



For Immediate Release

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Wheat Growers Disappointed by Decision to Delay HVK Grading Change

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association is disappointed with a decision by the Western Standards Committee to delay making changes to Canada's wheat grading standards that would put more money into prairie farmers' pockets.

The Committee decided not to recommend changes that would eliminate HVK (hard vitreous kernels) as a grading factor on CWRS until August 1, 2007 despite two years of research by Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) scientists that shows the level of HVK does not impact milling quality for either the CWRS (Canada Western Red Spring) or CWHWS (Canada Western Hard White Spring) wheat classes.

The level of HVK is determined by a visual inspection of a grain sample. To qualify as #1 CWRS, a minimum of 65% of the kernels in a sample must be deemed to be HVK. For #2 CWRS, the minimum is 35%. Research studies by the CGC show that the milling performance of a sample with as little as 6% HVK performs as good as samples with high HVK levels.

"For years, it appears as if wheat has been unnecessarily downgraded simply on the basis of its appearance," says Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers. "Farmers should be paid based on the milling value of their grain, not on the basis of how pretty it looks."

Bill Rusk, WCWGA director from Nipawin, SK who serves on the Western Standards Committee notes that historically, no other grading factor has caused wheat to be downgraded as much as HVK. On his farm, he estimates downgrading due to this factor cost him \$14,000 on his 2005 crop. "This grading factor has needlessly cost farmers thousands of dollars over the years," says Rusk. "Why should I be paid less when science is showing that my wheat has the same milling quality?"

The Wheat Growers note the cost of using HVK as a grading factor goes beyond the downgrading losses, as farmers often adjust their farming practices in the hope of obtaining a higher HVK count. For example, farmers will sometimes give priority to seeding or harvesting wheat and as a result sacrifice yield or quality of their other crops.

While the Wheat Growers commend the CGC for undertaking this research and advancing this issue, it is disappointing that the industry is slow to act. "Unfortunately, farmers face another year of getting paid for wheat on the basis of characteristics that have nothing to do with its milling quality," says Jolly-Nagel.

The Western Standards Committee is an industry body consisting of farmers, grain handlers, marketers and regulators that provides recommendations on grading changes to the Canadian Grain Commission. The Committee met yesterday in Winnipeg.

The WCWGA, an independent producer organization, has spent 36 years bringing forth innovative farmer-driven solutions and will continue to lobby on behalf of forward thinking, progressive producers in an effort to make farming sustainable and profitable.

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Innovative, farmer-driven solutions.