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2015 Wheat Quality Council Hard Spring Wheat & Durum Tour Completed

Summary by Ben Handcock, Executive Vice President

The Wheat Quality Council hard spring and durum tour was conducted July 27-30 in North Dakota plus parts of South Dakota and Minnesota. **(Tour Map)** There were 65 registered participants this year, and 39 of them were first-timers on this tour.

The 422 spring wheat fields surveyed averaged 49.9 bushels per acre, a record for our tour. The 16 durum fields averaged 39.2 bushels, up from 36.6, and they are getting harder to find. We evaluated 8 hard winter fields and they averaged 49.0 bushels, up from 44.0 one year ago.

The average for all 446 field stops was 49.5 bushels per acre. The five year average is 45.96 bushels. (Tour Results)

Day One covered the southern half of North Dakota, southwestern Minnesota and northeast/north central South Dakota. Yields were good on all routes again this year. The highest yielding spring wheat field was estimated at 78.4 bushels and the lowest was zero (severe hail over a large area), with a day one spring wheat average of 51.1 bushels versus last year at 47.7 bushels.

Day Two covered northwest and north central North Dakota. We find fewer durum fields each year, even in the far northwest. The yields were good again as we moved along the routes. We had a spring wheat high for the day of 85.1 bushels, a low of 23.3 with a day two average of 47.3 bushels. Last year these routes averaged 48.4 bushels.

Day Three concluded the tour by covering north central/north east North Dakota and north west/west central Minnesota. We had a huge contingent visiting the ND Mill so fewer stops were made. As is usually the case, this was the highest yielding area of the tour, although not by much. The day three average was estimated at 52.1 bushels, compared to 50.2 one year ago. Our high was 75 and our low was 25.1 bushels per acre.

My personal observations: I thought this crop had extremely high potential. It is the highest yield potential we have ever predicted. In lots of places we seem to have 2 crops in the same field. They were planted earlier than usual into very dry ground. Some of the crop emerged as usual, and some appears to have emerged 2 or three weeks later after rain began to fall. The early emerged wheat is about ready for harvest and the rest is very green and immature. The ripe part

is likely to have a problem with shattering (kernels falling out of the head) before the immature part is ready for harvest. This presents a problem for the producers.

For maybe the first time ever, the wheat seems to be equally good in all areas of the state. The folks going to the far southwest found wheat about as good as in the eastern valley area. This is good news for the producers in the western part of the state.

There appears to be limited disease in the crop this year. Some scab could be found, along with some ergot, but neither seems very serious at this point. It looked like a lot of fungicide had been applied, which should limit the disease issues.

Some harvest had already taken place (winter wheat I assume) and we hoped to see more going on while we were there. Unfortunately, it was just a little too damp for the combines to be running. A lot of wheat will be harvested in the next 2 weeks if the weather cooperates.

Once again our results are not official. The North Dakota Ag Statistics Service will publish official results in early August. Watch for them and see how we compare. We have been very close for the past ten years or so. We are not as scientific as they are, we simply overwhelm them with the number of fields we visit, and our formula provided by NDSU has been working very well.

Thanks to all of you who came, drove cars or helped in any way to make this tour a success. The newcomers have told me they learned a great deal, had a lot of fun and would love to do it again. We look forward to 2016.

Please mark the Wheat Quality Council 2016 Annual Meeting dates on your calendar. It should be interesting evaluating all the new wheat lines grown this year. The dates are February 16-18 at the Embassy Suites in Kansas City.