



# Washington Association of Wheat Growers

109 E. First Ave. • Ritzville, WA • 99169 • Phone (509) 659-0610 • Fax (509) 659-4302

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 18, 2017

Contact: Michelle Hennings (509) 659-0610

## **Without overseas trade, Washington wheat industry would suffer**

With approximately 90 percent of Washington's wheat being exported overseas, it isn't an exaggeration to say that trade is the lifeblood of Washington wheat farmers. The agriculture industry relies heavily on funding from the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program to develop new markets and support existing ones. Studies have shown that these programs generate a net return of more than 25 to 1 for U.S. farmers. Funding for these programs was eliminated in President Trump's proposed budget.

Ben Adams, a farmer from Coulee City, Wash., and the president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, has a hard time imagining how his farm would survive if the industry didn't have access to overseas markets. Adams grows soft white wheat and club wheat, two varieties that are so valued by overseas buyers that they command a premium over other types of wheat. Three of the most important markets for these wheats, Philippines, Japan and South Korea, were developed using funding from MAP and FMD through the work of U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), the wheat industry's marketing arm. USW also uses MAP and FMD funding to send experts to developing markets in Asia and South America to teach millers and bakers there how to use U.S.-grown wheat in their products.

"We need these programs to expand our markets and maintain them. If we lost those markets or saw a drop in market share, the wheat price would continue to drop. We are already struggling to break even on our wheat crop, so any further reduction in price would break the bank," Adams said.

Adams farms in an area that receives only 7-10 inches of rain per year, limiting the types of crops he can grow. Most of the alternative crops he could consider would require additional expenses in new equipment, not to mention surviving the learning curve required in learning to raise a successful crop other than wheat.

"In our area, soft white wheat is what we know how to grow. Our experience growing other types of wheat, such as hard red wheat or dark northern spring wheat, has always been challenging. If we lost the soft white market, we would lose a lot of farmers here. We just don't have the knowledge base to grow other crops, such as peas or canola, at a level that would sustain our livelihood. Farmers just can't accept the risk of trying to grow something on a large scale that they don't know how to grow," he explained.

Adams also pointed out that farmers would only be the tip of the iceberg if overseas market share is lost. Less wheat moving through the system means less work for elevators, shipping companies, and rural businesses that cater to farmers.

The wheat industry in Washington state was valued in 2012 at more than \$1 billion. According to an economic study by Washington State University, the state's wheat industry contributed another billion dollars to the state's economy through spending and employed more than 11,000 people.

###

About WAWG: Education and outreach are the heart of Washington Association of Wheat Growers activity, all of which is aimed at helping Washington wheat families. Since 1954, WAWG has been dedicated to the enrichment of the Washington wheat industry as a nonprofit trade association, which depends on volunteers, membership dues and donations to carry out activities as representatives on the state and national levels. WAWG monitors state, transportation, research and natural

resources policy and partners with the National Association of Wheat Growers to monitor national farm policy. Visit [wawg.org](http://wawg.org) for more information.