Wheat Technology Conference 2013 will bring University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension experts to Alliance, Ogallala and Sidney in early February to share the latest research and information on several relevant topics.

"Sharpening Your Production Skills for Maximum Profit" is the theme of Wheat Technology Conference 2013, sponsored by UNL Extension. The Ogallala conference will be held Feb. 6 at the Quality Inn.

The objective is to provide western Nebraska wheat producers, who farm the state's major wheat acreage, with state-of-the-art information related to wheat production and marketing, according to Dipak Santra, alternative crops breeding specialist at the UNL Panhandle Research and Extension Center.

Santra noted that western Nebraska always has had a large share of the state's wheat acreage. In recent years, expanding corn production in the eastern and central part of the state has shifted additional wheat acres to the west. With the drought, wheat is more important to western producers because wheat will produce some kind of crop even when stressed by lack of moisture.

The focus of the 2013 Wheat Technology Conference will be on emerging pest, disease and weed challenges, as well as fertilizer management, other production issues, industry trends, new technology in wheat genetics and market outlooks.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at each location, and the program will conclude by about 3:45 p.m.

Early registration is possible by contacting the Panhandle Research and Extension Center at 308-632-1230. The Panhandle Center's web site, panhandle.unl.edu, also has a downloadable brochure with a registration form that can be filled out and mailed back. Early registration fee is $35 per person by Jan. 28 and $45 thereafter and at the door.

Several major issues that have emerged since the last conference several years ago, according to UNL's Santra.

An insect pest, the wheat stem sawfly, was almost unknown to Panhandle producers several years ago, but now has become a significant threat. New strains of stripe rust disease are threatening older wheat varieties, and their control poses a management challenge. A new weed threat in dryland cropping systems is glyphosate-resistant kochia.

Another current topic is the link between wheat quality and marketability.

An emerging issue is a new technology that already has revolutionized corn, soybean and sugarbeet production. Genetically modified or transgenic wheat (biotech wheat) is likely to be in widespread use at some point in the future, according to Santra, so producers need to be aware of such new wheat varieties and what they will need to know about them.

Several large seed companies have been recently started wheat seed business, which very likely involved biotech wheat, Santra said. Producers in Panhandle have limited knowledge about biotech wheat, or how to adjust production systems to grow it.

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