*WAWG Lobbyist*

The Legislature adjourned on the 60th day of the 2026 Legislative Session on March 12 at around 8:30 p.m. In the final week of the session, the Legislature adopted the supplemental 2025-2027 operating, capital, and transportation budgets. The Legislature also spent the final week passing bills. In total, the Legislature passed 267 bills during the short session.

Once a bill passes the Legislature, it is delivered to the Governor to be signed into law, vetoed, or partially vetoed (he has the authority to remove entire sections of a bill, but not specific sentences). The governor has five days, excluding Sundays, to act on bills, unless the Legislature is within five days of adjournment, in which case the governor has 20 days to act.

### Legislature passes income tax

The main drama of the last week was the passage of the "millionaire's tax" or the passage of the income tax. Legislators in the House began debating the bill on Monday, March 9, at 5:30 p.m. and did not finish debating and passing the bill until Tuesday, March 10, at 6:30 p.m. There were no extended breaks during this marathon debate. This is the longest debate on legislation that Olympia insiders could recall. Over 80 amendments were debated during floor action on the bill, but only six were ultimately adopted. Unfortunately, an exemption for farming equipment was not adopted.

SB 6346 passed by a vote of 51-46 with eight Democrats joining all Republican members of the House voting nay on the bill. The final bill adopted by the Legislature imposes an income tax on individuals and pass-through entities with an annual income of over \$1 million beginning in 2028, with collection beginning in 2029. The new income tax would impact an estimated 30,000 taxpayers and generate \$3.5 million annually. Gov. Ferguson has indicated that he will sign the bill.

Washington is currently one of nine states without an income tax, and the passage of the legislation is expected to face a legal challenge and a ballot measure.

### Final supplemental operating budget

Budget writers unveiled the final supplemental budget (ESSB 5998) the day before the session adjourned. The \$80.2 billion supplemental operating budget adds more spending to the \$77.8 billion 2025-27 biennium budget adopted last year. The operating budget passed the Senate by a vote of 30-19 (on a party-line vote with all Republicans voting against it) and the House by a vote of 54-31 (with all Republicans voting against it joined by five Democrats). Notable highlights from the final supplemental operating budget include:

- \$350,000 is provided to the Department of Fish & Wildlife to complete the identification of offsets and opportunities for recreation associated with the potential draw down of reservoirs on the lower Snake River.
- Additional \$300,000 to Commerce to complete analysis for new electricity generation, transmission, ancillary services, efficiency, and storage sufficient to offset those provided by the lower Snake River dams.
- \$60 million from the Climate Commitment Act for the wildfire account to fight wildfires.
- \$140,000 to the Department of Agriculture to create program guidelines for a future green fertilizer grant program that aligns with the recommendations of the 2024 green fertilizer work group report.

### Final supplemental transportation budget

The Legislature adopted a \$16.6 billion supplemental transportation budget (ESSB 6005) before adjourning. The Senate passed the final budget unanimously while the House passed it by a vote of 69-26.

The House and Senate versions of the supplemental budget initially differed not just on projects, but on bonding. The original House proposal did not authorize bonding, while the Senate initially authorized \$1.1 billion in bonding. The final negotiated version includes \$800 million in new bonding. Additionally, the negotiated version included \$300 million in preservation funding, \$40 million increase in maintenance funding, \$65 million in federal matching for flood recovery, and increases the ferry system preservation by \$28 million over six years, which ends up being \$4 million for the 2025-2027 biennium.




The Legislature also passed ESHB 2711, which specifi-



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cally impacts the supplemental transportation budget. The bill revised various provisions enacted in ESSB 5801, which passed during the 2025 Legislative Session. As a reminder, ESSB 5801 increased the fuel tax by 6 cents per gallon and diesel by 9 cents per gallon beginning in 2025. Diesel had an additional 3 cent increase beginning in 2027. Both diesel and fuel were then increased by an inflation adjustment factor of 2% per year beginning July 1, 2026. HB 2711 delays the second \$.03 per gallon diesel tax increase from July 1, 2027, to July 1, 2029. The start date of the special fuel differential 2% inflation adjustment factor is also delayed until July 1, 2030.

### Final supplemental capital budget

The Legislature passed the bipartisan 2025-2027 supplemental capital budget (SSB 6003) unanimously on the last day of session. The \$4.5 billion budget funds construction and infrastructure projects across the state. The total available bond capacity is \$436.4 million, which is composed of \$355.6 million in remaining bond capacity from 2025 session and \$80.8 million in bond authority adjustments. The final budget appropriates \$435.1 million in bonds, leaving a balance of \$1.3 million in bond capacity. Notable highlights from the final supplemental capital budget include:

- \$136 million for water conservation, climate resilience, and clean energy, including \$3.2 million for the Columbia River Water Supply Development Program.
- \$41 million for flood preparedness and response.
- \$10 million for anaerobic digester development.
- \$2.186 million for WSDA Plant Services Lab, Prosser (both budgets).
- \$4.636 million for climate smart agriculture equipment.
- \$400,000 for soil health research infrastructure.
- \$500,000 for virtual fencing and climate resiliency.
- \$5 million for the Lower Columbia River dredging project (an additional \$10 million is in transportation budget for total of \$15 million).

One of the agricultural industry's priorities for the session, an exemption for lubricants from the Climate Commitment Act compliance obligations, has been sent to the Governor for his signature. The exemption goes into effect beginning Jan. 1, 2027. The Legislature also rolled back the scheduled estate tax increases passed last year that made Washington state the top estate tax in the nation at 35%. SB 6347 restores the state's estate tax rate structure to a 10% to 20% rate for those dying on or after July 1, 2026. The bill was delivered to the Governor on March 13. Another priority for agriculture that passed the Legislature is a bill that extends the existing hazard-

ous substance tax exemption for qualifying agricultural crop protection products that are temporarily warehoused but not otherwise used, manufactured, packaged, or sold in the state of Washington to 2038. The bill passed the Legislature on March 12 and was delivered to the Governor.

For a more detailed report, please visit [wawg.org](http://wawg.org). ■

## House Ag Committee advances farm bill

On March 5, the House Committee on Agriculture passed the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567) with a vote of 34-17.

"NAWG thanks Chairman Thompson for his leadership in moving the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 forward. Wheat farmers continue to face rising supply costs, low commodity prices, and uncertainty in global markets. We applaud the committee's work and bipartisan support to provide much-needed certainty," said Jamie Kress, National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) president and an Idaho farmer. "But Congress' farm bill work has just begun. NAWG encourages Speaker Johnson to bring the farm bill to the House floor, and we call on members of Congress to support its passage. By advancing this legislation, Congress can address key priorities for wheat farmers including modernizing the Farm Credit title, permanently transferring Food for Peace to USDA, strengthening trade promotion programs, reauthorizing CRP, and ensuring science-based labeling for crop protection tools. These provisions matter to farmers across the country, and we look forward to working together with the House and Senate to get them across the finish line."

One item of particular interest to wheat growers was an amendment offered by Rep. Sharice Davids (D-Kan.) that would direct the Natural Resources Conservation Service to study the impacts of winter wheat as a cover crop through harvest and report their findings to the House Committee on Agriculture. The amendment passed via voice vote. ■

## How are we doing?

Like something you read in *Wheat Life*? Disagree with something you read in *Wheat Life*? Let us know by emailing your comments and suggestions to [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org) or mail them to 109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, Wash., 99169-2394. Please keep submissions less than 350 words. Submissions may be edited for length. ■

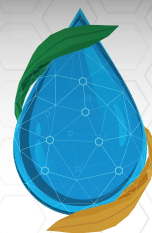
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## The challenge of ag viability in Washington state

Washington is widely recognized as one of the nation's most productive agricultural states. We are a local food haven, second only to California in the diversity of crops grown! The state consistently ranks among the top producers of many specialty crops, generating more than \$10 billion annually in agricultural value spanning across its 32,000 farms (94% family-owned). Agriculture makes up 10-13% of the state's annual gross domestic product, and our farmers and ranchers manage nearly 7.7 million acres of the state's lands. Yet behind those impressive production numbers, many farmers say the economics of agriculture in Washington are becoming increasingly unsustainable.

Recent data paints a troubling picture. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture, Washington lost more than 3,700 farms between 2017 and 2022, an average of more than two farms every day. The decline reflects mounting financial pressures on growers, particularly family farms that operate on thin margins and depend on stable markets and affordable production costs.

The financial outlook has become even more concerning. In 2024, Washington ranked last in the nation for returns to farm operators, with overall returns estimated at negative \$295 million. While farmers in other major agricultural states saw billions in positive returns, Washington growers collectively



spent more on inputs and operations than they earned. Analysts point to a strong U.S. dollar, which reduces export competitiveness, as one contributing factor. But our export dependence is only one contributing factor.

Rising costs are another major driver. The increase in labor, fuel, fertilizer, and regulatory compliance expenses have all increased sharply in recent years, especially in our state. In fact, labor costs alone have been reported far above national averages in Washington, reflecting both higher wages and regulatory requirements. For farmers producing globally traded crops, those higher costs can be difficult to recover in the marketplace. For example, in 1986, the Chicago Board of Trade wheat futures were roughly \$2.40-\$2.60 per bushel. Adjusting for inflation, today that would be \$7-\$7.50 per bushel. As of March 4, 2026, Chicago wheat futures were listed at roughly \$5.69-\$5.90 per bushel.

Another way to think of it is to compare fuel prices. In 1986, wheat prices were at \$2.50 per bushel and diesel was about \$1 per gallon. Today wheat prices are \$5.70 per bushel and diesel is \$4-5 per gallon. Wheat prices have not kept pace with input inflation, which is part of why many grain growers argue margins are tighter today despite higher nominal prices. A Washington wheat farmer today may harvest 60-70 bushels per acre, compared to ~40 bushels in the 1980s, but their real profit per acre is often similar or lower. Today, our farmers produce higher yields at higher costs, and profit margins suffer.

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Wheat farmers are not alone in this struggle. Potato fields, apple orchards, grape vineyards, and others are feeling the impact. Many growers say these pressures are creating a cycle that threatens the long-term viability of farming across crops. When production costs rise faster than commodity prices, farmers often take on additional debt or defer investments in equipment and infrastructure. Over time, those financial strains can push farms to consolidate, sell land, or shut down entirely. The result is fewer farms, fewer opportunities for the next generation, and a gradual loss of agricultural capacity.

The stress is not only economic. It is personal. Studies and reports tied to the agricultural sector in Washington have highlighted growing mental health concerns among farmers, driven largely by financial uncertainty, unpredictable weather, and the responsibility of maintaining multigenerational operations.

Despite the challenges, many industry leaders believe solutions are possible. Policies that improve labor availability, support export competitiveness, reduce regulatory burdens, and stabilize production costs could help improve profitability and keep farms in operation. Investments in infrastructure, research, and workforce development may also strengthen the long-term outlook for the industry.

Washington agriculture remains a cornerstone of the state's economy and rural communities, but the loss of thousands of farms and declining farm income highlight an urgent reality: the loss of locally grown food can happen here. Ensuring agricultural viability will require coordinated efforts from policymakers, industry leaders, and communities alike. Without those efforts, the state risks losing not only farms, but also the locally grown food we all appreciate. ■



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# 'YEN'ing for more information

LINCOLN COUNTY GROWER USES GREAT LAKES GROWER GROUP TO FINE TUNE OPERATION

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

The devil's often found in the details, and one Lincoln County grower is shifting through a wheat field of data to find answers.

**Jesse Brunner**, a fifth-generation farmer north of Almira, Wash., is going into his third year participating in the Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network (YEN). The program, which is based on a similar program in the UK, was started by the Michigan Wheat Board and the Grain Farmers of Ontario in 2021. Growers use an equation based on a location's solar radiation and rainfall to come up with a potential yield number that they then compare to their actual yield. Data is collected throughout the year and compiled into reports (both group and individual) that growers can use. The Great Lakes YEN includes farmers not only from the Great Lake states and Ontario, Canada, but states like Missouri, Kentucky, and New York. Brunner grows mostly fall-seeded canola, wheat, and peas and is currently the only Washington state grower participating. He first heard about the Great Lakes YEN from listening to Peter "Wheat Pete" Johnson on YouTube. Johnson has been enthusiastic about YENs and was the featured speaker at last year's Wheat College.

"I was very curious about it (the YEN)," Brunner said. "I think what makes them so interesting is the fact that you're combining the collective data of all the growers involved, and you're able to see, on a large scale, trends for what works and what doesn't work."



While the data might not directly translate from the Midwest and East Coast to the Pacific Northwest, Brunner said there are similarities, and a lot of the fertility information is directly applicable; he is tweaking his fertility program. How much of the other information translates to his own operation is something he is still figuring out.

"Not only am I able to make comparisons between what's going on here and what's going on back there, but I'm able to see what's going on in my own field," he said. "If we had a YEN in Washington, that would be amazing because then that would be a lot more relevant. But it is really interesting to see things like fertilizer rates compared to the

Midwest or to the Great Lakes area."

Brunner said his yields are in the middle range, but his seeding dates are much earlier than the other growers, and there are big differences in seeding rates. One of the most interesting things he has learned from his YEN participation is how much of his micronutrients are ending up in the grain compared to the Great Lakes area. Overall, there hasn't been an "aha" moment. Besides tweaking his fertility program, he is also experimenting with narrower row spacing on his drill and playing with seeding rates. He said he is looking for multiple improvements that might make a 1% difference, rather than one big change.

