

2020 Kernza call series: Current and prospective growers, industry, partners

Date: March 9, 2020

Linda Meschke, Bill Jokela, Jen Wagner-Lahr, Connie Carlson, Colin Cureton, Doug Bos, Jake Jungers, Jim Anderson, Stan Vander Kooi (Buffalo, current grower), Larry Liepold, Jay Peterson (SW MN, potential grower), Ben Penner, Jim Falk, Kory Durst (potential grower), Linda Meschke (Rural Advantage), Dale Anderson (potential grower, Cambridge), Jade Estling (Roseau, grower), Aaron (Cedar Rapids), Matt Liephon (AURI), Jason Robinson (AURI), Harold Stanislawski, Peter LaFontaine (FMR), Doug Bos (Rock County)

Connie: Do we need a review of the licensing terms? Sounds like none needed.

Jay Peterson: Haven't gone through that process, but will and need to be caught up.

Question: When should we get a seed inquiry in?

Connie: ASAP.

Carmen: If folks do apply, how long should they wait before following up?

Connie: Two weeks.

Colin: To clarify, the MN inquiries will come to myself and Connie. Non-MN grower inquiries will stay with TLI.

Jay Peterson: Considering growing Kernza. Following organic buckwheat. Timing?

Jake: What time do you think that might come off by?

Jay: Well, this is my first time growing buckwheat. So I'm not really sure.

Jim A: Maybe mid-to-late September? That's pushing it.

Jay: Any ideas for other Spring-planted crop to precede Kernza?

Stan: I followed wheat, planted Sept. 20. Seemed to come up fine.

Kurt: Spring grain, underseed a nitrogen fixing legume. Take off in late summer. Terminate and plant around September 1.

Kory Durst: Some heiffer hay. Then disc it down. Have it ready by late August

Dale: Some turkey litter. Spring oats. Might cut it for forage in early August, and have it ready for Kernza by late August. Maybe top dress it with Turkey litter.

Ben: Have some winter wheat out there now, then oats. Should come off mid/late July.

Carmen: Do you have concerns about survival of the winter wheat along with the Kernza?

Ben: Well, I've had pretty good experience taking care of the winter wheat.

Carmen: I've followed rye with winter wheat, and had some issues with survival.

Ben: I've had trouble with rye but not winter wheat.

Bill Jokela: Have you found there's enough time to plant a small grain prior and still get a mature grain off?

Carmen: Plenty of time to harvest small grain, generally first or second week in August. Plenty of time to get that off, apply manure,

Ben: 15th-25th of August winter wheat comes off. Been able to get it off and worked in, in time.

Luke: I'm going to try to follow buckwheat. Mostly my concern is vomitoxin in Kernza. If there's seed availability, I'd like to try this. Buckwheat is pretty short season, maybe 10 weeks,

Kory: Maybe 10 weeks for buckwheat, that's what I've seen.

Kurt: I planted buckwheat a couple years ago. A high temperature caused an issue to the flowers. It was so bad didn't make sense to run the combine through that area. The risk of planting buckwheat early is that you'll have it flowering in the heat of the summer.

Luke: When did you plant that, Kurt?

Kurt: Maybe around the first of July, maybe end of June. I could look at my records. It was maybe 90 degrees, not 105. I was surprised how touchy it was.

Carmen: Dry field peas could be an excellent crop to precede Kernza. Comes off late July, nitrogen fixing. If you can find a market for it.

Stan: Barley and peas. Would need a market, perhaps a dairy that would want to grind that up.

Grower: I'll be putting some acres in of peas for a local canning company, so that would be an option as well.

Connie: Anyone scratch back some snow and see how things are looking?

Luke: One from two years ago is maybe six inches high and very green. One from last year is very brown and black. But I think there's some good root growth there. I'm feeling good about it overall.

Ben: What's the frost/freeze situation looking like?

Luke: I scraped back a few feet of snow, and tried to get in to the soil, but it was frozen.

Ben: Is water coming out of the field?

Luke: Not much water coming out. We could check that tile line.

Stan: What's everyone's Spring fertilization program ideas? For crop planted in Fall 2019.

Carmen: Need to watch when to apply it. Compaction is always another challenge in the Spring. Also don't want to burn it, and don't want to over-fertilize it bc you might get some lodging. I used (1500-2000?) of liquid hog manure, knifed in, at 40 lbs N per 1,000 gallons of hog manure.

Jake: Splitting doesn't have much effect. Fall applications has seen good response. 60-80 lbs/ac has been our optimum.

Carmen: What do you think about poultry pellets? That would be beneficial.

Jake: That's what we've used.

Kathy: We're certified organic, where do we get that?

Jake: We had a vendor, I can send you our supplier.

Stan: It's very hard to find. Only guy I was aware of was in Michigan

Linda: Midwest BioAg sells it. Also cashton Farm Supply. Runs approximately \$190/ton. One ton per acre.

Carmen: Depends on analysis. Make sure you know what that is.

Carmen: Think about Kernza similar to planting a winter wheat. Maybe not as much fertilizer. Think about it sort of like winter wheat in terms of seed bed prep and fertility.

Grower: What type of yield should we expect?

Jake: 80% max yield in Y1, 100% in Y2, then maybe 40-60% in Y3. Average was about 500 lbs/ac. Range was 400-800 lbs/ac.

Colin: After cleaning and dehulling, maybe ~200 lbs/acre clean finished grain.

Grower: How are we going to market this crop? Can we get a list of buyers? Do we need to drum up these markets ourselves?

Colin: Excellent segue. A lot of our call last week focused on marketing. It seems clear to me and others involved that we need to foster more formal grower cooperation to build a reliable supply and take it to market. We can't have every grower individually writing the same 20 or so potential buyers, everyone playing each other for the highest or lowest price for material of variable quality. A next step will be a grower-specific call, perhaps in-person gathering, to start working through this.

Jim Falk: Consistency to the marketplace is key. It will be important to have some general guidelines to keep the integrity of the product. Best way to kill this thing is to deliver product that people can't use.

Carmen: It's no different than marketing any other grain. Anyone thinking to plant this crop- it's critical to have some post-harvest storage on-farm, there is minimal chance you are going to be able to haul it to a buyer straight away. Critical thing is to have post-harvest storage.

Jade: I'm fully supportive of that.

Carmen: We've got a lot of discussing to do before the combines and planters roll this summer/fall.

Question: So who will facilitate this?

Colin: UMN team, grower-leadership, AURI. The more grower leadership, the better. Partners like UMN and AURI can provide facilitation support, but ultimately this entity would be formed, led by, and owned and operated by growers.

Ben: I definitely want to be involved in that.

Carmen: Ben- I'll send you my writing on this to-date. Face-to-face grower meeting would be a goal, sometime soon.

Alan: I was of the mind that growers need to sit down together. Hosting an event on March 19th. Some folks have been invited. 4 growers around the northfield area are already growing. A statewide grower meeting is definitely in order.

Carmen: Steele County Fairground, organic supper, could we gather then? In late March.

