

Wheat Advantage



MAY 2026

SUSTAIN OUR FOOD FUTURE | GROW WHEAT

Farm Bill 2.0: What's at Stake for South Dakota Wheat Farmers

After years of delay, the Farm Bill is seeing action in Congress, and the stakes for South Dakota wheat farmers are real.

As this issue of the newsletter heads to the printer, the House will be voting on H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026, commonly called Farm Bill 2.0. Even after the House acts, the Senate will still need to take up and pass the bill – meaning this legislation

will remain front and center for months to come. Here's what you need to know, why it matters for wheat growers, and how members can make their voices heard.

Why Now – And Why It Matters

South Dakota wheat farmers are enduring one of the toughest farm economies in recent memory. For each of the past three years, the

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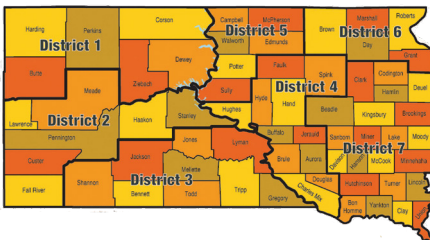
PO Box 667

Pierre, SD 57501

Office: 605-224-4418

SDWGA.org

SDWGA@midco.net



From the SDWGA Office

Spring is here, and so is a busy season — not just in the fields, but in the boardrooms and meeting rooms where decisions affecting South Dakota wheat growers are being made. Here's a look at what SDWGA has been up to on your behalf.

Advocating at the Federal Level - On May 7th, I'll be joining a couple of fellow SDWGA board members to meet with Ashlyne Beninga from Senator Thune's office. Our conversation will center on the legislative priorities that matter most right now: progress on the Farm Bill, rising fertilizer costs and concerns about long-term availability, securing durable access to international trade markets, and the need for meaningful economic relief for farmers who are navigating a challenging environment. These conversations matter, and we'll make sure South Dakota's voice is heard.

Strategic Planning for the Future - Looking ahead, the SDWGA board will be partnering with the South Dakota Wheat Commission on June 2nd for a strategic planning session. The goal is to identify the key opportunities and challenges facing our industry and to shape the direction of our priorities for the next three to five years. This kind of forward-thinking work is essential to ensuring SDWGA continues to serve members effectively.

NAWG Wants to Hear From You - As I've mentioned in previous columns, I've been involved in the National Association of Wheat Growers' strategic planning process. On Wednesday, May 13th, from 10-11 a.m. Central, NAWG will host a Virtual Input Session open to producers and stakeholders. This is your chance to make sure the national plan reflects what matters to growers here at home. I encourage you to participate.

Save the Date: McFadden Sculpture Dedication - Watch your email and Facebook for details on the upcoming dedication ceremony of the Edgar S. McFadden sculpture at SDSU in Brookings, which will be scheduled during an early-season home football game. The sculpture honors McFadden's extraordinary contributions to wheat research and his legacy in fighting hunger worldwide. All are welcome — it promises to be a wonderful celebration.

Wishing everyone a great growing season. Take care of yourselves.

- Jennifer Scharpe, SDWGA Executive Director



SOUTH DAKOTA WHEAT COMMISSION

2301 Research Park Way
Suite 253

Brookings, SD 57006

Jon Kleinjan, Executive Director

Office: 605-697-8033

Bryan Jorgensen, Chair

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average U.S. wheat farmer has posted a net loss — not because demand is weak (global demand for wheat remains strong), but because of a punishing combination of high input costs, prolonged low commodity prices, drought, and tighter credit conditions.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), passed last year, provided meaningful relief — including Title I program improvements and tax provisions that represented the largest federal investment in agriculture in decades. But because of Senate budget reconciliation rules, several key priorities for wheat growers couldn't be included. That's exactly what Farm Bill 2.0 is designed to address.

"Wheat farmers in South Dakota have weathered a lot in recent years — high input costs, tight credit, tough markets. A strong Farm Bill won't solve everything, but it gives us the tools and certainty we need to keep moving forward. Now is the time to get it done," said Steve Rumpza, president of SDWGA.

