

A new perennial cropping system: intermediate wheatgrass Kernza Future Trend of Agriculture?



Kernza is a new perennial grain crop developed at the Land Institute in Kansas. It is now grown on thousands of acres in the north of the county yielding grains that can be made into bread, chips and beer, and biomass as a feed for animals. Compared to the annual grain crops, there are many advantages of growing perennial crops, which can be planted once and harvested for multiple years.

Savings for farmers

- Save seeds for annual planting
- Save Fuel and labor used for tillage, planting every year
- harvest both grains (fall) and biomass for feed (spring and fall twice)

Environmental benefits

- reduced soil and water erosion, reduced soil nitrate leaching
- increased carbon sequestration

With support of a grant from SARE, we have performed experimental growing of Kernza on our farm in Alpine since 2022. Here are our findings:

1. We showed that in the Japatul Valley area of Southern California, about 30 miles from the coast, Kernza can grow for multiple years without irrigation, producing both grains and feed for animals.
2. The grains were used as seeds for replanting next year in a new field and successfully yielded new seedlings and crops
3. The fresh grass harvested in the spring and dry mass in the fall are liked by farm animals as feed
4. Kernza develops deep roots and can be used as erosion control.



SARE Project FW22-402: Testing new perennial intermediate wheatgrass for sustainable agriculture in California

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