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Elite barley producers share ideas

MERISTEM RELEASE

The "Elite Barley, Canadian Malting Barley Grower Recognition Program," recently named the 10 farmers selected by industry as top producers for the year. The goal of the program is to promote grower best management practices for malting barley, and showcase the value that malt and malt barley bring to western Canadian agriculture and the Canadian economy.

Michael Edney, of the Canadian Grain Commission, co-chair of the Elite Barley program, says several management techniques emerged from the information collected from these producers during the nomination process.

The majority of producers used certified seed which they indicated helps reduce disease pressures, says Edney. They use soil tests to assist with field selection. Canola stubble is the preferred choice and cereal stubble is never considered an option.

These top growers seed early and try new varieties.

Straight cutting is preferred at harvest, but the decision typically depends on weather and uneven maturity problems. When swathing is required, growers tend to leave barley standing as long as possible and only swath when the window available to allow

combining is within a few days. The goal is fewer than four days.

Most growers use production contracts to assist with marketing.

What was learned from last year's tough weather? "Sampling was one of the most important aspects of producing malt barley in the tough year of 2010," says Edney. "The sample must represent the barley in the bin. Storage with aeration is essential for malting barley. Using small bins allow segregation of varying quality."

The growers nominated for 2010 are: Roger Begrand, St. Louis, Sask.; Ryan and Lauren Maurer, Grenfell, Sask.; Hewson Farm Corp, Langbank, Sask.; Bob Copeland, Rosetown, Sask.; Jeffery Wheaton, Biggar, Sask.; Ironwheel Farms Inc., Shaunavon, Sask.; Howard Linnell, Hafford, Sask.; Bork Farm, Chipman, Alta.; Verdant Hutterite Colony, Drumheller, Alta.; and the Sunshine Hutterite Brethren, Hussar, Alta.

The Elite Barley, Canadian Malting Barley Grower Recognition Program is sponsored by: the Alberta Barley Commission, BASF, Brewers Association of Canada, Brewing and Malting Barley Research Institute, Canadian Wheat Board, Prairie Malt, SeCan, Seed-Ex Inc., Syngenta and Rahr Malting Canada Ltd.