"All that low hanging fruit has already been picked. We're looking for 3% improvements, or even 1% improvement. If I can get 10, 1% improvements, 10% improvement

## Wheat College update

This year's Wheat College has another tie to the Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network, or YEN. Dennis Pennington, a wheat systems specialist at Michigan State University, will be the featured presenter. Pennington helps manage the Great Lakes YEN and works with growers to use the YEN data.

Wheat College is scheduled for June 2 in Colfax, Wash., at the Palouse Empire Fairgrounds. See ad on page 20, and watch the May *Wheat Life* for a preview. ■

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is a pretty big deal,” he explained. “Life is all about managing expectations. I think the big thing that the YEN can point to is everywhere they’ve started one of these, they see a notable increase in the county average yield after about 10 years.”

To participate in the Great Lakes YEN, growers pay \$325. The actual cost of participating is about \$1,200, but the YEN is subsidized by Midwest grain purchasers who have a vested interest in increasing yields. After registering, growers receive a package containing everything they need to get started in collecting data.

Brunner said growers in the YEN are expected to collect a significant amount of data and keep meticulous records, such as soil tests, tissue tests, seeding dates and rates, variety planted, row spacing, chemical applications, dates when specific crop stages are reached, harvest dates, etc. At harvest, growers set aside a 3-acre plot that is harvested and weighed separately. Growers also submit field photos that are used to figure out head count and stand density. At the end of the year, growers get a “giant” report, but the data is kept anonymous.

“It sounds like more work than it is, but it’s not terrible,

and they have made it as easy as they possibly can. They have all your sample containers. Everything you ship off, they already have the box with a pre-paid label on it. All you have to do is throw the stuff in the box and put it in the mail,” he said. “You’re going to get out of it what you put into it. You have to be willing to put the time in.”

Despite the work, Brunner said his participation in the YEN has been absolutely worth it. For those who are interested, he suggested talking to a grower who is in the program or giving it a try for a year.

“Get a copy of the final report and just see what kind of information is in there. It is a level of analysis that really blew my mind when I first saw it,” he said. “I really hope to see a program started here in the Pacific Northwest. I think it’d be a great value to our growers. Right now, it’s focused on wheat, but in other places in the world, they have them for other crops too, and that’d be really exciting.”

Brunner said growers are welcome to contact him at [jesse.brunner@gmail.com](mailto:jesse.brunner@gmail.com) if they have questions about his participation in the Great Lakes YEN. You can also find information about the program at [greatlakesyen.com](http://greatlakesyen.com). ■



## Wheat College

Keynote speaker: Dennis Pennington

### Stacking the Bushels: Small Decisions, Big Yield

This Wheat College event will offer a mix of indoor and outdoor presentations.

*Dennis, the MSU wheat extension specialist, has been employed with MSU Extension for 29 years. Dennis received both his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in the Crop and Soil Sciences Department from Michigan State University. His current research program includes the wheat state variety performance trials, precision planting, high yield management project and the Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network.*



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# Hedging risk

AMMO SEMINAR FOCUSES ON USING OPTIONS AS PART OF RISK MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

In February, wheat growers had the opportunity to learn some basic information about using options as part of their portfolio of risk management tools.

The seminar was presented by **Allison Thompson**, a commodity broker and owner of The Money Farm, a commodity advisory service based in Minnesota. Thompson's family owns a farm that grows corn, soybeans, wheat, and barley. She was presenting as part of the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's 2026 winter schedule.

Thompson began her presentation by talking about the difference between hedging and speculation. Hedging is a tool to reduce risk on an operation, but it also lowers profit potential. Speculating is only for making money and doesn't account for risk.

"Farmers should not be necessarily speculating in the market, especially if you're hedging. If you're hedging, do not turn a hedge trade into a spec. That is the number one thing. If you remember anything today, don't turn it into a spec," she cautioned.

Every year, growers face two risks: prices collapse or they miss a price rally. They have three choices: do nothing; sell futures or forward contracts; or use options, which give flexibility while providing some protection. Options are the right, not the obligation, to do something. In marketing, there are two types of options: a put (sell at a price) or a call (buy at a price). Growers will pay an up-front premium to place a call or put, which Thompson likened to crop insurance.

"Just like your crop insurance, you pay money every year, but you don't expect that money back, right? Your hope is that you have a good crop, and you're able to sell it all in the cash market," she said. "The same thing with using options for hedging. You want to protect prices if they go down, or if you made sales, you want to protect them in case prices go up. You're not buying options to get rich. You're buying to avoid getting hurt."

There are three drivers of the cost of options:

- Volatility. If there's a lot of movement in the market, the cost goes up. Quiet markets make options cheaper.
- Strike price vs. market price. In other words, the price you want compared to the current market price.



- Time to expiration. The more time before the option expires, the more expensive it will be because markets have more time to move. Options can cover months or weeks. There's also a short-dated new crop option that's based off a new crop contract but expires earlier. Thompson says these types of options offer short-term protection at a lower cost. However, winter wheat does not have this option. As an alternative for winter wheat, growers could be cross hedging by buying corn options. In addition, white wheat generally is connected to Portland, not the Chicago market.

"Corn options are relatively cheap compared to wheat, but historically, if corn rallies, wheat should follow. If wheat rallies, corn should follow," she explained. "Your best bet, if you're using options on wheat, is to use Chicago's. I know it's not perfect, but we're talking about protection, not perfection."

A normal contract size for wheat is 5,000 bushels, and brokers quote options in cents per bushel. Thompson gave growers an example of a standard call or put at \$.15 per bushel. The contract would cost the grower \$750 to protect those bushels. Growers need to compare the cost of an option to the cost of storing grain and any interest rates from operating loans that are drawn on because of a lack of cash flow.

"The good thing about options is this is the only cost

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you're going to have," she explained. "If you bought a call and prices continued to go down, it's going to lose value on you, so if you don't get out of it, it expires worthless, and you're out the \$750 bucks. Better case scenario is prices move up, and you gain value in the call option. At least you know your worst-case scenario right up front when you're using options."

Thompson said she often helps growers buy a call option immediately after selling grain, something she called "re-owning" grain. This is helpful if a seller thinks there's some opportunity for markets to go higher after the grain is sold. She advises growers to only "re-own" grain once.

"You're buying the call with the broker, independent of your grain merchandiser," Thompson explained. "You'd set up an account

**Common Options Trading Myths**

- Myth 1: "Only for Experts"** (Icon: Plus and X)
- Myth 2: "Just Gambling"** (Icon: Downward arrow)
- Myth 3: "Buying Always Safer"** (Icon: Buy/Sell buttons)
- Myth 4: "All Expire Worthless"** (Icon: Pie chart)
- Myth 5: "Need Huge Capital"** (Icon: Dollar and Euro signs)
- Myth 6: "Too Complicated"** (Icon: Formula  $\Delta S \approx \frac{1}{2} \sigma^2 T + 0$ )

Understanding these myths helps make better trading decisions

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with a broker, like me, and you'd have a futures account. You would put monies into this futures account to pay for those options. If they worked for you, this account gains value. If you exit it and you made money in it, I can send the money home. If you lose it all, Chicago gets your money, the market got your money, that's how it works."

Buying the option is only half the work; growers also need to know when to get out. In addition, growers should understand that the markets work to make most options expire worthless. The exit strategies Thompson explained were:

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- Let it expire worthless if there's no value in it.
- Exercise the option and turn it into a futures position.
- Roll it into a deferred contract or high strike. This would be if you had good money in your option.

"Most options do expire worthless, but again, we're not going for perfection, we're going for protection," she said. "If you're not sure about options, just do one and see how it works."

Following her presentation on options, Thompson also gave a market outlook report. See her most up-to-date report on page 50. ■



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# State of the estate

SEMINAR TACKLES FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF MANAGING AND PASSING THE FARM TO NEXT GENERATION

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Financial presentations are usually popular with growers, but adding fried chicken and jojos from Sonny's Tavern in Washtucna made February's Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) seminar a slam dunk.

Before getting to the victuals, growers heard about estate planning from Corey Brock, financial advice from Tara Wiswall, and an estate tax update from Jared King.

## Estate planning

Brock, an attorney with Brock Law Firm, dove into estate planning. These are highly emotional assets that are moving from generation to generation, and families need to decide what legacy means and work with a team that understands agriculture.

"Is the farm the legacy or the family? Hopefully, it can be both," Brock said.

There's a huge difference between fair market value and farm value, and it's one of the biggest issues Brock works with, especially when there are nonfarm kids in the picture. He cautioned growers to be aware that kids may not have the same kind of emotional attachment to the farm as the parents do, and the next generation has to know what is going on.

Typical estate planning goals for farm families include:

- Keeping the farm in family.
- Designating specific heirs to operate.
- Being fair to other children and/or off farm children; however



Corey Brock (left), an attorney with Brock Law Firm, covered estate planning and the idea of fair vs. equal when it comes to dividing assets among farming and nonfarming heirs.

fair doesn't necessarily mean equal.

- Having a realistic cash flow. One common scenario that Brock runs into is mom and dad just got debt paid off at age 75. Kid wants to come back, but can the farm support them all? Then, a neighbor's farm comes up for sale, and instead of retiring, the parents have to figure out how to pay back that new debt.
- Have a practical plan. There's a lot of bad lawyering, and if you aren't working with people who have experience in agriculture, you are doing yourself a disservice. Law has become very specialized.

"The goal is how do we transition this and make it work? If you only transition it at death, it won't work. At 45, if your kid doesn't have a substantial stake in the farm, they are just a hired hand," Brock said. "A silent will will fail. Mom and dad knew what they wanted, but they didn't tell anybody. Don't punt it to the next generation. Make the hard decisions for the family and the next generation."

Farmers need to evaluate their estate plan, which should be structured for three things:

- Asset protection. Farmers are both landlords and tenants. They need to separate out land (the passive side) and the operation (the active side) into different entities. This helps protect the land from potential legal actions.
- Tax planning. Your plan needs to be structured properly for both income and estate taxes by a qualified firm that has lots of experience with ag. As a self-employed person, growers should take a careful look at the social security tax as there are ways to save on that.
- Transition planning. Growers shouldn't put nonfarm kids with farm kids on the operating side; those entities should be transitioned differently.

Brock walked growers through an example of a family with three kids — a

son who farms and two off-farm daughters — and how he'd structure the farm. The goals include minimizing taxes; providing for succession planning; protecting income to mom and dad; providing safeguards from divorce, bankruptcy and non-approved transfers (nonlinear heirs); and maintaining control to mom and dad and then to their children. The land would be placed in an LLC and the operating side in a partnership with separate corporations for the parents and the children. The son would be able to buy out the sisters at farm value, not fair market value.

“Talk to your kids and make sure off farm family are taken into consideration and given value. Most of them probably want the cash. The best way to keep the farm together is to keep the farming kid as owner of the land,” he said.

Brock's key takeaways were:

- Identify a business structure that works for the business, not only for estate planning.
- Communicate early and often.
- Give cash to uninterested family members early with clear understanding that the farm assets will remain with the farm family members.
- Balance accumulating assets personally (for retirement) while keeping the business cash flow healthy.

### Sound financial advice

Wiswall is a financial advisor with Edward Jones who's seen what the lack of proper planning can do to a family farm. One side of her family lost their farm when the farming sibling couldn't afford to buy the other siblings out without having to sell the farm. On the other side, her grandfather retained control until he was 80 years old and was diagnosed with cancer. When he was forced to

give up control, none of his heirs had an interest in coming back to the farm.

She encouraged growers to involve family members in all farm activities to promote teamwork and enhance cooperation and efficiency in farm tasks. Family members need to share knowledge, such as financial skills or marketing skills, and make sure that the farm team (CPA, lawyers, bankers, etc.) know other family members, since things like credit scores don't transfer.

“Involving family builds a sense of shared responsibility, strengthening both family bonds and farm success,” she said.

Growers need to separate the business and farm from personal income and assets, and there needs to be assets beyond the farm. Cash flow should also be regularly monitored to understand fund availability and support smart financial decisions.

“Combining budgeting and cash flow tracking promotes financial stability and informed decision-making,” she said. “You don't just do this once. It is a

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constant and will need to be updated regularly. Also make sure that the financial knowledge isn't only in one person."

Managing risks and investments includes:

- Risk identification. Recognizing potential threats helps in planning to protect farm assets and ensure sustainability.
- Risk mitigation. Implementing strategies reduces the impact of risks on farming operations and finances. Need to have something off the farm (social security).
- Investment strategies. Smart investments support growth and long-term success of the farming business. If you are just sitting on cash, it is losing value from inflation.

Wiswall pointed out that the farm can't be an ATM or a Venmo account for nonfarm kids. It has to be run as a business, and if nonfarm kids need support, it should come out of personal assets. Growers also need to be realistic about how many families the farm can support. In addition, the farm team (think financial advisor, CPA, and attorney) need to be younger than you, they need to know about each other, and work together.

Pitfalls to avoid include having adult children as owners on your personal accounts; beneficiaries that don't match your estate plan; not telling your kids what's going to happen when you die; and starting this planning in your 80s or when a major life event happens. It's too late at that point.

Wiswall's takeaways were:

- Balancing farm operations. Efficient management of farm activities ensures productivity and supports family livelihood.
- Harmonizing family life.



Tara Wiswall, a financial advisor with Edward Jones, urged growers to involve family members in all aspects of managing the farm, including financial decisions.



Jared King, a CPA with Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S., closed out the session by talking about estate taxes and farm business structures.

Maintaining strong family bonds provides emotional support essential for rural success.

