

- *Wheat: A Story Worth Sharing*
- *Your Dollars at Work: 2025-26 Research Highlights*
- *Fall Wheat Scouting: Catch Problems Before Spring*

AMERICAN WHEAT MAKES A GLOBAL IMPACT

More than 70 years ago, farmers envisioned a way to put America's agricultural abundance to work fighting hunger around the world. Their idea helped lay the foundation for the Food for Peace program. Since then, U.S. wheat has played a vital role in international food assistance, accounting for approximately half of bulk in-kind food aid and an estimated 36.7 million bushels of U.S. wheat annually.

That legacy was on full display as Hard Red Winter wheat made its way from U.S. fields to the TEMCO export elevator in the Port of Houston for final destination in the Port of Mombasa in Kenya, where 1.7 million bushels of U.S. Hard Red Winter wheat and rice were unloaded from the Liberty Grace. From Mombasa, the commodities were entrusted to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) for distribution to people facing food insecurity across the region. For Idaho farmer Jamie Kress, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), and Kansas farmer Gary Millershaski, chairman of U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), witnessing the delivery brought the purpose of food assistance into focus.

From American Harvests to Families in Need

Following its arrival, the wheat was bagged and prepared for distribution to various destinations, including Kakuma Refugee Camp. Kress and Millershaski visited the camp as part of a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service mission to see firsthand how American-grown commodities support food assistance efforts.

A refuge for people displaced by conflict and food insecurity across East Africa, Kakuma currently houses approximately 300,000 refugees, with its population growing by an estimated 400 people each week. The wheat allocated to Kakuma will help support the camp's food supply as it prepares for potential El Niño-related flooding and continues to accommodate new arrivals.

“From the hands of American farmers who grow this wheat to the hands of families receiving it in Kakuma, this contribution creates a tangible connection across continents,” remarked Betty Kaw, WFP country director in Kenya. “We thank American farmers for helping provide the next meals to refugees in Kenya.”

A Return to Food for Peace's Roots

The Liberty Grace shipment was the second bulk vessel to arrive in Africa under the current administration, signaling a renewed emphasis on delivering U.S.-grown commodities through international food assistance programs. In recent years, Food for Peace increasingly relied on foreign suppliers, limiting opportunities for American-grown commodities.

After consistent and considerable efforts by agricultural organizations, including USW, NAWG and member states like the Texas Wheat Producers Board and Association, the U.S. Department of State and USDA announced an interagency agreement in January 2026 allowing USDA to operate the Food for Peace program. Under the agreement, all commodities must be grown in the U.S., creating sustainable market demand for U.S. wheat.

“Seeing U.S.-grown wheat back in these programs is incredibly exciting for me. In the past, it was heart-wrenching to be thinking about our harvest in the United States—knowing we have such an abundance of food—while mothers on the other side of the world were struggling to provide even the most basic amount of food for their children. To see that wheat being unloaded at the port in Kenya and know it will help feed hungry families made this trip especially meaningful.”

**JAMIE KRESS, IDAHO
NAWG President**

The transition, however, is not yet permanently codified in law. Establishing USDA's authority to administer Food for Peace remains one of the Texas Wheat Producers Association's key legislative priorities in the pending farm bill.

Securing the Future of U.S. Food Assistance

While permanent authorization remains a priority, USDA has continued to advance international food assistance efforts. In October, the department announced \$825 million in funding for international food assistance through the Food for Progress, Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole Food for Education programs. These investments support communities facing food insecurity while creating opportunities for U.S. agricultural commodities to reach international markets.

The Liberty Grace shipment represents more than a delivery of wheat. It is a powerful symbol of U.S. wheat farmers doing what they do best—delivering high-quality nutrition at home and worldwide. As policymakers consider the future of Food for Peace, the shipment serves as a reminder of what is possible when agricultural production and humanitarian assistance work together. For wheat farmers, a strong and stable food assistance program offers a way to support families facing hunger while boosting demand for American-grown wheat.

WHEAT: A STORY WORTH SHARING

BY SHERI GLAZIER, MS, RDN, LD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WHEAT FOODS COUNCIL AND OKLAHOMA FARMER AND RANCHER

Roughly 58 percent of U.S. wheat is consumed domestically.

Consumers are increasingly interested in how their food is produced.

The new direction of the Wheat Foods Council is focused on telling the farmer's story to grow public confidence in wheat.

Do you ever recall a moment that quietly guided the trajectory of your career? Many years ago, I was in an undergraduate class, and we watched a documentary presented as an honest picture of agriculture. I was excited that we were actually discussing agriculture, but that excitement quickly turned to frustration at what I saw and heard. I didn't yet have the confidence to speak up. I had grown up on a wheat and cattle operation, and I knew how our family cared for the land, grew our crops and looked after our cattle. The documentary told a very different story. At that moment, I realized agriculture didn't have a voice in that room, and someone else was telling our story.

