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MABA Urges Crop Insurance to Use New Technology to Analyze Wheat Quality Losses

EAST LANSING – The **Michigan Agri-Business Association** has called on the Federal Crop Insurance Administration to accept new technology to determine wheat quality losses after rain delayed the wheat harvest in some parts of the state.

Heavy rains during peak harvest in some areas caused wheat, especially white wheat in the Thumb and central Michigan, to sprout or germinate in the head, causing starch and proteins in the grain to break down. The longer the grain sprouts, the lower the flour quality. Many flour mills and elevators have moved away from using just sprout counts as a primary measure of wheat quality toward a falling number schedule, which measures the viscosity and ultimately the true quality of the flour. The falling number test is an internationally standardized, accurate and objective scientific test that measures the starch quality of wheat.

MABA has asked FCIA to accept both sprout counts and falling numbers when determining a loss of quality for wheat when adjusting a crop insurance claim. The FCIA currently only accepts a “sprout” count to determine quality. This issue is on the heels of producers being upset that many have grain contracted far below the current market price, and are now experiencing substantial quality discounts for high sprout and low falling number grain. MABA has also been in contact with Michigan’s Congressional delegation for help in pushing the FCIA to change its policies.

“This is a complex and frustrating issue for farmers,” said MABA President **Jim Byrum**. “This is very serious because farmers filing claims on their crop insurance policies often can’t use the elevator’s quality loss assessments simply because the crop insurance administration doesn’t recognize this new technology.”

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“This is especially serious because farmers are taking a hard financial ‘hit,’ and elevators cannot be expected to accept grain they cannot sell, nor pay more than they can sell it for,” **Byrum** said. “Country elevators know what their miller and end user customers will accept, so they have to be cautious about filling their storage with grain that cannot be used by those customers. Considerable high sprout and low falling number wheat will be sold as feed wheat this year, rather than to the milling or cereal market, and elevators are scrambling to get that grain moved.”

In the falling number test, wheat is ground, and the time a plunger takes to fall to the bottom of a tube filled with the heated ground wheat is measured. The seconds it takes for the plunger to fall is known as the “falling number.” High quality wheat is thicker, and the plunger takes longer to fall.

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