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Seeding Date Demonstration in Winter Wheat

Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission

The objective of this project was to demonstrate to Saskatchewan producers' that the accepted final seeding date for winter wheat (previously September 15th, now September 30th deadline for Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Coverage) could be extended into October and the seed still maintain a significant level of viability. With increased acres of later maturing crops being seeded, as well as the chance of a delayed harvest, finding the time to seed winter wheat during the fall can be challenging, but damp mornings or down-time due to rain makes for perfect seeding opportunities.

In year one of this trial, Wildfire winter wheat was seeded into very dry soil with most of the growing season precipitation accumulating mid-summer. Limited moisture resulted in tiller mortality for the earlier seeded crops and may have decreased overall yields. Winter wheat was harvested August 26, 2019, before significant rainfall events caused delays through September and late into October. Due to the wet fall conditions, seeding dates for the second year were delayed and based on when soil conditions were suitable. With the above average amount of fall precipitation and moisture that followed in early spring, earlier seeded winter wheat benefited over the later seed dates.

This project demonstrated that plant survival does result after September 15th and winter wheat can still be competitive at a later seeded date. Yields have shown to be more promising than previously thought when planted late September and into October if moisture conditions are right. However, producers should decide whether there is value to planting in those later windows by comparing other cropping

options, including potential yields, profits and the risk factors of seeding late into September and October. As yield is directly correlated with stored soil nitrogen and moisture, response will vary by year and may have been different each year of the trial if rainfall was received in a timely matter.

