



## WHEAT MARKETING CENTER

Portland, Oregon

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **New Wheat Marketing Center Training Pilot Program: Wheat Quality & Risk Management Assessment Workshop for Elevator Operators**

Portland, Oregon (September 23, 2005) -- Wheat Marketing Center (WMC) is reaching out once again to help connect the dots. It is WMC's mission to connect these dots between wheat farmers and wheat-consuming nations around the globe.

A recently completed pilot training program at the WMC connected the dots for two country grain merchandisers, two country elevator managers, a grain rail loading supervisor, two warehousemen, and an upriver barge grain loading superintendent.

The Wheat Quality and Risk Management Assessment Workshop for Elevator Operators pilot program was supported by U.S. Wheat Associates, the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS), the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA), and export grain elevator companies Columbia Grain and CLD Pacific Grain. The goal of the new WMC training program is to provide country elevator operators with information about the importance of wheat quality segregation and its economic impact.

Based on feedback from participants, the program was a resounding success. Lindy Blagg, Grain Merchandiser at Mid-Columbia Producers in Moro, Oregon, reports that the program increased her knowledge of the entire wheat "system," and gave her an understanding of how all those dots along the system, from the farmer to the overseas customer, are connected.

"After seeing all of the tests done on wheat and flour to determine functional characteristics that are required to meet customer specifications, what needs to be done by our country elevators becomes clearer. We need to do a better job of segregation -- not only segregation by protein, but also by wheat class, grade, sprout damage, and dockage.

"It all adds up. With proper identification at the country elevators, and with the ability to segregate grain by specific quality factors, we can do a better job of filling the needs of our overseas customers more consistently. And the more efficient we are, the more desirable our wheat is throughout the entire chain -- and the more profitability there is," Blagg said.

John Gregerson, Superintendent at the McNary Barge Loading Facility for Pendleton Grain Growers commented, "We learned a lot. For instance, I didn't have any idea that wheat was used for so many different products. The grading and specification differences from each country, as pointed out by Shannon Schlecht of US Wheat Associates, Portland, was really interesting... and surprising, too, that some countries want #2 grade wheat. I thought they'd all want #1.

"This means we need to start thinking about segregating. Throughout this whole course, everyone we talked to talked about protein. Right now, upcountry, we don't really try to bin separately for protein, but I think this will be something we do in the future. It just might be more profitable to segregate by protein. I didn't know that protein was such a big deal," Gregerson said.

According to WMC Wheat Lab Supervisor Bon Lee, "Segregation, sprout damage identification, protein content -- these and other factors are important in the world marketplace. That's where our lab tests come into the picture. Working with samples of wheat and flour, we conducted more than a dozen tests during the program to illustrate the impact of wheat and flour quality on processing and finished products. The falling number test is one good example.

"For one thing, the falling number test measures the level of enzyme activity. Too much enzyme activity results in a low falling number value and produces sticky dough during processing and poor texture in the finished product," Lee continued.

In discussing sampling procedures at the country elevator, Branch Manager Sherri Timm of Odessa Union Warehouse in Harrington, Washington, said, "Sometimes our warehousemen grumble about having to climb to the top of the elevator to get a sample. I didn't realize why falling number was needed and just didn't ask the question when samples were requested. Now I've learned how important it is, I can tell our people the reasons for taking samples and emphasize how very important it is."

On information presented by the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA), Paul Porter, Grain Merchandiser & Rail Loading Supervisor for Pendleton Grain Growers Union County Operations, commented that "Dave Green gave the best presentation on risk management that I've ever heard. It was relevant because the biggest challenge to me at a country elevator is how to keep producers wanting to grow wheat. RMA programs and tools, such as crop revenue and crop loss programs, help mitigate their production risks. Incentives would be built into price when segregation becomes profitable.

"This is my third time to come to WMC and every time I come I get something new. This time, I came away with a lot of the dots connected," Porter said.

When asked how the grain elevator operator training has affected him, John Gregerson summed it up by saying "The program excited me about my job. I've been in my job 18 years and it's kind of the same old thing day after day. After this program, I was excited about sampling wheat again. It was fun to come back to work and know that there's a lot more to the wheat than what we do -- and also that what we do is so important and has an impact on the export elevators and the customers overseas.

"It really inspired me to look at my job again and see how it fits into the whole system; now I'm doing my job to the fullest and have told my guys about the training and how what we do matters so much. I've found new meaning in my job, which is great!" Gregerson concluded.

David Shelton, WMC Executive Director said that "from the positive responses about how the wheat system's components all fit together, this pilot program found a need and filled it; it provided a lot of answers for the elevator operator segment of the wheat system... and connected a lot of dots for them."

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SIDEBAR TO: NEW WMC TRAINING PROGRAM:  
*WHEAT QUALITY & RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT  
WORKSHOP FOR ELEVATOR OPERATORS PILOT PROGRAM*

***SEGREGATION IMPORTANT TO ASSURE WHEAT QUALITY,  
HAS BIG ECONOMIC IMPACT***

The importance of wheat quality segregation and its economic impact has an additional element which came to light at the same time the Wheat Quality & Risk Management Workshop for Elevator Operators Pilot Program was initiated.

Visiting Taiwan scientist William Y. Tsai was conducting experiments at the Wheat Marketing Center (WMC) to compare wheat and flour testing methods with those done in Taiwan at China Grain Products Research & Development Institute (CGPRDI). Tsai is Chief of the CGPRDI Test & Analysis Section and is responsible for testing all wheat imports to Taiwan.

"Standardizing our testing methods is the only way to achieve true comparisons to judge wheat quality," Tsai said. "That includes synchronizing wheat test milling and flour analyses."

Currently, the U.S. wheat has a 95% market share in Taiwan but is facing strong competition from Australia and Canada. In 2004, Taiwan imported more than 35.6 million bushels (971,300 metric tons) of U.S. wheat, including Soft White, Hard Red Winter, and Hard Red Spring wheat classes.

Taiwanese millers, bakers, and food scientists are looking for strong gluten characteristics from U.S. hard wheats for their Taiwan-style steam breads, as well as for other types of breads and for seven major types of noodles.

Long-time research collaborators, WMC and CGPRDI have been exchanging wheat samples protocols for milling and protein strength over the last year. "We are continuing to work together to bring differences in our individual protocols and testing techniques to have less of a gap," Tsai commented.

This joint research project was initiated by U.S. Wheat Associates, and the work continues as the WMC and CGPRDI Labs conduct tests in locations that are thousands of miles apart.

"We have made significant headway since we began this collaboration," said WMC Supervisor Bon Lee. "WMC visited CGPRDI to develop an understanding of their protocols, and Mr. Tsai has worked with us here at WMC several times."

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The Wheat Marketing Center is a private, non-profit corporation that is a bridge between wheat producers of the Great Plains and the Pacific Northwest and wheat importers throughout the world.

It is a focal point for wheat processing information, particularly in the countries of the Pacific Rim, with a mission to conduct wheat research projects and to provide related educational activities to the worldwide wheat-consuming industry.

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