- Effective financial management. Careful budgeting and resource allocation helps farm families overcome economic challenges.

### Estate tax update

King, a CPA with Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S., closed out the AMMO session by updating growers on state and federal estate taxes.

For most farmers, the federal estate tax is not an issue. For 2026, the exemption is set at \$15 million per person and is indexed to inflation. The annual gifting limit is \$19,000. On the state side, effective July 2025, the exemption is \$3 million per individual. Washington has the highest state-level estate tax rate in the nation with the top tier at 35%. The state does have a farm exemption, which can be tricky to meet, and has no limit on gifting.

*Editor's note: In the 2026 Washington State Legislative Session, legislators approved*

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a bill to roll back the estate tax, lowering the top rate from 35% to 20%.

When it comes to a will, what is fair is not necessarily equal.

“Is it fair for the person not on the farm to get as much of the farm as it is for the person on the farm? That’s for the parents to decide, and it’s something to consider,” King said. “Have you communicated your intentions for your estate?”

Like Brock, King advocated carving off the operating side of the farm from the real estate and giving operational control to those working on the farm (as opposed to nonfarm family members). King presented an example where the parents want the farm to continue and wish to treat their two children fairly. One child returned to the farm after college, and the other has a successful off-farm career. The parent’s retirement is funded through a crop-share lease, and the land is protected by various LLC agreements. The on-farm son continues to farm and owns the corporation (the operating entity) outright, allowing him to make all day-to-day decisions without input from the off-farm sibling. Income from farm operations benefits those working the farm. The corporation pays land rent to the LLC, producing a steady income stream for each heir. This arrangement reduces the pressure to equally apportion estate assets. A buy-sell agreement in the LLC protects the on-farm child if the sibling wants to sell.

“My big takeaway is to communicate whatever your plan is. Have transparent conversations with the family, discuss expectations or goals, and communicate that with landlords,” King said. He also advised growers to expose the next generation to all aspects of farming, shift responsibilities over time, and facilitate ownership through gifting. ■

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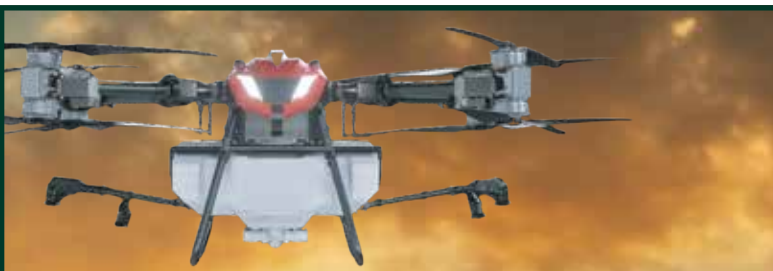


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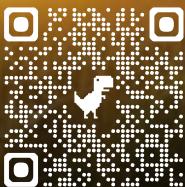
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### Morgan Menaker, WSU Regional Extension Agronomist

By Kevin Gaffney  
*Special to Wheat Life*

Coming from a region of rolling hills where soft red wheat dominates and annual rainfall averages 45 inches, **Morgan Menaker** admits he experienced some culture shock upon arriving in Eastern Washington.

“The first time I came to Pullman for my in-person interview, driving south of Spokane into Whitman County was almost like arriving on another planet,” Menaker said. “The beautiful green wheat fields in May seemed to stretch on forever. I had never seen images of the Palouse country. It was truly eye-opening.”

Menaker began his new role with Washington State University (WSU) Cooperative Extension in September 2025. Based in Colfax, he now serves growers across Whitman, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties.

Menaker moved from North Carolina, where his average farmer managed 2,000-3,000 acres, to Eastern Washington. He previously worked in Union County, N.C., one of the state’s top agricultural counties where crops include soft red wheat, corn, sorghum, cotton, fruits, and vegetables, alongside numerous horse, goat, and cattle operations.

“Most people have eaten soft red wheat; they just didn’t know it. When you look at the back of a six pack of Lance Crackers, it’ll be from Charlotte, N.C.”

Menaker’s interest in agriculture and plant biology began early. His grandfather and father owned a Christmas tree farm in the Appalachian Mountains when Menaker was young. He earned a degree in general biology from the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in 2017 and a master’s in plant science and pest management from Virginia Tech in 2022. At VMI, cadets live in barracks all four years as members in the Corps of Cadets.

Following graduation, Menaker served in the U.S. Army under a three-year contract and completed Armor Officer Basic at Fort Benning, Ga. He served with the 4th Squadron, 3d Cavalry Regiment in Fort Hood, Texas. Menaker served in heavy weapons then reconnaissance



troop. He also rotated through South Korea.

“I enjoyed my time in the Army,” Menaker said, “but I decided not to make it a career when my contract ended.”

During his military service, Menaker married his wife, Kirsty. The couple now has two children: a four-year-old son and one-year-old daughter. After leaving the military, Menaker worked with Metrolina Greenhouses in Huntersville, N.C., focusing on plant propagation.

“I enjoyed the work,” he said, “but I missed the service aspect. Serving and helping others has always been important to me.”

That desire to serve led him to Extension work. He initially worked with nursery operators and fruit and vegetable growers before transferring to Union County, where small grains and soybeans are major crops. His Extension program focused on producing milling quality wheat and weed control.

One of the primary challenges there was managing pests and diseases. Another was managing herbicide-resistant weeds, particularly multiple resistant Italian ryegrass. A typical rotation in his region included three crops over two years with no summer fallow: spring corn harvested in September; winter wheat planted immediately after and harvested by early summer; followed by soybeans harvested before winter. Corn would then be planted again the following spring.

“There was never any summer fallow, or you’d end up with a field full of pigweed or ryegrass,” Menaker said. “It was a remarkable and rewarding experience to provide critical research to growers in the area where I grew up.”

Because of intensive rotation patterns and widespread use of herbicide-tolerant crops, Menaker notes that North Carolina may have been 15–20 years ahead of the Pacific Northwest in developing that level of herbicide-resistant weeds. He conducted extensive research addressing resistance issues in wheat and other crops during his three years in Union County. ▶



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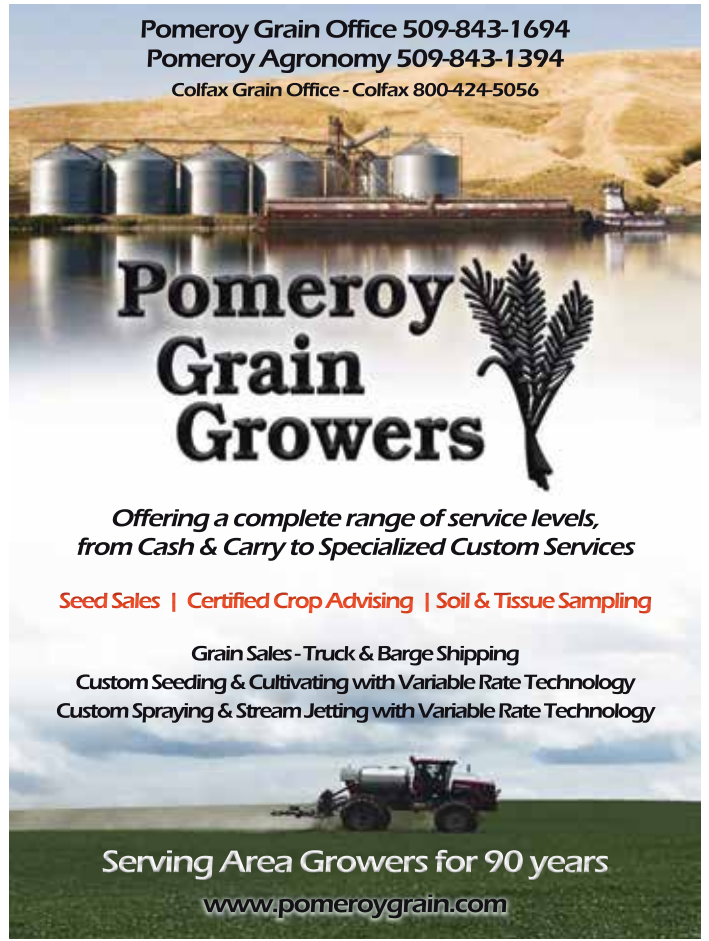
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When the opportunity arose to join WSU Extension, Menaker welcomed the challenge.

“Here in Washington, we’re dealing with herbicide resistance in cheatgrass, Italian ryegrass, morning glory, Russian thistle, kochia, and other weeds,” he said. “I’m eager to work with local growers to find practical, long-term solutions.”

Menaker has submitted research funding requests to the Washington Grain Commission and the Washington Oilseed Commission to support work on herbicide resistance management. Potential solutions include diversified crop rotations and adjustments to standard herbicide programs.

“As we all know, change doesn’t come easily,” he said. “Conservation practices, direct seeding, and precision agriculture technologies all require investment. The payoff is there, but it takes time to recover those costs.”

He compares reliance on chemical management practices year after year to running on a treadmill — steady effort without forward progress. As one University of Idaho scientist put it, “We sprayed our way into this problem; we’re not going to spray our way out of it.”

Menaker strongly believes in on-farm research and is already planning trials throughout his five-county region. He would like all projects to include at least two sites, accounting for soil type variability and differing precipitation.

“My work focuses on research that local growers want and what will benefit them most,” he said.

He encourages wheat growers to plant multiple varieties rather than relying on one. Planting only one variety can increase vulnerability to winter injury or disease outbreaks.

“I’ve encountered some minor skepticism about my background not being in soft white wheat,” Menaker said, “but I believe things are progressing well. I look forward to continuing to expand my knowledge and serve our growers.

For Menaker, the most rewarding part of the job is making a tangible difference.

“I enjoy the research side of my work,” he said, “and I love that it directly supports our local growers.”

Outside of work, Menaker enjoys spending time with his family and exploring the Pacific Northwest. He can be reached at his WSU Cooperative Extension office at [morgan.menaker@wsu.edu](mailto:morgan.menaker@wsu.edu) or at (509) 397-6290. ■



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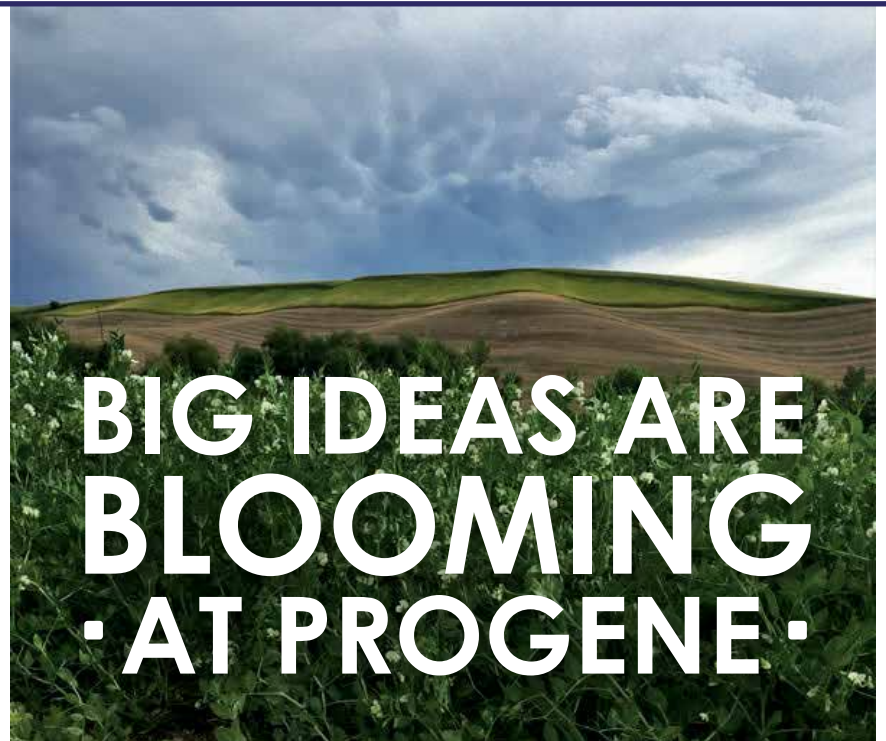
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**Table 1: Prominent research program areas supported wholly or in part by the Washington Grain Commission funding since 1958.**

### **Wheat and barley breeding programs**

- a. Focus on spring and winter soft white and club classes, with some hard red spring, hard red winter, and hard white varieties also released. Germplasm adapted to unique and variable growing conditions in Washington.
- b. Agronomic traits: Maturity date, cold hardiness, straw strength and length, threshing ability, herbicide tolerance, emergence from deep sowing, falling numbers, yield.
- c. Disease and insect resistance: Seedling and adult plant stripe rust resistance, foot rot, eyespot, snow mold, Cephalosporium leaf spot, Hessian fly, soilborne wheat mosaic virus (SBWMV).
- d. Varieties with herbicide tolerance (Clearfield, CoAXium, Metribuzin, and others in development).
- e. Development of rapid breeding technology. Molecular markers for disease resistance and other traits, dihaploid technology, bioinformatics, and aerial imaging.

### **Extension**

- a. Small grains website, decision support tools, podcasts, and publications.
- b. Annual Wheat Academy event in Pullman and now the traveling Wheat Academy outside of Pullman.
- c. Cereal Variety Testing Program.
- d. Weed management, grain marketing, soil science programs.

### **Agronomic research**

- a. Fertility, crop rotation trials.
- b. No-till and minimum cultivation, water conservation, and retention.
- c. Pesticide and herbicide registration and evaluations (new emergency registrations).
- d. Importance of “greenbridge” in disease control.

