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NEWS RELEASE

WASHINGTON AGRICULTURE TO HIGHLIGHT INDUSTRY FOR USDA SECRETARY VISIT TO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

WASHINGTON WHEAT WELCOMES SECRETARY PERDUE

(July 2, 2018, Ritzville, WA) International trade, the uniqueness of the Pacific Northwest agriculture, and the 2018 Farm Bill top the list of priorities leadership and staff of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) and Washington Grain Commission (WGC) will convey while USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue visits the PNW this week.

Known for production of soft white wheat destined for overseas markets, Washington exports approximately 90 percent of the state's wheat crop, which requires the need for stable and effective trade agreements. "Our wheat is known throughout the world as being of the highest quality," said Gary Bailey, a farmer from St. John, Wash. and chairman of WGC. "Our wheat industry is heavily reliant on continuing the relationships that have been built over the past 60 years with our overseas customers. Agriculture contributes positively to the trade balance and these markets cannot be jeopardized by uncertain trade programs."

Central to WAWG's current lobbying efforts is for the swift bipartisan passage of the 2018 Farm Bill and full funding of the USDA. "It has been promising to see action taken so far by the House and Senate in regards to the farm bill, but we must keep the momentum going. We look forward to discussing policy and the importance of farm programs with Secretary Perdue. Farm policy, and its effective implementation, to provide stability and certainty for America's farmers is paramount," said Marci Green, president of WAWG and a grower from Fairfield, Wash.

"This is a great opportunity for Washington agriculture to showcase our state and to convey how critical effective trade programs and stable farm policies are to the producers of the Pacific Northwest," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG. "We would like to thank Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers and Congressman Newhouse for their efforts in making this visit possible. Our growers provide a high-quality product that is greatly desired in overseas markets and today more than ever we need to share our story of the uniqueness of Washington agriculture."

According to the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington agriculture contributes a market value of \$10.6 billion of crops and livestock to the state's economy, of which \$6.7 billion of food and ag products are exported overseas. A 2016 economic impact study from Washington State University shows the total value of the state's wheat sales was \$1.3 billion and it supported nearly 6,500 jobs.

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