Delivering Information on Best Management Practices to Help Improve Wheat Profitability

The Situation
Wheat continues to be grown on more acres that any other crop in North Dakota. Even though hard red spring and durum, the classes of wheat primarily grown in North Dakota, fetch a premium over other classes of wheat in the world market, current prices make it difficult for many growers in North Dakota to produce wheat profitably. Improving yields, reducing input costs and better marketing can help address this serious concern.

Extension Response
The NDSU Extension Service organizes meetings designed to provide the best and latest information on wheat production practices and marketing. One of these key educational programs that is specifically focused on wheat issues is: The Best of the Best in Wheat Production and Marketing. This meeting is offered in two locations in western North Dakota each year. In these meetings, research-supported recommendations that address the major production challenges of spring and durum wheat growers are presented. Furthermore, important principles and skills are reinforced with hands-on sessions. An effort is made to include the most recent research findings and focus on the most relevant topics that impact the profitability of wheat production.

Impacts
More than 70% of the participants at these meetings that completed a post-meeting survey in 2016 indicated that they learned something new and useful and in many cases indicated that they learned something that they planned to incorporate into their farming operation. The current forecast for the price of wheat suggests that prices will remain low and that growing wheat profitably will be challenging. Understanding and employing best management practices will be critical if growers are to produce a profitable crop.

Feedback
The following are some comments gleaned from the post-meeting survey as to what they learned at the meeting:
- Acquired knowledge on how to better market wheat, how to control grassy weeds, and when and how to apply late season fungicides
- Learned how to tell the difference between green and yellow foxtail
- Gained a greater understanding of the sawfly lifecycle
- Learned the ideal seeding rates for new varieties

When asked to put a dollar value on the information that they had learned from the meeting, the responses varied from $10 to $15,000.

Public Value Statement
Since wheat production is such a large part of the farm economy in North Dakota, profitable wheat production is critical to the economic health of the state.

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Partners
The Best of the Best meetings are sponsored by the North Dakota Wheat Commission and the North Dakota Grain Growers.