

# Media Release

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## Record setting crop under the snow

*Regina, Sask.* – In farming, seeded acre records are normally announced in the spring. Then again, winter wheat isn't your average crop. Keeping with a trend that really took off last year, this fall, prairie producers planted over 1.5 million acres of winter wheat. Those producers say the potential of this fall seeded crop is still growing.

"Its all about money" says Rod Fedoruk, president of the newly formed Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission. "Every year Stats Canada keeps a record of the number of acres planted. Last year 1.2 million acres of winter wheat were seeded across the Prairies and those numbers are up this year. We're coming off another great year for winter wheat where the crop out yielded just about everything," says Fedoruk, pointing out the average yield of winter wheat is 25 per cent higher than the average yield of spring wheat. "It's no wonder farmers are flocking to winter wheat."

"The green of winter wheat is more than just money," says Paul Thoroughgood, regional agrologist with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). "Winter wheat is good for the environment because producers reduce the use of costly pesticides and because it provides habitat for waterfowl to nest. It's a great fit for the producer's bottom line and for the environment."

According to Thoroughgood, winter wheat is catching on with producers for a lot of reasons. "It provides marketing choice, spreads workload and potentially reduce herbicide and insecticide costs," he says. "Winter wheat is a crop that is well-suited to many recent developments in Prairie Canada agriculture. There is an expanding market in the ethanol and livestock industries. Both will provide additional sales opportunities. Reduced pesticide input costs and ability to spread workload are also factors in the crop's expansion."

The increase in winter wheat acres is beneficial to spring nesting waterfowl, particularly northern pintails, a species that has declined since the late 1970s. This benefit to waterfowl has led DUC to invest in excess of \$3.5 million in support of variety development, agronomic research, producer group support and financial incentives to producers in the past six years.

"Investing in winter cereal research and development is exactly what the Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission is all about," says Fedoruk. "As farmers we know the future of the crops depends on coming up with new varieties, improved marketing options and agronomic advances. The Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission was formed to levy winter cereal sales by farmers to generate funding for research and development."

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The Saskatchewan Commission follows the lead of a sister organization, the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission in Alberta. Manitoba Producers are considering a similar organization in that province.

"The increase in acreage is a result of lots of co-operation between many agencies but at the end of the day, the increase in seeded acres is the result of producers wanting to experience the benefits of winter wheat on their farms," says Thoroughgood.

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