

MONTANA

wheat & barley

DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

September 1, 2024

Gleanings from MWBC

New Directors

MWBC recently welcomed two new directors to our team. Cindy McKamey and Courtney Herzog were appointed by Governor Gianforte to replace retiring directors Charlie Bumgarner and Densie Conover, respectively. We will certainly miss Denise and Charlie and their contributions to MWBC, but we're also excited to get Cindy and Courtney on board and we're looking forward to their involvement.

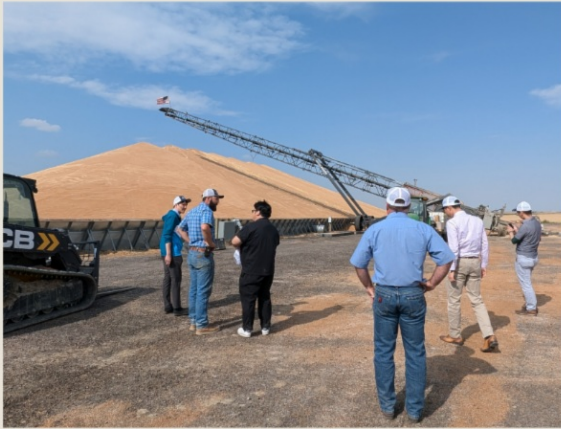
Trade Team Season

In Montana, August translates to harvest season and trade team visits. MWBC hosted three trade teams during the month all representing the Japanese wheat and flour milling industry. Japan is historically the third/fourth largest buyer of US wheat with approximately 85 percent of the hard red winter wheat and 60 percent of the hard red spring wheat originating from Big Sky Country. MWBC is always excited and motivated to welcome customers to Montana so they can meet growers; view harvest first-hand; ride on combines; tour commercial grain elevators, seed plants and flour mills; and learn about grading procedures at the State Grain Lab.

Each trade team is unique in its makeup with varying levels of interest regarding facets of the industry they would like to focus on. However, a common thread is consistently their desire to meet growers and visit their farm operations. For many team members, it is their first trip to America. We roll out the red carpet and make sure they have a great time and learn as much as possible while they are in Montana. MWBC appreciates the time and effort of everyone involved from the commercial grain industry, the State Grain Lab and especially the growers who welcome the teams to their farms, shops and bin sites. While combines and tractors might seem second nature to many, the Japanese visitors are always excited and impressed when they have the opportunity to check out the equipment and go for a ride.



From Top Left:
Bandel Farms share with Nisshin team members with a tractor ride and field visit; MWBC Jake McFarlin talks ground piles



BNSF Update

MWBC welcomed Mike McKay, Montana's BNSF ombudsman, and Matthew White, general director of agricultural products, to our office for a visit and opportunity to discuss BNSF rail operations in the state. Mike and Matt addressed performance issues related to car placement and velocity. They noted that shuttle sets offered to the marketplace were reduced from 155 to 140. Their objective is to turn fewer shuttle sets faster (velocity) while improving customer service and their overall performance. Issues related to cross border logistics with Mexico were also addressed. The slow return of empties and the damage to hopper cars while in Mexico are creating multiple problems for the railroad. Note the *Mexico Rail Group* article below.

Challenging Growing and Harvest Season

It seems every year is different in production agriculture, and that has not changed this year. Favorable fall seeding conditions resulted in excellent stand establishment for the 2024 Montana winter wheat crop. Mild June temperatures, average precipitation, modern farming practices and ever-improving varieties resulted in an excellent crop in terms of quantity and quality. While protein levels are below average, statewide yields have been excellent. The most recent USDA estimate of 51 bushels per acre matches record yields established in 2020 and 2023. Growing conditions changed significantly after July 8 when a blistering stretch of hot, windy weather and limited precipitation took a toll on all spring planted crops. As we approach September, harvest of spring crops continues. Unfortunately, untimely rainfall interrupted harvest on multiple occasions and caused crop damage in some areas of the state. We are all disappointed and frustrated with the hand Mother Nature dealt us during the second half of the growing season. Perhaps the silver lining is the rainfall will improve conditions as seeding is rapidly approaching.

We are all in this together. Please keep your head up, be safe and best of luck this fall.

Kent Kupfner

State News

August Trade Teams Produce Wheat Quality Conversations

While crop producers struggled to get anything cut during a shower-laced August, there's some good news to report regarding productive trade team visits to Montana. Three Japanese trade teams arrived to gather in-depth information about Montana's high quality wheat.

