



CROP VARIETIES

Harvest: the F150 of wheat varieties

With an all around package, Harvest has had a long run

BY ANDREA HILDERMAN

Every year, farmers get the opportunity to grow new and improved varieties of wheat. Wheat breeders are continuously raising the bar by adding disease or insect resistance, additional agronomic benefits or earlier maturity. But every so often, a variety comes along that just seems to have a consistency and reliability that gives it incredible longevity in the field.

The Canada Western Red Spring wheat variety Harvest seems to be just that variety. Harvest was bred by Fred Townley-Smith, at the Cereal Research Centre in Winnipeg. It was registered in 2001 and Farm Pure Seeds acquired the distribution rights. "It was slow to take off," says Ron Weik, portfolio

manager at FP Genetics. "It wasn't until about 2005-06 that it started to ramp up acres in a big way." FP Genetics is the company that was formed when Farm Pure Seeds went out of business in 2007-08, and it acquired most of the variety licenses Farm Pure Seeds had at the time.

This past year, Harvest was the second to only Stettler in Alberta by a small margin, followed by CDC Go, Lillian and CDC Abound. In Manitoba, Harvest was third, at 14 per cent, behind Carberry at 32 per cent and Glenn at 17 per cent. When the CWB conducted the variety survey, Harvest was in the top three CWRS varieties on the Prairies for three years in a row 2008 to 2011, or until those surveys came to an end due to the changes to the CWB monopoly.

WHAT'S THE SECRET?

What is it about Harvest that has given it the longevity it has displayed for the past 10 or more years?

"There's no one reason to grow Harvest," says Randy Court of Court Seeds at Plumas, Manitoba, "but there are lots of little reasons to grow it." Court goes on to say that it's the particular combination of good yield, early maturity and kernel quality that makes Harvest so attractive for a farmer. "Add to that good straw strength that is suitable for straight cutting and kernel quality as good as anything out there, and Harvest is often the first one in the bin. Early harvest really helps when it comes to quality."

Another seed grower who has now retired from the seed business,

Warren Kaeding, of Churchbridge, Saskatchewan, is also a big fan of Harvest wheat. "I liken it to a Ford F150," he explains. "It's not maybe the best in any particular category, but as an overall package it's hard to beat. It's the same with an F150. You just get such consistency with it year after year and that was its best-selling feature." While Ford F-series trucks have been the best-selling trucks in North America for over 30 years, Harvest is unlikely to last that long.

If Harvest has an Achilles heel, it's fusarium resistance, which is rated as very poor. On the plus side, it has good, consistent yield, excellent harvesting benefits like strong straw, resisting shattering and sprouting as well as retaining its color and holding grade if harvest conditions are not ideal. Because it is an older

variety now, certified seed sales are not reflective of its dominance in acres. "Certified seed sales are tailing off now," says Kaeding.

"I put in quite a few acres of Harvest last year," says Court. "Based on my experience and how well this variety performs, I still see substantial acres going in for 2014."

It's very likely that Harvest will lose acres as new varieties are registered that deal with pests like midge and sawfly, or improved disease resistance. However, both Court and Kaeding believe that none of the new varieties have come to market with the same comprehensive, all-around package that Harvest did.

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ALBERTA'S FUSARIUM MANAGEMENT PLAN

dence levels have gone from about 10 per cent, in what was admittedly a bad year, to 25 per cent this past year, and in Canada Western Amber Durum, it's even higher.

"Incidence is a measure of how widespread the disease is," explains Grafenhan. "Severity, on the other hand, is based on the percentage of fusarium damaged kernels (% FDK) in affected samples. As one of several grading factors, the CGC uses tolerances for per cent FDK to determine grades of cereal grains.

In 2013, affected samples were generally less than 0.5 per cent infected which is considered low. The problem with these high incidence levels is that if conditions are supportive of fungal growth, and Alberta gets rain and warmer temperatures around cereal flowering time, then this disease can have a devastating effect on the crop," warns Grafenhan.

As a comparison, incidence levels in harvest samples of hard red wheat in Manitoba run around 45 per cent. Grafenhan does not see these incidence levels declining, rather, the likelihood is that Alberta will mirror what happened on the eastern Prairies 10 to 20 years ago.

"In many ways, zero-tolerance for *F. graminearum* on seed creates a false sense of security," says Grafenhan. "Growers might be better served through education and adoption of the strategies farmers on the eastern Prairies already practise as standard operating procedures for growing crops that are susceptible to *Fusarium graminearum* is list"

The Fusarium Action Committee undertook a science-based review of the Management Plan. Possible changes should be announced soon. "Knowing that the Fusarium Action Committee is actively working on options is something that will be well received by everyone from industry through to farmers," says Hyra. "Alberta needs to be focussed on good, sound fusarium management practises and technologies to keep the disease in check."

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OBITUARIES

Kochia Scoparia
 Died—In the flax fields of Saskatchewan, during a failed attempt to steal water and nutrients. The deceased passed quietly, offering little resistance to the Group 14 mode of action in Authority® Charge herbicide. With up to eight weeks of residual control, lambs-quarters, redroot pigweed, wild buckwheat and others met the same fate. Flax, peas, sunflowers and chickpeas will suffer no longer. Kochia has no remaining friends or family.

Redroot Pigweed

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