



TheWheatField

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 2020 EDITION

Sask Wheat introduces new Board of Directors at 2020 AGM

The Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission (Sask Wheat) installed three newly elected directors at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on January 13, 2020.

Joining existing directors Bill Gehl, Brett Halstead, Jake Leguee, and Ken Rosaasen will be **Lesley Kelly, Glenn Tait, and Jocelyn Velestuk.**



Kelly is the farmer behind the *High Heels & Canola Fields* blog. She co-founded the Do More Agriculture Foundation, which supports producers in taking care of their mental well-being. She farms with her husband near Watrous.



Tait, who farms near Meota, previously served as a Sask Wheat director from 2014 to 2018. He has served on his local RM council and his local school board, and

currently serves as an Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) representative.



Velestuk is an agronomy consultant who is currently the President of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association board. She farms on a 2,500-acre, mixed operation with her husband and his parents near Broadview.

Following the CropSphere conference, the Board of Directors elected Halstead as the Board Chair and Leguee as the Vice-Chair.

Halstead, who farms near Nokomis, was first elected as a Sask Wheat Director in 2017. He served as a director of SaskCanola for eight years and represented SaskCanola on the Board of the Canadian Canola Growers Association.

Leguee, who was also elected in 2017, is a third-generation farmer from the Weyburn area who grows a variety of crops. Leguee has a degree in Agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan, specializing in agronomy.

At a meeting prior to the AGM, outgoing directors Laura Reiter, Dan Danielson, and Scott Hepworth were recognized and thanked for their contributions to Sask Wheat.

Reiter, who served as Board Chair for two years, took on several committee roles, notably serving as Chair of the Research Committee. She also represented Sask Wheat on the Boards of the Canadian International Grains Institute (Cigi) and Cereals Canada.

Hepworth, who was Vice-Chair for the past two years, served on the Cereals Canada Board. He also represented Sask Wheat on the Board of Directors of Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan.

Danielson was a former Vice-Chair of the Board and served on several Sask Wheat committees. He recently served as the Sask Wheat representative on the Board of Directors of the Western Grains Research Foundation.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE:

International relationships key to Saskatchewan wheat farmers



Hello and a belated happy new year to my fellow wheat producers. I hope that you have been able to find some marketing opportunities for your crops over the past few months and had the opportunity to take some time off after a difficult growing year.

We have just wrapped up another successful CropSphere conference in Saskatoon. I was able to meet many of

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you there and hear from you about the concerns you have about the upcoming season and the challenges you experienced in 2019.

I hope you were able to take away information from CropSphere you can apply to your farming operation this year. This is always our goal at these events, which is why we continually adjust the agenda and bring in speakers who can address current and anticipated issues facing farmers.

Speaking of information for your farms, I hope you are able to attend one of our Think Wheat extension meetings, which are coming up in early March in Assiniboia, Davidson, and Melfort. We have an excellent lineup of speakers who will be addressing topics such as marketing, pest control, and agronomy. Please see the back cover for more information or go to saskwheat.ca for information and to register.

Among the speakers at Think Wheat will be two representatives from the Canadian International Grains Institute (Cigi). My fellow director Jake Leguee and I were able to join the delegations from Cigi and Cereals Canada on the New Crop Missions in late 2019. My mission took me to Indonesia, Singapore, and China while Jake went to Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Italy.

The New Crop Missions are essential for Canadian wheat producers to solidify current relationships with international customers while opening up new marketing opportunities. The Missions provide Canadians vital channels of communication to tell our story and answer questions, establishing mutually beneficial relationships with customers who desire the consistent, high quality wheat Canada produces.

For me, it was a tremendous opportunity to meet wheat buyers and processors in these countries. More than that, I was able to talk about how we produce our crops and the care we put into things such as maintaining our soil fertility and the responsible use of inputs, which keep our farming operations sustainable.

While in Indonesia, I had the opportunity to experience the unloading of a shipment of Canadian CWRS at the port in Jakarta. It was an incredible experience to see these huge vessels unloaded and made me proud to know that there may be grain in that shipment that I produced on my farm.

We will continue to build on these relationships and open up other opportunities, which includes resolving trade issues such as the country-of-origin labelling barrier on Canadian durum that is being imposed by Italy. Trade agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Canadian-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) should help Canadian grain farmers maintain access to key markets and hopefully grow our customer base.

