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## 2017 Wheat Quality Council Hard Spring Wheat & Durum Tour Completed

Summary by Dave Green, Executive Vice President

The Wheat Quality Council hard spring and durum tour was conducted July 24-27 in North Dakota plus parts of South Dakota and Minnesota. **(Tour Map)** There were 78 registered participants this year, and most of them were first-timers on this tour. We had 18 drivers following the eight predetermined routes we have used and compared against for 30 years. We use the wheat yield formula provided to us by NDSU.

The 443 spring wheat fields surveyed averaged 38.1 bushels per acre. Down from 45.7 of last year. The 47 durum fields averaged 39.7 bushels, well down from last years 45.4. We evaluated 6 hard winter fields and they averaged 46.6 bushels, up a lot from the 34.7 one year ago.

***The average for all 496 field stops was 38.4 bushels per acre. This is 7 bushels less than last year's 45.5. (See Tour Results)***

Day One covered the southern half of North Dakota, southwestern Minnesota and northeast/north central South Dakota. Yields declined from east to west on most routes. Many commented on the reduced acres in many areas as producers are shifting to row crops. The southwest was very poor with a large amount of wheat fields being abandoned to hay. The highest yielding spring wheat field was estimated at 86 bushels and the lowest was 1.3, with a day one spring wheat average of 37.9 bushels versus last year at 43.1 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 improved as we moved along the routes. We had a spring wheat high for the day of 78.9 bushels, a low of 4.9 with a day two average of 35.8 bushels. Last year these routes averaged 46.9 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 46.2 bushels, compared to 48.9 one year ago. Our high was 86.7 and our low was 9.9 bushels per acre.

**My personal observations:** I thought this crop was as bad as advertised basis the weekly crop and weather reports. We usually don't see such drop off in yields from east to west. The western

areas of North Dakota are suffering through a long drought. It appeared that they were short of rainfall throughout the season 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.

Although you could find some common diseases and insect damage, that was not the story. Dryness was the issue. The plants are shorter, heads are smaller than the last few years.

Some harvest had already taken place (mostly winter wheat) and we hoped to see more going on while we were there. The crop in most of the state was not quite ripe. Northern areas were several weeks away from harvest. Production will undoubtedly be lower than our yield estimates indicate due to high levels of abandonment. In most years, almost all of the wheat that's planted is harvested. We also are aware of the continued push of acreage to the west as row crops have been better for producers in the east regions. We like that we have followed the same routes for 35 years because of the data we have collected, but realize we sample more in the east and changes may be needed.

*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. This tour is training that is hard to get today for a very reasonable cost. Our attendance was up 5 people again this year which means we continue to add value to our company members.*

**Please mark the Wheat Quality Council 2018 Annual Meeting dates on your calendar. It should be interesting evaluating all the new wheat lines grown this year. The dates are February 20-22 at the Embassy Suites in Kansas City.**