



Western Winter Wheat Initiative

MEDIA RELEASE

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Winter Wheat Provides Opportunity for Unseeded Acres

Regina, Sask., June 9, 2017 – The 2016 harvest season was one some growers would like to forget. Unfortunately, the reminder was still there when the snow melted this spring uncovering thousands of unharvested acres that producers still had to combine plus get a 2017 crop in the ground. But adversity leads to opportunity and the Western Winter Wheat Initiative (WWWI) encourages producers to seed winter wheat this fall as a way of dealing with unseeded acres that didn't get planted this spring.

“Incorporating winter wheat into your cropping rotation is a risk management tool,” says Janine Paly, WWWI agronomist for Alberta. “There is no doubt that seeding during harvest in September poses some challenges; however, acres seeded in August can ease the stress and intense workload producers experience in a wet spring.”

Seeding winter wheat into chemfallow requires different planning than seeding into other stubble. Here are some tips Paly has for producers to seed winter wheat successfully:

Minimize stubble disturbance/Maintain stubble: Standing stubble is a key practice to establish winter wheat as the trapped snow insulates the crop from winter elements. Year-old stubble will break apart easier than stubble from a freshly harvested crop; however, any stubble is better than summerfallow. Minimize traffic over the field to maintain stubble integrity by using the same tracks in spraying operations and avoid harrowing and cultivating if possible.

Line up seed early: Before spring crops are harvested, take advantage of the less busy time and source seed. Plan to have the seed on farm and treated with a seed treatment before planting. Research conducted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada indicates a seed treatment minimizes seedling disease and can help with winter survival.

Fertility management: Selecting the right source and amount will help ensure your soil has a balanced supply of plant nutrients. It is important to perform a soil test to determine nutrient levels within the field. Winter wheat nitrogen management is different than spring wheat and determining the right timing of nitrogen application will vary depending on your operation. There are a few options: fall-

applied, spring-applied or split application, but the method will vary depending on weather, soil moisture, and seeding equipment. Winter wheat has the ability to yield up to 40 per cent more than CWRS with adequate rates of nitrogen.

Seed early: Seeding early is a key factor in establishing a successful winter wheat crop. Plants that enter the winter with three to four leaves have a well-developed crown tissue and a better chance of winter survival. The optimal seeding window across the Prairies is between September 1 and 15. The question that may arise is, "How early can I seed?" It is better to seed earlier than later as producers can get busy with harvest operations and forget to seed within the optimal window. Extra consideration when seeding too early is the risk of disease transfer of stripe rust or Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus. If these diseases are of concern, growers can seed a resistant variety, delay seeding (depending on region), or should avoid seeding into conditions with volunteer cereals, or adjacent to a green wheat crop.

Forgetting 2016 for some growers won't be easy, but they can take advantage of a bad situation and get a head start on the 2018 season by seeding winter wheat.

Promoting winter wheat as a great sustainable crop option for farmers in Prairie Canada, the WWWI offers expert agronomic support and funds breeding and agronomy research programs thanks to like-minded industry partners Bayer, Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Mosaic Company Foundation and Richardson International Limited.

For more information, visit growwinterwheat.ca or follow the WWWI on Twitter @growwinterwheat.

About the Western Winter Wheat Initiative

*The **Western Winter Wheat Initiative** is a collaboration between industry members who support a sustainability model for Canada's agricultural landscapes. The purpose of this initiative is to build awareness and credibility of winter wheat as a highly productive crop option for western Canadian farmers.*

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