Sask Wheat continues to monitor and advocate for the consistent movement of grain by rail to shipping ports. This will be key to capturing market opportunities and for the grain sector to thrive. Canadian wheat farmers are facing increasing competition from Russia, Australia, and the Black Sea region, among others, and we must have a reliable rail system and the port capacity that meet our needs to keep us competitive.

Having varieties of wheat that deliver good yields, are resistant to pests and environmental stressors, and have the traits desired by our international customers is also key to a prosperous grain sector. This is why Sask Wheat continues to invest heavily in research and breeding programs. Producer dollars have delivered varieties and agronomic techniques that have advanced the industry and kept wheat as an important crop in the rotations of farmers across Saskatchewan. We intend to keep it that way, with a focus on improving the profitability and sustainability of wheat.

I am looking forward to being the Chair of Sask Wheat over the next year. We have many challenges and opportunities ahead of us, and I believe that we have an excellent group of producers on our Board that will allow us to meet the needs of Saskatchewan wheat producers and be sound stewards of your check-off dollars.

Brett Halstead, Chair



BOARD MEMBERS:

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Brett Halstead
Nokomis

Lesley Kelly
Watrous

Jake Leguee
Weyburn

Ken Rosaasen
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GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:

Collaborative research investment a priority for Sask Wheat in 2020



The 2019-2020 crop year will be remembered because of the very late and difficult harvest experienced by many producers and for the marketing of grains affected by adverse harvest conditions. The industry focus on falling number last fall, in particular, created uncertainty for many producers in trying to determine the marketability and value of their wheat. While falling number is not a Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) grade specification for wheat, it is a key indicator of the functional value of wheat in terms of pan bread production and is now a specification on many producer delivery contracts.

The CGC has just completed a consultation process on whether to add DON and falling number as part of the official grade specifications for wheat – they have created a summary document that is available to the public (<https://www.grainscanada.gc.ca/en/about-us/consultations/2019/stakeholder-discussion.html>) but are not proposing a change to the grading system at this time. This is a complicated issue and producers will want to continue to participate in the discussion as these non-grade specifications have had a major influence on the value of their grain in recent years. At a minimum, producers will want to see more standardization and transparency of sampling and testing procedures.

The adverse harvest conditions in 2019 also affected producer wheat deliveries early in the crop year. While deliveries and export shipments have improved since the completion of harvest, the system will have to perform exceedingly well for the remainder of the crop year to meet export expectations. Markets are testy this year and while customers are purchasing, competition is keeping some pressure on prices while international circumstances, such as trade disputes, African swine fever, and the coronavirus, are making markets nervous.

This has also been a notable year for Sask Wheat from a research perspective. Through our participation in the Canadian Wheat Research Coalition (CWRC) with the Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC) and Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association (MWBGA), we have assumed responsibility for the Core Wheat Breeding Agreements (CBAs) previously managed by the Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF). The CWRC recently announced the CBA with the University of Saskatchewan's Crop Development Centre and will now work to finalize the next CBAs with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Universities of Alberta and Manitoba.

Producers provided approximately \$27.9 million through the WGRF CBAs with AAFC and the universities to maintain plant breeders, technicians, and specialists involved in all efforts to finish wheat varieties. Now that the three Prairie wheat commissions have taken up the mandate for the varietal development of wheat, we will collectively carry on the investments of the CBAs through the CWRC on behalf of producers.

The CWRC also recently finished year one of the Canadian National Wheat Cluster, which is coordinating 22 research activities supported by co-funders through a five-year funding commitment (2018-23) of nearly \$25 million, covering everything from wheat breeding to wheat agronomy and disease mitigation. Sask Wheat is the current host of the CWRC, so we are deeply involved in all aspects of carrying through on the Wheat Cluster on behalf of all Canadian wheat producers.

These investments represent a huge funding effort by producers. The CBAs are going to be over \$34 million over five years, while the Wheat Cluster is \$25 million, of which \$11 million is producer dollars (\$3.3 million of which is Sask Wheat funding). Additional investments by Sask Wheat through provincial and other funding mechanisms are worth over \$18.5 million since 2014. The additional funding commitments from WGRF, AWC, and MWBGA shows the commitment producers have made to wheat research and the development of new varieties. This is a critical effort that needs to be continued!

It is an effort that also must be recognized in the current consultations on value creation/capture mechanisms. Producers have significant money on the table and they have a unique interest in the direction of new variety development. They have also told us they want a voice in how the public wheat breeding institutions develop and release varieties in the future. The development of mechanisms to deliver value to producers and recognizes their investments in the research process is critical. This value creation/capture consultation will continue to evolve over 2020 and producers will be asked for their input!

