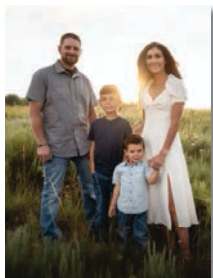




## Malting Barley and Using Crop Insurance

BY NOEL COLE, CROP INSURANCE AGENT / FARMER  
FOLLOW HER ON INSTAGRAM @WHEATAT5000FT

Malting barley has recently humbled me, not only as a farmer but also as a crop insurance agent. The adage “never stop learning, because life never stops teaching” comes to mind.



My own farm uses the Malting Barley Endorsement to insure our barley acres and many of the insureds that I work with also use it. For those of you that are unfamiliar with the Malting Barley Endorsement (MBE), I will provide a brief summary in my own words. The MBE provides additional quality protection, it uses malt contracts to establish projected and harvest prices, and rejection of production by the buyer for failure to meet the standards contained in the contract can be an insured cause of loss as long as certain conditions are met. One of those conditions is that the production must be sampled and quality determinations must be made no later than 90-days after the insurance period. The MBE is available in selected counties in 13 states including Idaho. It is a wonderful risk management tool for those that contract malting barley, but it is not absolutely bullet proof.

My schooling started after we received a considerable amount of moisture during harvest, 2023, in the southeastern part of the state. This moisture led to pre-germination (non-visible sprouting) also known as chitting. Pre-germination reduces barley’s ability to maintain a high level of germination especially during long storage. It still can produce good quality malt but it must be used soon after harvest.

So, in theory, a farmer who samples their barley shortly after harvest would be within all contract specs for germination and sprout, but that same sample months later might be out of spec due to the barley losing germination capacity, and this is exactly what I witnessed this year. A rapid visco analysis, or RVA, can help predict whether barley is at risk of losing germination energy for malting. This is not definite because storage conditions and moisture content at harvest should also be used to predict safe storage time.

Most of the barley in my area is farm stored. Some do not finish delivering their barley until right before



harvest the following year, which is far past the 90-day condition set forth in the Malting Barley Endorsement. To navigate this, samples are taken at harvest time and evaluated by the maltsters. Any quality issues discovered at this time can easily be managed. Pre-germination is a bit tricky, as we discussed earlier. In 2023, I had insureds believe that that all of their barley was within contract spec based on the initial sample. They were later blindsided at delivery time because the barley was no longer viable due to poor germination. Linking this to an insurable cause of loss and proving that it was not caused by improper handling or storage conditions is where the water becomes muddy.

Pre-germination has caused a conundrum. I have researched and reached out to multiple sources over the past few months to try and come up with the best way to navigate it. Sending samples to a third-party lab has been brought up multiple times; I don’t think you can have too many samples especially if you suspect quality issues. Sampling at harvest and again right before the 90-day deadline might be helpful in detecting changes in germination and sprout. Delivering barley as soon as possible after harvest is not always achievable, but working with the maltster to move anything that is chitted or is known to be a susceptible variety can be advantageous. Inquiring about RVA values and working with the maltster to come up with the best storage solution moving forward was recommended. The reoccurring theme is that a good rapport with the maltster is imperative. A change to existing policy or a new storage endorsement has also been suggested.

It is always nice to hear experiences from other farmers on how risk management tools are helping their operation. Discussing shortcomings and trying to brainstorm solutions is not always pleasant; however, it



is important. IGPA’s Risk Management Committee is a great asset to grain farmers and has been successful in taking things up the chain. I am sure there are many that would like to file grievances against malting barley after the 2023 crop year. It is my hope that we can use them as traction to facilitate change.

This is a very brief and condensed summary of the Malting Barley Endorsement in my own words, it is not the complete policy. Policy language is continually being updated. For further information about risk management needs, contact a crop insurance agent. ■



## Local Working Groups Help NRCS Focus Conservation Efforts in Communities

BY CARLY WHITMORE, USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

You may have heard from your local USDA service center about the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs being locally-led. But, what does “locally-led conservation” mean? In Idaho, NRCS is committed having communities direct where they want federal conservation dollars go. To accomplish this, communities across Idaho meet annually to discuss resource concerns and problem areas, and to decide what are the most important natural resource issues in their area for NRCS to focus its funding on.

These local working groups (LWGs) meet annually in the summer and fall and, depending on where you live, sometimes in the spring. Anyone may attend and contribute ideas. The beauty of LWGs is how diverse they are, both in terms of agricultural products and viewpoints. Attendance should include a variety of producers – ranging from livestock and poultry raised in the area, to crops of all kinds and private forest landowners. Additionally, representatives from other government agencies may join the conversation, as well as private industry groups or individuals who are curious as to the priorities of the region. A diverse group helps NRCS employees gather ideas and opinions, and can produce creative requests and solutions that fit the needs of those involved.

