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## 2016 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 25-28 in North Dakota plus parts of South Dakota and Minnesota. (**Tour Map**) There were 73 registered participants this year, and 41 of them were first-timers on this tour.

The 407 spring wheat fields surveyed averaged 45.7 bushels per acre. Down a bit from the record 49.9 bushels per acre last year. The 42 durum fields averaged 45.4 bushels, up from 39.9, and a record high for this tour. We evaluated 6 hard winter fields and they averaged 34.7 bushels, down a lot from the 49.0 one year ago.

***The average for all 455 field stops was 45.5 bushels per acre. This is 4 bushels less than last year's 49.5. (See Tour Results)***

Day One covered the southern half of North Dakota, southwestern Minnesota and northeast/north central South Dakota. Yields were good on most routes again this year. The southwest was a little lower than the rest of the routes, and had a lot of hail damage, also. The highest yielding spring wheat field was estimated at 90.8 bushels and the lowest was 16, with a day one spring wheat average of 43.1 bushels versus last year at 51.1 bushels.

Day Two covered northwest and north central North Dakota. We found a few more durum fields this year, as was predicted before the tour started. The yields were good again as we moved along the routes. We had a spring wheat high for the day of 89.9 bushels, a low of 18.0 with a day two average of 46.9 bushels. Last year these routes averaged 47.3 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. The day three average was estimated at 48.9 bushels, compared to 52.1 one year ago. Our high was 88.8 and our low was 22.1 bushels per acre.

**My personal observations:** I thought this crop had very high potential. It is not the record crop of the past 2 years, but is still very good. The far southwest is again the lowest yielding area of the state as it usually is. It appeared that they were a little short of rainfall during critical periods.

We saw several durum fields between Minot and Devils Lake this year. There have been very few in that area in the last several years.

There appears to be some disease in the crop this year. Some scab could be found, but it looked like a lot of fungicide had been applied, which should limit the disease issues. Some cars in the far northeast found significant amounts of scab and flood damage, reporting that they felt some fields would not be harvested.

Some harvest had already taken place (mostly winter wheat) 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. Spring wheat in the south was about ready to go, but we found wheat in the northern counties was just flowering in some cases.

*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. They are looking forward to 2017.*

*This was my last spring wheat and durum tour, as I will be retiring after our annual meeting next February. There was a special celebration for me at the NCI final meeting. I was truly moved by what people said and did. I couldn't ask for better friends and better people. I will miss all of you, but the tour will carry on as it always has. It has been a great run!!!*

**Please mark the Wheat Quality Council 2017 Annual Meeting dates on your calendar. It should be interesting evaluating all the new wheat lines grown this year. The dates are February 21-23 at the Embassy Suites in Kansas City.**

**If you haven't been there for a while, I would love to have you come so I can tell everybody goodbye. I really appreciate the support you have given Patsy and me over the past 25 years.**