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**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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2010 Durum Quality Average But Highly Varied

Recently I received a quality report of the 2010 durum wheat produced in Montana and North Dakota. Because the northwest corner of North Dakota has transitioned into being the largest durum production area of the state, I want to share some of the basic but important features of the 2010 crop as reported through a survey conducted by the North Dakota Wheat Commission.

First of all, the 2010 northern U.S. crop is estimated to be roughly 15 percent larger than the bountiful harvest of 2009. The larger production is attributed to more acres being planted and once again record yields due to a very favorable growing season.

Growers in this area experienced a prolonged harvest due to wet weather. Despite this, nearly 70 percent of the Montana/North Dakota crop was number 2 hard amber durum (HAD).

Average test weight on the crop is 60 pounds per bushel which is down from last year but similar to the most recent five-year average. I am a bit surprised that the 2010 crop has a similar protein level to last year coming in at 13.4 percent. This below average protein is almost a natural occurrence when yields are high but is still above the typical minimum industry demand of 13 percent.

Vitreous kernel distributions show that three-fourths of the crop is above the HAD minimum of 75 percent vitreous. This is similar to last year but a lower

percent is above the 90 percent level. The 2010 crop average is 82 percent vitreous, slightly below the five-year average of 88 percent. All of this is a result of the lower than average protein levels and harvest rains.

Milling performance on the crop, based on a Buhler laboratory mill, reveals increases in both semolina and total extraction. The endosperm is ground into a granular product called semolina which is mixed with water to form stiff dough. This pasta dough is then forced through dies or metal discs with holes to create different shapes of products. The average semolina extraction of the 2010 crop is 66.3 percent which is one percent higher than the previous year and two percent higher than the five-year average.

According to the Wheat Commission report, the 2010 crop can be considered to be of average to good quality, when the entire crop is considered. Larger carryover supplies from 2009 and the higher than average production in 2010 provide a good pool of high quality durum to select from to produce end products that score well above the crop average. Given the wider spread in quality parameters and market values with the 2010 crop, the report urges detailed communication between buyers and sellers on contract specifications.

According to Corey Paryzek, Williams County Director of the FSA/USDA office, Williams County growers planted 364,572 acres of durum in 2010. This was 16,676 fewer than planted in 2009. Williams, Divide, and Mountrail counties of North Dakota account for 47 percent of the total acres planted in the state this past growing season.