Board of Director’s Update

The annual MSGA Board meetings were held March 23 & 24 at the MSGA Office in Bozeman. John Grass was re-elected as President and Bear Whitmer as Vice President. A number of business items were discussed.

One key item was the acceptance of seed standards for Camelina as part of the MSGA Handbook of Standards. It should also be noted that these standards were accepted by the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) at the last international meeting (June 2008) held in Quebec City, Canada. This marked the first time in many years that new crop standards have been added at the international level.

Honorary MSGA Membership was given to Bill Skorupa of Bridger, a long time seed producer near Bridger, and Norm Ostby of Winnett, recently retired field inspector (inspected 1994-2006).

The MSGA Board requested that the manager begin the process of evaluating conditioning facilities used by certified producers who are not commercial conditioners but who process their own seed for sale. Bringing this group into the conditioning plant evaluation process would ensure that we are following MSGA Handbook rules with regard to official authorization of conditioning plants (General Standards, pages 6, 10 and others) thereby reducing any potential liability to the organization, as well as possibly decreasing liability for the conditioners themselves. This would involve an inspection to be done before the next year’s board meeting, to verify that the equipment can be properly and adequately cleaned between seed lots.
Board Update continued….

Two issues pertaining specifically to alfalfa seed certification were discussed, the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance (NAFA) Agreement, and the AOSCA Stewardship Practices Agreement. These agreements, if signed, would require extra inspections and verifications to be made by MSGA inspectors with regard to things like combine inspections, planter inspections, etc. These agreements represent an approach to managing the co-existence of GMO Alfalfa and non-GMO alfalfa production.

Seed Industry reports were given by: Dr. Bill Grey, Montana Foundation Seeds; Dr. Jeff Jacobsen, Dean and Director, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station; Brent Sarchet, Montana Department of Agriculture; and John McDonnell, Montana Seed Trade Association. Dr. Phil Bruckner, MSU winter wheat breeder, reported on his variety development work.

These are some of the items discussed at this year’s MSGA Board Meeting. We appreciate the work done by the MSGA Board members on behalf of the seed certification program.

Photos from the two seed conditioner’s clinics. Williston, ND on the left and Great Falls, MT on the right.

Seed Lab Update…

As many of you may know the State Seed Lab is currently experiencing a funding shortage. As a result, as of February 28, the seed lab staff has been reduced to 3 people. Two full time staff and 3 call-in staff members have been laid off. It should be noted that the remaining staff members have a lot of years of experience and their expertise is well known in the seed lab industry. Although the current staffing situation has put some pressure on the remaining analysts to accomplish the work, but they are working very diligently to maintain the best level of service possible. The hope is that seed lab customers will continue to support the lab by sending samples as we look for ways to improve the financial picture and get set for the next fiscal year. Our appreciation goes out to these ladies for the great effort they are making on behalf of the seed industry.
Seed Conditioner’s Clinics

As of this writing, two seed conditioner and handling facility clinics have been held. The first one was in Williston, ND, November 18-19, 2008. The second one was held in Great Falls, January 20-21, 2009. Around 100 people were on hand for each event. Comments received after each event indicated people were generally satisfied with the programs. We would like to thank the exhibitors, sponsors and speakers who helped us with these events. They are listed below.

North Dakota Meeting Exhibitors (November): Agassiz Seed and Supply, Dustin Gjugstad; Agri-Resources, Lee Dybsand; ArrowCorp, Inc., Scott Theisen; Bjerke Brothers, Tracy Bjerke; Bratney Companies, Ron Purvis; Degesch America, Jim Osment; EBM, Francis Serr; Garratt Industries, Inc., K. C. Garratt; Gartner Seed Farm, Mike Gartner; Lewis M. Carter Mfg., Buddy Mathis; Oliver Mfg., Dave Knudsen; Westrup Inc., Gary Muckala

North Dakota Speakers: Francis Serr, EBM – Principles of separation and product handling; Ron Purvis, Bratney Companies – Airscreen cleaners and length separators; Dave Knudsen, Oliver Mfg. – Gravity tables; Jim Osment, Degesch America, Inc. – Seed storage and treatments; Joe Magnusson, ND Regulatory Manager & Brent Sarchet, MT Dept. of Agriculture – PVP and seed laws; Bill Grey, MSU – Seed borne diseases and seed treatments; and Mark Birdsal, Birdsal Seed and Grain – Legal concerns and the seedsman.

Great Falls, Montana Meeting Sponsors (January): Bayer Crop Science, Jim Elliot; BASF, Brandon Neuman; Wilbur Ellis, Bill O’Haire; Syngenta, Doug Deschamp; and the Montana Seed Trade Association.

Great Falls Speakers: Kevin Riley, Clipper/Ferral Ross – Air Screen Cleaners; Dave Knudsen, Oliver Mfg, - Gravity tables; Tom Helman, Bratney Companies – Length Separators; Paul Morano, AgriPro, Dan Biggerstaff, WestBred, LLC, and Bill Grey, Montana Foundation Seeds Program – Round table forum on Plant Variety Protection, moderated by Brent Sarchet, Montana Department of Agriculture; Jim Smiley, Degesch America – Grain storage and storage treatments; Dr. Bill Grey – Seed diseases and seed protection treatments; and John Lee, Nationwide Agribusiness – Areas of risk and loss control.

