

California Wheat

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CWC Wheat Bulletin

February 28, 2011

US Wheat Leaders to Visit Export Customers in Latin America

ARLINGTON, Va -- Wheat industry leaders from California and Oklahoma will visit export customers in Mexico, Chile and Peru in early March as part of a Board Team trip sponsored by U.S. Wheat Associates (USW). Larry Hunn, a third-generation farmer from Clarksburg, CA, and chairman of the California Wheat Commission and Mike Schulte, CEO of the Oklahoma Wheat Commission, will join USW Director of Communications Steve Mercer.

USW is an export market development organization working in more than 100 countries on behalf of America's wheat producers.

"We promote U.S. wheat as the world's most reliable and valuable supply and nothing brings that claim to life more than connecting producers with their customers," said USW President Alan Tracy. "These are working trips that give our directors the chance to review our work, learn about what milling and baking customers need and to thank them for their business."

Hunn is looking forward to making a personal connection with these buyers and end-users.

"As a U.S. Wheat Associates director, I think it is important that I understand more about our customers and what they think about the work we do to keep demand for our wheat strong," he said. Hunn is a past president of the California Association of Wheat Growers and grows hard red winter wheat and several other crops on a family farm in California's Sacramento River delta.

Schulte, who is a late substitute for a producer director from Oklahoma, says he is glad to have a chance to hear what customers think about U.S. wheat quality.

"Export markets are critical for Oklahoma wheat growers," Schulte said. "This will be a great opportunity for me to keep them informed about what Latin American wheat buyers need." Schulte remains involved in wheat production through his family's farm. He directs a four-person staff at the grower-controlled Oklahoma Wheat Commission, which is charged with promoting the state's hard red winter wheat crop.

The first stop for this USW Board Team is Portland, OR. They will get a thorough background on the U.S. wheat export system by USW West Coast office staff, the Federal Grain Inspection Service, the Wheat Marketing Center and private exporters. In Guadalajara and Mexico City, Mexico, Santiago, Chile, and Lima, Peru, the team will meet with key flour millers, bakers and wheat food processor customers as well as U.S. agricultural representatives posted in those countries.

Mercer plans to post updates from the trip in the Discussion section of the U.S. Wheat Associates Facebook page, www.facebook.com/uswheat. Visit this address, "Like" the page and click on Discussion to read updates, ask the Board Team questions or express opinions.

The activities of USW are made possible by producer checkoff dollars managed by 19 state wheat commissions and through cost-share funding provided by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. For more information, visit www.uswheat.org or contact your state wheat commission.

Attention California organic wheat growers/ handlers: If you have wheat available, please call the Commission office. We have an interested local buyer.

California Joins Research Fly-In

Jim Parsons, California Wheat Commissioner and President of the California Association of Wheat Growers, joined more than 40 wheat growers, researchers, millers and bakers in Washington, D.C. earlier this month to urge Members of Congress and the Obama Administration to protect federal investments in wheat research. CWC Executive Director Janice Cooper also participated in the outreach effort.

Parsons and Cooper, together with wheat breeders and growers from Washington and Oregon, visited with key members of Congress from their states in order to discuss the importance of federal funding of wheat research to local growers and to food security worldwide. Parsons recounted the damage caused by stripe rust to California wheat several years ago and how both federal funding and grower dollars supported the research needed to produce disease-resistant varieties for California growers to plant.

Mike Pumphrey, a wheat breeder from Washington State University, described national and international efforts to develop resistance to UG 99, a virulent stem rust disease which is spreading from Africa to the Middle East. Much of the U.S. wheat crop is vulnerable to this disease, which can cause up to 50% yield loss in susceptible varieties.

Federal funding for USDA programs including wheat research is threatened by the effort to cut government expenditures and the United States' massive debt. Federal government spending on wheat research is considered discretionary spending, the type most targeted for cuts by the House Budget Committee.

Historically, because wheat research focuses on locally-adapted varieties for the nation's six classes of wheat, the work is spread among many different USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) locations and state land grant universities, which have specialized expertise and staff. For the past two decades, agriculture research funding has remained flat, while expenses for salaries and new technology have continued to climb.

Unlike crops including corn and soybeans, wheat is disproportionately dependent on public research. Wheat is also uniquely complicated, with regional-specific varieties of six unique classes, grown across

42 U.S. states. Wheat's genome is larger than the human genome.

Parsons and Cooper noted the large number of diverse interests visiting Capitol Hill to educate members on the impact of proposed cuts. "With so much pressure to cut our national deficit, we just wanted our Congressional representatives to understand how research protects and improves the wheat we grow," said Parsons. "We understand that budget cuts are needed, but we hope they are done carefully, given what is at stake."

Though a number of private companies have announced investments in wheat science in recent years, the industry is still highly dependent on public research funded by the federal government, state governments and producer-paid check-off dollars. More than three-quarters of varieties being used today came from public research programs.

Wheat is vital to the U.S. and world economy and for food security. Wheat exports alone contributed \$5.9 billion to the U.S. economy in 2010, and wheat itself is responsible for 20 percent of calories consumed in the world, according to the United Nations.

For more information, please see:

- A chart of wheat research funding over time, <http://www.aaas.org/spp/rd/trres09p.pdf>.
- A map showing each U.S. region's wheat classes, research labs and challenges addressed by research is available at <http://www.wheatworld.org/wp-content/uploads/research-informative-map-fly-in-20110208.pdf>.
- NAWG's comprehensive research website page is at <http://www.wheatworld.org/research>.