Plan Ahead for Fall Seeding

By Larry Lutcher, OSU Extension Agronomist, Morrow County Extension

What variety are you going to plant next fall? This is one of the most important decisions made by any wheat producer. It can have a significant effect on your bottom line. Waiting until the last minute may be costly—you may be left with few options, and you may be forced to use a variety that is not a top-performer in your area. Many of us look to research conducted by Oregon State University to help guide us through the decision making process. I think this is a good idea, but I also know that most of you will have selected a variety well before results from this year’s variety trials are available. The following summary may help you as you contemplate variety selection for the upcoming year.

Spread your risk. Grow more than one variety. Grow at least two varieties or grow three or four if you can. Realize that testing provided by land-grant universities is your best source of critically-needed, unbiased information, but it is not “bullet proof.” It’s just not possible to test varieties under all possible growing conditions. Your own experiences are a valuable resource. Use this information, along with outcomes from university research, to select varieties that will work best on your farm. Thinking about growing a different variety this year? That’s great, but don’t go “overboard.” Try it on 80 acres or maybe a half-section during the first year. See how it does. Expand acreage slowly, overtime, and don’t plant a new variety on every available acre—at least not until you are sure it is the right thing to do.

These are varieties I believe are reasonable options to consider for those of you who farm in Morrow County. Goetze is a good replacement for ‘Gene.’ It is more sensitive to the cold than most other varieties. Grain yield averages 2-to-4 bu/acre better than ‘Tubbs-06.’ Best grown on south and southwest facing slopes where soil temperatures during the winter tend to be a few degrees warmer than in other locations. Also a realistic option for fields where chemical fallow has been practiced—because standing stubble will decrease the potential for injury from a cold northeast wind. Do not plant before October 15th. ORCF-102 consistently outyields ORCF-101 (in our area) when seeding occurs after October 15th. Reports of a short coleoptile indicate this variety may be best suited for shallow seeding situations. ORCF-102 has a fairly good disease package and reasonably good winterhardiness. Tubbs-06 is grown on many acres in Morrow County. It performs well here. My biggest concern is that its susceptibility to stripe rust may increase (more so than some of our other varieties) as time goes on. It produces lots of tough residue, and this may be a problem at seeding time.

Westbred 528 is a variety that seems to be best suited for irrigation, but there are reports of respectable yield under dryland environments. Test weights are relatively high; tolerance to the cold seems to be pretty good. This variety will be included in next year’s large-plot variety demonstration project. Skiles is being promoted as good choice for early seeding due to its increased tolerance to Cephalosporium stripe. Reports also indicate good performance if planted before the end of October. I haven’t seen any data on coleoptile length, but would presume it’s about average. The cold hardiness of Skiles is pretty good. Eltan was developed by Steve Jones at Washington State University. It is popular in the Connell and Lind areas. It has a relatively long coleoptile and better emergence from deep seeding depths—better than any of the other varieties listed above. For this reason, it is a good one to experiment with if you are committed to early seeding and deep planting depths in a tillage-based system. It is very winter hardy. It has a funny appearance—compared to some of the other varieties that have traditionally been grown in our area. Its stems are a bit on the spindly side and the variety may be prone to lodging when yield potentials are high. The heads look different too—they are short and somewhat compact. Reports about grain quality have ranged from poor-to-good, so I’m not sure about this. Tolerance to Strawbreaker foot rot is not as good as recently developed varieties from Oregon State University. I guess one could make the argument that if it doesn’t emerge, then nothing else matters………

Mike Flowers (Extension Cereal Specialist, Oregon State University) will share valuable information about variety performance during our Morrow County Dryland Crop Tour on June 18th. Hear the latest information; learn about what’s going on, and use this information to help you improve your bottom line.