



TheWheatField

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

JUNE 2021 EDITION

Sask Wheat submits response to the *Canada Grain Act Review*

Sask Wheat has made its submission on behalf of Saskatchewan wheat producers to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's review of the *Canada Grain Act* (CGA) and operations of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC). The submission is available on Sask Wheat's website.

Maintaining the strength of Canada's quality assurance system and the Canadian brand was an important focus for Sask Wheat during the review. The key recommendations of Sask Wheat's submission include:

CGC Mandate and Governance — Sask Wheat believes it is vital that the CGC's mandate continues to work "in the interests of the grain producers." Furthermore, the governance structure of the CGC needs to ensure that producers' interests are protected from the parties that are meant to be regulated by the CGA. Sask Wheat is supportive of the current Commissioner governance model of the CGC with western Canadian producer representation at the Commissioner level.

Outward Inspection — As part of protecting the Canadian brand, Sask Wheat is in favour of mandatory outward inspection remaining as a function performed by the CGC, although there are improvements that should be made to the current system to improve timeliness of service.



Market Transparency — Sask Wheat is calling on the CGC to implement an export sales reporting program to improve market transparency and support the competitiveness of producers. Canadian producers need timely access to sales and export data, and the CGC is best suited to collect and disseminate this data as a neutral party that is already privy to much of the information needed.

CGC Surplus — Sask Wheat believes that any determined uses of the accumulated surplus need to go towards activities that will directly benefit producers as they are the primary source of CGC fee recovery. Sask Wheat is also asking the CGC to immediately review its user fees and update its forecasting methodology to prevent the surplus from continuing to grow.

Licensing — Sask Wheat is requesting that licensing requirements be extended to include feed mills and container-loading facilities to ensure producers have access and coverage under the CGC's producer protection services.

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CHAIR'S MESSAGE:

Sask Wheat calling on the government to recognize the carbon sequestration efforts of producers



The 2021 growing season started with difficult conditions. At the time of writing, we have received some much-needed rain. We will still need a good amount of rain in June and July to overcome the drought conditions we experienced throughout April and May. With the water table receding significantly over the last two years, timely rain is of major importance.

The timing and amount of precipitation will be a significant factor in determining how to manage diseases and pests such as Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) and wheat midge. As many producers have questions about these and other issues during the year, Sask Wheat has started producing the *Wheat Profit*

podcast and *Wheat Watch* information documents to provide the latest information on timely topics such as herbicide carryover and seeding into dry soils.

We are providing the FHB maps once again to assist producers in managing this ever-present disease. If the weather remains dry, the risk of FHB should be low. But that can turn around quickly should we receive rain and the conditions turn humid. The threat of FHB could also stretch on longer this year if wheat emerges late or unevenly. The risk maps will be available on the Sask Wheat website (saskwheat.ca) until the end of July to assist producers in managing this destructive disease.

In addition to building agronomic resources, Sask Wheat has dedicated much of the past few months to advocating for wheat producers on several fronts. We made two submissions to the consultation on the *Canada Grain Act* and operations of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), including a joint submission from Sask Wheat, SaskBarley, and the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS).

The overview of Sask Wheat's individual submission starts on page one of this newsletter and the full submission is on our website. The key takeaways of our submission are that the CGC's mandate must continue to work in the interests of grain producers, that the Canadian brand is protected by the CGC maintaining outward inspection functions, and that timely access to sales and export data should be made available to producers.

This review must strengthen Canada's quality assurance system so it benefits the viability of profitably growing wheat in Canada. Maintaining the reputation of the Canadian brand and increasing the transparency of market information will allow Canada's wheat farmers to seize opportunities in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Carbon offsets have been a significant issue for Saskatchewan grain farmers this year. Part of Sask Wheat's efforts to address this included joining SaskCanola, SaskBarley, SaskFlax, SaskOats, and the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers to respond to two discussion papers by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment on the Saskatchewan Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Offset Program and Offset Protocol Development.

We called on the government to recognize the carbon sequestration efforts of producers through the offset program. Zero-till and continuous cropping practices sequester approximately nine million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year and Sask Wheat and our partner commissions believe this is a critical asset to help both the federal and provincial governments meet their climate change goals. That value should be recognized and returned to the farmgate.