### **Varietal end-use quality for baking**

- a. Protein, falling numbers, dough strength, and other chemical and physical properties of importance to end-uses; cake and cookie baking analysis in support of breeding programs. Sets standard for public and private companies’ varieties.
- b. Annual Preferred Wheat Variety Brochure.
- c. Participation in marketing activities here and abroad.

### **Programmatic enhancements, infrastructure, and rapid response**

- a. Major equipment purchases as state and federal funds are reduced: combines, vehicles and trailers, lab equipment.
- b. Infrastructure such as matching funds for state-of-the-art grain breeding greenhouse.
- c. Emergency trials to respond to GMO release in wheat field.
- d. Emergency allocation of research funding for alternative falling numbers test.
- e. Critical matching funds for regional programs, such as STEEP, federal project on weeds (Herbicide Resistance Initiative), and Washington Wheat Health Initiative.

### **Discovery research**

- a. Bioinformatics for gene discovery and molecular markers for breeding.
- b. Microorganisms for alteration of soil pH and N fixation in wheat.
- c. Mechanisms of resistance and gene discovery for drought, heat, and cold tolerance in wheat. ■

the RAS ultimately crystallized around two priorities: the stewardship of the research portfolio itself and the specific responsibilities that would be asked of individual RAS members.

Recruiting farmers into leadership roles is never easy. Time is the scarcest resource in agriculture, and asking growers to take on meaningful RAS responsibilities demands thoughtful consideration. Recruiting was critical. The RAS must be representative of the diverse environmental and geographic growing regions in Washington. To achieve the breadth of coverage of the Washington grain industry, the WGC commissioners decided the RAS should have 10 members: two WGC commissioners, the research chair from WAWG, one grower from each of the five WGC districts, and two at-large grower members. A member of WGC staff and the WSU liaison serve as ex officio members. The seven grower members were to be neither past WAWG board members or past WGC commissioners. Nominations for the RAS were solicited from WGC commissioners, WAWG board members, county grain grower presidents, researchers, and industry. It was considered essential to have nominations from the group they represent to have knowledgeable, accountable, and dedicated members of RAS. A document describing RAS and individual responsibilities and expectations was

**Table 2:** Current membership of the Research Advisory Subcommittee

| Name                 | Representation | Home       |
|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| Drew Bowdish         | At-Large       | Goldendale |
| Kurt Druffel         | District 2     | Pullman    |
| Wyatt Koller         | District 3     | Pomeroy    |
| Garrett Moon         | District 5     | Prosser    |
| Austin Sievers       | District 1     | Spangle    |
| Mark Thomsen         | District 4     | Waterville |
| At-Large (Open)      | At-Large       |            |
| Kevin Klein          | WGC            | Edwall     |
| Ben Barstow          | WGC            | Palouse    |
| Jim Moyer, RAS-Chair | WAWG Research  | Dayton     |
| Casey Chumrau        | WGC CEO        | Spokane    |
| Rich Koenig          | WSU Liaison    | Pullman    |

shared with each nominee prior to selection.

Eighteen grower nominations were received, and seven were selected. One at-large member was left vacant to allow the opportunity to meet an unanticipated need. The current RAS membership is listed in Table 2.

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The RAS held its first organizational meeting at WSU on Jan. 13–14, 2026, refining the review process through meetings with researchers, administrators, and a tour of research facilities. A new review model was introduced: each member now carries primary responsibility for three WGC-funded projects and secondary responsibility for three more, maintaining oversight from initiation through completion. This replaces the previous structure in which all WGC commissioners were responsible for more than 25 projects. Having fewer projects enables members’ deeper engagement on individual projects. The annual Research Review followed on Feb. 19, 2026, after which the RAS provided funding recommendations to the WGC and improvement suggestions and feedback to project leaders.

Moving forward, the RAS is initially scheduled to meet three times annually:

- A business meeting to review preproposals for “new” projects, assess strategic priorities, review programmatic areas, and implement changes designed to increase grower involvement.
- A meeting for an in-depth review of each project.
- The annual WGC Research Review of new and renewing project proposals where presentations are made by project leaders to growers.

The RAS has begun discussions regarding improving the WGC Research Review to engage growers and to make research proposal information more widely available, as well as results of completed projects. The RAS welcomes input from all stakeholders in its efforts to be more strategic and responsive to farmers’ needs. ■



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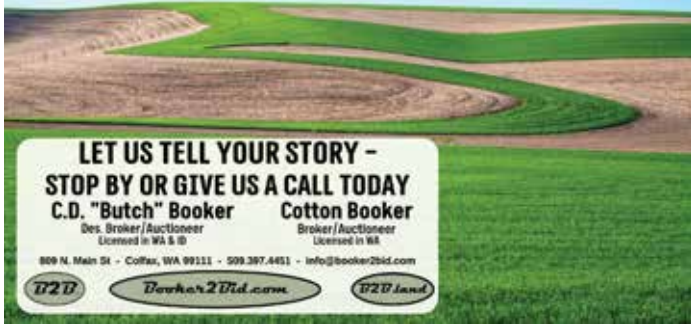


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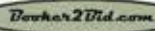


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# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



## WGC spending on market development reflects growers' priorities

By Kevin Klein  
Chairman, Washington Grain Commission

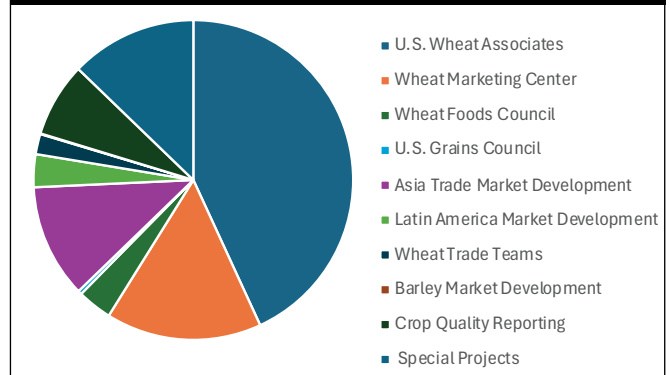
Marketing our crops as farmers is a year-round process. Most of us are constantly watching the market, trying to determine the

best time to sell. That's pretty tough when crop prices are below the cost of production.

For the past several months, I've been trying to determine exactly how many acres of spring wheat, spring barley, and spring canola to plant. I'm weighing several factors at once — delivery timing at harvest, current contract prices, and where the markets might be by August. Should I forward contract to lock in prices now? It's always easier to talk about than to actually pull the trigger. For some reason, as farmers, we are always optimistic that the price will go higher!

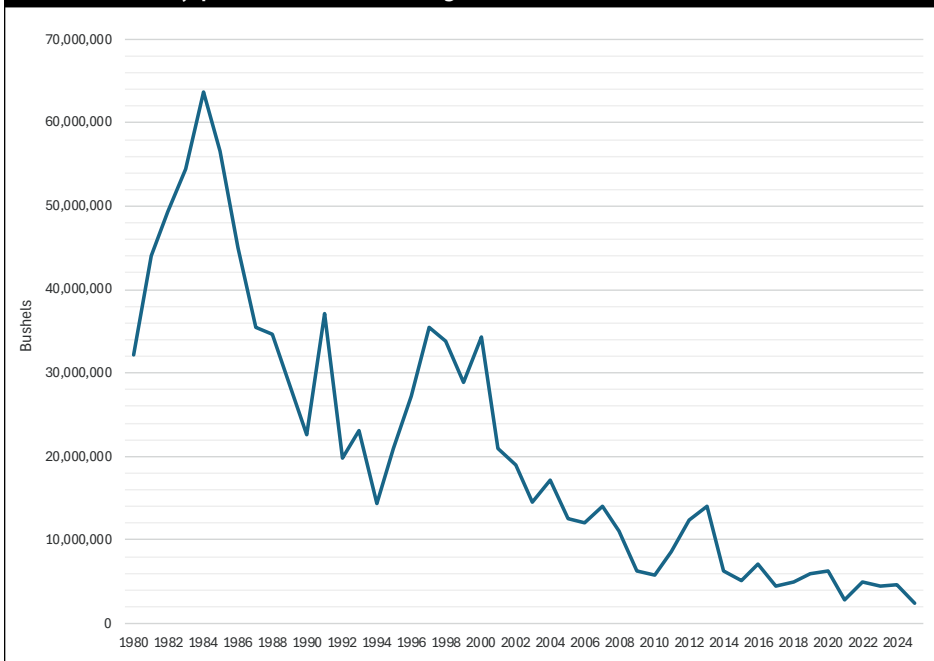
At the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), our budgeting is a little more stable, largely due to a reserve account that allows us to keep our annual expenditures roughly in the same ball park, currently around \$7 million. Understand, though, that as the wheat price fluctuates, so does the commission's income from assessments. And probably like your farm income, the last two years have been down. We've kept the marketing portion of

Chart 1. Market development budget

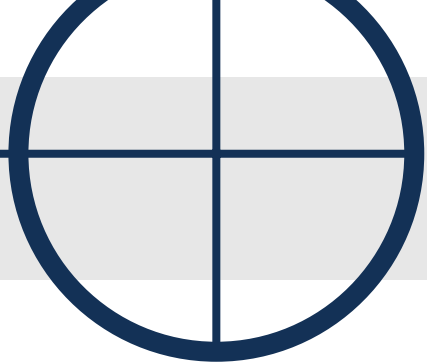


our budget pretty consistent, as growers have been vocal that marketing is their priority. As you can see from Chart 1, the largest budget item is dues to U.S. Wheat Associates, the international market development organization for the industry. We partner with them in many ways; the trade teams that come through during the summer months is one of the main collaborations. There are other partnerships that we feel are a vital part of our outreach to foreign markets. Quality continues to be a critical part of our sales pitch and what provides value to our customers. We invest a lot of time, effort, and resources in the annual crop quality testing and reporting. We rely heavily on the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland to accomplish this.

Chart 2. Barley production in Washington



The last thing I will mention is the continual decline of barley production in Washington state (see Chart 2). We started the tough conversations at our last meeting of what direction to move, and how to budget for barley spending with limited and declining assessment income. With Great Western Malt moving out of Vancouver, Wash., and expanding their Idaho facilities, the marketing of barley is now a major challenge in our state. The WGC is committed to supporting the barley breeding programs at Washington State University, but what does the future hold for barley markets here in our area? If you happen to have any good ideas, please reach out to myself or any commissioner. ■



# REPORTS

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## 2025 spring variety trial results

Despite lack of moisture, wheat crop yielded near five-year average with stable test weight, protein

By Mike Pumphrey

*Assistant Professor and Spring Wheat Breeder, Washington State University*

Washington's spring cereal grain production in 2025 was once again dominated by the seasonal timing of high temperatures and unreliable precipitation during the growing season. The 19.7 million bushels of spring wheat harvested was down 6% compared to 2024, but near the five-year average. Yields averaged 42 bushels per acre, and milling quality specifications were generally good with stable test weights and reasonable protein considering the noted lack of moisture through most of the growing season.

Acreage reporting from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) estimated 80% of Washington's spring wheat acres were soft white market class, and a total of 910,000 spring wheat acres were seeded in Washington and Idaho. Barley acres harvested dropped significantly to 49,000 in Washington, while Idaho harvested 490,000 acres.

The Washington State University (WSU) Variety Testing Program successfully conducted spring wheat trials at 12 locations across Eastern Washington in 2025. Testing data is intended to provide rain-fed wheat growers with unbiased information on variety performance and relevant traits to help support optimal on-farm



