By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

When it comes to talking wheat, the Hughes family name remains one of those names synonymous with wheat production in southwest Nebraska.

And like family before him, Chase County farmer Dan Hughes of Venango continues to promote wheat production, both in the U.S. and abroad.

In early December, Hughes traveled to Abu Dhabi in United Arab Emirates to extol the virtues of all U.S. varieties of wheat to the International Association of Operative Millers.

The conference drew many African and Middle Eastern wheat buyers, he noted.

Hughes said people would be surprised at the amount of U.S. wheat consumed in those countries. In fact, Egypt represents the largest buyer of U.S. wheat in that region.

They use it for a flat-bread product, which is then provided to the citizenry by the government.

Hughes travels on behalf of U.S. Wheat Associates and presently serves as vice-chair of the national entity.

For the past seven years, Hughes has served on the board of directors of the Nebraska Wheat Board. The Wheat Board is the entity that administers wheat check-off funds in Nebraska.

On Oct. 1, 2012, state law changed how the check-off is collected. The new formula calls for collecting 4/10th of one percent of the per-bushel price at which the wheat is sold.

Funds from the check-off are used to promote wheat both domestically and internationally.

Becomes chairman in July

As one of four officers of U.S. Wheat Associates, he represents a 19-state region of wheat-growing states who elected him for the position.

He serves as the vice chair and will become chair of the board this July.

U. S. Wheat Associates promotes all of the six different classes of wheat grown, including winter and spring varieties of red, white and durum.

When stumping for U.S. wheat, Hughes' mission is to assure the quality of the pro-duct, the availability of stable supplies and price transparency.

Hughes touts the fact that the U.S. does not use wheat as an embargo tool when sanctioning countries.

In addition, U.S. contract law governs the sale of wheat and insures buyers they are protected.

He also promotes the quality of the product which is maintained by strict grading standards.

He said these standards of quality also ensure the buyer that the U.S. product will meet or exceed the buyer's specifications.

His job is to convince buyers that U.S. wheat is the best product in the market for their needs.

Hughes served on a panel at the conference, updating buyers on the quality of the 2012 crop.

During his time with U.S. Wheat Associates, he has traveled to South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Peru, Columbia and Ecuador on behalf of American producers.

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