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## Next Week's Wheat Quality Tour

Participants in next week's Hard Wheat Quality Tour of Kansas wheat fields will get a first look at the impact that hard freezes the weeks of April 8, April 15 and April 22 will have on the 2013 Kansas wheat crop.

Nearly 80 folks are expected to participate in this year's tour, which is hosted by the Wheat Quality Council and intended to give its members an understanding of the growth and development of the Kansas wheat crop, plus provide insight into yield and quality potential. The tour, which takes place April 29-May 2, leaves from Manhattan and follows six pre-determined routes. Participants will have overnight stays in Colby and Wichita, with daily evaluations of what they've seen in the state's wheat fields; a wrap-up session at the Kansas City Board of Trade will forecast the yield of the 2013 Kansas wheat crop.

The annual Wheat Quality Tour is an educational and networking opportunity for those involved, says Justin Gilpin, chief executive officer of the Kansas Wheat Commission and Kansas Association of Wheat Growers. "The tour is widely known for bringing together all segments of the wheat industry, where it all begins: in the field, with farmers."

Ben Handcock, director of the Wheat Quality Council, says the tour serves as an educational opportunity for many members of the media, milling and baking companies, governmental agencies and retailers. "Our objective is to give people a snapshot view of the wheat crop, the day we are there," he explains. "We have members who mill, bake and trade this crop, and the tour is a service to them. This tour provides a great opportunity for them to gain a greater understanding of the industry."

Participants gain a firsthand understanding of what it takes for farmers to grow, manage, harvest and market the crop. Many foreign buyers of Kansas wheat will participate, giving those folks a chance to see the high quality of the Kansas crop, Handcock adds.

More than 600 crop evaluations will be made in wheat fields throughout the state, and yield estimates made using a formula developed by the National Ag Statistics Service.

What the group finds on the 2013 Wheat Tour is unknown, at this point. Last year, the crop was well ahead of schedule; this year's crop is about 10 days behind schedule and could be dramatically affected by recent freeze events. Effects of drought in western Kansas are severe, according to the April 22 Weekly Crop Report from Kansas Ag Statistics; the state's wheat crop is rated 37% poor to very poor; 33% fair and 30% good to excellent.

The Wheat Quality Council aims to improve the quality of all U.S. wheat varieties and act as an information conduit between wheat breeders and millers and bakers. It sponsors an additional tour of Hard Spring and Durum wheat throughout North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. For daily Wheat Tour updates, log onto our blog, [www.thewheatbeat.wordpress.com](http://www.thewheatbeat.wordpress.com)