



By Jan Rahn

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Bringing a loud and clear message to Nebraska, a Nigerian trade team visited farms and elevators the first part of June to encourage wheat growers to meet their request and demand for more hard white wheat in addition to the massive amounts of hard red wheat currently purchased.

The country is the largest buyer of hard red winter wheat in the world.

Perkins County farmer Dan Hughes and his wife Josie hosted a tour and barbecue last week for a nine-member trade delegation representing Nigeria's largest milling and baking companies, local producers, members of the Nebraska Wheat Board and elevator representatives.

In a casual setting at the Hughes farm south of Brandon, the Nigerian team was adamant that milling and baking companies in their African nation want more white wheat in addition to the hard red wheat primarily grown in the four mid-western states they are targeting, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Nigeria has a very rapidly growing population and the people are asking for more and more wheat products such as instant noodles, pasta, bread, rolls, etc.

"Don't buy Australian!" Hughes told the team who gathered for refreshments and a question/answer period prior to a barbecue and catered meal which was served in a newly built shop on his property.

"They [Nigerians] want more white wheat," said Hughes to area producers and elevator personnel who came from as far away as Hemingford to visit with the trade delegation.

Hughes, chairman-elect of the U.S. Wheat Associates board and commissioner of the Nebraska Wheat Board, said the major difficulty in meeting the Nigerian demand is the bottleneck in the first handler, the local elevator.

Elevators need to understand there's a premium to get them to handle hard white wheat because of the stringent requirements in keeping the two varieties separate during storage and shipping, he explained.

"We need to educate our farmers and elevators to make extra effort in seeing that segregation happens," said Hughes. "That's a piece of the puzzle—elevators need to be willing."

A Frenchman Valley Co-op representative said the elevators handle white wheat in four different locations, shipping one-half million bushels of white wheat to ConAgra. Another representative from Farmer's Co-op indicated his elevator did not have enough volume of the crop to make it worthwhile.

U.S. Wheat Associates marketing consultant Muyiwa Talabi, who is based in Lagos, Nigeria and was accompanying the team, said he has been coming to the United States for 10 years. Although there is some progress in getting the demand met for hard white wheat, he said he has not been happy with the success over the last two or three years.

"My desire has not been fulfilled to the extent I want it to be," said Talabi.

The handling from the producers, to the elevators, to the gulf is complicated, he said.

“They’re looking at the money, not satisfied customers,” he said.



About trade team

The trade team’s visit is part of an agreement between the Nebraska Wheat Board (NWB) and U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), a national cooperative of 19 wheat-producing states that focuses on international marketing.

Each year USW brings foreign trade delegations to the United States to visit with wheat farmers, see the wheat crop first-hand and visit with grain marketing companies.

Trade teams such as the one visiting recently bring together both the beginning and end of the grain chain, allowing Nigerian customers to make a personal connection with U.S. wheat farmers who consistently produce the high quality wheat that Nigeria’s industry wants and needs.

USW is the industry’s market development organization working in more than 100 countries. Its mission is to “develop, maintain, and expand international markets to enhance the profitability of U.S. wheat producers and their customers.”

USW activities are made possible through producer check-off dollars managed by 19 state wheat commissions and cost-share funding provided by USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service.

USW maintains 17 offices strategically located around the world to help wheat buyers, millers, bakers, wheat food processors and government officials understand the quality, value and reliability of all six classes of U.S. wheat.