

Contact



A Newsletter from the Canadian Wheat Board

Volume 1, 2005

The 2004 harvest in review



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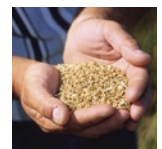
Mother Nature posed considerable challenges to farmers in Western Canada during 2004. Cool weather during the growing season resulted in a later-than-normal harvest, which reduced supplies of high-quality spring wheat, durum and barley. The portion of the spring wheat and durum crops falling into the top two grades is both expected to be the lowest in over 10 years. Less than one-third of the spring wheat crop is expected to make the standard for the top two Canada Western Red Spring (CWRS) wheat grades.

The most significant factor affecting the quality of grain last fall was an early frost, which occurred August 20, 2004. The frost covered about one-third of western Canadian growing areas and resulted in both yield losses and grade degradation throughout the region.

Harvesting began in the first week of September, but progress was slowed by both persistent rains in the northern grainbelt and slow maturation of the crop. Only 10 per cent of the crop was harvested by the third week of September, which was close to three weeks behind normal. Conditions improved in late September and the first two weeks of October, as an extended period of warm, dry weather prevailed over the entire Prairie region. Harvest progress reached 90 per cent complete by October 20, 2004. Rains and snow in late October brought harvesting activity to a halt, but warm, dry weather in November allowed farmers to complete harvest. Parts of northern Alberta and Saskatchewan were too wet and some crops will remain unharvested in those areas.

Statistics Canada estimates total wheat production in Western Canada to be 23.9 million tonnes; spring wheat production is estimated at 18.1 million tonnes; durum wheat production is estimated at 4.9 million tonnes and barley production is estimated at 12.3 million tonnes. All production estimates are well above last year's levels and are the result of near record yields.

Protein levels of both CWRS and durum are significantly below last year and the five-year average, due to the higher yields experienced in 2004. The cool growing season resulted in minimal stress to the crop, which was reflected in protein contents that are over one per cent lower than last year's levels. ■



A BRIGHT IDEA



Want to take leftovers home from your favourite restaurant? In the near future, you could be taking them home wrapped in wheat.

Scientists are investigating the use of wheat starch to create environmentally-friendly, disposable containers.

Until recently, these polystyrene take-out containers have been made of petroleum-based ingredients that end up in landfills around the globe. Slow to decompose, they add another burden to the environment.

But, prototype containers made from wheat starch have proven to be as light-weight, leak-proof and convenient as their plastic-based cousins. However, once tossed in the trash, these containers decompose in only a few weeks.

Consul thanks farmers for donation

Following one of the worst storm seasons experienced in more than a decade, Caribbean countries including Haiti and Grenada are struggling to rebuild in the aftermath of Hurricanes Ivan, Charley, Frances and Tropical Storm Jeanne. Over 1,000 Haitians were killed during the storms and more than 90 per cent of homes in Grenada were destroyed by fierce winds and driving rain.

A \$10,000 donation made by the CWB on behalf of western Canadian farmers will be added to other international relief efforts to help people in the area reclaim land and reconstruct buildings.

The money sent by the CWB is normally used to sponsor the Caribbean Millers' Dinner. However, in light of the devastation left by the hurricanes, the CWB opted to send the money to the Grenada Hurricane Relief Fund and the Canadian Red Cross Caribbean Hurricane Appeal.

At least one representative from the area has expressed appreciation for the decision.

In a letter received by the CWB in early November, the Honorary Consul for Grenada, Casper A. Shade, extended his sincere thanks to the farmers of Western Canada for their contribution. The letter estimates it will cost between \$3.5 billion to \$7 billion to rebuild Grenada alone.

In his letter, Mr. Shade also expressed the indomitable spirit of the people in the area, writing: "Hurricane Ivan damages are a setback to Grenada's development, but with God's grace and the help of our friends, we will overcome this disaster." ■



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Interested in the durum industry? Mark your calendar.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada will host the 3rd International Durum Wheat Workshop September 6-10, 2005. Called Mapping the Future, the workshop builds on the two previous durum workshops held in France (2000) and Italy (2002).

The goals of the workshop are to update participants on developments in the industry and identify priorities in areas of research related to durum wheat breeding. Topics will include chemistry and technology, end-product quality (pasta, couscous and bread) and future requirements.

The venue for the workshop is Winnipeg's Fairmont Hotel, located a

short walking distance from the CWB and the Canadian Grain Commission. The area is also home to numerous restaurants, shopping, museums and the Forks National Historic site. A block of rooms is being held for conference participants until August 3, 2005. Average Winnipeg temperatures in September range from daytime highs of 19 degrees Celsius (66 degrees Fahrenheit) to nighttime lows of six degrees (43 degrees Fahrenheit).

The early registration fee for the workshop is \$500 Cdn. To register, or for more information, visit www.mapthefuture.org. ■



Mapping the future

Ultrasonic Bread

Typically associated with medical procedures, ultrasound is now being tested for application in the baking industry.

Researchers at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, are investigating the application of low-intensity ultrasound technology to both dough and bakery end-products.

Ultrasound involves using a transducer to emit inaudible sound waves. These waves fan out through an object. When they hit something dense, the sound bounces back and is translated into a visual image by the computer.

The non-invasive, non-destructive properties of ultrasound make it ideal for measuring the quality and properties of wheat flours, baking ingredients and flour dough.

Baking is a complex process that relies on the quality of flour used. Flour quality is dependent

on wheat quality, which constantly fluctuates, depending on growing and harvesting conditions. This makes it difficult for commercial bakers to predict the quality of their end products and means that new batter batches must be tested for outcome, which slows production and increases cost.

Ultrasound could prove to be the answer. Bakers would be able to see what is happening inside their breads as they move through the production line, allowing the line to be fine-tuned as it operates.

The technology could prove to put producers of dough and baked goods in a better position to make the most of their products and increase customer satisfaction.



The project is supported by industry and Canada's Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, a program that promotes university-industry interaction and technology commercialization.

Industry participants include the CWB and the Canadian International Grains Institute (CIGI), General Mills Inc., Weston Bakeries Ltd., AIC Flour Service Division, Acatrix Inc., Danisco USA Inc., and Griffith Laboratories. ■

Faces and places



Erik Ordoñez, CWB marketing manager, Simon Nobile, Pastas Capri, Venezuela; Dario Giraldo, president, Molinera de Caldas, S.A.; Sandra Giraldo, business manager, Molinera de Caldas, S.A. at the Latin American Millers Conference in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.



Giovanni Basile, of Venezuela, views the herd at Scott Corvett's farm in Rosser, Manitoba, fall 2004.



Giovanni Basile and Scott Corvett check the crop on Corvett's farm in Rosser, Manitoba, fall 2004.



Erik Ordoñez, CWB marketing manager for Latin America and the Caribbean, gives an overview presentation on the western Canadian wheat crop to the Latin American Millers Conference in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.



Mick Walts, manager of engineering, Contilatin Division, ContiGroup Companies and Bill Spafford, CWB vice-president, marketing.

Contact is a publication of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). Contact is designed to keep our Latin American and Caribbean grain industry partners informed about the Canadian system of grain marketing, CWB initiatives and factors that influence the marketing of western Canadian wheat and barley.

Readers are invited to submit questions and comments to:

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