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SDWGA Is Engaged — and on Record

In April, the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association joined more than 330 agricultural organizations from all 50 states in signing a letter to House leadership urging swift passage of Farm Bill 2.0. The letter, led by the Farm Credit Council, was delivered to House Speaker Mike Johnson, Leader Hakeem Jeffries, and all House members.

"Farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses have been operating under Farm Bill policies written in 2018, and the landscape has changed significantly since that time," the letter noted. "Agriculture and rural America cannot continue to manage the challenges of 2026 with the solutions from 2018."

SDWGA also participated in a National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) call to action urging Congress to pass a strong Farm Bill, protect key wheat priorities, and oppose harmful amendments.

What's in Farm Bill 2.0 for Wheat Growers?

NAWG has identified five key priorities for wheat farmers in Farm Bill 2.0:

1. Farm Credit - Expand and modernize farm credit to ensure farmers have access to affordable, reliable financing — especially critical given today's high interest rates and rising input costs.

2. Food for Peace Program (H.R. 1207/S. 525) - Codify the transfer of the Food for Peace program from the State Department to USDA. About one-third of all U.S. wheat production goes to food aid — making this program a direct source of demand for South Dakota wheat. Placing it within USDA, which already administers similar programs like McGovern-Dole and Food for Progress, means more efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance and greater long-term program stability. Countries that start as Food for Peace recipients often become major commercial customers — the Philippines is a prime example, now one of the top buyers of U.S. wheat.

3. Agricultural Trade Promotion - Roll the new Supplemental Agricultural Trade Promotion Program from the OBBBA into the proven Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) programs, keeping U.S. wheat competitive in global markets.

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4. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) -

Reauthorize CRP to maintain working lands conservation tools that protect soil and water resources while supporting farm income stability.

5. Agricultural Labeling Uniformity - Prevent a growing patchwork of conflicting state pesticide label laws and reaffirm EPA's authority as the national standard for science-based, risk-based pesticide regulation. Consistency matters — farmers shouldn't have to navigate 50 different sets of rules to protect their crops.

A Budget Proposal Worth Watching

Adding urgency to the Farm Bill fight is President Trump's recently released FY2027 budget proposal, which calls for a \$4.9 billion cut to USDA — a 19% reduction from current levels. The proposal takes direct aim at programs that matter to wheat growers, including Food for Peace (proposed to drop from \$1.2 billion to just \$97 million) and McGovern-Dole (\$240 million targeted for cuts). Both are longstanding drivers of demand for U.S.-grown wheat and critical tools for global food security.

It's important to note that the President's budget is a proposal, not law — Congress controls the power of the purse and will determine final funding levels through the appropriations process. But the proposal signals where the administration's priorities lie, and it makes congressional action on the Farm Bill — including codifying Food for Peace's transfer to USDA — all the more important. NAWG is actively engaging House and Senate Agriculture appropriators to advocate for robust funding of these programs, and SDWGA is behind that effort. 

What You Can Do


Congress needs to hear from farmers. NAWG has made it easy — visit wheatworld.org to send a message directly to your Representative urging them to:

- Support the Farm Bill and its key wheat grower priorities
- Protect pesticide labeling uniformity provisions
- Protect the Food for Peace transfer to USDA
- Oppose harmful amendments that would weaken these provisions

You can also contact South Dakota's congressional delegation directly:

- Senator John Thune: thune.senate.gov | (202) 224-2321
- Senator Mike Rounds: rounds.senate.gov | (202) 224-5842
- Representative Dusty Johnson: dustyjohnson.house.gov | (202) 225-2801

South Dakota wheat growers have a strong voice in Washington — but only when we use it. The Farm Bill affects every acre you plant, every loan you take out, and every bushel you sell. Let your representatives know where you stand.

For more information on SDWGA's legislative priorities or to get involved, contact the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association at SDWGA@midco.net or 605-224-4418. 