A Career in the Making

I've spent the last decade bridging agriculture and nutrition, connecting the small share of us in agriculture to the people who ultimately eat, which is all of us. Now I'm honored to serve as the new executive director of the Wheat Foods Council, the only farmer-driven domestic marketing organization for wheat in the country.

Our Vision:

A secure future for U.S. wheat farmers, supported by strong domestic demand and public confidence in wheat.

Our Mission:

Advance domestic demand for wheat by elevating farmer voices, connecting farmers and consumers, fostering innovation, and aligning the wheat industry around clear, unified messaging.

Two Markets, One Strong Demand Base

Domestic and export markets are important to U.S. wheat farmers, and each does work the other can't. In 2024/25, about 1.97 billion bushels of U.S. wheat were used: roughly 58 percent (1.14 billion bushels) here at home and about 42 percent (829 million bushels) abroad, according to USDA. Our export customers move a large share of the crop, and the Wheat Foods Council's focus on domestic demand is meant to work alongside that effort.

A solid, steady base at home makes the whole market stronger, and growing that demand is the Wheat Foods Council's job.

Where Consumer Interest is Heading

More Americans are paying attention to how they eat, and wheat fits right in. The 2024 IFIC Food & Health Survey found that 54 percent of

Americans followed a specific eating pattern in the past year, up from 38 percent in 2019. Only seven percent followed a low-carb diet, seven percent went gluten-free, and four percent followed keto. The most popular approaches were high protein (20 percent) and mindful eating (18 percent), and neither requires giving up bread, pasta or tortillas.

Meanwhile, Grain Foods Foundation research from June 2026 shows sourdough and artisan bread consumption rising, driven by taste, texture and a reputation for being better for you. Sixty-two percent of consumers link visible grains and seeds with better health and more than half associate sourdough with better gut health. Shoppers are also diversifying their pantries: 71 percent of traditional bread buyers also bought tortillas or wraps in the past three months and 57 percent bought rolls. Consumers are exploring new ways to enjoy wheat, and every new way is a new outlet for what we grow.

Consumers Want to Know More

Today's shoppers are curious about their food, including what's in it and where it comes from. In the 2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey, "knowing where the food comes from" was the top food-production factor, cited by 59 percent of Americans, up from 51 percent in 2017. GFF's research adds that consumers are looking for simpler ingredients without giving up the taste and texture they already love. Farmers are the best people to answer these questions, and that's an opportunity.

One thing hasn't changed. For 20 consecutive years, IFIC has found that taste outranks price, healthfulness, and convenience as a purchase driver. People already love what we grow, and we're excited to keep strengthening their confidence in it.

Building on Trust, and Where You Come In

To build on the trust consumers already have in wheat, we are working to communicate the value of wheat as an ingredient, showcase the production practices farmers use, and support conversations that put wheat to work in new and innovative ways. Our farmers are our most credible messengers, which is why elevating your voices comes first in our mission. **When farmers tell this story, people listen.**

Stay tuned as the Wheat Foods Council writes this next chapter. I welcome your feedback and insights because every farm's story is unique, and yours is worth sharing.

Contact Sheri at sglazier@nationalwheat.org

Sources: USDA ERS/WAOB, U.S. wheat supply and use by class, 2014/15-2024/25; International Food Information Council, 2024 Food & Health Survey (n=3,000, March 2024) and 2025 Food & Health Survey: A Focus on Food Production (n=3,000, March 2025); Grain Foods Foundation/Ipsos, Understanding Consumer Bread Consumption Habits (n=1,043, June 2026)

YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

2025-2026 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- More than a third of the board's 2025-2026 budget was dedicated to research.
- Over the past 10 years, over \$3.3 million has been invested in research initiatives.
- Sixteen projects were funded in the last cycle.

Advancements in Wheat Breeding

A significant portion of the board's research investment supports statewide wheat breeding programs designed to develop varieties that meet the diverse needs of farmers across Texas. Three key breeding programs, located in Canyon, Commerce and College Station, provide regional representation across the state. A new variety from the Canyon breeding program, TX18A001119, is adapted to the High Plains, Central Plains and South Texas and is expected to be released in 2027.

KEY ADVANTAGES OF TX18A001119

- Excellent Irrigated & Dryland Grain Performance
- Strong Season-Long Forage Yield
- Consistently High Test Weight
- Drought Tolerance
- Resistance to Leaf Rust, Stripe Rust, Stem Rust
- Resistance to Soil-Borne Wheat Mosaic Virus

In the Blacklands, the breeding program is using new sources of Fusarium Head Blight and Hessian fly resistance from USDA germplasm, making Texas the first Southeastern breeding program to incorporate these traits into new wheat lines. The College Station program has focused on incorporating novel traits, including Biological Nitrification Inhibition, into Texas lines to improve nutrient-use efficiency and potentially reduce input costs for farmers.