Harvey Brooks, General Manager

Welcome Carmen!



In early October, Carmen Prang joined Sask Wheat as the Research Program Assistant.

Carmen came to Sask Wheat from Nutrien Ag Solutions, where she was a Crop Production Advisor, doing sales and agronomy. During her time at Nutrien, she obtained her Certified Crop Advisor and Articling Agrologist designations.

Carmen attended the University of Saskatchewan's College of Agriculture and Bioresources, majoring in agronomy. While obtaining her degree, she worked with Agriculture and Agri Food Canada in Swift Current doing special crops research, and with Monsanto in Saskatoon doing canola research.

Carmen grew up on a grain farm at Milestone where she remains actively involved.

CWRC commits over \$9.6 million to USask Crop Development Centre

The Canadian Wheat Research Coalition (CWRC), a collaboration of Sask Wheat, the Alberta Wheat Commission, and the Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association, has committed more than \$9.6 million over five years to a core breeding agreement (CBA) with the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) Crop Development Centre (CDC). The announcement of the CBA was made prior to the Sask Wheat Annual General Meeting on Monday, January 13 in Saskatoon.

The CWRC funding will provide expanded "core" support for the CDC's wheat breeding programs, including a significant increase in contributions to field-based breeding activities, disease nursery and screening capacity, molecular marker assisted breeding, winter nursery capacity, and end-use quality evaluation.

The CDC will be concentrating on the development of Canadian Western Red Spring (CWRS), Canadian Western Amber Durum (CWAD), and Canadian Prairie Spring Red (CPSR) wheat cultivars with improved yield potentials, greater resistance to diseases such as fusarium head blight (FHB) and stripe rust, and pests such as the orange wheat blossom midge.

"This investment by the CWRC will benefit farmers across the Prairies," said Jason Lenz, CWRC board chair and a director with the Alberta Wheat Commission.

"The CDC is renowned for their excellence in research and for developing some of the most popular and best-performing varieties available. Farmer-funded wheat breeding has been vital to the continued development of programs and farmers will

benefit from their investments with the release of new varieties that can help make their farms more profitable."

"The CDC looks forward to working with the CWRC in developing new wheat genetics for producers in Western Canada," said Dr. Pierre Hucl, CDC wheat breeder and Interim Director.

"Our 25-year relationship with the Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF) has been very productive and will provide the momentum to deliver on the ambitious objectives we have developed with the CWRC. The core breeding agreement announced today will be key to ensuring the future successes of the wheat breeding programs at the CDC."

The agreement with the CDC is the first core breeding agreement to be signed by CWRC. The provincial wheat commissions, through the CWRC, have assumed responsibility for these agreements from the WGRF.

The new agreement represents a significant increase over the previous five-year agreement of \$5.4 million. CBAs are funded proportionally by provincial commissions and adjusted annually, based on the previous year's production. The 2018-2019 production year saw 53 per cent of the CBA funding coming from Saskatchewan, with 32 per cent coming from Alberta, and 15 per cent coming from Manitoba.

Additional agreements with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and other public breeding institutions are expected to be signed and announced in 2020.

Sask Wheat commits \$1.9 million to collaborative wheat research

Sask Wheat announced the commitment of \$1.9 million to support wheat research projects funded under the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) in 2019 on January 14 at CropSphere 2020. The Sask Wheat announcement followed an announcement by the Honourable David Marit, Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture, who announced the 2019 funding of all crop-related ADF projects.

"The ADF funding process is a key mechanism to connect researchers and wheat breeders with Saskatchewan's wheat producers, keeping producers involved in developing new varieties and finding solutions to pests, diseases and environmental stressors," said Ken Rosaasen, Sask Wheat Director and Research Committee member.

"These projects will allow Sask Wheat to continue to achieve our mandate of maximizing returns on producer check-off investments and building long-term, sustainable growth for the industry."

Sask Wheat has committed over \$9.3 million to projects through the ADF process since 2014. This research falls into the areas of variety development, production and post-production.

"Investing in targeted research and allowing researchers and wheat breeders to leverage funding from several sources will benefit Saskatchewan wheat producers now and in the future," said Rosaasen.

"We are very pleased to partner with the Government of Saskatchewan and collaborate with other ADF co-funders to find new opportunities for wheat producers and strengthen the future of Canadian agriculture."

For more information on currently funded research, visit saskwheat.ca.

