

Michigan Agri-Weekly

Agriculture, Sustainability and the Environment

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MABA Warns: Don't Plant Wheat after Corn

LANSING – The **Michigan Agri-Business Association** today warned farmers to avoid planting wheat after corn, unless they follow some critical management tips to avoid disease problems this fall.

“Wheat is an important cash crop for Michigan farmers, and to help them produce a high yielding, quality crop, we urge farmers to follow some steps that can help maximize yield and minimize or avoid disease problems in wheat production,” **MABA President Jim Byrum** said. “Farmers should also be aware that disease and sprouting problems can attack all currently available varieties of both red and white wheat. However, there are strategies to help avoid these problems and maximize economic return.”

MABA recommends that farmers:

- Work closely with local agronomy suppliers from variety selection through harvest, and establish a sound fertility program, as well as an intensive scouting and pest control plan, including weed insect and disease control.
- If farmers must plant wheat following corn, try to minimize the potential for disease problems by moldboard plowing the field before planting. This is also true even in fields where silage was harvested. Disease spores continue to exist in even the short stalks remaining after silage harvest.
- Plant inspected, certified or quality assured seed with a good performance history in your area.
- Do not plant old seed.
- All seed must be treated with a commercially applied seed treatment; the use of planter box seed treatments should be avoided.
- Plant after the fly free date, and plant more than one variety and/or spread planting dates to minimize disease and harvest problems.
- Plant in the range of 1.8 million kernels of seed per acre, and maintain a uniform planting depth of about 1.5 inches.
- Test soil and apply fertilizer to maximize optimum economic yield.
- A spring application of nitrogen and possibly micronutrients are highly recommended.
- Ensure that your crop scout is monitoring weed and insect infestations.
- Scout between the flag and heading stages of growth for powdery mildew, and consider a fungicide application if recommended by agronomy suppliers.
- Based on weather conditions and other factors, consider an application of a recommended fungicide for the prevention of diseases such as scab.
- Harvest wheat as soon as you can after the grain reaches 17% moisture. This year provided an excellent example of the problems – and costs of waiting until grain is even drier.

“Wheat is an excellent crop because of advances in yield and other characteristics,” **Byrum** said. “Because wheat is harvested in mid-summer, it helps cash flow during a critical time of the year. There are usually aggressive local markets for wheat through local elevators, millers and other end-users. Michigan food processing companies use most of the wheat, especially Michigan white wheat produced in Michigan. Agronomically, wheat is an excellent rotational crop because it returns organic matter to the soil and aids soil health in other ways, as well.”

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