Along with the other five commissions mentioned above, Sask Wheat is a member of the Carbon Support Group for the Carbon Advisory Committee of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association (SSCA). The Committee and Support Group members have asked the government for separate regulations for agricultural carbon sink protocols

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GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT:

Sask Wheat is calling for improved export sales reporting



The 2021 growing season is off to a challenging start due to the drought conditions prevalent across much of Western Canada. Although recent rainfall has helped replenish topsoil moisture, with subsoil moisture levels essentially depleted, timely rains will certainly be needed across the province to help the crop advance.

As we approach the end of the 2020/2021 grain marketing year, exports of wheat and durum continue to be strong. As of May 10, 2021, exports of wheat (excluding durum) reached 15.1 million metric tonnes (MMT), 27 percent ahead of last year's pace, while durum exports reached 4.9 MMT, which is also 27 percent higher than last year. The agriculture sector has certainly taken advantage of the extra rail capacity made available throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be important to monitor service to the agriculture sector as other commodities begin to compete for rail capacity again in a post-Covid environment.

Although exports have remained strong, market disruptions, changes in trade patterns, and supply and demand dispositions have reinforced the need for more market transparency. In response to the *Canada Grain Act* (CGA) review consultation process and a resolution passed at Sask Wheat's 2021 Annual General Meeting calling for public export sales reporting, Sask Wheat commissioned a report on "Data Requirements for a Transparent Market" by Mercantile Consulting Venture Inc. The report provides a comprehensive overview of data gaps in grain markets and the solutions required to put producers on an equal footing when planning their cropping decisions and marketing their production. The report is available on Sask Wheat's website.

Through the CGA review consultation, Sask Wheat called on the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) to create a daily and weekly export sales reporting program similar to the data available to American farmers as collected and published by the USDA since 1973. Providing data on export sales will allow producers to better understand market dynamics, moving them toward that more equal footing with other supply chain participants.

In preparation for the CGA review, Sask Wheat also contracted a report to review areas of potential changes to the CGA and the operations of the CGC, and the potential impacts on Saskatchewan grain producers' activities and economics. This report is also available on Sask Wheat's website. Although the initial consultation period has ended, I encourage producers to review the reports and Sask Wheat's CGA Review Submission on our website - further discussion and consultations will occur and there will be implications for producers.

Research remains the core focus of Sask Wheat. We continue to make significant investments in varietal development on behalf of producers through the Canadian Wheat Research Coalition (CWRC), a collaboration between Sask Wheat, the Alberta Wheat Commission and the Manitoba Crop Alliance. The CWRC recently announced a commitment of \$2 million over five years towards

a Core Breeding Agreement with the University of Alberta. The funding for this agreement is shared between the commissions and is calculated annually based on total tonnes of spring wheat sales in Western Canada on which a levy is collected. For 2021, Sask Wheat will contribute 50.94 percent of the funding.

This is the third Core Breeding Agreement the CWRC has signed, building on our agreements with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada worth \$22.6 million over five years and with the University of Saskatchewan Crop Development Centre worth \$9.6 million over five years. The CWRC is also continuing to work on renewing the Core Breeding Agreement with the University of Manitoba. The last several years have demonstrated the resilience of new varieties that can withstand extended dry conditions and threats of pests and diseases when combined with improved agronomic practices. Having said that, we know that improvements in varieties will always be needed and these investments are meant to ensure that Saskatchewan farmers continue to have access to improved varieties to enhance the sustainability and profitability of wheat production in the province.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE *continued from page 2*

that would not be subject to non-scientific factors. Any offset program must also include farmer ownership of soil carbon credits, a registry that allows farmers to "bank" their credits, an effective price discovery mechanism, and full transparency of basis costs.

The Ministry of Environment plans to implement a carbon offset protocol for the crop sector in 2022. While we are awaiting further details on the area of focus for this protocol, Sask Wheat has encouraged the Ministry to engage with farmers early in developing this protocol to ensure it is practical and will provide value to farmers.

More information on all of these initiatives is available on our website: saskwheat.ca. The contact information for Sask Wheat directors and staff is also available on our website if you have any questions or comments on these or any other issue of concern. Please feel free to contact us.

Good luck this growing season!



Join our email list!

Go to
saskwheat.ca
to sign up.

Sask Wheat Accepting Director Nominations

The Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission (Sask Wheat) is currently seeking nominations for four positions on the Board of Directors. The producer-elected-and-directed Board ensures producers have the resources, leadership and provincial, national and international representation to strengthen Saskatchewan's competitive advantage and makes certain that producers' interests are protected.

To be eligible to sit on the Board, you must be a registered wheat producer. A registered producer means any producer who has had a Sask Wheat check-off deducted since August 1, 2019 and has not requested or received a refund of check-off in the last fiscal year (August 1, 2020 - July 31, 2021).