**Table 1. 2025 WSU Extension Soft Spring Wheat Variety Trial Summary**

| Precipitation Zone=>20" |                        |           |           |              |                     |                 |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                 | FAIRFIELD              | ALMOTA    | PULLMAN   | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                         | -----Yield (Bu/A)----- |           |           |              | Lb/Bu               | %               |
| Bush                    | 47                     | 88        | 77        | 70           | 61.5                | 10.0            |
| Ryan                    | 46                     | 80        | 75        | 67           | 59.6                | 10.4            |
| Tekoa                   | 41                     | 79        | 78        | 66           | 61.5                | 10.7            |
| TMC Lochaven            | 40                     | 75        | 78        | 64           | 61.1                | 11.3            |
| WA8327 (Soda)           | 44                     | 79        | 70        | 64           | 60.1                | 10.3            |
| Butch CL+               | 38                     | 74        | 79        | 64           | 60.8                | 10.6            |
| Seahawk                 | 41                     | 72        | 74        | 62           | 60.9                | 10.6            |
| WB6211CLP               | 37                     | 68        | 80        | 62           | 58.8                | 11.4            |
| Roger                   | 43                     | 72        | 70        | 62           | 61.0                | 9.8             |
| Louise                  | 39                     | 71        | 74        | 62           | 59.1                | 10.5            |
| UI Warrior              | 39                     | 69        | 75        | 61           | 59.9                | 10.7            |
| Hedge CL+               | 37                     | 69        | 74        | 60           | 60.6                | 11.0            |
| Melba                   | 41                     | 68        | 71        | 60           | 58.5                | 10.3            |
| JD                      | 42                     | 70        | 67        | 60           | 60.7                | 10.5            |
| <b>Average</b>          | <b>43</b>              | <b>76</b> | <b>76</b> |              | <b>60.0</b>         | <b>10.6</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>       | <b>6</b>               | <b>11</b> | <b>16</b> |              | <b>2.6</b>          | <b>1.0</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>             | <b>6</b>               | <b>6</b>  | <b>10</b> |              | <b>1.9</b>          | <b>4.9</b>      |

| Precipitation Zone=16-20" |                        |           |           |              |                     |                 |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                   | DAYTON                 | PLAZA     | ST. JOHN  | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                           | -----Yield (Bu/A)----- |           |           |              | Lb/Bu               | %               |
| Bush                      | 32                     | 65        | 57        | 51           | 61.1                | 10.8            |
| WA8327 (Soda)             | 28                     | 68        | 49        | 48           | 60.5                | 10.4            |
| Ryan                      | 31                     | 60        | 47        | 46           | 59.4                | 10.4            |
| Tekoa                     | 28                     | 58        | 51        | 46           | 61.3                | 10.9            |
| Roger                     | 27                     | 58        | 50        | 45           | 61.1                | 10.4            |
| Melba                     | 31                     | 57        | 43        | 44           | 60.0                | 10.2            |
| JD                        | 29                     | 62        | 40        | 44           | 60.6                | 10.6            |
| TMC Lochaven              | 29                     | 57        | 45        | 44           | 60.8                | 11.2            |
| Louise                    | 29                     | 57        | 43        | 43           | 58.8                | 10.5            |
| Hedge CL+                 | 27                     | 61        | 41        | 43           | 60.6                | 11.0            |
| Seahawk                   | 27                     | 57        | 44        | 42           | 60.3                | 10.7            |
| WB6211CLP                 | 28                     | 53        | 45        | 42           | 58.3                | 11.4            |
| UI Warrior                | 26                     | 56        | 42        | 42           | 60.2                | 11.0            |
| Butch CL+                 | 25                     | 54        | 44        | 41           | 59.4                | 11.0            |
| <b>Average</b>            | <b>28</b>              | <b>60</b> | <b>46</b> |              | <b>60.1</b>         | <b>11.5</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>         | <b>6</b>               | <b>8</b>  | <b>8</b>  |              | <b>2.4</b>          | <b>1.1</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>               | <b>10</b>              | <b>6</b>  | <b>8</b>  |              | <b>1.8</b>          | <b>4.8</b>      |

| Precipitation Zone=<16" |                        |           |           |           |              |                     |                 |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                 | BICKLETON              | ALMIRA    | LIND      | REARDAN   | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                         | -----Yield (Bu/A)----- |           |           |           |              | Lb/Bu               | %               |
| WA8327 (Soda)           | 27                     | 40        | 26        | 49        | 36           | 61.3                | 10.4            |
| Seahawk                 | 27                     | 34        | 18        | 44        | 31           | 61.2                | 10.8            |
| UI Warrior              | 21                     | 33        | 20        | 45        | 30           | 61.6                | 11.6            |
| Bush                    | 26                     | 34        | 23        | 34        | 29           | 61.0                | 10.7            |
| Tekoa                   | 27                     | 29        | 23        | 39        | 29           | 61.2                | 11.0            |
| Hedge CL+               | 23                     | 32        | 19        | 39        | 28           | 61.5                | 11.0            |
| Roger                   | 23                     | 35        | 19        | 36        | 28           | 60.8                | 10.3            |
| Louise                  | 20                     | 33        | 22        | 35        | 28           | 60.2                | 10.7            |
| TMC Lochaven            | 22                     | 32        | 19        | 38        | 28           | 60.5                | 11.3            |
| Ryan                    | 22                     | 30        | 20        | 37        | 27           | 60.3                | 11.3            |
| Melba                   | 24                     | 25        | 21        | 38        | 27           | 60.9                | 10.2            |
| JD                      | 22                     | 26        | 22        | 37        | 27           | 60.2                | 11.2            |
| WB6211CLP               | 20                     | 34        | 19        | 30        | 26           | 59.2                | 11.8            |
| Butch CL+               | 20                     | 33        | 17        | 32        | 26           | 60.5                | 11.8            |
| <b>Average</b>          | <b>23</b>              | <b>33</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>40</b> |              | <b>60.9</b>         | <b>10.8</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>       | <b>7</b>               | <b>8</b>  | <b>5</b>  | <b>9</b>  |              | <b>1.3</b>          | <b>0.9</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>             | <b>13</b>              | <b>11</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>10</b> |              | <b>1.0</b>          | <b>4.7</b>      |



WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

**Table 2. 2025 WSU Extension Hard Spring Wheat Variety Trial Summary**

| Precipitation Zone=>20" |                    |           |              |                     |                 |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                 | ALMOTA             | PULLMAN   | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                         | ---Yield (Bu/A)--- |           |              | Lb/Bu               | %               |
| CP3055                  | 74                 | 71        | 72           | 58.0                | 12.3            |
| MT Ubet                 | 71                 | 72        | 72           | 61.8                | 12.5            |
| Dayn                    | 66                 | 77        | 71           | 61.0                | 12.0            |
| UI Gold                 | 70                 | 69        | 70           | 61.3                | 12.5            |
| MT Dutton               | 65                 | 72        | 68           | 60.8                | 13.0            |
| Hale                    | 65                 | 69        | 67           | 62.9                | 13.6            |
| MT Carlson              | 66                 | 65        | 66           | 61.1                | 13.0            |
| Net CL+                 | 62                 | 68        | 65           | 63.5                | 13.2            |
| Kelse                   | 60                 | 69        | 65           | 61.9                | 14.6            |
| Chet                    | 61                 | 67        | 64           | 61.9                | 13.2            |
| WB9623                  | 61                 | 65        | 63           | 61.7                | 12.8            |
| Alum                    | 56                 | 69        | 63           | 61.7                | 12.8            |
| WB9636                  | 59                 | 66        | 63           | 61.2                | 14.2            |
| WB9662                  | 63                 | 61        | 62           | 61.4                | 14.0            |
| Glee                    | 57                 | 65        | 61           | 62.1                | 13.1            |
| CP3530                  | 59                 | 60        | 59           | 61.5                | 13.4            |
| LCS Hammer AX           | 56                 | 59        | 57           | 62.0                | 12.7            |
| APB709                  | 57                 | 57        | 57           | 60.8                | 12.9            |
| WB9303                  | 57                 | 57        | 57           | 61.7                | 14.2            |
| WB9668                  | 53                 | 55        | 54           | 61.0                | 15.1            |
| <b>Average</b>          | <b>62</b>          | <b>67</b> |              | <b>61.7</b>         | <b>13.3</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>       | <b>16</b>          | <b>13</b> |              | <b>2.0</b>          | <b>1.1</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>             | <b>12</b>          | <b>9</b>  |              | <b>1.5</b>          | <b>4.1</b>      |

| Precipitation Zone=16-20" |                        |           |           |              |                     |                 |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                   | MAYVIEW                | PLAZA     | ST. JOHN  | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                           | -----Yield (Bu/A)----- |           |           |              | Lb/Bu               | %               |
| MT Ubet                   | 42                     | 58        | 47        | 49           | 60.6                | 13.4            |
| Dayn                      | 42                     | 52        | 53        | 49           | 60.8                | 12.3            |
| MT Dutton                 | 47                     | 51        | 48        | 49           | 59.7                | 13.4            |
| Chet                      | 36                     | 56        | 52        | 48           | 61.6                | 13.9            |
| Alum                      | 39                     | 54        | 49        | 47           | 60.1                | 13.5            |
| Net CL+                   | 45                     | 52        | 45        | 47           | 61.3                | 13.3            |
| UI Gold                   | 43                     | 53        | 44        | 47           | 60.6                | 12.8            |
| CP3055                    | 42                     | 52        | 45        | 46           | 56.5                | 12.5            |
| MT Carlson                | 34                     | 55        | 45        | 45           | 59.9                | 13.4            |
| WB9623                    | 36                     | 49        | 42        | 43           | 59.8                | 13.5            |
| Glee                      | 32                     | 49        | 47        | 43           | 60.7                | 13.6            |
| WB9636                    | 39                     | 50        | 39        | 42           | 59.8                | 14.1            |
| Hale                      | 26                     | 54        | 46        | 42           | 61.0                | 14.6            |
| Kelse                     | 26                     | 51        | 49        | 42           | 60.5                | 14.6            |
| WB9662                    | 32                     | 48        | 33        | 38           | 60.1                | 14.6            |
| APB709                    | 30                     | 46        | 36        | 37           | 59.3                | 13.6            |
| LCS Hammer AX             | 35                     | 44        | 32        | 37           | 61.0                | 13.5            |
| CP3530                    | 30                     | 49        | 23        | 34           | 59.3                | 13.5            |
| WB9303                    | 27                     | 39        | 25        | 30           | 60.4                | 15.4            |
| WB9668                    | 20                     | 41        | 27        | 29           | 60.5                | 16.2            |
| <b>Average</b>            | <b>34</b>              | <b>50</b> | <b>42</b> |              | <b>60.4</b>         | <b>13.9</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>         | <b>10</b>              | <b>8</b>  | <b>11</b> |              | <b>3.0</b>          | <b>1.4</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>               | <b>13</b>              | <b>7</b>  | <b>13</b> |              | <b>2.3</b>          | <b>5.2</b>      |

production, provide samples for rigorous end-use quality evaluation, allow comparison to new and up-and-coming variety candidates, and support market class production decisions. Variable production conditions limited our ability to use results from five additional locations where yield data were not sufficiently reliable, mostly in lower precipitation areas that were strongly affected by low rainfall and untimely heat.

Data in Tables 1 and 2 summarize rain-fed trial performance of commercially available varieties. Summaries of experimental cultivars, irrigated nurseries, and less reliable dryland locations are not presented but are available on the WSU Small Grains Extension website at [smallgrains.wsu.edu](http://smallgrains.wsu.edu) using the Variety Selection tool. Data on quality rankings, falling numbers, pest and disease resistance, aluminum tolerance, plant height, heading date, and other traits are available from WSU Extension as well as from the Washington Grain Commission, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's

Agricultural Research Service's Western Wheat Quality Laboratory, or the WSU wheat breeding team.

The rankings of top performing soft white varieties in each precipitation zone were consistent with the performance in 2024 and prior years. Bush, a 2024 release from WSU, Ryan, Tekoa, and a 2025-release, Soda (WA8327), performed well across precipitation zones. Roger was the leader in spring club wheat performance, with yield averages very similar to Ryan across locations.

Hard spring wheat varieties were planted on about 20% of the spring wheat acres in Washington in 2025, based on NASS reporting. Performance of hard red spring varieties was more variable, with no clear statistical separation in variety performance, though MT Ubet and MT Dutton trended higher yielding across precipitation zones.

Herbicide tolerant two-gene Clearfield cultivars in the spring wheat variety trials included Butch CL+ (SWS), WB6211CLP (SWS), Hedge CL+ (spring club), Net CL+

(HRS), and experimental line WA8436 CL+ (HRS). LCS Hammer AX (HRS) was the only CoAXium spring wheat in the Variety Testing Program trials.

Barley yields in Washington were sharply lower in 2025, with a NASS estimate of 49 bushels per acre, with seasonal drought and temperature effects clearly impacting the crop. See Table 3 on the next page. Like hard red spring wheat, compressed yields and challenging environmental conditions led to few statistically significant differences among variety yields, though LG Slovan, KWS Thalix, Carleton, Claymore, LG Caruso, and KWS Enduris trended toward the top of yield performance.

While a summary of 2025 data is presented in this article, growers are always encouraged to spend more time looking at multiyear data for a better representation of variety performance when available. Additional information, ratings, and yield data can be found at our website at [smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety](http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety).

*Acknowledgements: Funding for 2025 for supplies, travel, and technical support (Alex Brown and Karl Effertz) for the WSU Extension Cereal Variety Testing Program was provided by the Washington Grain Commission and WSU Wheat Breeding Royalty and USDA-ARS Club Wheat Breeding funds. Facility and partial salary support were provided by WSU. We are grateful for the many on-farm cooperators we partner with to conduct these trials around the state. They are essential for producing quality data, and their donations of land, time, and resources are appreciated. ■*

| Precipitation Zone=<16" |                        |           |           |           |              |                     |                 |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                 | BICKLETON              | ALMIRA    | LIND      | REARDAN   | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                         | -----Yield (Bu/A)----- |           |           |           |              | Lb/Bu               | %               |
| MT Carlson              | 20                     | 30        | 23        | 38        | 28           | 60.6                | 12.2            |
| MT Ubet                 | 22                     | 30        | 23        | 32        | 27           | 60.4                | 12.2            |
| Net CL+                 | 20                     | 31        | 20        | 35        | 27           | 62.0                | 12.8            |
| Alum                    | 19                     | 32        | 18        | 36        | 26           | 61.1                | 12.4            |
| Hale                    | 18                     | 38        | 17        | 31        | 26           | 61.7                | 12.9            |
| Chet                    | 18                     | 32        | 18        | 36        | 26           | 61.7                | 12.6            |
| Kelse                   | 20                     | 29        | 18        | 36        | 26           | 61.4                | 13.3            |
| UI Gold                 | 17                     | 32        | 19        | 34        | 26           | 61.0                | 12.7            |
| WB9623                  | 19                     | 31        | 19        | 33        | 25           | 60.7                | 12.4            |
| CP3055                  | 22                     | 23        | 24        | 30        | 25           | 57.4                | 11.7            |
| Glee                    | 18                     | 29        | 16        | 34        | 24           | 61.2                | 12.6            |
| LCS Hammer AX           | 16                     | 31        | 20        | 29        | 24           | 61.1                | 12.7            |
| MT Dutton               | 20                     | 23        | 21        | 32        | 24           | 59.7                | 13.0            |
| Dayn                    | 20                     | 23        | 17        | 35        | 24           | 60.4                | 12.4            |
| WB9668                  | 15                     | 32        | 13        | 26        | 22           | 61.5                | 14.8            |
| WB9662                  | 16                     | 27        | 15        | 27        | 21           | 60.7                | 13.8            |
| WB9636                  | 16                     | 27        | 14        | 28        | 21           | 60.3                | 13.7            |
| CP3530                  | 19                     | 23        | 16        | 24        | 20           | 60.3                | 13.1            |
| WB9303                  | 13                     | 30        | 6         | 31        | 20           | 61.1                | 13.6            |
| APB709                  | 18                     | 23        | 12        | 24        | 19           | 60.1                | 12.3            |
| <b>Average</b>          | <b>19</b>              | <b>29</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>32</b> |              | <b>60.9</b>         | <b>12.9</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>       | <b>4</b>               | <b>8</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>8</b>  |              | <b>1.7</b>          | <b>1.0</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>             | <b>11</b>              | <b>13</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>11</b> |              | <b>1.3</b>          | <b>4.4</b>      |