We also appreciated the early planning help of Ben Larson and Wade Crouch, County Extension Agents from Richland and Cascade Counties, respectively, as well as the sponsorship and help from Brent Sarchet with the Montana Department of Agriculture.
What’s on the variety watch…..Bill Grey

Those of you who enjoy scouting for new variety releases and current recommended varieties will find the following two links helpful:
<http://plantsciences.montana.edu/FoundationSeed/release.html>

Dave Wichman and Tom Blake have released a new MSU hooded barley, MT981397, which they have called “Lavina”. It is a replacement of Haybet, which has been a long time favorite since it release in 1989, by Dr. Gene Hockett, USDA barley geneticist and MSU scientists, including Dave Wichman, Gregg Carlson and your very own Ron Larson. Lavina is a 2row hooded spring barley bringing together the desired characters of Haybet and Baronesse.

Small Grains for Montana, Performance Evaluation and Recommendations:
<http://plantsciences.montana.edu/Crops/Default.htm>

Dry pea and lentil state-wide variety trials headed up by Dr. Chengchi Chen, are becoming a valuable tool for producers and plant breeders. Dr. Norm Weeden’s new release ‘Amigo’ MSUPLB27, and the MSU-WSU release ‘Windham’ pea are being compared to standard varieties, and they appear to be yielding right along with Majoret and Cruiser. CARC Summer Field Day is an opportunity to view foundation production of Lavina, Windham and Amigo.

Upcoming Events!!!!!!!!!

- June 15-18: Summer Seed Trade Meeting
- June 30: Northern Ag. Research Center Field Day, Havre, MT
- July 8: Western Triangle Research Center Field Day, Conrad, MT
- July 9: Central Ag. Research Center Field Day, Moccasin, MT
- July 13-14: MAES Summer Conference, Creston, MT
- July 16: Eastern Ag. Research Center Field Day, Sidney, MT
- August 12: Western Ag. Research Center Field Day, Corvallis, MT
- September 1: SeCan Royalties Due
- October 1: North Dakota Research Fees Due

New Grass Fields:

New fields of grass seed planted before June 30 are required to have a seedling inspection the year of planting. Anyone planting Newhy Hybrid Wheatgrass needs to have a pre-plant field inspection to verify the absence of quackgrass, one of the parents of this variety. A seedling inspection is also required about 30-40 days after planting.
Taking the Blight out of the Ascochyta with Seed Testing….Bill Grey

Often times the benefit of seed testing goes unnoticed during the hectic season of seed sales. Recently, I had an opportunity to review the Ascochyta seed test that has been conducted by the Seed Lab and the Schutter Diagnostic Lab at MSU. Many of you in the small grain market may be unaware of this test as it only impacts those involved with chickpea, lentils and field pea. I would venture that if growers had to vote on the number one disease of pulses, that “Ascochyta blight” would win hands down.

Ascochyta is a fungal pathogen that ‘blights’ or fires the foliage during crop production, leaving little more than stems and residue that produce fungal spores and further inoculum to infect the crop. If a diseased crop does produce seed, even a seemingly few number of infected seeds when planted can result in an crop becoming “blighted”. A lab test for infected seeds can provide a management tool to minimize the threat of Ascochyta or at the very least, eliminate an early season application of foliar fungicide. The test does provide a percentage of infested seeds, ex. 1 positive seed/500 equals 0.2%, and so on. Currently, there is no tolerance established for the seed standards of these crops in MT or ND. Generally, a highly infected seed lot is at a higher risk for field infection. However, there is always the potential for the Ascochyta disease to be spread by air-borne spores from infected residue of previous crops or adjacent fields. A seed lot with none to low incidence and conditioned with a recommended fungicide does minimize the threat of seed borne Ascochyta.

The Schutter Diagnostic Lab initiated the test at the request of MSGA. Several folks have been involved with the test and it is worth noting that their expertise in fungal diagnostics is essential. An accurate test of a sample consists of 500 seeds that are cultured and visually examined for the diagnostic conidia morphology and fungal growth. Ms. Martha Bamford worked out the details in the early years and was followed by Dr. Nina Zidack for a few years where she helped differentiate the fungal species involved in this disease complex. Currently Ms. Kara Schile under the supervision of Dr. Mary Burrows, are evaluating the seed lots in cooperation with the MSU Seed Lab.

The following table summarizes the tests from 613 seed lots conducted over 9 years. Chickpea seed lots were positive for Ascochyta at a frequency of 26%; Lentil seed lots at 33%; and Field Pea seed lots at 12%. The frequency of Ascochyta among the three pulse crops was 21% overall. Continued participation by seed producers in the seed test will take “the blight out of the Ascochyta”.

Table 1. Number of Seed lots with a positive Ascochyta seed test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chickpea</th>
<th>Lentil</th>
<th>Field Pea</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Application Deadlines:**

* Applications for certification of perennial crops (plus canola, peas and lentils) are due May 25th.
* Applications for certification of all other crops are due June 15th.
* Applications postmarked after June 15th – June 30th will be assessed a $50 late fee.
* Applications postmarked after June 30th will be assessed a $100 late fee.

**Fees:** The following fees MUST accompany the Application for Certification to the MSGA office:

- **Annual Filing Fee** – Payable with each application: $30/Application
- **Acreage Fee** – Will be refunded on acreage cancelled before field inspection:
  - All Crops: $2.50/Acre
  - With the exception of:
    - Field Beans: $6.00/Acre

Remember that two (2) field maps are required to be supplied with each application. Maps need to be clearly marked with boundaries for each field. One map will stay in MSGA files and the other will be sent to the appropriate field inspector.

**Production Fees:**

Ideally, production fees should be paid 30 days after harvest but are not considered “late” until April 16th. Growers risk having their current year’s applications withheld from the program if production fees have not been paid for any previous year. Additionally, foundation seed requests for new MSU varieties may be denied if the previous year’s production fees have not been paid. Please call Heather if you have questions on what you owe.