Director responsibilities include:

- Supervising the business of Sask Wheat including oversight of management, providing strategic direction, and ensuring effective governance of the organization.
- Attending meetings approximately 8-10 times per year and attending conference calls as required.
- Representing Sask Wheat at other meetings and events throughout the year.

Nomination forms can be found on the Commission's website: saskwheat.ca. You may also request a nomination form be mailed or faxed to you by calling 306-653-7932. Nomination forms must be signed by two or more registered wheat growers. If the registered grower is a corporation, partnership or other legal entity, it can designate a representative to hold office. A proper

form of designation (available online or from the Returning Officer) must accompany the nomination form for every director nominee or director nominator of a corporation, partnership or other legal entity.

Completed forms including candidate bios and photos should be mailed, faxed, emailed or delivered to:

Returning Officer – Levy Central Fax: 306-975-6850
2335 Schuyler Street Email: smitha@levycentral.ca
Saskatoon, SK S7H 5N1

All nominations must be received no later than 12:00 pm CST on September 3, 2021.

Please direct any questions related to elections to Returning Officer Ann Smith at 306-975-6853.

Questions related to the Commission, the Regulations governing formation of the same, or the collection of the check-off, should be directed to Harvey Brooks, Sask Wheat General Manager at (306) 653-7932.

Voting Process and Results

If a vote is required, ballots will be mailed out to all Saskatchewan wheat producers in late October. An electronic voting option will also be available. Election results will be announced in December and officially presented at the Sask Wheat AGM in January 2022.

RESPONSE TO THE CANADA GRAIN ACT REVIEW *continued from front page*

Subject to Inspector's Grade and Dockage (STIGD) — STIGD is an important tool for producers to have when negotiating with grain companies. However, Sask Wheat would like to see several changes made to enhance the usefulness of the program, including having the CGC define a specific window for how long a grain company must hold onto a producer's grain sample that will allow producers to challenge an elevator's grade within that window after delivery. Adding non-grade determinants such as DON and Falling Number (FN) to the STIGD process would also strengthen the program. Finally, Sask Wheat urges the CGC to expand access to STIGD to all licensed facilities.

Producer Payment Protection — Sask Wheat believes it is crucial to maintain a security system that reflects an individual company's risk profile and activities to keep the system accountable.

CGC Oversight on Objective Measurements — Sask Wheat encourages the CGC to use a portion of its surplus to increase its capacity to conduct onsite inspections and auditing of grading practices and equipment at primary elevators through a random auditing program. Sask Wheat also recommends the CGC explicitly define and explain the scope of its authority regarding oversight on equipment and testing protocols for non-grading factors, such as DON and FN, which have become increasingly important in grain contracts.

Grain Research Lab (GRL) — The crop and technology research completed by the GRL plays an essential role in maintaining Canada's quality assurance system and supporting the Canadian brand. Sask Wheat strongly encourages the Federal Government to review the appropriation funding levels for the CGC and GRL to ensure they accurately reflect the benefit to the public.

Western Grain Standards Committee — Sask Wheat supports adjusting the membership of the Western Standards Committee so that "actual producers of western grain" constitute a clear majority of the Committee.

Sask Wheat has called for a thorough analysis, including a benefit-cost analysis, to be completed as part of the CGA review and for further consultations to occur once this analysis is completed and prior to recommendations being brought forward for consideration.

Although this consultation period has ended, Sask Wheat will continue to be engaged on this file and keep producers informed of any developments.

More Midge in Saskatchewan Forecast

A costly insect pest is set to make a comeback in Saskatchewan wheat fields. Entomologists are cautioning producers to be on the lookout for orange blossom wheat midge during the 2021 growing season.

“For a lot of our wheat-growing regions, the population is in place for serious midge pressure,” says James Tansey, provincial specialist, insect/pest management with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

The pest is back in the spotlight thanks to work by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Prairie Pest Monitoring Network, which collects survey data to create pest forecasts and risk warnings. Wheat midge are an important pest to keep an eye on as they can significantly reduce yields and quality without proper management.

“We’ve got lots of red on the map this year, quite a bit more than we saw last year,” says Tansey. Red indicates the highest level of midge pressure (greater than 1,800 per square metre). For 2021, the areas of greatest risk include the southeast, central and northern growing regions.

Tansey qualifies that the forecast is based on 419 field samples, taken in the fall of 2020. “We’re not hitting every field, but it does give a good idea of regional prevalence of wheat midge populations and likely pressure,” he says.