Regional Agronomic Efforts

Texas' diverse growing regions require research tailored to the conditions and challenges farmers face in different parts of the state. Much of the board's regional research investment supports Statewide Uniform Variety Trials and the evaluation of region-specific management practices, pests and diseases.

The trials provide an unbiased, statewide evaluation of varieties from both university breeding programs and private companies. Recent results highlight the strong performance of varieties released in the last three years. During the 2026 growing season, these varieties demonstrated strong yield potential across multiple regions, accounting for four of the top-yielding varieties in the High Plains Irrigated trials, the third-highest-yielding variety in the Rolling Plains and the highest-yielding variety in the Blacklands.

Additionally, Blacklands variety trials evaluated Hessian fly resistance across four locations, providing further insight into varietal performance and supporting informed variety selection decisions (see Evaluating Pest Resistance).

While several of the 2026 trial locations were lost to challenging growing conditions, many were successfully harvested and provided valuable insight into variety performance under stressful conditions.

Small Grain Silage

The implementation of the Small Grain Silage checkoff has allowed the board to invest more dollars into silage-related research. As regional forage demand and small grain silage acreage has increased, the board recognizes the need for relevant, timely research to help producers make informed decisions for those production systems.

During the 2025-26 funding cycle, the board supported research evaluating three wheat and triticale varieties at three maturity stages and two cutting heights. Samples are currently being processed and analyzed for nutrient composition and fiber digestibility. Once complete, the results will provide additional insight into how harvest timing and cutting height affect forage yield and quality. The board also approved funding for a silage header to support Texas A&M AgriLife Research's ongoing work in small grain silage production, strengthening its capacity to conduct this project and future studies.

Evaluating Pest Resistance

An estimated eight percent of Texas wheat acres were infested with Hessian fly in 2026, with the majority of affected acres located in the Blacklands. These severe infestations resulted in an estimated loss of 5.18 million bushels and an economic impact of more than \$26 million. While devastating for farmers in the region, the widespread infestation also provided an opportunity to evaluate varietal Hessian fly resistance under severe conditions. Research funded by the board identified the following five varieties as resistant and five varieties as tolerant to Hessian fly:

HESSIAN FLY RESISTANT VARIETIES	HESSIAN FLY TOLERANT VARIETIES
AP Sunbird WB4523 Amigos GoWheat 9216H TX21M5445	Gallagher Bob Dole Trical Bighorn LCS Brazos TX20M4131

A separate project took a molecular approach to Greenbug resistance. Researchers targeted specific RNA molecules and evaluated their effects on Greenbug survival. Three of the four targets reduced Greenbug survival, providing a promising starting point for further research into incorporating these RNA targets into wheat lines.

FALL WHEAT SCOUTING

PREVENTATIVE SCOUTING IN THE FALL CAN LEAD TO PAYOFFS IN THE SPRING

What to Look For

Stand Establishment:
Identify patterns. Look for skipped rows or blank spots, thin areas or plants that are dying soon after emergence. Grubs can feed on roots and take out stands, while wireworms can prevent emergence. Hessian fly can cause death of tillers and/or entire seedlings.

Disease Transmission:
Disease occurs when piercing or sucking pests feed in the fall prior to a freeze. If not properly managed, aphids and mites can cross the green bridge, which can lead to infection.

Root Injury:
Pull plants from damaged areas or the edge of damaged areas and inspect roots for pruning, feeding injury, grubs or wireworms. Healthy roots should be firm, white to light-colored and well developed.

Foliar Feeding:
Watch for clipped leaves, ragged foliage, leaf chewing or defoliation from fall armyworms and other pests.

Weeds and Uneven Crop Growth:
Note patches of weeds, yellowing, stunting or uneven growth. Consider irrigation patterns, soil variation, planting depth, compaction and previous herbicide applications.

How to Scout

Walk fields as needed when wheat is emerging and at least bi-weekly for the extent of the fall, especially if troubling patterns appear. Most pests at this early stage prefer warm weather. The heat of the day is favorable to scout for insects or problems before they become serious. Avoid relying on drive-by observations only.

UPCOMING DATES & EVENTS

Farm Programs

- **ARC/PLC Sign Up Deadline (2026 Crop Year)**
December 11, 2026
- **ARC/PLC Sign Up Deadline (2027 Crop Year)**
March 15, 2027

Events

- **Amarillo Farm & Ranch Show**
December 1-3, 2026 | Amarillo, TX
- **Texas Wheat Producers Board & Association Meeting**
December 1-2, 2026 | Amarillo, TX
- **Texas Wheat & Texas Corn Farmers & Friends Reception**
December 1, 2026 | Amarillo, TX
- **Amarillo Chamber of Commerce Ag Appreciation Luncheon**
December 2, 2026 | Amarillo, TX

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