

Workshop Title:

Growing the Grain Network

Speakers:

Ellen Mallory, Heather Darby

Executive Summary:

This session was a farmer-to-farmer discussion based session. Growers were able to bring up issues that they have experienced, questions they have, and they were also able to explain how they themselves have adjusted and dealt with issues. The speaker moderated the discussion, but it was mostly a farmer-to-farmer discussion. It was established that there could be great benefit by networking to continue discussions about the topic in the future.

Main Notes:

Note: Due to the nature of this session, anything that is said from the crowd will be in italics

- Speaker explains that it is a chance to raise questions that growers may have, as well as topics they would like to address
- The group (in a circle) went around the room saying names and farm information, took about 15 minutes
- Topics to discuss:
 - No till organics
 - *Adding no till peas into the cereal made the growers yield better for the rye while doing no till organics*
 - *How much peas do you plant? (To other grower from above)*

- *150 lbs. per acre, meadow and golden variety*
- *Do they stand well for you?*
 - *You may get a few rye plants growing that will hold the peas up, it does not hurt to have them hold the peas up, especially in wet weather*
- Speaker explains that it is likely a nitrogen issue, which is why the peas help
- There are new systems using other crops than rye, rolling them down
 - They have a different stem and the grower may be able to roll earlier and kill them
 - Speaker is interested in trying out other small grains
 - Some look at planting first, then rolling after
- Low tillage
 - *Three crops: Wheat, followed by soy beans, followed by clover*
 - *Had a problem with tillage, heads came up*
 - *Second problem was that soy beans came up well, grew well, and by the harvest time for wheat, the soy beans were competing with wheat so I didn't get as good as a yield. At the same time, nipping of tops of soy, if soy was planted by itself would have got a better yield. Then cross-seeded with clover, but it was loaded with quack grass. Trying to get as little tillage as possible. Where people are doing relay*

cropping, they plant soybeans on about the 15th of may so they do not sprout and compete with wheat crop

- *We see a lot of a farmers going to a pea/oat mixture. Leaves pea chips in our oats. Farmers seem to like it, and we have accepted that and its up to us to cater to that as we process the oats to adjust. We've seen a flourish of farmers doing that.*
- *We clean ours and separate peas from barley. I have a rotor cleaner (Not sure if this was the actual name) A traditional grain cleaner will clean it up depending on your level of peas. We separate purely for marketing*
- *There are some markets for peas and grains mixed*
- *In Quebec if you plant oats, wheat and peas together you know one will do better than the other. Kind of like crop insurance*
- *What is the better option for livestock purposes to grow with peas?*
 - *The biggest thing is to get maturity dates dead on. We planted with wheat, and it turned out better but its critical to get the maturity dates. The percentage is much more than 20% peas*
- *Has the speaker done anything with mixed grains?*
 - *Not mixed grains, but there needs to be more guidelines out there*

- *I have mixed both of them; peas and oats using a 90-day pea (have an early oat) but you have to be careful with what oat. The other way is oats, then wheat and then peas but I don't like putting barley and wheat together, it's a bit trickier. I can do a 15-16% protein ration with barley.*
- *I would be curious to know what is most successful crop rotation for quality of wheat? What is best protein in wheat for human consumption? We do clover, wheat, and clover wheat but don't make income off of clover. Putting peas, soy is an option trying to go into a 3-year rotation. What is the rotation*
 - Sometimes a one set rotation does not work. What's going to precede wheat to give the best chance of growth?
 - *Following the legumes seems to work. It's variable on every farm. In the mid-west, 3 years with corn, bean alfalfa. In southern Saskatchewan, it's 5 year with lentils, peas, etc. There's a decent straw market out there, which could be included to get some income. That just gets sold conventionally to local cattle farm*
 - *We run a 5-year rotation: clover, wheat, soybeans, adds in composted manure; plant mixed soil, followed by oats under seeded with clover. My thought that straight clover would give best benefit. This year I planted timothy in cooperation with clover hoping to tie up some free nitrogen. The other*

problem I have seen is 2 years of clover promotes cooch grass problem. But for costs, there does not seem to be a better option

- The reason we came was to foster more communication in our region. In each state, there's not a lot of organic but in the region, there is a lot. Is there a way we can communicate in this region? Would people value trying to set up a call that everyone could dial into?
 - *What about a chat room? That could be a great way to have lists and a record fostering communication so you could get in touch with specific farmers if you want.*
 - *For what it's worth, CSA farmers have a really active Facebook page with easily 40-50 conversations a day. People post a picture with a problem, and people respond with ways to help*
- It could be set up specifically for grains. We could also do webinars.