In Idaho, there are 17 NRCS Conservation Delivery Teams – each with their own local working group. There is also a working group for Tribes and Tribal members. LWG numbers vary in size, from only a handful of attendees to a packed conference room, with attendees joining virtually if that option works best for them.

What does an LWG discuss during their meetings? Anything related to conservation and USDA conservation programs! The group’s responsibilities include:

- Developing a conservation needs assessment to identify conservation solutions to natural resource problems;
- Identifying priority resource concerns that can be addressed by NRCS programs;
- Assisting NRCS and the local conservation district(s) with public outreach and information efforts; and
- Identifying education and informational needs of the community.

Local working groups address a wide swath of topics, and welcome input from anyone. Meetings are a directed discussion, and may be supported by outside facilitators in order to help groups better meet their objectives. These facilitators are not always a member of the community, but they are always committed to the working group’s goal: to commit to a common vision of conservation.

Local working groups are an important part of Idaho’s commitment to conservation, and you’re invited to join your local meeting and provide your input. To learn more about NRCS local working groups or to find yours, visit [nrcs.usda.gov/idaho](https://nrcs.usda.gov/idaho) or stop into your local USDA Service Center. ■

# National Barley Improvement Committee Introduces Resilient Barley Initiative on Capitol Hill

The National Barley Improvement Committee, which represents the U.S. barley community of growers, researchers, processors, users, and allied industries, conducted its annual advocacy trip to Washington D.C. in March. The team of nearly 30 barley enthusiasts from across the country participated in over 100 Hill visits advocating on behalf of federal research funding for the barley industry. Idaho Barley Commissioner Mike Wilkins of Rupert and Executive Director Laura Wilder were part of this effort.

NBIC’s priority ask sought to establish a new research venture with the USDA Agricultural Research Service and Land Grant University partners entitled the Resilient Barley Initiative (RBI). The RBI seeks to address abiotic stressors, related to climate change, that have dramatically impacted yield and quality of the barley crop in recent years. As a result, industry has felt disruptions in supply, resulting in imported barley, which is exacerbated by farmers’ decision to not grow the risk-laden crop.

A collaborative team of researchers across 18 states will accelerate resilient barley line development and variety adoption, taking into account unique geographical needs posed by a changing climate. Improved genetics will promote a greater utilization of inputs, mitigation of risk, and positive ecological impact from crop adoption. Replicated cropping system trials will be deployed to better understand management practices for barley and the systems that can best support input use efficiency. Winter barley is a special focus within both approaches - genetics and management - to better understand the tangible ecosystem benefits provided while producing a high quality and profitable crop for



IBC’s Laura Wilder, left, and Mike Wilkins in Washington D.C. with the National Barley Improvement Committee.



U.S. Barley Industry Representatives joining the 2024 National Barley Improvement Committee in Washington D.C.

farmers. In addition to introducing this new initiative, an annual funding request was made of \$8,000,000 annually to be included in the FY25 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration Bill.

NBIC members also advocated for an increase in the funding levels for the Barley Pest Initiative (BPI). The BPI is an effort to strengthen research capacity to address over 20 insects and diseases that impact barley yield and quality through development of new resistant varieties and management strategies. In the most recent spending bill (FY24), the BPI received \$3.5 million in support, but the NBIC team is actively working to secure an additional \$1.8 million to bring the total in FY25 to \$5.3 million annually. Already, in just three years of partial funding, the researchers working on the BPI have made great progress. You can read more about this work on the American Malting Barley Association website. In addition to the RBI and BPI, support was also vocalized for other initiatives and agencies within the USDA that are critical to the barley industry as outlined in their legislative priorities.

“Once again, the NBIC brought a diverse and strong team of barley advocates to the Hill. In a year we were prepared for funding cuts, the increase in funding for the Barley Pest Initiative was welcomed news,” said Ashley McFarland, who serves as executive secretary of the NBIC. “Furthermore, the Resilient Barley Initiative received a warm reception in many offices and we are hopeful in its establishment in FY25.” ■

# Idaho Barley Commission Welcomes New Communications and Program Manager

The Idaho Barley Commission is pleased to welcome new Communications and Program Manager, Sydney Anderson.



Anderson, from Nampa is a graduate of the College of Southern Idaho where she earned associate degrees in both Agriculture Business and Equine Studies, and the University of Idaho where she earned a B.S. degree in Agriculture Science, Communication and Leadership Development.

Besides her formal education, she completed a number of successful internships, including working alongside former U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, and serving as an International Relations

Intern for the California Chamber of Commerce, as well as traveling to South Africa for the International Leadership Seminar for State Officers through the National FFA Organization.