**Table 3. 2025 WSU Extension Spring Barley Variety Trial Summary**

| Precipitation Zone=>20" |                    |             |              |                     |                 |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                 | PALOUSE            | FAIRFIELD   | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                         | ---Yield (Bu/A)--- |             | Lb/Bu        | %                   |                 |
| KWS Thalix              | 3032               | 3138        | 3085         | 47.2                | 11.4            |
| LG Slovan               | 3287               | 2735        | 3011         | 47.1                | 12.5            |
| BC Lexy                 | 3093               | 2774        | 2934         | 46.4                | 11.6            |
| Carleton                | 3012               | 2723        | 2867         | 46.8                | 11.4            |
| AAC Synergy             | 2642               | 3073        | 2857         | 46.0                | 12.5            |
| Survivor                | 2723               | 2833        | 2778         | 48.6                | 12.2            |
| Claymore                | 2698               | 2717        | 2708         | 46.4                | 12.1            |
| LCS Diablo              | 2721               | 2615        | 2668         | 46.3                | 12.5            |
| BC Marietta             | 2579               | 2723        | 2651         | 42.0                | 12.5            |
| Successor               | 2594               | 2507        | 2550         | 44.9                | 12.4            |
| KWS Enduris             | 2715               | 2372        | 2543         | 45.4                | 11.9            |
| Altorado                | 2226               | 2731        | 2479         | 43.6                | 12.5            |
| Kopious                 | 2575               | 2311        | 2443         | 43.7                | 11.2            |
| LG Caruso               | 2556               | 2315        | 2435         | 45.1                | 12.0            |
| LCS Odyssey             | 2376               | 2368        | 2372         | 46.4                | 12.0            |
| Lenetah                 | 2230               | 2404        | 2317         | 47.6                | 12.8            |
| Ascent                  | 2209               | 2393        | 2301         | 46.0                | 12.4            |
| AAC Connect             | 2320               | 2088        | 2204         | 45.2                | 12.6            |
| <b>Average</b>          | <b>2593</b>        | <b>2586</b> |              | <b>45.6</b>         | <b>12.2</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>       | <b>663</b>         | <b>978</b>  |              | <b>3.7</b>          | <b>1.6</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>             | <b>11</b>          | <b>17</b>   |              | <b>3.6</b>          | <b>6.4</b>      |

| Precipitation Zone=16-20" |                        |             |             |              |                     |                 |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| VARIETY                   | ALMIRA                 | MAYVIEW     | REARDAN     | 2025 AVERAGE | AVERAGE TEST WEIGHT | AVERAGE PROTEIN |
|                           | -----Yield (Bu/A)----- |             |             | Lb/Bu        | %                   |                 |
| LG Slovan                 | 2524                   | 3955        | 2417        | 2965         | 48.2                | 13.5            |
| LG Caruso                 | 2180                   | 3168        | 3175        | 2841         | 46.0                | 13.1            |
| KWS Enduris               | 2494                   | 2825        | 2600        | 2640         | 46.6                | 12.6            |
| Carleton                  | 2231                   | 3129        | 2465        | 2608         | 47.0                | 13.0            |
| Successor                 | 2503                   | 2895        | 2344        | 2581         | 48.5                | 12.8            |
| KWS Thalix                | 2533                   | 2828        | 2126        | 2496         | 47.9                | 12.6            |
| Claymore                  | 2123                   | 2799        | 2457        | 2460         | 47.0                | 12.6            |
| LCS Odyssey               | 1787                   | 3294        | 2162        | 2414         | 47.2                | 12.2            |
| Survivor                  | 1976                   | 2871        | 2381        | 2409         | 48.5                | 13.5            |
| LCS Diablo                | 1805                   | 3085        | 2191        | 2360         | 46.5                | 12.9            |
| BC Marietta               | 1904                   | 2912        | 2195        | 2337         | 45.9                | 11.9            |
| Lenetah                   | 2177                   | 2358        | 2309        | 2281         | 48.3                | 13.1            |
| BC Lexy                   | 2026                   | 2398        | 2401        | 2275         | 47.0                | 12.6            |
| Altorado                  | 2192                   | 2384        | 2191        | 2256         | 47.1                | 12.4            |
| AAC Synergy               | 1934                   | 2787        | 1836        | 2185         | 47.0                | 12.6            |
| Kopious                   | 1439                   | 2523        | 2267        | 2076         | 45.0                | 12.5            |
| Ascent                    | 1767                   | 2243        | 1920        | 1976         | 48.4                | 13.2            |
| AAC Connect               | 1201                   | 2182        | 1644        | 1676         | 46.2                | 13.5            |
| <b>Average</b>            | <b>2315</b>            | <b>2763</b> | <b>2208</b> |              | <b>47.2</b>         | <b>12.8</b>     |
| <b>LSD (0.05)</b>         | <b>782</b>             | <b>1035</b> | <b>711</b>  |              | <b>2.7</b>          | <b>1.7</b>      |
| <b>CV %</b>               | <b>15</b>              | <b>17</b>   | <b>14</b>   |              | <b>2.6</b>          | <b>7</b>        |



# Sprouting too soon

## PROTECTING GRAIN QUALITY AND NUTRITION IN WHEAT AND QUINOA



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Maintaining grain soundness and end-use quality is essential for domestic and international grain markets. Grain soundness refers to the physical integrity and maturity of harvested grain, while end-use quality describes how well that grain performs in finished food products.

In the Pacific Northwest (PNW), grain soundness underpins the global reputation of the region's soft white wheat industry. The phrase "quality is king" accurately captures the priorities of this market. Grain that meets strict standards is exported primarily to Asian markets and used to produce high-quality cakes, noodles, and other specialty products. Maintaining industry standards has helped the PNW build a reputation that keeps international buyers returning year after year. Yet an exclusive focus on quality can overlook another important dimension of grain production: nutrition. Refined white wheat, the foundation of many food products, provides energy but contains fewer nutrients than whole-grain alternatives. Through funding provided by the Washington Research Foundation BioInnovation Grant, researchers in Washington state and across the U.S. are exploring ways to improve the nutritional profile, affordability, and accessibility of wheat and other grain-based foods. These efforts include expanding the use of whole wheat and evaluating alternative grains with superior nutritional characteristics. One crop receiving growing attention is quinoa.

Quinoa has gained global recognition for its exceptional nutritional value and resilience to environmental stresses such as frost, drought, and salinity. As a result, quinoa cultivation has expanded dramatically from just eight countries in 1980 to more than 125 today.

Despite their nutritional advantages, both whole wheat and quinoa must meet the same fundamental requirement as traditional wheat products: high grain soundness and quality. Grain that loses soundness produces inferior food products, often resulting in baked goods with poor rise, undesirable texture, and reduced nutritional value. Unsound grain can also disrupt industrial processing in mills, bakeries, and breweries, and in severe cases, lead to significant economic losses for growers and processors.

### Preharvest sprouting: A hidden threat to grain quality

Under certain environmental conditions, both wheat and quinoa are vulnerable to a physiological problem that directly threatens grain soundness: preharvest sprouting (PHS). PHS occurs when mature seeds begin to germinate before harvest, typically following rainfall or prolonged humidity. This can happen in seeds that lack strong dormancy, as in quinoa, or after dormancy has naturally declined, as in wheat.

For growers in the Pacific Northwest, the difference between premium export grain and substantial economic loss can depend on a narrow window at the end of the growing season when grain must remain sound until harvest.

During germination, seeds activate metabolic pathways that mobilize stored reserves for seedling growth. A key enzyme in this process is alpha-amylase, which breaks down starch stored in the seed's endosperm into sugars that fuel early seedling development. ▶



While essential for plant growth, premature activation of this process degrades starch reserves in harvested grain and significantly reduces grain quality and end-use performance.

Managing PHS remains challenging because once dormancy is lost and favorable moisture conditions occur, sprouting cannot be fully prevented. The problem is further complicated by incipient sprouting — early biochemical changes that degrade grain quality before visible sprouts appear. At this stage, grain quality may already be compromised even though sprouting is not yet visible. Global economic losses associated with PHS are estimated to approach \$1 billion annually.

Quinoa is particularly vulnerable to PHS. Unlike wheat, quinoa seeds lack protective structures such as glumes that shield grain from environmental moisture. Quinoa also exhibits weaker seed dormancy than most modern wheat varieties, allowing sprouting to occur more readily under wet conditions. As a result, PHS damage in quinoa can develop quickly and become severe (Figure 1).

The consequences can be substantial. Sprouted quinoa seeds become brittle, lose weight, and often detach during mechanical harvest, leading to potential yield losses. Sprouted grain may also exhibit higher respiration rates and moisture content, increasing the risk of mold growth and heating during storage.

Because complete prevention is difficult, current management strategies focus primarily on reducing risk. For wheat, growers are encouraged to plant varieties with improved tolerance to PHS. Comparable varieties remain limited for quinoa. All growers can also reduce risk by closely monitoring crop maturity and harvesting grain before forecast precipitation events when possible.

In wheat, grain elevators and export facilities often evaluate starch damage using tests such as the falling numbers test. In some cases, blending strategies may be used to maintain acceptable quality thresholds. Similar approaches may eventually prove useful for quinoa if varieties with more

moderate responses to sprouting can be developed.

However, improving PHS tolerance through breeding presents a fundamental biological challenge. The same mechanisms that regulate seed dormancy and sprouting in the field also control germination after planting. Breeding programs must therefore balance improved tolerance to preharvest sprouting with the need for rapid and uniform crop establishment, a difficult but essential goal.

### Advancing solutions with translational tools

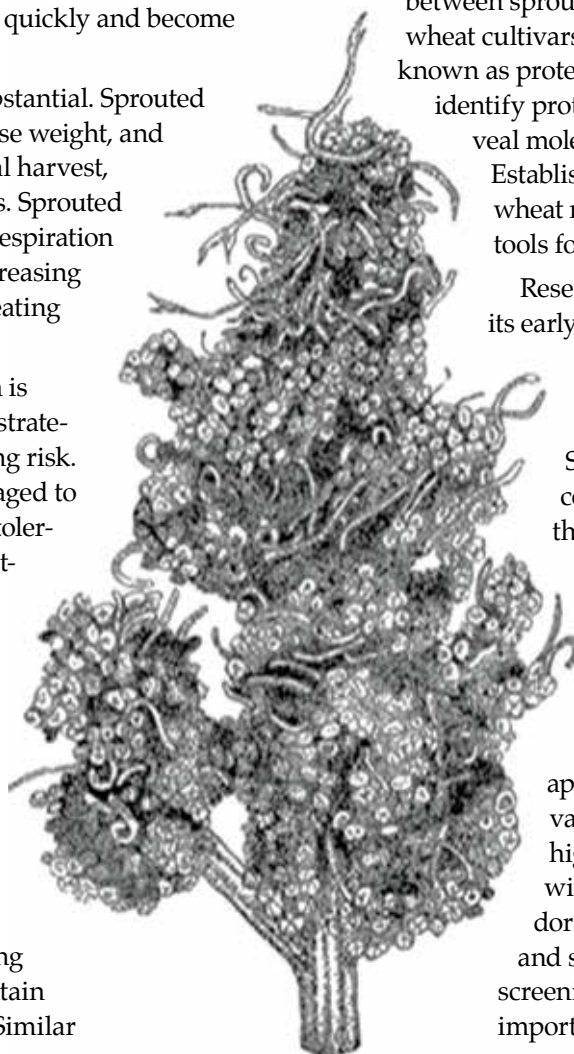
Researchers across the Pacific Northwest are working to better understand the biological mechanisms underlying preharvest sprouting and to develop more effective strategies for managing its impact (Figure 2).

In wheat, studies have focused on identifying genetic markers associated with PHS tolerance that can support plant breeding programs. More recently, research has expanded to examine differences in protein expression between sprouted and sound seeds across multiple wheat cultivars. Comparative protein profiling, known as proteomics, offers new opportunities to identify proteins involved in sprouting and may reveal molecular targets for improving tolerance.