2020 Wheat Market Outlook

By Marlene Boersch, Mercantile Consulting Venture Inc.

Global cash wheat markets during the 2019-2020 crop period have been quite active, with most exporting countries making very good export volume gains over the previous year. For example, Stratégie Grains in Europe expects total European Union (EU) wheat exports will reach 29.6 million mt, up 37 percent from last year. Indeed, EU shipments to the end of December 2019 show a soft wheat total of 12.8 million mt, which is up 60 percent over last year. Even US wheat inspections (North American wheat) show season total exports of 520 million bushels, up 16 percent over last year.

Unfortunately, Canadian wheat exports have not kept pace. According to Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) data as of January 12, 2020, Canadian wheat exports (excluding durum) only reached 6.9 million mt, a full 16 percent (-1.3 million mt) smaller than wheat exports last year to date. At least durum exports are 46 percent (+696,000 mt) ahead of last year's pace, although this does not make up for the shortfall in wheat.

Commercial wheat stocks in Canada have reached 2.8 million mt, much of it (1.6 million mt) sitting in primary elevators. This means that Canadian farmers have not been able to participate in the increase in wheat demand and trade we have seen this year.

Pushed by good cash demand levels, international wheat prices have also been rising throughout the crop year. For example, Russian 11.5 percent protein wheat was priced at US\$183/mt free-on-board (FOB) in late August 2019, and was worth US \$223/mt in late January, a 22 percent increase. Russian 12.5 percent protein wheat is worth another \$3-to-5/mt. It is noteworthy that there has been strength in lower quality wheat (soft wheat and feed wheat), which is trading close to high quality wheat values. This means there should be a market for the some of the difficult qualities harvested

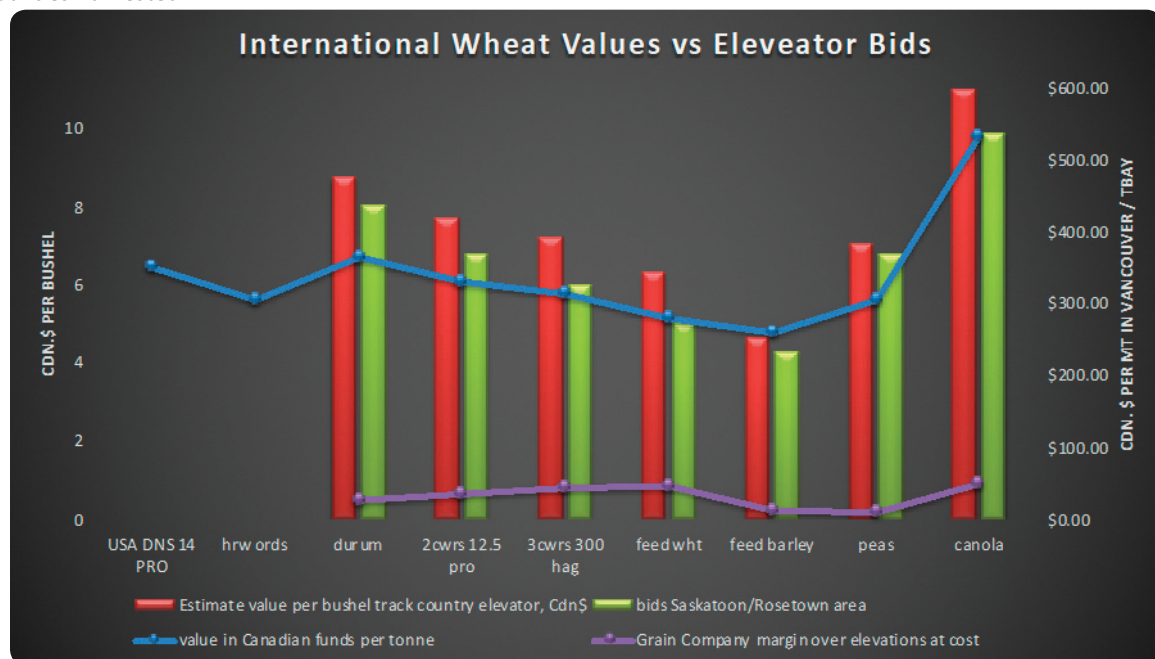
in Canada this year. However, our grain handling system is not well equipped to handle special qualities.