Why midge is making a comeback

The midge comeback is not a surprise to insect experts. After a series of dry springs, the 2020 season delivered a level of moisture and heat that was ideal for the pest to “come out to play” according to Tyler Wist, research scientist of field crop entomology with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

“There was plenty of moisture in May and that’s really tied to getting the wheat midge to come out of the ground,” he says. Wist explains that 25 mm of rainfall can trigger midge emergence. “Those same rains that get the spring wheat up and growing are the same rains that get the wheat midge up and moving. It’s pretty well synchronized,” he says.

What midge risk means for producers

Growers are advised to check the forecast map and determine if they farm in one of the wheat midge ‘hot spots.’

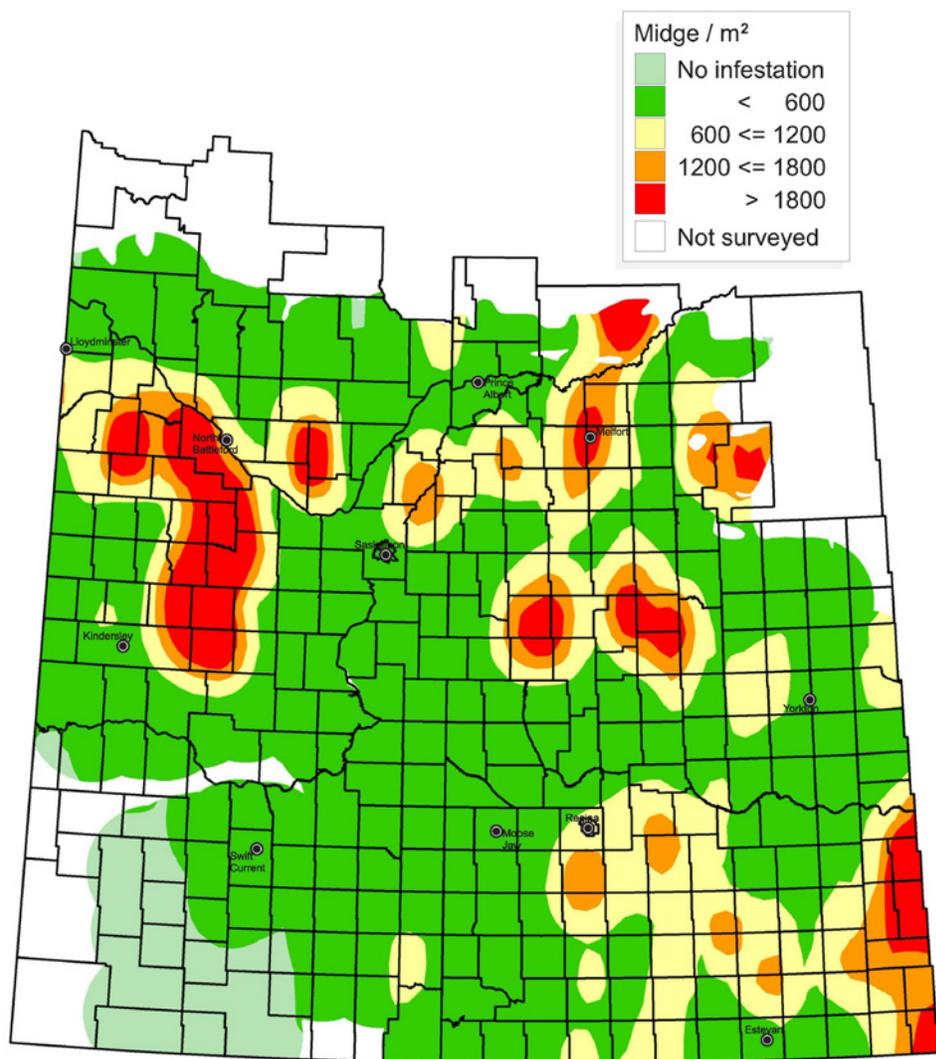
The best line of defense is growing a Midge Tolerant Wheat variety, which offers built-in protection. With varieties available in every wheat class, they are a vital tool to control orange blossom wheat midge – as long as growers follow stewardship practices. This includes limiting the use of farm-saved seed to one generation past Certified seed.

Tansey’s and Wist’s message for those who don’t have a Midge Tolerant Wheat variety in their 2021 line-up is to monitor their fields for midge in late June and early July as wheat heads are emerging.

