**QUALITY OVER QUANTITY**

Malt barley harvest report sheds light on the 2015 crop year

By Sydney Duhaime

If one word could sum up the 2015 growing season, it would be “unpredictable.”

For farmers across Western Canada, 2015’s unco-operative weather made for a suspenseful crop year—one that left many worried that their crop might not make it to harvest, especially in the case of malt barley.

While it is normally a rewarding crop to grow, malt barley can be sensitive to extreme weather and a tough growing season. However, according to the Quality of Western Canadian Malting Barley Annual Harvest Report, malt barley proved to be resilient and survived 2015’s unpredictability.

**Inside the report**

Created by the Grain Research Laboratory (GRL) at the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) and the Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre (CMBTC), this annual report (available at grainscanada.gc.ca) provides marketers and buyers with an in-depth look at malt production and quality in Western Canada.

Marta Izydorczyk, research scientist and program manager with the CGC, explained that the results of this report also show how the demand for malt barley and select varieties is changing. This is information farmers can use, in conjunction with the yield data, to make the best varietal choice for them.

“This year, our survey was based on 62 composite samples that represented more than one million tonnes of barley selected for malting,” Izydorczyk said.

Samples are provided by grain handling and malting companies, which allows the GRL and the CMBTC to create a malt harvest report complete with weather conditions, specific characteristics (starch, protein and germination levels), seeded varieties and overall varietal yields.

**Up-and-coming varieties**

The 2015 barley harvest in Western Canada was an estimated 7.78 million tonnes, and, for the most part, malt barley acres were seeded with two dependable varieties: AC Metcalfe and CDC Copeland. In fact, these varieties of choice occupied a combined 73.9 per cent of Western Canada’s malt barley acres.

Although AC Metcalfe and CDC Copeland are staple malt varieties in Western Canada, a few new varieties are growing in interest among farmers and, more recently, the malting and brewing industries as well.

“Bentley, CDC Kindersley, AAC Synergy are becoming more popular,” Izydorczyk said. “I think we will probably see more and more interest in new varieties. I have the impression that we are going to see a much higher percentage of acres grown with these varieties.”

Wade McAllister, an Alberta Barley delegate and farmer from the Penhold area, has a growing interest in these new varieties too. “Synergy looks like it is going to be the new up-and-coming variety,” he said. “Rahr is looking at getting some more acres in of Synergy, so we are looking at putting some in next year.”

**Quality and price**

In terms of quality, malt barley from the 2015 harvest was a bit of a mixed bag. Harvest samples showed some signs of pre-harvest sprouting and higher-than-average levels of protein—less than ideal characteristics for malting.

Peter Watts, managing director of the CMBTC, explained that the late-August and early-September rains caused sprouting, which downgraded the quality of barley. However, “anything that was harvested before the rains was relatively good quality and, in some cases, very good quality,” he said.
Malcolm MacDougall, who farms near Champion in southern Alberta, knows firsthand the damage harvest-time rain can cause. “If you get rain at the wrong time and your malt barley turns to feed, it goes from one of your best-paying crops to one of your worst-paying crops,” he said.

MacDougall said his malt barley was much better than expected, despite the drought conditions that occurred to varying degrees throughout the province in 2015. “We weren’t expecting a lot from our barley. It was a hot and dry summer, then we had a lot of rain and hail.”

McAllister also experienced issues with rain when harvesting his malt barley. “Harvest was challenging towards the end,” he said. “We try to get our malt off before the rain . . . so we can make malt.”

Luckily for McAllister, he was able to get the barley off the field before the rain came—and luckier still, all of his barley made malt. “The quality was excellent, probably some of the best barley we have ever grown,” he said. “Proteins were low, plumpness was good and the yields were incredible.”

Despite the unpredictable weather, MacDougall and McAllister were not alone in their results. The 2015 malt harvest had higher-than-average kernel weight and plumpness, high extract levels, good germination and slightly above-average yields and acres (a 12-per-cent increase over the previous year).

In addition to yields and acres increasing, demand for malt barley only continues to grow—and the price forecast looks promising.

