

Wheat tour



Roger Stockton, K-State extension crops and soil specialist from Colby, explained to farmers Tuesday morning the characteristics of different wheat varieties in a test plot at Fred and Jeanie Schields' farm north of Goodland.
Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

Farmers gather to discuss wheat

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10 miles north of Goodland. The Schieldses planted a little over 30 varieties of wheat, which included four white varieties. About 60 farmers were at the tour for the 14th year that the couple has planted a test plot.

On hand to discuss the wheat varieties were Roger Stockton, extension crops and soil specialist from Colby, and Chuck Johnson, regional business manager for AgriPro, a seed company.

Dan O'Brien, extension agriculture economist from Colby, handed out K-State's cost analysis sheets showing what it cost to produce most crops grown in northwest Kansas. The sheets gave comparative profitability projections for these crops.

O'Brien said farmers depend on good yields for irrigated crops to make any money, considering the high cost of running irrigation wells.

"(The) greatest opportunity for profit is high yields," he said.

Talking about irrigation, Stockton said that last year it was expensive to pump with the runup in fuel costs, and wells couldn't keep up with the heat and the drought. Irrigation usually improves yields and potential profits, he said.

"If it's worth doing in dryland, why wouldn't it be good on irrigation," he

said.

However, he went on to say that water isn't free and it's not going to last forever. He said farmers should give that some thought in their irrigation management.

Stockton said Tam 107, a variety of wheat which was released in 1984 and has been grown in Kansas, has been a good variety, but has poor milling and baking quality. He said one export customer who had bought Kansas wheat for five years had everything he baked fall flat in the first two weeks after he started using a load of Kansas wheat which had mostly Tam 107 in it. The customer now refuses to buy any more Kansas wheat.

He said there are at least 10 new varieties that have some Tam 107 parentage, but are improved.

"It's time to retire Tam 107," Stockton said, "and start using these newer varieties."

He suggested that the improved varieties would produce better quality grain that is more marketable.

He talked about the white wheat varieties which were planted at the Schields' test plot and said a new release called Lakin had been developed at Hays which had good winter hardiness, shatter resistance, straw strength and test weight.

Johnson said the two questions he has been asked by farmers is what's the

best wheat to plant and what new varieties do you have?

He said if he knew ahead of time what weather conditions were going to be, he could tell farmers what variety of wheat to plant. But since he doesn't know, he said the best thing for farmers to do is spread out their risk.

"Plant three to five varieties," he said, "with a spread of maturity and genetics."

Johnson said AgriPro hasn't had any new wheat varieties for a few years, but the wheat of choice is Jagger because of its yields.

He said a new variety, which is a cross between Jagger and Abilene and is called Jaggilene, would be coming out. He said it has an excellent disease health package for this area.

"I saw a few of you snicker when he said Jaggilene," Stockton said. "The alternative was Abiger."

Johnson said another new variety that would be available was called Hawkin, which is a cross between Hawk and a spring wheat.

He recommended that farmers plant certified wheat seed on as many of their acres as possible, as they'll get a good deal by planting it.

A breakfast provided by First National Bank was held at the Sherman County 4-H Building following the tour. The Ruleton Eager Beavers 4-H Club served.

Bush asks for open minds

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government and it is a pledge that I will keep."

Bush spoke beside NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson at a joint news conference.

During the leaders' private meetings, Bush had eagerly spelled out his thinking on the need for missile defense, aides said.

"I think people are coming our way. But people know I'm intent on doing what I think is the right thing in order to make the world more peaceful," Bush told reporters afterward.

Robertson said Bush didn't present a specific missile defense plan or ask for the allies' support.

"What the president asked for and what the president got was an open mind from the other allied countries," Robertson said.

Bush chafed at one journalist's question about critics who say Bush is jumping to deploy a missile shield before scientists are sure it can work.

Those critics "are dead wrong," Bush said, his voice rising. "Of course we're not going to deploy a system that doesn't work. What good will that do?"

He acknowledged "some nervousness" among European allies about his pledge to abrogate the 1972 Anti-Bal-

listic Missile treaty and build a defensive system.

"I understand that but it's beginning to be allayed when they hear the logic behind the rationale," Bush said. "I'm making good progress on this issue here in Europe."

Outside NATO headquarters, where the leaders met, hundreds of protesters toted signs decrying Bush's plan. One protester flew above NATO headquarters in a motorized hang-glider with a sign reading "Stop Star Wars."

