



CWC Wheat Bulletin

February 14, 2014

Drought's Impact on California Wheat

CWC Vice Chair Erik Freese and Handler Member Geoff Schulz appeared on the NPR program **Insight** to discuss the impact of the drought. To listen to the program, go to: <http://www.capradio.org/news/insight/2014/01/27/insight-012714/>

California Planted Acres Down 7 Percent; CWC Annual Variety Survey Underway

In the 2014 Winter Wheat Seedings report published by USDA's National Ag Statistics Service last month, California's planted Winter Wheat acreage was estimated at 570,000 acres, 93% of last year's final planted acreage estimate. Durum wheat plantings are estimated at 75,000 acres; no change from last year's seedings estimate. With the state's water deficit, however, it is challenging to accurately estimate this year's grain production.

To gain a clearer picture of likely production, the Commission conducts an annual survey asking growers to identify how many acres they have planted (or are likely to plant) by variety and location. Cymantha Fredrickson, CWC Assistant Director, manages this annual effort. "We appreciate growers who return the survey," said Fredrickson. "Individual grower information is

kept confidential, but the aggregate data is very useful for market development and research."

Next year, the Commission plans to move to an online survey, which will streamline the process of compiling the results and save on printing and mailing costs. We are asking growers to share their email addresses to facilitate this change.

Commission-Funded Wheat Research Project Results Available Online

The Commission's top priority for assessment dollars is to fund research into new and improved wheat varieties. Approximately one third of the Commission's budget is used to support the UC Davis wheat breeding program and UCCE field research around the state.

As part of the Commission's December board meeting, the Commission joined forces with UC Cooperative Extension to present the results of all the Commission-funded research conducted during the 2012/13 crop year. UC Davis wheat breeder Jorge Dubcovsky, statewide field trial coordinator Phil Mayo, and several UCCE farm advisors presented their results at the December 5th meeting held at the Tulare UCCE office.

These presentations may be viewed at: <http://www.californiawheat.org/news/2013-research-mtg-videos/>

CA Wheat Breeder Dubcovsky Honored

Jorge Dubcovsky, an acclaimed plant geneticist, international leader in wheat genomics and elected member of the National Academy of Sciences from the University of California, Davis, was recently named a recipient of the 2014 Wolf Prize in Agriculture, sharing the prize with Lief Andersson from Uppsala University in Sweden.

The \$100,000 Wolf Prizes are awarded annually by the Wolf Foundation to outstanding scientists and artists in the fields of agriculture, chemistry, physics, mathematics, medicine and the arts. This year five prizes were awarded to eight individuals in four countries.

The new Wolf Prize laureates will receive their awards in May from the president of Israel and Israel's minister of education during a ceremony at the Knesset Building in Jerusalem.

In selecting Dubcovsky, the Wolf Foundation committee wrote that his research achievements are "truly impressive" and that Dubcovsky's "combined basic and applied approach was able to dramatically improve the nutritional value of wheat, and the impact of the discoveries was increased when they were made available to the scientific community."

Dubcovsky, a professor in the Department of Plant Sciences and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation investigator, was born and raised in Argentina.

He began his career teaching middle school science and math classes, and earned his bachelor's degree in biological sciences from the University of Buenos Aires in 1984.

He received his doctoral degree in biological sciences in 1989 from the University of Buenos Aires and came to UC Davis in 1992 for a research fellowship under the direction of Dr. Jan Dvorak, interested in the techniques that

were becoming available in the growing field of molecular biology. Employing such techniques, he and Dr. Dvorak used molecular markers to mine new information about plant biology and generated the first molecular genetics maps in wheat.

Dubcovsky joined the UC Davis faculty in 1996. During the past two decades, he has conducted pioneering research in mapping and isolating genes in wheat's massive genome and deploying them in wheat cultivars. He and his laboratory colleagues have identified and cloned genes involved in disease resistance, protein content, flowering and frost tolerance. Identification of these important genes has enabled researchers and breeders to accelerate the development of more nutritious and better adapted wheat varieties.

In 2011, Dubcovsky received a USDA Honor Award, the most prestigious award given by the agency's secretary in recognition of exceptional leadership in science, public policy and management vital to guiding the nation's food and agricultural system. In 2013, he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honors for scientists and engineers in the United States.

The Wolf Prizes are awarded by the Wolf Foundation, established in 1975 by the late German-born inventor, diplomat and philanthropist Dr. Ricardo Wolf. A resident of Cuba for many years, he became Fidel Castro's ambassador to Israel, where he lived until his death in 1981.

Five or six annual Wolf Prizes have been awarded since 1978, to outstanding scientists and artists. A total of 290 scientists and artists from around the world, including this year's laureates, have been honored with this prestigious prize.

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