“Scout at dusk on calm evenings,” says Wist, adding that’s when midge females – little orange flies – can be observed laying eggs on developing wheat heads. “Wheat midge can affect both your yield and your grade. If you find one midge on five heads when scouting you’ve reached your yield threshold. One midge on 10 heads is your grade threshold.”

Timing is everything with midge. “As soon as you hit that threshold, have your sprayer ready to go. That’s when you’ve got to hit them because wheat midge only live for five days,” says Wist. “They’ll do all their damage in the first two or three days. If you wait around, it’s going to be too late.”

Wheat Midge Forecast 2021



New testing methods finally tilt the scales in wheat's battle against DON

By Janna Moats

Fusarium head blight is a notorious fungal disease threatening small cereal grains like wheat. Its effects are far-reaching and result in millions of dollars in economic losses every year, making it one of the most significant crop diseases faced by Canadian wheat growers.

Not only does this disease reduce crop yields and seed quality, but the fungus responsible for the infection produces dangerous mycotoxins including one called DON (*deoxynivalenol*). Even small amounts of this toxin can cause major health issues for humans and animals, which is why it has become heavily regulated across grain markets.

"If a load of grain is contaminated with a mycotoxin like DON, it could be rejected," says Dr. Lipu Wang, Research Officer with the University of Saskatchewan's Crop Development Centre (CDC). According to Wang, "This is a big economic challenge for western Canadian wheat growers."

Developing fusarium resistant varieties with low levels of DON is a top priority for wheat breeding programs. Unfortunately, their efforts have been stunted due to a lack of available options to test for the mycotoxin.

According to Wang, "The industry agrees DON is an issue that should be addressed in our breeding programs, but there aren't many labs in Western Canada that can measure mycotoxins."

To overcome this, Wang joined forces with Dr. Randy Kutcher (University of Saskatchewan Chair of Cereal and Flax Crop Pathology). With funding support from the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture through the Agriculture Development Fund, their research team was able to develop a rapid, cost-effective method for detecting DON in wheat.

Wang and Kutcher approached the challenge by modifying an existing testing method known as Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS). As Wang puts it, "We customized the method specifically for the needs of wheat breeders."

"The time needed to test a sample for DON was a big limitation for breeding programs," said Wang. "With this new method, we reduced the testing time from 20 minutes to two minutes for each sample."

By reducing the testing time, Wang's team can process hundreds of samples at a time. "Right now, we can screen around 200 samples each day with this method," said Wang. This is exactly the kind of testing capacity a breeding program would need.

While the team found ways to cut back on time and costs, they made sure not to compromise on accuracy.

"We used a very strict validation method for every step of our method," said Wang. "It is the same validation method recommended for medical assays by the United States Department of Agriculture."

This new approach for detecting DON in cereal grains is already helping wheat breeders in Western Canada. By implementing

this testing into their programs, breeders can speed up their screening process and improve their selection criteria for developing fusarium resistant varieties with low DON.

After the success of their DON testing method, Wang and Kutcher took their work one step further.

"Fusarium doesn't only produce DON, it can produce other mycotoxins, as well," said Wang. "So, we developed a method that can detect up to seven different mycotoxins in wheat."

This secondary method was designed as a proactive approach to disease management. "With it, we can know which mycotoxin is dominant in western Canadian wheat and watch for changes and trends," said Wang.

The method is already being used by researchers at the CDC and will help the industry respond more quickly to changing and emerging disease threats.

Wang hopes to continue to serve the Saskatchewan wheat industry through his research and encourages anyone interested in these newly developed methods to reach out to the CDC, saying, "If there are breeders and companies interested in applying these methods, we are very happy to help."

Producers needed for soil health testing project

You are invited to join the network of volunteer farmers participating in a research project aimed at developing a soil health testing tool for Saskatchewan producers.

The project, which is funded by SaskCanola and Sask Wheat, is being undertaken by Dr. Kate Congreves (Project leader) and Dr. Zelalem Taye (Postdoctoral Fellow) from the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Saskatchewan.

To participate in the study, go to the Sask Wheat website (saskwheat.ca) and click on the "Call for Producer Participation: Developing the Saskatchewan Assessment of Soil Health (SASH) Tool" story under Latest News on the main page. Click the button on the next page to be taken to the enrollment page for the project.

The online registration will take one or two minutes. You will be asked to answer demographic questions and questions about which rural municipality and crop district you reside in.

You can also email Dr. Zelalem Taye at zmt059@mail.usask.ca with your details to participate in this project.