PUT YOUR BUSINESS IN FRONT OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The SDWGA *Wheat Advantage* reaches 4,500 South Dakota wheat and grain growers with every issue — producers who are making purchasing decisions for their operations. Published multiple times a year, inserted in *Prairie Grains* magazine. Rates start at \$125. Call Jennifer at 605-224-4418 or email SDWGA@midco.net.

2026 SOUTH DAKOTA WHEAT YIELD CONTEST

Showcase Your Operation. Compete for Top Yields. Win Recognition.

Open to South Dakota wheat
producers across 7 districts

Recognizing top-performing
winter and spring wheat growers

Winners announced at annual
Ag Horizons Conference on
December 1, 2026

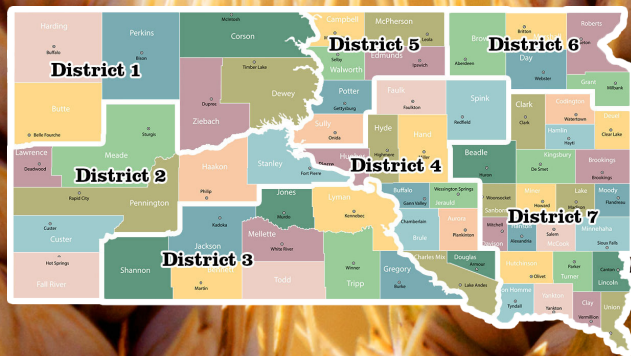
CATEGORIES

- Winter Wheat
- Spring Wheat

Awards (per district)

- 1st Place: \$500 + plaque
- 2nd Place: \$300 + plaque

Winners will be awarded in each category
in 7 districts across SD.



NEW DEADLINES & UPDATED RULES

For complete contest information, rules, and forms,
visit <https://sdwga.org/wheat-yield-contest/>

KEY DEADLINES

- Winter Wheat Entry Deadline: June 1, 2026
- Spring Wheat Entry Deadline: July 31, 2026
- Harvest Data Due: October 1, 2026

WHO CAN ENTER

- Must be a SDWGA member
- Membership dues can be included with entry (\$100 for 1-year or \$250 for 3-years)
- Multiple entries allowed

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- Minimum 5-acre field
- At least 1.5 acres harvested for yield
- Must be verified by a third-party supervisor

HOW TO ENTER

- Enter online at SDWGA.org
- Or submit paper forms (available at a sponsors' location, download from website, or by email request to sdwga@midco.net)
- Entry and Harvest Form required for a complete entry



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WHEAT GROWERS ASSOCIATION™

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The Summer Scouting Calendar: Protecting Your 2026 Yield Potential

With moisture deficits across much of South Dakota, the 2026 crop is already facing stress before we hit the critical summer window. As we move from May into the high-stakes reproductive stages of June and July, scouting is about making smart, timely decisions that protect yield potential. Since our next newsletter won't reach you until September, use this as your guide for managing the summer ahead.

May-June: Disease, Scab & Insects

The flag leaf and head together contribute roughly 70–75% of final grain yield — this is the most critical window to protect the plant, and it moves fast.

Foliar Disease

Scout the lower canopy first, then work upward. Three diseases to watch: **stripe rust** (yellow-orange pustules in stripes), **leaf rust** (brown circular pustules scattered across the leaf), and **tan spot** (brown lesions with a yellow halo, moving up from lower leaves). If any are visible on the leaf just below the flag leaf, a fungicide application may be warranted.

Fusarium Head Blight (Scab)

As wheat begins flowering — watch for yellow anthers emerging from the head — the window opens for FHB. Apply fungicide at early anthesis (roughly 50% of heads showing anthers) if risk is elevated and moisture is in the forecast. Effectiveness drops off significantly beyond 6–7 days after flowering begins.

Important: Do not use strobilurin fungicides (FRAC code 11 — Headline, Quadris) after heading — research shows they can increase DON levels, leading to dockage or rejection at the elevator. Products with proven FHB suppression include Prosaro, Prosaro Pro, Miravis Ace, Caramba, and Sphaerex.