“I think the demand should remain strong for malting barley because supplies are tight,” Watts said. “We should see prices as relatively strong in 2016, at least early in the season, as producers are making seeding decisions.”

ALBERTA BARLEY’S AGM AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

By Ellen Cottee

Buoyed by a successful 2015 harvest, Alberta’s barley industry looks to continue the momentum into 2016. However, before taking on the new year, farmers and industry alike had the opportunity to learn about exciting opportunities and the increased potential for the world’s oldest cereal grain at Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting.

Hosted at the Banff Springs Hotel, Dec. 9 to 10, the 2015 AGM was a chance for Alberta’s barley producers and industry members to come together, learn and look forward.

“This is the time when we reflect on the activities and accomplishments of the past year and work towards the future,” said chairman Mike Ammeter, as he kicked off the meeting.

“It wouldn’t be an agriculture conference without sustainability on the agenda,” added Erin Gowriluk, government relations and policy manager for Alberta Wheat Commission.

As she updated attendees on the Alberta Crops Sustainability Project, Gowriluk discussed the sustainability goals and standards set forth by the new federal government. “Given the work we have done, and the interest and engagement many of you have demonstrated in this area,” Gowriluk said, “we are well positioned to work collaboratively to help the federal government reach their sustainability objectives.”

albertabarley.com
In addition to addressing the shifting world of environmental standards, maintaining the sustainability of Canadian barley markets also remains a focus for 2016. Kenric Exner of Viterra highlighted the growing competition with other barley-rich countries as a concern, especially in terms of exports and demand into China, during his presentation on export and domestic markets. “Ensuring barley’s risk and returns to the producer remain competitive versus competing commodities is a major priority in order to grow or preserve barley’s acreage base,” he explained.

Exner cited Canada’s growing number of craft breweries as a major force keeping the domestic demand for malt barley strong. With over 400 breweries opening in Canada between 2004 and 2014, and global beer production rising, malt barley has become a key domestic and export market player.

During his update on the commission’s activities, Alberta Barley’s general manager, Rob Davies, discussed how to keep the malt barley industry sustainable and competitive. With more than 20 malt varieties available, Davies outlined why producers largely stick with AC Metcalfe and CDC Copeland, varieties registered in 1994 and 1999, respectively. “Malt barley growers are basically holding almost 70 per cent of their eggs in a basket that is 15 to 20 years old,” Davies explained. “That is hurting our competitiveness both in the field and internationally.”

Davies said market development work to improve both domestic and international acceptance of new varieties is critical. When buyers accept new varieties, it will allow producers the opportunity to grow newer varieties with better yields and to increase their net returns per acre.

On the industry side, Gord Winkel from the University of Alberta gave producers a look at what safety and sustainability can mean for an essential yet often misunderstood sector. Building on his mining industry experience, Winkel’s presentation, titled “The Sustainability Imperative,” included sound advice for Alberta’s barley producers. “If you don’t tell your story, someone else will,” he said. “And you might not like it.”

Similar to mining, agricultural communities are located in rural or remote areas, yet many of the negative perceptions of the sector come from large urban centres. According to Winkel, this means people who have no experience in the industry are passing judgment on the practices of an industry they rely on.

In 2016, members of Alberta’s barley industry will have to come together to work towards sustainability goals while ensuring their story is being told and, most importantly, understood. With the tools, tips and information presented at Alberta Barley’s AGM, they are starting the year off on the right foot.
POSTER SESSION HELPS CONNECT RESEARCHERS AND PRODUCERS

Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.

“Building relationships is a key element of Alberta Barley’s annual general meeting. With plenty of opportunities to network and connect, the two-day event proved to be a major success in 2015. During the AGM, the research poster session presented a unique opportunity for producers to learn the latest on effective feeding and barley use research from the researchers themselves.

Participants in the poster session distilled their research into poster format and presented it to AGM attendees mingling in the hall of the Banff Springs Hotel. The 16 students and researchers were judged in five different categories—poster organization, research content, communication, question and answer, and importance to the industry.

The three winners—Larisa Jancewicz, Krysty Munns and Gabriel Ribeiro—were all graduate students conducting research at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s (AAFC) Lethbridge Research and Development Centre.