A shortage of railcars and a preference to handle grains with fewer separations is restricting Canadian prices, and the graph

shows that Canadian elevator bids for lower grade wheat are not reflecting world price levels. So, while international markets are showing relatively high values for low grade wheat and are indicating higher wheat prices in general, this has not translated into equivalent elevator bids on the Prairies. Instead, the lack of additional rail capacity means the improved demand has conceivably converted into better margins for grain elevators.

Looking ahead, the worry remains that Canadian exports will not pick up the pace, which would leave Saskatchewan grower bids lagging world values, as we have seen in previous months. Not expecting significantly improved wheat export volumes in Canada, we recommend producers to dispose of old crop supplies rather than wait. There is one caveat due to China: China has a commitment under the World Trade Organization (WTO) for nine million mt of wheat imports from all origins for 2020. Should China choose to honour its WTO commitments for wheat and actually start buying nearby, this should give Canada good sales opportunities out of the West Coast, should railcars be available when needed.

We also highlight that there is a big inverse in the wheat markets between old crop and new crop wheat. New crop Russian wheat is \$25/mt cheaper than current crop wheat. The inverse indicates the market is expecting good supplies of wheat next summer. Because farmers in the EU and in Russia have been enjoying very good returns to their wheat crops over the fall and winter, wheat production for 2020-2021 is expected to expand, especially in Russia. This means that Canadian growers will lose value if they do not or cannot access the current wheat markets and have to carry wheat into the next crop year. This also makes new crop wheat prices look like a hedging opportunity.



Assumptions: Multiple car rail rates; \$49.50/mt total handling costs.

What makes a drought resistant wheat work?

By Clare Stanfield

Have you ever noticed how the leaves of a wheat plant roll up toward the middle in really dry conditions? Karen Tanino will tell you that's an avoidance strategy.

The University of Saskatchewan professor explains that leaves roll like that to reduce surface area, which reduces water transpiration through the leaf surface. And that's not the only thing wheat plants do to fend off the pressures of drought conditions.

Tanino specializes in plant abiotic stress physiology – basically, how plants react to environmental stressors in an effort to protect themselves. She's leading a three-year project, funded by Sask Wheat and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture through the Agriculture Development Fund, aimed at finding out what makes wheat varieties drought resistant.

Her field-to-lab study is looking at 20 spring wheat and 10 durum varieties that have shown a range of drought resistances in the field across a number of variety trials. "We are utilizing the wheat varieties developed by breeders at the Crop Development Centre and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada," says Tanino. "We bring them into the lab and ask why – what makes them more sensitive or more resistant to drought? It's a way to capitalize on all that breeding material that has already been selected for in the field."

But what is she looking for, exactly – genes? In a way, yes, but Tanino says this project is focused more on identifying the biochemical markers and physiological characteristics that make some varieties grow and behave in certain ways under drought stress. Wheat breeders can use this information to faster select drought-adapted wheat varieties in breeding programs.

Roots and leaves

There are basically two ways a wheat plant can reduce its drought stress. "A plant can take up more water or lose less, or both," says Tanino. "The most stress-resistant plant has the most tools in its toolbox."

To this end, Tanino and her team are looking at both root architecture and leaf structure (namely leaf wax, as well as the presence of specific cells and essential ions) that relate to drought-avoiding behaviours.

In the case of roots, the team is looking at plant responses to simulated drought stress, which is created by adding salinity (salt) to a growth media (agar) to impose physiological drought. Researchers then looked at root development, the rate and angle of growth under different saline concentrations, from the embryo in the seed to the five-plus tiller stage.

"One of the unique things about our study is that, for the first time anywhere, we're developing a Zadoks scale for the roots to determine the root stages that correspond to the Zadoks scale of the shoots as a predictive model," says Tanino. "It is important to first identify the baseline root stages in order to more accurately compare how differently a resistant plant's root architecture reacts to drought stress compared to a sensitive plant."

Similarly, she's looking at leaves from a different perspective. "Most studies focus on the stomata, the pores on the leaf that open and close, and many don't think about the cuticular wax layer," she says. Leaf wax helps reduce water loss through transpiration and is a desirable trait for breeders.

"Our lab is focusing on avoidance strategies," she says. "Whether that's trying to find plants that generate more roots, or have less water loss through leaves or both."

Half way through the project, Tanino's team has already developed a root tolerance index for screening purposes. At the end of three years, the goal is to identify leaf traits of promise, and develop a Zadoks scale for roots, which will form the baseline to identify the mechanism of drought stress resistance. The long-term goal is to have a comprehensive field-based, high-throughput phenotyping technology in place so that wheat breeders can quickly, accurately and confidently select for drought resistance.