In her youth, she was involved in 4-H and FFA programs at the local, state and national level, and she current serves as a local 4-H leader and is active in the Nampa FFA Alumni.

After spending time in Colorado, Anderson is eager to invest in her roots again and expand her passion for service in Idaho agriculture. She looks forward to serving Idaho barley growers and providing resources to educate others on the importance of Idaho barley. We are very excited to have her as part of the IBC team! She can be reached at [Sydney.Anderson@barley.idaho.gov](mailto:Sydney.Anderson@barley.idaho.gov). ■

# IBC Represents Idaho Growers at Spring U.S. Grains Council Meetings

Idaho barley growers were well represented at the U.S. Grains Council International Marketing Conference and Annual Membership meeting in Guatemala City, Guatemala earlier this spring by IBC commissioners Josh Jones and JC Olson, along with Executive Director Laura Wilder.

USGC is an important market development partner for IBC in adding value back to growers.

This event provided members with an overview of the Council’s strategy for the coming year and included several Advisory Team (A-Team) sessions, where experts in various agricultural commodities and markets come together to conduct market and commodity-specific deep-dives and share experiences relevant to their industry for this year. Both Jones and Olson participated in Western Hemisphere A-Team meetings. U.S. barley sector attendees also met together to discuss barley specific programs.

“Trade is a long game,” said Jones, IBC Chairman. “We are working to establish new markets for barley, as well as maintaining and growing existing trade relationships and our involvement with U.S. Grains Council helps tremendously in these efforts.”



IBC Commissioners Josh Jones, left, and JC Olson, along with Executive Director Laura Wilder at the USGC International Marketing Conference in Guatemala City.

In addition, Wilder joined U.S. Grains Council (USGC) staff from its nine worldwide offices and representatives from other state commodity checkoff partner organizations for the Council’s biannual Global Industry Partners Conference (GIPC) held in Marrakech, Morocco in March.

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GIPC is an important conference for aligning Council staff and state checkoff staff on USGC market development strategies and provided an excellent opportunity for U.S.-based staff and members to connect with international staff face to face and gain detailed knowledge about the Council's programs and strategic vision, as well as work on future joint programming.

Topics for the week centered around Council programming plans that will be possible thanks in part to additional funding opportunities via the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Regional Access Promotion Program (RAPP). Attendees also received updates on the organization's trade policy and sustainability efforts and received market-by-market updates on ethanol and feed grains from directors in its international offices. Wilder presented at the meeting on behalf of the U.S. barley sector. ■

## Barley Yield Contest Makes its debut in Idaho – Idaho Entries Open for 2024

In the last decade, the Idaho barley industry has made its mark on the national and international level bringing in record yields. Building on this momentum, the Idaho Barley Commission (IBC), in collaboration with industry partners, has taken the reins to launch the Barley Yield Contest. The 2024 Pilot Program will take place in Idaho, with plans to expand the contest nationally next year.

In 2023, Idaho produced 32.7 percent of the nation's barley supply with 60.48 million bushels on 540,000 acres harvested. It's no surprise Idaho leads the nation in barley production, due to higher yields on primarily irrigated acres compared to the nation's other major barley growing areas. It makes sense that the first-ever Barley Yield Contest is launched in Idaho.

Barley growers can enter in three divisions: Spring Dryland Barley, Irrigated Spring Barley and Irrigated Winter Barley. Entrants will provide information on their management practices and a final yield count recorded on their harvest reports. The grower with the highest yield will be named the state winner and awarded a trip to the 2025 Commodity Classic in Denver, Colorado. The collection of data will create a collaborative report of management practices with seed variety performance. An analysis of these successful seed varieties and management practices will be available for consideration by other growers, industry partners and research programs.

This contest provides more than recognition for growers, it offers the opportunity of collaboration exchanges to create new standards within the barley industry. It serves as a platform for growers to demonstrate their expertise, share best practices, and compete for recognition in producing high-quality barley yields. As a vital part of Idaho's agricultural heritage, barley contributes



significantly to our economy and sustains livelihoods throughout the region. IBC hopes this contest serves as a catalyst to set the standard for yield recognition and research programs.

“The Barley Yield Contest represents an opportunity to showcase the potential of barley in Idaho and beyond. By encouraging growers to push the boundaries of barley production, we're not just celebrating individual achievements but driving the entire industry forward,” said Brett Wilken of Scoular who has been helping to organize the 2024 pilot. “The contest embodies innovation, and I am honored to be part of a program that not only promotes competition, but also showcases the vital role barley plays in Idaho.”

The Idaho Barley Commission invites growers and industry partners to join in this historic event. As the contest unfolds, a new industry standard will be set with more opportunities to follow. Contest details are available now on the Commission's website at <https://idahobarleycommission.org>. ■