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NDSU Institute of Barley and Malt Sciences Holds Barley Workshop

Producers were able to learn about barley production and marketing during a workshop held in Minot on January 28. Barley Production and Management for Profit was organized and sponsored by the North Dakota State University Institute of Barley and Malt Sciences (IBMS) in cooperation with the North Dakota Barley Council, North Dakota Grain Growers Association, American Malting Barley Association, NDSU Extension Service and USDA-CSREES-funded Barley Coordinated Agricultural Project (CAP).

Ten presentations, a keynote luncheon address and a panel discussion of pertinent barley issues filled the day. Producers, industry representatives, crop consultants and researchers attended the workshop.

Neil Townsend, Canadian Wheat Board, began the day with an overview of world barley markets. He told the group that world barley production is down, particularly in key malting barley regions. Two consecutive Australian crop disasters and quality problems in the European Union are the main causes. Other factors that are negatively impacting world supply include export restrictions in the Ukraine, a prohibitive export tax in Russia and rising feed barley prices. Growing beer markets in China and Russia and a number of other developing markets are buying greater amounts of malting barley. This growing demand could be favorable for marketing and increased production, Townsend says.

Terry Gregoire, NDSU Extension Service cropping systems area specialist in Devils Lake, discussed the best cropping practices for producers under various environmental conditions.

Grant Jackson, professor of agronomy at the Western Triangle Research Extension Center in Conrad, Mont., presented research findings on planting rates and fertilizer practices for dryland malting barley. Don Tanaka, research soil scientist with the USDA-Agricultural Research Service in Mandan, updated producers on the value of barley in crop rotations.

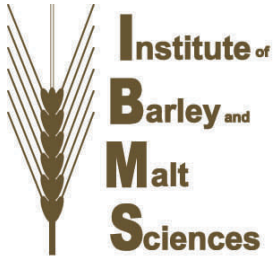
Joel Ransom, NDSU Extension small grains crop specialist, gave an update on available barley varieties in North Dakota. He indicated that barley varieties with good characteristics and diversity to meet various needs are more available to producers than in the past. Six-row varieties, including Lacey, Stellar-ND, Tradition and Drummond, show promise, as do two-row varieties such as Rawson, Conlon and Pinnacle.

Jochum Wiersma, Extension specialist in the Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, explained the Barley CAP, which uses state-of-the-art genomics technology to develop molecular markers. The goal is to speed up development of new barley varieties. Utilizing a new type of technology, Wiersma received immediate feedback from the audience. The results of his impromptu poll revealed that producers understand and appreciate the complex research being done by Barley CAP researchers.

The luncheon keynote address was given by Ray Grabanski, president and principal owner of Progressive Ag in Fargo. He stated that farm profitability is expanding, but so are costs. If we truly are in a boom time for markets, good management practices will be the key to profitability, Grabanski said.

Dwight Aakre, farm management specialist in the Agribusiness and Applied Economics Department at NDSU, discussed whether barley will be competitive in 2008. Utilizing a predictive tool for break-even return over variable costs, Aakre showed that barley production success depends on location in the state, as well as environmental and market variables. The north-central and northwestern regions of the state tend to have more barley-making malt quality and a competitive return when compared with other crops. His interactive predictive tool is available on the Web at <http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/aginfo/farmmgmt/farmmgmt.htm>.

Cole Gustafson, NDSU Agribusiness and Applied Economics Department professor, gave an overview of USDA barley crop insurance and efforts to improve insurance, which include proposed enhanced price and malting barley supplements. He also addressed the issue of insuring barley for ethanol. He indicated that the goal should be to protect quality, not bushels.



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Key malt quality factors were explained in a talk given by Paul Schwarz, IBMS director and NDSU Cereal and Food Sciences professor. To illustrate his presentation, a display of good- and poor-quality barley in the various stages of the malting process was available for viewing. Then Karen Hertsgaard, IBMS information specialist, updated the audience on the activities going on at IBMS.

A panel of producer and industry representatives led the audience in a discussion at the end of the day. Some of the discussion topics included whether new barley varieties meet the needs of producers, how crop insurance affects production of open-market barley and tools producers would like to have available. The panelists included Al Slater, Busch Agricultural Resources Inc.; Kelly Kotowicz, Alvarado Farmers Elevator; Jim Hettinger, Molson-Coors Brewing Co.; and producers Louis Arnold of Esmond and Doyle Lentz of Rolla.

The day was well-received and the feedback was good, according to workshop organizers. The IBMS plans to hold more programs at other locations in the state.

Presentations from the conference are available on the IBMS Web site at

<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/ibms/>.

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