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Grand Challenge: Global Food Systems

Title: Wheat Demonstration Field Days

Why is this issue important? Wheat is the leading crop in terms of acreage in the Central Kansas District (CKD). As an economic driver, it is very important to the local producers as well as associated supporting businesses. Wheat varieties are constantly changing as are the disease pathogens which threaten the crop's success. Understanding the characteristics of the different varieties is key in choosing which one fits our environment and cropping system.

How did Extension address this issue? With the help of area producers, Jay Wisbey, CKD Crop Production Agent, planted three separate wheat plots with 20 different varieties. The trials aimed to represent a mixture of recently released and proven varieties, which fit our area - creating an opportunity for producers and specialists to evaluate them locally.

A field day was hosted at each of the locations on May 27th featuring Extension Wheat Specialist Romulo Lollato and Wheat Pathologist Kelsey Anderson Onofre.



Together, they covered the characteristics of the different varieties including growth habits such as maturity, tillering capacity and numerous other factors. Disease response was also highlighted by pointing out the individual strengths and weaknesses in addition to how diseases have mutated over time.

These tours generated active discussion within the audience. Attendees engaged in conversation about both the various concerns and "silver linings" of the current wheat crop. Much was shared about how these were influenced by the environment of this most recent growing season.

What was the impact?

There were 48 individuals who attended the wheat plot tours in 2022:

- Of the survey respondents, 90% stated the side by side comparisons in the plots influence their wheat variety choice.
- 93% stated they increased their knowledge of wheat variety selection.
- 66% indicated the field days significantly increased their knowledge of wheat diseases