

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Local data for local cereal grain growers

AT A GLANCE

Southeast Idaho has a wide array of cereal grain growing areas. Local research paired with local education meets the needs of local producers.

The Situation

Cereal grain crops are extremely important to the Idaho economy. In 2022 cereal grain crops grown in Idaho were worth well over a billion dollars (wheat \$749,249,000; barley \$449,550,000; oats \$5,120,000; USDA 2022 State Agriculture Overview). Cereal grains are grown across the state under vastly different growing conditions. Best management practices and variety selection are different for each area. Growers recognize that they need local research and local education.

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension specialists and educators have been combining forces for many years to address the needs of local producers. Identifying the needs of producers has always been a challenge. In years past, a large meeting was held each fall to plan cereal school topics. We started noticing that grower participation was declining, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic restricted in-person meetings. To get better input from growers, we began holding small meetings in cereal-producing counties in southeast Idaho to collect feedback on local needs. We have found that growers are much more likely to engage in small groups than in large groups. Our goal is to keep growers in the driver's seat and to meet their needs.



Kryst Krein presenting in Bonneville County on seed-drill comparisons. Photo by Justin Hatch.

In response to requests of local producers, UI Extension specialists and educators, and prominent producers presented on the following topics in 2023: weed control, the new Idaho State Department of Agriculture pesticide applicator recertification process, opportunities for cereal producers to participate in the University of Idaho's USDA funded Climate Smart grant, seed-drill comparisons, precision ag technologies, variety trial results and nitrogen fertility. Other topics presented in previous years included cereal disease issues, production input costs and end-use quality.

Cereal grain producers prefer small local education events because they feel that topics can be tailored to their specific growing conditions. We held cereal

schools in Burley, Pocatello, Idaho Falls, St. Anthony, Grace and Preston.

Program Outcomes

In 2023, there were 241 participants across all locations (Burley, Pocatello, Idaho Falls, St. Anthony, Grace and Preston). Of those who completed the survey, 32 were farmers who collectively manage a total of 66,489 acres and who estimated they would save \$229,425 as they implement what they learned while

attending. The change in participants' knowledge was assessed using an end-of-workshop evaluation (N=46). Data was analyzed using an analysis of variance with $P \leq 0.05$. Results (see Figure) indicated a significant increase in knowledge among participants for each topic.

The Future

Cereal schools have been held in Idaho for decades. University of Idaho Extension educators and specialists are continually trying to adjust to meet the needs of producers. We will continue to seek input from producers and industry representatives to keep cereal school relevant.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The Idaho Wheat Commission and the Idaho Barley Commission have always been big supporters of the University of Idaho Extension cereal schools and have sponsored lunch at cereal schools for many years. Idaho Ag Credit has also supported the program by sponsoring refreshments at various locations. In cooperation with the Idaho Department of Agriculture, pesticide applicator recertification credits were offered at 2023 cereal schools.

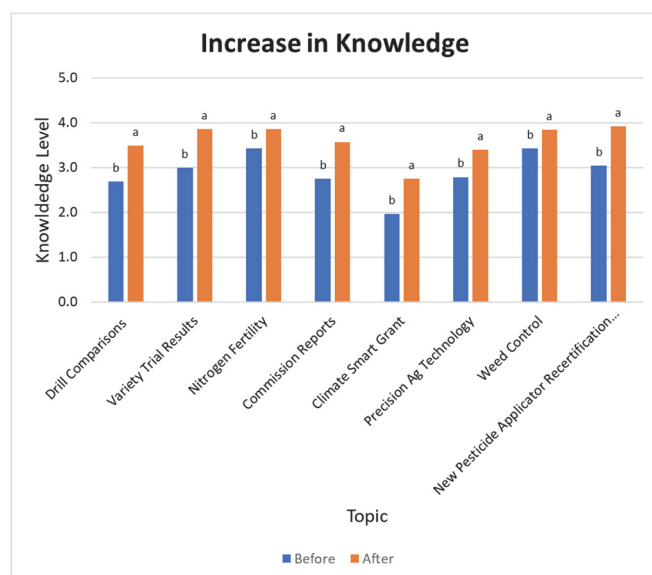


Figure: Change in participant knowledge.

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