Aster yellows in wheat: a positive in the negative

By Clare Stanfield

Sometimes, finding out something isn't a problem is just as important as finding out it is. Take the case of aster yellows (AY) in wheat.

A well-known and serious problem of canola, AY was not really thought of as a major issue in wheat. "But one year, we had all these unexplained yield losses in the field," says Pierre Hucl, wheat breeder and professor at the University of Saskatchewan's Crop Development Centre. "I knew it was also a high aster yellows year in canola, so we wondered if that was the cause."

To find out, Hucl joined forces with Tyler Wist and Chrystel Olivier, both entomologists with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Saskatoon, to conduct some field and lab studies and take a closer look at AY in wheat.

At the time, very little was known about AY disease expression in wheat, whether or not certain varieties were more susceptible than others, if there was a critical threshold for aster leafhopper populations, or what kind of yield loss AY was capable of causing. Indeed, aster yellows in wheat was a veritable blank slate of knowledge.

With funding from the Sask Wheat, the Western Grains Research Foundation, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture through the Agriculture Development Fund, Hucl, Wist, and Olivier devised a series of lab and field studies to fill in some of those blanks. "We looked at durum and common wheat – 25 varieties in total," says Hucl. The bulk of that was CWRS (14 varieties), with CWHW, GP, CWSW, CPS and four varieties of CWA durum rounding out the list.

The results of the three-year study were decidedly mixed and perhaps a little anticlimactic, according to Hucl, but not without value.

"We grew the field trials abutting a commercial canola field," he says. This would ensure the trials were well exposed to leafhoppers and therefore AY. "We had all these unexplained symptoms in the field, and I was hoping to separate this out indoors, but we were unable to do it."

Those symptoms included bleaching, stunting, tiller dieback and empty heads in wheat with known AY infection. But since other pests can also cause these symptoms, Hucl and the entomologists tried to replicate them under controlled disease conditions in the lab.

There, under wet soil conditions with high light intensity, they could see that AY-infected plants showed more of these symptoms and had a small drop in yield, but it was not consistent. "In the indoor experiments, entomologists had colonies of insects, infected and not infected," says Hucl. "We had randomized, replicated trials, and we were still unable to see much in the way of definitive symptoms."

What about varietal differences? "We did find that durum is twice as likely to get the disease as common wheat," says Hucl. It sounds alarming, but he says that the average infection rate in common wheat is one percent, so a doubling to two percent in durum is pretty insignificant.

From 2015 to 2017, Hucl and Wist studied AY in wheat from every possible angle, conducting seven separate lab experiments



University of Saskatchewan wheat breeder Dr. Pierre Hucl

and three seasons of field trials all designed to uncover the interactions between aster leafhoppers and AY in wheat. Everything from how many insects fed on plants, to how long they fed, to crop staging at time of feeding to the possible roles of soil moisture and light intensity – all was thoroughly investigated.

"We wanted to know if this disease was a breeding objective," says Hucl. Turns out, it's not. And that's okay, he says. Proving a negative is just as valuable as finding a positive, and growers *had* been asking if AY was causing yield losses. "The research did answer that question."

Sask Wheat's SR&ED tax credits now available

The Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) Program is a federal government program that encourages research and development by providing tax-based incentives.

By using levy contributions to finance research and development work that benefits Saskatchewan wheat producers, Sask Wheat is able to participate in this program and distribute these tax-based incentives to producers.

The program gives registered wheat producers access to investment tax credits (by means of cash refunds and/or reduction to taxes payable) for their levy contributions that are spent on qualifying research.

For the crop year ending July 31, 2019, producers may claim 28.92% of their levy contributions as a qualifying SR&ED expenditure on their federal tax return.

In addition, farm corporations may also claim 20.74% of their levy contributions as a qualifying expenditure towards the Saskatchewan Research and Development Tax Credit program.

Producers that have requested a refund of their levy are not eligible for either tax credit.

For more information and links to taxation forms, please go to the Sask Wheat website: saskwheat.ca.

THINK WHEAT



The Think Wheat extension meetings bring the latest information on marketing and agronomy to Saskatchewan wheat farmers.

Assiniboia: Tuesday, March 3

Prince of Wales Centre Auditorium

Davidson: Wednesday, March 4

Davidson Town Hall Auditorium

Melfort: Thursday, March 5

Kerry Vickar Centre - Affinity Credit Union Room

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