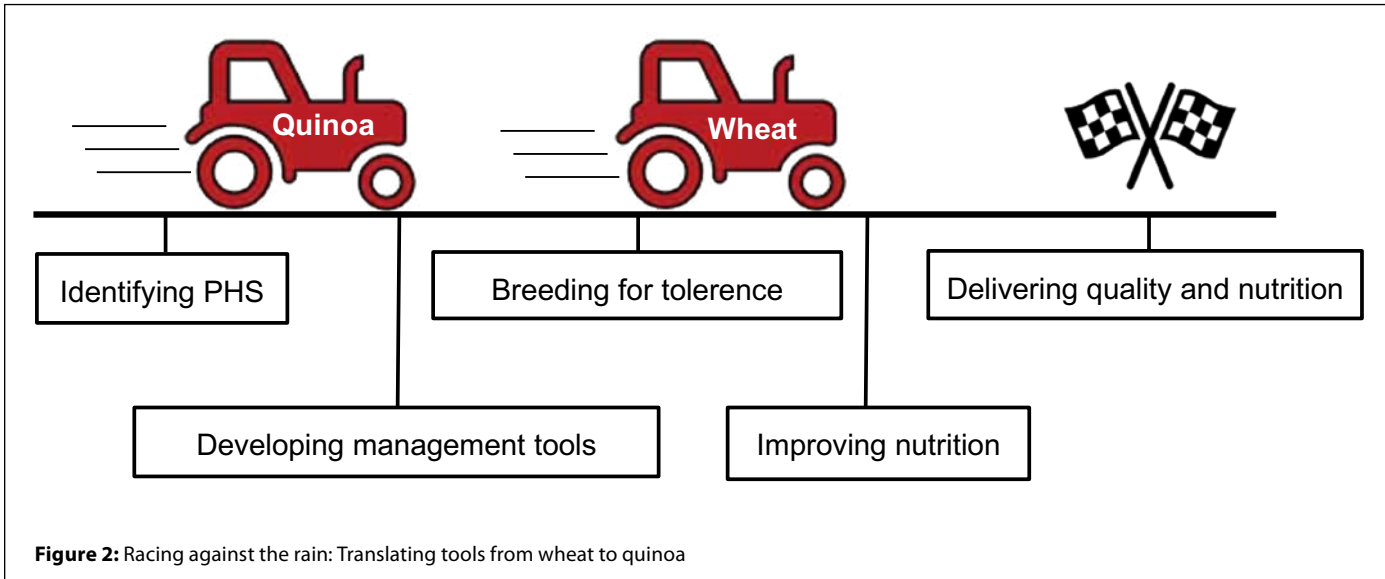
Established methods for studying PHS in wheat may also serve as valuable translational tools for investigating sprouting in quinoa.

Research on PHS in quinoa remains in its early stages. Current efforts focus largely on identifying tolerant varieties and improving management strategies. Studies conducted at Washington State University have already identified certain quinoa varieties, particularly those adapted to higher latitudes, that show improved tolerance to adverse weather conditions that lead to preharvest sprouting.

Breeding programs are also exploring strategies to better regulate seed dormancy. One promising approach involves developing quinoa varieties that remain dormant under the high-humidity conditions associated with preharvest rainfall, but lose that dormancy once seeds are harvested, dried, and stored. Researchers are also developing screening methods to identify agronomically important traits associated with PHS tolerance in quinoa, providing valuable tools for future breeding efforts.



**Figure 1:** Sprouted quinoa panicle. Drawing courtesy of Emma McGinty.



**Figure 2:** Racing against the rain: Translating tools from wheat to quinoa

### Building more resilient, nutritious grain systems

Whole wheat and quinoa offer tremendous potential to improve the nutritional value and diversity of grain-based foods produced in the Pacific Northwest. However, realizing this potential will require overcoming one persistent challenge: preharvest sprouting.

PHS represents both a scientific puzzle and an economic threat. It reduces grain quality, increases post-harvest losses, and limits the adoption of promising crops such as quinoa. At the same time, the biological processes that drive sprouting are complex and tightly linked to essential traits such as seed dormancy and germination.

Addressing this challenge will require coordinated advances in genetics, physiology, and crop management.

Continued research aimed at identifying molecular markers of tolerance, understanding protein expression during sprouting, and developing improved screening tools will be essential for breeding crops that are both nutritionally valuable and resilient to environmental stress.

As interest in nutrient-dense grains continues to grow, improving PHS tolerance in wheat and quinoa will be critical for sustaining the productivity, profitability, and global competitiveness of Pacific Northwest agriculture. By deepening our understanding of the mechanisms that control seed dormancy and sprouting, researchers hope to develop future grain systems that deliver not only exceptional quality but also enhanced nutritional value that future food systems demand. ■



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# WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## Wheat: The geopolitical grain



By Allison Thompson  
*Owner, The Money Farm*

When geopolitical tensions rise, wheat rarely stays quiet for long. Unlike corn or soybeans, wheat sits directly at the center of global food security. It is the primary staple grain for billions of people, and many of the countries that rely on it the most produce very little of it themselves. Instead, they depend on consistent shipments moving across oceans and through politically sensitive regions. That is why wheat often becomes the grain market most sensitive to global conflict. Weather still matters. Acreage still matters. But wheat is one of the few agricultural markets where politics, trade routes, and national security can move prices just as quickly as drought. Right now, that geopolitical sensitivity is back in focus.

Energy markets have been volatile amid rising tensions in the Middle East. Shipping risks have increased around critical maritime corridors, and global trade routes are once again part of the conversation for commodity markets. When those risks increase, agricultural markets — particularly wheat — begin to price in the possibility of disruption.

None of these developments necessarily mean a supply shock is imminent, but in wheat markets, the possibility of disruption is often enough to move prices. That is because wheat is not just a commodity. In many parts of the world, it is a political commodity. To understand why wheat reacts so quickly to geopolitical headlines, it helps to look at where wheat is produced, and where it is consumed.

Global wheat exports are heavily concentrated among a handful of countries. Russia has emerged as the world's dominant exporter, while the European Union, Canada, the U.S., Australia, and Ukraine also play major roles in supplying international markets. In recent years, the geopolitical sensitivity of wheat markets has become even more pronounced because of the concentration of global exports. Russia alone often accounts for roughly one-fifth of global wheat shipments, while Ukraine remains a major supplier through the Black Sea corridor. When such a large share of global trade flows through a relatively small number of exporters — and through politically sensitive shipping routes — disruptions in a

single region can quickly ripple through global markets.

The war in Ukraine and periodic disruptions to the Black Sea export corridor have already demonstrated how quickly global wheat trade flows can shift. When export infrastructure or shipping lanes become uncertain, importers are often forced to look elsewhere for supply, pushing demand toward other exporting nations and increasing volatility in global prices.

On the other side of the ledger are countries that rely heavily on imports. Many of them are located in North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia. Nations such as Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Indonesia, and Bangladesh import large volumes of wheat each year to meet domestic food demand.

For these countries, wheat imports are not optional. Governments often subsidize wheat-based foods to maintain affordability and social stability, meaning rising prices can quickly translate into political pressure. As a result, importing nations tend to react early when uncertainty emerges around global supply. Waiting for confirmation of a disruption is rarely an option. By the time shortages are confirmed, it may already be too late. Instead, importers often move early.

Wheat's sensitivity to geopolitics is not new. Periods of rising food prices have historically coincided with moments of political instability. During the early 2010s, surging global food costs were widely cited as one of several contributing factors during the Arab Spring. While today's global market dynamics are different, the lesson remains clear: when the availability or affordability of staple foods becomes uncertain, governments tend to react quickly.

That is one of the defining characteristics of the wheat market: prices often move well before any physical shortage develops. Traders begin evaluating whether shipping routes could be disrupted, whether export flows might slow, or whether governments could impose restrictions on grain exports. Even when the answers are unclear, the uncertainty itself is often enough to inject volatility into the market.

Another layer connecting geopolitics and wheat markets is energy. Transportation costs are a major component of the global grain trade, and those costs are heavily influenced by energy prices. When geopolitical tensions escalate in key oil-producing regions, crude oil markets



tend to react quickly. If oil prices rise, the cost of moving grain across oceans rises as well.

At the same time, energy volatility tends to increase overall market uncertainty. When energy markets move sharply, financial markets often become more reactive across multiple asset classes, including agricultural futures. For wheat, which is already highly sensitive to global trade dynamics, that energy link can amplify price swings during periods of geopolitical stress.

Another important sensitivity for wheat markets is the U.S. dollar. Because wheat is traded globally in dollars, currency movements directly influence export competitiveness. When the dollar strengthens, U.S. wheat becomes more expensive for foreign buyers, which can slow demand and place pressure on futures prices. Conversely, a weaker dollar tends to support exports by making U.S. grain more attractive in international markets.

One of the most revealing signals in wheat markets occurs when prices rise even while the U.S. dollar strengthens. When wheat futures rally even as the dollar moves higher, it can signal that global buyers are prioritizing supply security over price. In those moments, the market is sending a message: demand is strong enough — or uncertainty is high enough — that importers are willing to pay up to ensure access to wheat.

For wheat producers, the geopolitical nature of the market presents both challenges and opportunities. The challenge is unpredictability. Geopolitical rallies can develop quickly, driven by headlines rather than clear shifts in supply and demand. Prices may spike sharply and then retreat just as fast once uncertainty fades. That kind of volatility can make it difficult to determine whether a move reflects a lasting change in market structure or simply a temporary risk premium.

At the same time, those sudden rallies can create

valuable marketing windows for producers who have grain priced or hedged. Because geopolitical risk tends to appear quickly, it often pushes prices higher before producers have time to adjust their expectations. When that happens, disciplined marketing strategies can allow farmers to capture value during short-lived price spikes.

History shows that many geopolitical rallies in wheat ultimately fade once tensions stabilize or supply disruptions fail to materialize. Markets are quick to add risk premium, but they are equally quick to remove it once the immediate threat passes. That is part of what makes geopolitics such a powerful, and sometimes frustrating, influence on agricultural markets.

At its core, wheat remains a fundamentally agricultural market. Weather, yields, acreage decisions, and global inventories still determine the long-term balance between supply and demand, but wheat is also unique among major grain markets because it sits so closely to global politics. Energy markets influence transportation costs. Currency movements shift export competitiveness. Import-dependent nations monitor supply closely, and shipping lanes connect all of it together. That combination means wheat markets often react to the world beyond the farm gate.

Not every geopolitical headline translates into sustained price strength. Many fade as quickly as they appeared, but when tensions rise in regions that influence energy markets, trade routes, or food security, wheat is often the first agricultural market to react. In that sense, wheat continues to behave much as it always has, not simply as a crop, but as a commodity tied closely to global stability. ■

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

# Sprouting an interest

First grade lessons use wheat as part of science unit | By Trista Crossley

Returning to her family's Whitman County farm may not have been in the cards for Carrie Bellecourt, but she's found a way to honor her background by sharing her wheat-growing knowledge with her first-grade classes.

Bellecourt grew up in Steptoe, Wash., the daughter of Jim and Cathy White. Jim was the fourth generation to farm his family's land; he is now retired and the corporation leases out the farm. For the past 17 years, Bellecourt has taught grade school at the Riverview School District in the Snoqualmie Valley, between North Bend and Redmond. Last year, her science curriculum included growing alfalfa, ryegrass, and wheat from seed. With her background and ties to growers in Eastern Washington, she said she was all over it.

"One helpful resource is the Monson family. I grew up with Kent, and his family provided great aerial videos of the process of growing wheat, everything from tilling to seeding to spraying to harvesting," she said. "That has been a really great resource to be able to show my students how the wheat goes in the ground, and how it's maintained. I also have lots of books about wheat and bread, so I've been able to read them stories about how Washington wheat is harvested, is transported down the river, and then becomes some of the food they eat."

The students germinate wheat berries in clear straws so they can watch the roots and seedlings

develop. They will take most of their wheat plants home, but some seedlings are transplanted into the school's garden. If Mother Nature cooperates, they'll be able watch the plants grow and develop heads. Bellecourt has a bucket of wheat kernels from her father's last harvest that the kids can play with, to learn what wheat kernels look and feel like. This year, she plans to mill some wheat berries to demonstrate how they turn into flour.

"I really love this part of our science unit. It's near and dear to my heart because I grew up around farming, so if I can bring some of that to my students, it feels good," she

said, adding that she's bought toy combines, bank-out wagons, and tractors so the students understand the different equipment Eastern Washington farmers use.

The area Bellecourt teaches in is "rural moving into suburban," and has some agriculture, especially dairy, but nothing like the sweeping fields of Eastern Washington. The school garden is used to measure rainfall as part of the class's weather unit. As for the alfalfa and ryegrass that the children also plant, Bellecourt said the plants are "mowed" with scissors, and the children learn how ryegrass is grown in lawns, and alfalfa is used as food for livestock. For first graders, the objective of the science unit is to look at the systems of a plant and discuss how the food can be grown for nourishment. They also talk about how parts



Students germinate wheat seeds by putting them in a clear straw with a bit of tissue paper that wicks water up to the seed. By using a clear straw, students can watch the roots develop. Photo courtesy of Carrie Bellecourt.

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of one crop can be used to plant next year's crop.

"The students are actually grabbing the soil, putting their seeds in themselves, watching them grow. I can't keep them away from the science corner," Bellecourt said. "They are always watching their plants and observing them. I caught a kid today talking to her plant because she is very smart and knew that carbon dioxide fed the plant, so she really wanted to talk to it. Six- and seven-year-olds really enjoy the hands-on concepts of science. It brings me back to my childhood of doing hands-on learning to hit the standard instead of just reading out of a book."

Bellecourt said some kids know what wheat looks like, but many don't realize where their food comes from. Local farms and FFA clubs will sometimes bring locally grown food to the lunchroom, and she feels it's important to highlight Washington apples, potatoes, and wheat, among other crops grown in the state.