To till, or not to till? Researchers answer difficult residue management question

By Janna Moats

Flax crop residues can be a costly nuisance for Saskatchewan growers if they aren't managed carefully. They wrap around seeding equipment in the spring, increase downtime in the fields, and interfere with seed germination, taking a chunk out of the bottom line.

According to Dr. Jeff Schoenau (Professor of Soil Science at the University of Saskatchewan), harvest conditions could influence decisions surrounding residue management strategies.

"Flax tends to be harvested last in later fall when it is cold and damp," said Schoenau. "This allows the straw to become tough which makes it chop poorly". This can make it a real tangly issue come seeding time.

Saskatchewan growers may turn to vertical tillage, disking, or burning as strategies for handling flax residues. While each of these options are effective at reducing the amount of straw and stubble left in the fields, are they always worth the effort?

To answer this question, Dr. Schoenau teamed up with colleague and soil physics professor Dr. Bing Si to conduct a large-scale research trial, funded through the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, the Western Grains Research Foundation, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture through the Agriculture Development Fund.

"We were interested in learning how these different residue management strategies would affect the condition of the soil and the crop yields in the following growing seasons," said Schoenau.

The three-year project began in the fall of 2015 near Central Butte, Saskatchewan. Each test plot spanned nearly five acres and contained residue from a recently harvested flax crop. The research team managed the residues on each plot using either vertical tillage, tandem disking, raking and burning, or no-till practices. Come spring, each plot was seeded to red spring wheat, while the subsequent two years were seeded to peas and then to canola.

The research team evaluated each of the long-term effects of their flax residue management strategies based on soil health and structure, crop yields, and cost of production.

"The first thing we measured was the effect of flax residue management practices on soil water infiltration over three crop years," said Si, adding that, "In Saskatchewan, water is a major limiting factor for crop production."

Flax stubble burning didn't appear to have a major impact, but tilling reduced the soil's moisture content compared to untilled plots.

"That is what we expected," said Schoenau. "Tillage tends to dry out the soil, because if you get rid of that stubble on the surface you don't have as much snow trap during winter."

During the first year of the study, they found that vertical tillage reduced air permeability of the soils compared to the other treatments. According to Schoenau, "We looked at this because the roots need oxygen and so do the microorganisms. We need aeration to allow the microorganisms to do their job like fix nitrogen."

The researchers believe these findings might be explained by their use of rolling baskets behind the vertical tillage equipment which may have increased the number of fine pores in the surface soils.

Aggregate size and stability was another important consideration as predictors for soil erosion.

"We found that aggregate size wasn't affected much," said Schoenau, "but the tillage and burning practices did tend to decrease aggregate stability."

Fortunately, the negative impacts of their tillage treatments appear to be short lived. According to Si, "The negative effects of tillage seem to disappear after a couple of years, so it doesn't hurt as long as you don't do it every year."

The same couldn't be said for burning, especially when considering soil fertility.

"Burning did show a small increase in phosphorus availability the following crop year, but you also lose carbon and nitrogen from the soil which can hurt in the long-run," said Schoenau. "You may get a bit of short-term gain, but you potentially get some long-term pain from continued burning."

When it came to crop yields, Schoenau and Si didn't see any changes in crop yields the following three years after their residue management treatments.

So, what does all this mean for a producer's bottom-line?

"If there is truly no difference in yield, but there are additional operation costs, it actually doesn't pay," said Schoenau.

Schoenau goes on to say, "If you're able to harvest the flax early on when it's warm and the straw chops well, you might not need to burn or till. Seeding directly in well-chopped flax stubble worked well, in our study."

But when harvest conditions are not ideal, Schoenau and Si agree that periodic use of tillage practices are a viable solution to handling difficult crop residues.

"Vertical tillage doesn't hurt the soil if you don't do it every year," said Si. "If the purpose is for residue management and weed control in problem spots then you can do it and the effects will dissipate over time."

Ultimately, a successful residue management program all comes down to optimizing harvest conditions and paying attention to the needs of the land.



Manage your Fusarium Head Blight risk

Sask Wheat's FHB risk maps help wheat producers identify their level of risk for FHB infection.

The maps, in conjunction with daily monitoring and a cost/benefit analysis tool, help producers determine if the application of a fungicide is necessary.



The FHB risk maps are generated daily through June and July at:

saskwheat.ca



Sask Wheat
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Sask Wheat
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

310 - 111 Research Drive, Saskatoon SK S7N 3R2
Phone: (306) 653-7932 | Web: saskwheat.ca

