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# PLANNING FOR PROFIT



WHEN PLANNING FOR  
YOUR **WINTER WHEAT**  
CROP, DID YOU KNOW  
THAT THERE IS A  
WEATHER MANAGER  
AVAILABLE TO HELP  
YOU PREDICT PREVIOUS  
SPRING CROP  
MATURITY?

Check it out at  
[www.wintercereals.ca](http://www.wintercereals.ca)

**Planning for profit** is involved with growing all crops, but winter wheat can require special attention to produce profitable results. Experienced winter wheat growers plan ahead to achieve successful results.

## Crop Rotation and Planning for Stubble

Long before you plant winter wheat you must make important decisions. Ideally, planning begins when spring crop decisions are being made, as the spring crop's seeding date will have a great influence on availability of that stubble for fall planting. Canola and mustard are the most popular stubble choices because these crops are often seeded early to ensure the highest yield but this also facilitates earlier harvest and stubble availability. Polish canola, barley or oats can be seeded later and still provide stubble due to earlier maturity. Long time successful growers typically have a contingency plan for available stubble. For further information on spring crops and seeding date, see the **weatherman-ager** at [www.wintercereals.ca](http://www.wintercereals.ca). This model predicts harvest dates for spring crops at varying seeding dates for given areas, producing scenarios for available stubble suitable for winter wheat seeding.

## Harvesting Stubble Crop

Best results have been obtained when winter cereals are direct seeded into standing stubble. Swathing or straight combining should leave the tallest stubble possible. Straw and chaff should be spread in a wide swath to avoid seeder plugging, emergence problems and nutrient immobilization. Harrowing prior to seeding is not recommended, due to stubble knockdown. Experienced growers also avoid excessive traffic on the field when harvesting to limit damaging stubble in high traffic areas, such as field edges and approaches. Use the stubble trapping potential index (STP) to help identify if there is enough snow trapping ability in the field. An ideal STP after seeding would be 20 or greater.

$$STP = [\text{stubble height (cm)} \times \text{standing stems per m}^2] \div 100$$



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Conserving Canada's Wetlands

Active by nature.



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## Key Points to Planning for Profit

- Have the first fields seeded in spring be the crops to precede winter wheat.
  - Choose early maturing varieties of the spring crop.
  - Direct seed into standing stubble.
- Be aware of post-seeding STP.
- Book seed and fertilizer early and have it on farm.
  - Have equipment serviced and ready to seed.
  - Seed during the optimal window for your area.
- Capitalize on opportunities to seed during harvest.
  - Don't wait for rain.
- Wait to assess winter wheat until all spring seeding is complete.
- Look for new root growth and healthy crown tissue.

## Logistical Planning

Seeding at harvest requires good logistical planning to make things go smoothly. Preparing seeding equipment prior to harvest will save precious time during a busy fall. Having fertilizer and seed available and on farm will also save time. If on farm storage is not feasible, arrangements should be made for cleaning or pick up of seed, as well as confirming fertilizer will be available when needed. Growers may even have their seeding equipment field ready with seed and fertilizer on board, so seeding can start before trucks are needed. Trucks to supply seed and fertilizer are often the limiting factor when seeding, so utilizing hopper bins, seed wagons or borrowing trucks may streamline seeding.

## Seeding Opportunities

Seeding while combining can also be a challenge for new growers. Experienced growers find there are enough stoppages in harvest to seed without abandoning the combine. Often damp mornings or stoppages due to showers make for perfect seeding opportunities. After the initial fall, growers find that next harvest is more spread out, easing the pressure of seeding the next winter wheat crop.

## Spring Stand Assessment

The first step of spring stand assessment is to wait until all other spring seeding is complete, and then assess the winter wheat field. Good crown development before freeze up in fall is the most important factor in achieving winter survival. Both leaves and roots can die off over winter. Digging up a plant and inspecting the crown to see white color and new white root growth is a sure sign of plant survival. If unsure, always consult with an experienced agronomist or winter wheat grower to make the best assessment possible.

▶ **For more information**  
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