"Knowing where all of our fruits and vegetables and meat and grains came from is an important part of how I grew up, and if I can pass a little knowledge of that to students, I think it sets them up for success in science and their life," she said. "I always kind of pushed away being a farmer's granddaughter, daughter, and having five generations of my family do this. But then all of a sudden, I've embraced it when I know that I can teach kids about it. That's been a big change for me, a personal change that kids everywhere should have this knowledge. And boy, do they like combines and tractors. They all want to ride in one. I can't get a combine over here. We might just have to take an overnight field trip to Eastern Washington!" ■



(From top) First grade teacher Carrie Bellecourt uses toys to help her students understand the kinds of farm equipment Eastern Washington farmers use. Art is an important part of the lesson. In a nod to her childhood growing up on a wheat farm, Bellecourt is using her knowledge to help teach students where some of their food comes from. Photos courtesy of Carrie Bellecourt.



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# THE BOTTOM LINE

## Viability and value in farmland ownership

By Tim Cobb

Owner, Farmland Company

There is evidence in the broader farmland market trends that would indicate that this historically dependable asset class is showing signs of fatigue following years of steady price increases. Farmland transactional sales have been leveling out for the past 18 months, the availability of capital flowing into the market is shortening due to challenges in meeting return on investment benchmarks, and the increasing profitability challenges facing farm families all combine to create a noticeable shift in the market.

Farmland has long been regarded as one of the most stable and enduring asset classes across the country because of its scarcity, essential economic role, and the steady capacity to generate both income and long-term appreciation. In today's financial environment, which includes elevated interest rates, challenging commodity markets, and persistent pressures from higher input costs, producers and investors alike are working to understand the current financial viability and the lasting impacts to asset value. A closer look at the derivatives of viability will lead to a better understanding of the impact to farmland values.

Agricultural viability refers to the ability of a farming operation, crop system, or ag production enterprise to remain **profitable**, **productive**, and **sustainable** over time. Given the current set of market circumstances, it becomes clear that direct amounts of energy must be expended in each of the three categories.

**Profitability.** It has been said that working in agriculture requires living an "agriculture lifestyle." However, it is important to understand that underlying all activities in agriculture is the need to support what consistently has become a modest lifestyle as producers work to remain profitable.

Profitability leads to many positives that ensure that producers can meet the demand created in the marketplace now and into the future. Without profitability, farm equipment can become obsolete or broken down. Without

profitability, families cannot meet their most basic needs, causing them to look elsewhere for a livelihood. Without profitability, innovations that lead to greater productivity will not be able to be included in the farming operation. Without profitability, the likelihood of being able to maintain the value of farmland from one generation to the next becomes more challenging.

In short, profitability in the farming operation has a direct correlation to the long-term value of farmland, whether it is owned by the farming producer or not.

**Productivity.** Never in the history of growing food to feed the world's population have we experienced per acre crop productivity like we do today. That productivity continues to be optimized through scientific and cultural advances, while reducing waste in all its forms, and allowing for efficient use of machinery across the entire industry. Productivity is optimized and currently runs on razor thin margins.

The correlation and impact to farmland value is direct. During the past 15 years, we have experienced growing farm productivity that has added to overall achievable per acre rents, bolstering financial returns that have justifiably led to an influx of interest from external capital sources. This added capital has fueled an unprecedented upward cycle in farmland values across a relatively short period of time. There are some in our industry that would consider our current farmland value cycle as an "overheated market" that will require commodity prices and rents to continue to rise to keep pace with growing land values.

Because farmland values have historically appreciated gradually over time, we look very closely at annual impacts to productivity and price points of the produce grown to determine directional changes. The past 24 to 36 months across various sectors from wheat, tree fruit, forages, and specialty crops have seen broad weakness in demand and external world trade-related impacts. These weaknesses, however, have not yet pushed per acre land values substantially lower. Time will tell how sustained

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pressure plays out across the farmland asset class.

**Sustainability.** This requires owners, operators, and consumers to make decisions today that will be impactful to the viability and value of productive farmland in our country in the future. Farmland is the type of asset that requires true vision as well as patience and determination during times of lower returns. Sustainability includes a full understanding of each intrinsic value found in farmland ownership and advocating for policies that include

protection and support for farmers and farmland owners for generations to come.

Sustainability truly includes close attention to overall stewardship, profitability, and productivity from the onset of management decisions. Some of the best ways to ensure that farmland assets remain is to take a close look on an annual basis at what improvements and maintenance can be done right now within the power of the stakeholders to keep farmland viable. At the end of the day, it will require control of the controllable inputs among us all to ensure value in the greatest land on earth. ■

Tim Cobb is a farm kid from Eastern Washington and is the owner of Farmland Company, based in Spokane, Wash. Farmland Company specializes in direct farmland management, real estate brokerage, and consulting across the Pacific Northwest. For more information, visit the company's website at [farmlandcompany.com](http://farmlandcompany.com).

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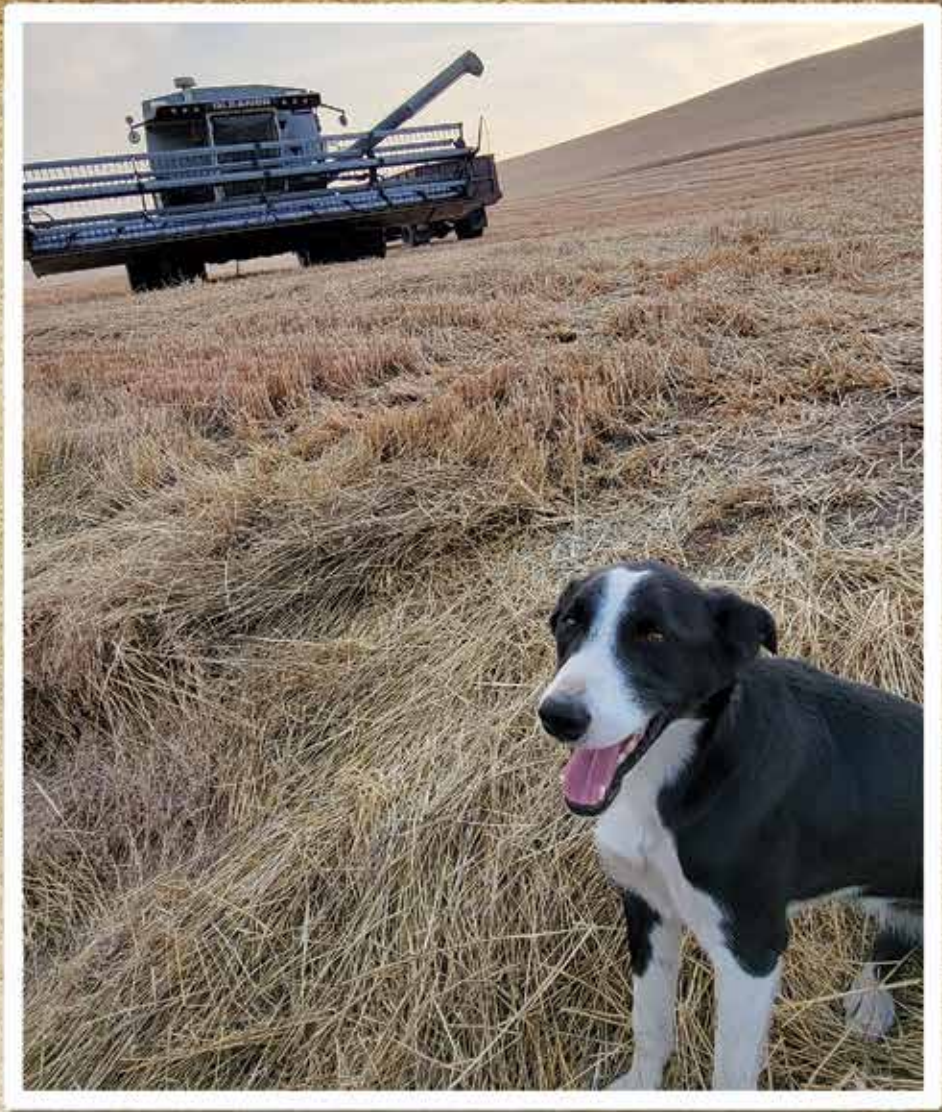
# Your wheat life...

Email pictures to  
[editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org).

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



Raegan Appel (9) and Jim Hughes hauling wheat in Whitman County.  
Photo by Jim Hughes.



Taco (2) after a long day of harvest at 5N Farm in Colton.  
Photo by Debbie Niehenke.



Grady James Howard (3) unloading his truck during wheat harvest on Sievers Farm near Spangle. Photo by Marshall Howard.



Future farmer Mary Jo Kulm (2 months) in front of her parents Richard and Ashley Kulm of Lind.  
Photo by Melissa Knodel.



(Left) Rowan Cochrane (4 months) and Malcolm Cochrane (17 months) celebrate the end of harvest in Kahlotus. Photo by Sam Cochrane. (Above) Hodges 1905 Farm in Oakesdale. Photo by Madeline Hodges.

# HAPPENINGS

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

## APRIL 2026

**11 ST. John Easter Egg Hunt.** St. John City Park in St. John, Wash. [stjohnwa.com/events](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.

**29-MAY 2 JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW OF SPOKANE.** Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. [juniorshow.org](http://juniorshow.org)

## MAY 2026

**2-3 RENAISSANCE FAIR.** Music, entertainment, food, arts and crafts and maypole dances. East City Park, Moscow, Idaho. [moscowrenfair.org](http://moscowrenfair.org)

**3 BLOOMSDAY.** Spokane, Wash. [bloomsdayrun.org](http://bloomsdayrun.org)

**9 WINTHROP '49ER DAYS.** Parade, live music, and dancing. Winthrop, Wash. [winthropwashington.com/events/old-west-festival/](http://winthropwashington.com/events/old-west-festival/)

**9-16 SPOKANE LILAC FESTIVAL.** Car show, parade, marathon. [spokanelilacfestival.org/](http://spokanelilacfestival.org/)

**12 WAWG BOARD MEETING.** Meeting starts at 10 a.m. at Washington Wheat Foundation Building, Ritzville, Wash. (509) 659-0610, [wawg.org](http://wawg.org)

**13-14 WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION BOARD MEETING.** Meeting begins at 10 a.m. on Wednesday and 8:30 a.m. on Thursday at the commission building at 2702 W Sunset Boulevard, Spokane, Wash. Contact [wgc@wagrains.org](mailto:wgc@wagrains.org) for more information or access to the virtual meeting.

**15-17 SELAH COMMUNITY DAYS.** Carnival, car show, entertainment, vendors. Selah, Wash. [selahdays.com](http://selahdays.com)

**15-17 WAITSBURG CELEBRATION**

**DAYS.** Classic car show, cornhole tournament, fun run, vendors, parade, soap box derby, music. Waitsburg, Wash. [waitsburgcd.com](http://waitsburgcd.com)

**21-24 MOSES LAKE SPRING FEST.** Three on three basketball tournament, car show, parade, carnival, entertainment. McCosh Park in Moses Lake, Wash. [springfestivalinmoseslake.com](http://springfestivalinmoseslake.com)

**22-24 LAST STAND RODEO.** Cowboy breakfast, cowpie jog, parade, entertainment. Coulee City, Wash. [laststandrodeo.com](http://laststandrodeo.com)

**23 WATERVILLE COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE.** Event runs from 8 a.m. to approximately 3 p.m. Maps and a list of addresses will be available for pick up on W. Locust Street. The event is sponsored by Waterville Main Street Association. [historicwatervillewa.org/](http://historicwatervillewa.org/)

**27-28 METHOW VALLEY RODEO.** Saddle bronc, bareback, bulls, barrel racing, team roping and junior events. Held at the rodeo grounds, about halfway between Twisp and Winthrop. [methowvalleyrodeo.com](http://methowvalleyrodeo.com) ■

## Submissions

Email listings to [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org). Include date, time and location of event, plus contact info and a short description.

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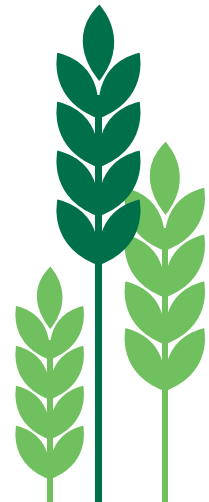
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**KICKER:** Top yielding conventional hybrid, 2020 to 2025 PNW Winter Canola Trials. Excellent winter hardiness and resilience to pod shattering. Good drought tolerance. Medium maturity.

**MERCEDES:** Top yielding conventional hybrid, 2012 to 2024 PNW Winter Canola Trials. Vigorous fall establishment and early season cold tolerance. Responds to lower seeding rates relative to OP canola. Medium maturity.

**\*PHOENIX CL:** Two-gene Clearfield hybrid with proven performance in the PNW. Superior cold tolerance. Vigorous fall growth helps overcome insect feeding. Early maturity. Enhanced pod shattering resiliency. High yield potential.

**\*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.

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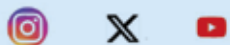


| PNWVT                         | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | PNW             | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------------|------|------|------|
| LBS PER ACRE                  |      |      |      |      |      |  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

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

**\*Phoenix CL, Colin CL & Carlsson CL compatible within Clearfield wheat rotations.**

Strong cross tolerance to Imi / SU herbicides. Can be sprayed post emergence with Beyond herbicide. SU or SURT Canola cultivars are not viable in a Clearfield rotation. (50% yield reduction in soils containing IMI residues, independent research Caldbeck Consulting.)



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