Some of the allies disagreed with Bush's view that they all face a growing threat of missile attack.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder told the NATO summit there are important questions about the technical feasibility of missile defense. Plus, he said, "Russia and China need to be involved."

In contradiction to Bush's view, French President Jacques Chirac said the ABM treaty, which outlaws national missile defense, is "a pillar" of global security. He called for stepping up efforts to stop the spread of ballistic missiles "irrespective of action taken regarding the anti-missile project."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said missile defense will be an area of "intensive negotiations" but added,

"The most important thing is that Europe and America should always stick together."

Noting pointedly that the United States has no "specific proposal" yet on how it would intercept missiles, Robertson said, "NATO is embarking now on a major thinking process about the challenges we face and the best means of addressing them. These consultations will continue and they will deepen."

Bush aides were confident that he would receive backing from nations such as Hungary, Poland, Italy and Spain.

The White House didn't want a summit communique to overshadow Bush's first NATO visit. In its place, Robertson of Britain held a separate news conference to make announcements — among them that the entire alliance now supports adding at least one new member next year.

He didn't say which countries might be invited to join, but it was the first time Robertson made it clear publicly that putting off expansion was no longer an option.

Russia is strongly opposed to NATO expanding closer to its own borders. Just two years ago, NATO took in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

New recycling program on the table

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pending on how much Golden West workers are paid.

The most expensive option was a local government-run recycling program, which members estimated would cost \$200,000 to start and

\$50,000 a year.

The least expensive choice was to do nothing. The officials agreed that's not really an option, saying it's cheaper to recycle materials than dump them in a landfill.

"A lot of people want to recycle," city Commissioner Chuck Lutters said.

"We've teased them for so many years."

Though they didn't come to an agreement, the officials discussed splitting the cost to start and maintain a recycling program. Pickman suggested the two boards sign a written agreement when they do make a final decision.

Farm and Ranch 3x13 100% In Back

By Kiley Russell

Associated Press Writer
FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — Prunes are not a young fruit, they're not a hip fruit and the kids just don't seem to eat them the way they used to.

That's partially why, despite a recent marketing makeover, California's prune industry is in such bad shape.

Farmers are being encouraged to let much of their fruit rot in the fields rather than add to a swelling oversupply, and many will be paid to bulldoze their orchards this year in an effort to keep production down for the next several years.

"Our heaviest users of prunes have been people over the age of 65. That population has declined somewhat and we're having to reach a younger population. But to them, prunes are an old-fashioned fruit with laxative connotations," said Greg Thompson, general manager of Yuba City-based Prune Bargaining Association.

To entice the youthful palate, prune marketers began calling the wrinkly fruit "dried plums" this year. Consumption rose slightly, but not enough to put a dent in a looming prune glut.

Because the dried fruit can be stored for a few years before going bad, the industry is coping with 110,000 tons left over from last year's harvest. So even though this year's harvest is expected to be down 30 percent to about 155,000 tons, the 2001 market will still be burdened by tons of excess prunes.

Now, after several years of languishing prune consumption, a glut and plummeting prices, California prune farmers — who supply almost the entire nation — are desperately trying to expand their markets and reduce supply.

"A number of handlers and packers released all their growers right after the first of the year this year," said Gus Collin, 62, a Tulare County prune farmer.

Many buyers are waiting for the price to hit rock bottom before placing new orders, so some farmers have no idea if they'll even have a market this year, Collin said.

The industry has come up with three solutions: a tree elimination program,

a push to get farmers to pick and dry only enough plums to meet market orders and a request of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to buy excess fruit.

To keep production down for the next several years, farmers will be paid \$4.50 for every tree they yank out of the ground with money collected from the state's 1,200 prune growers by the Prune Bargaining Association. There will be a \$50,000 cap for any one family. The industry wants to cut California's estimated 86,000 acres of plum trees by 20 percent.

Farmers are also being asked to dry

only enough prunes to meet current market orders, leaving the rest to rot, Thompson said.

"Packers are working with growers to let them know how many tons they can use," he said. "The problem is there will be an opportunity for people to come in and buy that fruit off the tree for a cheap price and really depress prices."

Prices have yet to be established for much of this year's crop, but last year farmers were paid about \$800 for a ton of prunes. That's less than production costs for most growers, Thompson said.

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