

Oklahoma Wheat Commission's Collaboration with Wheat Marketing Center Yielding Exciting New Opportunities for Local Growers

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The Wheat Marketing Center located in Portland, Ore. Is described by Executive Director of the Oklahoma Wheat Commission **Mike Schulte** as the crossroads of technical and international wheat trade for the global marketplace. In a recent interview with Radio Oklahoma Ag Network Farm Director **Ron Hays**, he explained why the OWC has chosen to invest in the Center, which it hires to test and conduct product development research on the different wheat varieties produced in Oklahoma. Through this research, Schulte says the Commission is working to add value back to local producers, generate greater demand for wheat produced in the state and increased the industry's global competitiveness. You can listen to their complete conversation by clicking or tapping the LISTEN BAR below at the bottom of the page.

“Often times, if we have millers and bakers that are coming on trade delegations to Oklahoma through the US Wheat Associates or going other places in the United States, they are going to be looking at analytical results from the laboratory up there (at the Wheat Marketing Center) on end use qualities for wheat varieties coming out of specific regions they are looking for,” Schulte explains. “Moving forward, we feel like it’s really important to be looking at all aspects of the market and trying to find different ways for us to become more competitive in the global

marketplace.”

The Commission resolved to engage the WMC, Schulte says, after speaking with local producers who were concerned that more work needed to be done on product development in order to generate greater demand for locally produced wheat. While enthusiastic about the varieties being developed and released through the Oklahoma Wheat Improvement Team at Oklahoma State University and the agronomic traits they offer, Schulte says producers have become interested in finding ways in which they can use the unique benefits of those OSU derived varieties and add value back to the producers growing them.

“We certainly know that it is a tougher time out there on the farm right now, so we’re trying to take this information gained from testing and see if there are things we could be doing differently to be able to create new products in the marketplace for our buyers both in the domestic and export markets,” Schulte remarked. “The Wheat Marketing Center in Portland is a little far away from us here in Oklahoma and I think that maybe some producers would question why we’re doing the work up there - really it’s the only place we can go in the US that’s going to have the level of expertise we need to be able to work on product development and be price competitive.”

The work has already yielded some good results with two innovations having stemmed from this collaboration with the WMC. Typically, HRW wheat is not used in making pasta, however the WMC found that the Smith’s Gold variety flavor profile and baking characteristics were actually well-suited for pasta. This discovery has led to a direct partnership with a local Oklahoma City-based pasta company, Della Terra which now offers a locally-produced HRW pasta line. In addition, the Skydance variety has been found well-suited for making tortillas. Schulte says there are companies in west Texas that are interested in pursuing a direct partnership as well to supply their tortilla factories.

“Granted, that’s just a small niche market. But as we see changes in the marketplace, we feel like we can take some of these things we’re learning and try to capture value out of them for people that have specific uses,” he said. “So, as we move forward, you’re going to see us do more work on flavor profile studies. We know this is what chefs and the culinary industry is looking for. We really feel like we’re in a unique position to capitalize on this.”