Use the **FHB Prediction Center** (scabusa.org) and **SD Mesonet FHB Tool** (sdmeso.sdstate.edu) to assess risk before spraying. Both are

free; scabusa.org also offers email and text alerts.

Aphids & Mites

As temperatures rise, watch for aphid and mite pressure — especially under drought stress. Key thresholds: Bird Cherry-Oat Aphid at 20–30 per stem pre-heading; English Grain Aphid at ~50 per stem pre-heading. Treating below threshold can backfire by wiping out beneficial predators. In high heat, English grain aphids often drop to the lower canopy — check the base of the plant, not just the heads. In dry years, also watch for **brown wheat mite**, identified by white or bronze stippling on leaves.



Leaf rust infected leaves. Photo source: USDA Agricultural Research Service

Refer to the **SD Pest Management Guide: Wheat** (SDSU Extension) for current thresholds and product recommendations.

July-August: Grasshoppers, Sawfly & the Green Bridge

Grasshoppers

Dry conditions in 2026 are expected to push grasshopper pressure higher. Scout field edges early. Treatment thresholds: ~21 adults per square yard in margins; ~8 per square yard within the field.

Wheat Stem Sawfly

Sawfly is only a meaningful concern in **Harding and Perkins counties** in northwestern South Dakota. If you farm outside that area, it is not

a major factor in your management. In sawfly country, the primary tool is planting solid-stem varieties — there is no effective in-season insecticide. At harvest, split stems from the base to check for larvae; prioritize infested fields for early harvest to reduce lodging.

Breaking the Green Bridge (August)

After harvest, destroy all volunteer wheat and grassy weeds at least **two weeks before planting** winter wheat. This breaks the habitat that keeps wheat curl mites — and the Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus they carry — alive between seasons. Mites can blow from neighboring fields up to two miles away, so this works best as a community-wide effort.


Additional steps to reduce WSMV risk:

- Delay fall planting until mid-September in high-pressure areas
- Select varieties with WSMV resistance (see SDSU Wheat Variety Trial Results)

- Rotate to broadleaf crops in fields with repeated WSMV history

The Scouting Toolbox

- **SDSU Extension (extension.sdstate.edu)** — Weekly updates and the SD Pest Management Guide: Wheat
- **SD Mesonet Small Grains Disease Tool (sdmeso.sdstate.edu)** — Localized FHB, tan spot, and leaf blotch forecasting
- **FHB Prediction Center (scabusa.org)** — National risk map and free alerts
- **Crop Protection Network (cropprotectionnetwork.org)** — Fungicide efficacy tables; the first stop before any spray decision

In a tough year like 2026, every pass across the field should be intentional. Matching crop condition, pest pressure, and weather outlook to the right decision at the right time is what protects both yield and profitability. The tools are there. Use them. 



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Growing Forward Together

JOIN THE SOUTH DAKOTA WHEAT GROWERS ASSOCIATION

When you join SDWGA, you get:

A voice in Pierre and Washington — We advocate for wheat growers at the state legislature and work alongside the National Association of Wheat Growers on federal policy, including the Farm Bill, crop insurance, and food aid programs that directly affect your bottom line.

Information you can use — The *Wheat Advantage* newsletter, delivered multiple times a year, keeps you current on production, markets, research, and legislative developments that impact your operation.

Education that pays off — Members get access to our annual Ag Horizons Conference (December 1, 2026) and upcoming Rotate Into Profit seminars designed to help you make the most of every acre.

A community of growers — Connect with fellow wheat farmers across South Dakota who share your challenges and your commitment to the industry. Plus, members are able to participate in the South Dakota Wheat Yield Contest.

FOR AG INDUSTRY & BUSINESSES: Associate memberships start at \$250 and offer sponsorship opportunities, advertising reach to 4,500+ grain producers, and a direct connection to South Dakota's wheat community. Visit SDWGA.org to learn more or call Jennifer at 605-224-4418.

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Please cut on the dotted line and mail.

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Please select membership level:

- Grower \$100**
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Or go to SDWGA.org or scan the QR code to pay online.

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