

Dependable People: A Spotlight on the Oregon Wheat Commission

MARCH 16, 2020

For 40 years, U.S. wheat farmers have supported U.S. Wheat Associates' (USW) efforts to work directly with buyers and promote their six classes of wheat. Their contributions to **state wheat commissions**, who in turn contribute a portion of those funds to USW, qualifies USW to apply for **export market development funds** managed by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. Currently, 17 state wheat commissions are USW members and this series highlights those partnerships and the work being done state-by-state to provide unmatched service. Behind the world's most reliable supply of wheat are the world's most dependable people – and that includes our state wheat commissions.

Member: [Oregon Wheat Commission](#)

USW Member since 1980

Location: Portland, Oregon

Classes of wheat grown: Soft White (SW), Hard Red Spring (HRS), Hard Red Winter (HRW)

USW Leadership: William L. Hulse, 1981/82 Chairman; Stan Timmermann, 1993/94 Chairman; Darren Padget, incoming 2020/2021 Chairman

The Oregon Wheat Commission works to enhance the profitability of Oregon wheat growers by communicating, educating, assuring markets and conducting and stimulating research. Oregon grows primarily soft white (SW) wheat in the vast expanses of Eastern Oregon, and in the lush Willamette River Valley.



Photo from "Kernels and Chaff; A History of Wheat Market Development." [Read more about this history here.](#)

61. First meeting of Oregon Wheat Commission and first Wheat Commission meeting in the United States, 1947.

Left to right: William Enschede, Hillsboro; Millard Eakin, Grass Valley; Jens Terjeson, Pendleton; Ed Bell, Administrator; Marion Weatherford, Arlington; Ralph McEwen, Haines.

Why is export market development important to Oregon wheat farmers and why do they continue to support USW?

About 10% of Oregon wheat is used domestically, therefore most of our marketing efforts are focused on overseas markets. Oregon SW wheat is low-moisture with excellent milling results, providing a whiter and brighter product for making Asian-style noodles. It is also ideal for exquisite cakes, pastries and other confectionery products.

With closer proximity to Pacific Rim markets and their high importance to Oregon wheat growers, our state is also home to the USW West Coast Office, as well as the [Wheat Marketing Center](#) — the education and research bridge connecting growers and customers.

How have Oregon wheat farmers recently interacted with overseas customers?

Oregon Wheat was proud to help [host a recent reception welcoming Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries \(MAFF\)](#). The group came to Portland to commemorate the successful conclusion of the trade negotiations and to renew its connection with the U.S. wheat industry.



Mr. Yusaku Hirakata, MAFF, and Darren Padget, Oregon wheat farmer and USW 2019/20 Vice Chairman.

Many of our Oregon representatives travel throughout the year to various trade missions as well as host customers in our state.

What is happening lately in Oregon that overseas customers should know about?

- **Commitment to Quality:** Oregon Wheat continues to invest in research and development in wheat breeding programs, at [Oregon State University](#) and the [USDA-ARS Western Wheat Quality Laboratory](#), focusing on high quality wheat varieties to support our customers and the end use of our wheat product.
- **A Focus on Long-Term Sustainability:** Pacific Northwest published [Best Management Practices](#) and our growers' production practices involve a high use of certified seed and agronomic practices to meet quality and sanitary-phytosanitary (SPS) requirements.
- **Leading Innovations:** [Investment into the Resilient Dryland Farming Initiative \(RDFI\)](#) at the [Columbia Basin Ag Research Center](#) supports adaptation of farming practices in low rainfall areas.
- **Supporting the Multi-Modal Transportation System:** Oregon Wheat continues efforts to maintain and enhance critical infrastructure, with a particular focus on the Columbia-Snake River dams. The Columbia Snake River System is the nation's single largest wheat export gateway and each year nearly 10% of all U.S. wheat exports move by barge on the Snake River. In partnership with Idaho, Montana and Washington, Oregon Wheat is highlighting the importance of the river system's navigation to our federal and state partners. View the Oregon Wheat Growers League [website](#) for more information.



Oregon Wheat commissioner Jason Middleton (United Grain Corporation) and USW Vice President of Communications Steve Mercer at the 2020 Introduction to Flour Milling short course at the IGP Institute.



Contracting for Wheat Value Delegation from China at Darren Padget's farm.



Oregon Wheat commissioner Walter Powell (white shirt, middle, back row) participated on the 2019 South Asia Board Team to the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia.



USW led five representatives of the Taipei Bakers Association and three officials from Taiwan's Department of Public Health on a trade team to Oregon in late April 2018.



Attendees from the 2016 USW Latin America Buyer's Conference visited Darren Padget's farm.



USW Director of Communications Amanda Spoo visited Darren Padget's farm in October 2019 to lead a video shoot that will focus on U.S. wheat farm families and the U.S. wheat supply chain.



Jeff Newtonson says precision agriculture helps his family produce a more consistent soft white wheat crop for overseas buyers. Jeff's father, Bob Newtonson, has served on the USW Board of Directors for several years. Learn more about their production [here](#).



Outgoing Oregon Wheat CEO Blake Rowe presenting at the 2018 USW Latin American Buyer's Conference in Brazil.