"Japan is one of our oldest international buyers and their interest in Montana wheat was a major incentive for launching the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee (MWBC) in 1967," said Kent Kupfner, executive director, MWBC. "I think most producers know that Montana exports at least 75 percent of our wheat to the Pacific Rim. However, we can't take that for granted. We know Canada and Australia have been very competitive in this market, so I think we [MWBC] can further educate producers about end use characteristics buyers are looking for. These August teams were a great example of their increasing focus on quality."

US Wheat Associates brought to Montana members of the Japanese Flour Millers Association (JFMA), including four different companies focused on quality characteristics of this year's crop. Nippon and SHOWA, the second and third largest Japanese millers respectively, Chiba Flour Milling and Okinawa Flour Milling spent two full days with us. These buyers were hyper focused on our spring and winter wheat crops with curiosity about protein content, kernel hardness and test weights. No doubt, they are thinking about how these qualities will impact their own milling process back home, along with marketability factors of the end product.



Nisshin, the largest flour milling company in Japan with 40 percent market share, brought four young professional team members August 10. Their roles included innovation and development, milling, quality control and production. Flour milling is the core of their business but they emphasize "new food culture" with their Napoli pizza and tsukemen (dipping noodles). Nisshin has recently developed a food creation club online that helps the Japanese commercial industry create new markets with high fiber, whole wheat flour and bran. During their visit, they were fascinated with Mountain View Co-op's grain handling and storage



Beyond the lab, it's our job to connect buyers to real-time industry on the ground while our guests are here. Because harvest has been so sporadic, we struggled to find anyone harvesting within an hour of Great Falls for the JFMA group to witness. We got lucky in Moore; each one of these millers was able to ride along in the cab with Paul Tyler – a big thrill! In addition to 2024 crop quality factors, we also concentrated our attention on fall planting – talking about seed selection, crop inputs, demonstrating equipment – and how fall moisture is retained through practices like no-till.

Reaching out to new markets is a big piece of the sales puzzle, but mature markets like Japan do not sit idle; they must be maintained and strengthened. For example, when our customers are working on new products, we need to hear about those innovations so we can promote the best varieties to fulfill their needs. If they admire our Montana family farm legacy, or perhaps how our producers utilize water, then those market advantages must be reinforced in every visit. As the saying goes, communication is key.

Most of these buyers were under 40 and very adept at technology, some taking notes by electronic pen and tablet. Like Americans, they have less contact and exposure to production agriculture as generations change. These visits give them a first-hand experience; in turn we hope that emotional impact drives demand and enhances our trading relationships for Montana's grain industry.

Global News

US Wheat Associates Statement on USDA Approval of Drought-Tolerant Wheat Trait

US Wheat Associates (USW) commends the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for its thorough, science-based process resulting in the deregulation of the HB4® drought-tolerant trait from Bioceres Crop Solutions announced on August 27, 2024. The farmer leaders of USW are

confident that the HB4® trait has the potential to deliver significant producer and consumer benefits.

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US Grains Council Promotes US Barley, Malt to Vietnamese Beer Industry

The U.S. Grains Council's (USGC's) Southeast Asia & Oceania (SEA&O) office recently launched its first promotional program for barley and barley malt in Vietnam, where the Council organized a roundtable discussion with 14 representatives from Vietnam's fast-growing craft beer industry to explore the needs of the market and areas of cooperation for continued demand growth.



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Mexico Rail Group "Surprised" at Capacity Concerns Raised by US Grain Shippers



Pushing back against criticism from American agricultural exporters, the Mexican Railway Association insists that the country's railroads have the capacity to handle growing cross-border trade with the United States.

A coalition of American agricultural shippers told to federal regulators last month that capacity problems — not surges of migrants seeking refuge in the U.S. — are the main culprit for congestion on Ferromex that began late last year.

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Great Recipes!

Finally! It's football season! Here are some tailgate recipes for the end zone:

- [Mini Ham & Cheese Rolls](#)
- [Mary Alice's Hoagie Dip](#)
- [Pull Apart Queso Sliders](#)
- [Million Dollar Dip](#)
- [Salted Caramel Chocolate Chip Cookie](#)



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Working For The Best!

At the **Montana Wheat & Barley Committee**, we promote local research and develop trade markets around the world.

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