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Amy Bickel/The Hutchinson News

# **Yields**

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of Abbyville's Farmers Cooperative. Showers a week ago dropped test weights below 60 pounds – the benchmark for No. 1-grade quality wheat. The downpour Thursday in central Kansas would most likely bring test weights lower. Moreover, more is in the forecast for the upcoming week.

It's becoming a long, drawn-out harvest, he said.

On Wednesday evening, it wasn't rain that stopped the Seltman family as they cut wheat near the eastern Ness County border. With this patch hit hard by disease and hail, they were making adjustments to the combine header because they were getting too much foreign material into the bin.

By then, it was nearing 7 p.m. Pam Seltman pulled the tailgate down on the pickup to create a buffet featuring sauerkraut and brats for the crew, which included her husband, Jeff, her children and brother-inlaw, Brian.

Thankfully, Jeff Seltman said as he stood around with his family eating dinner, not all their fields are like this. "Some of it has been real good," he said, adding they have had some fields average in the mid-70s.

They heard a neighbor made 90 bushels an acre, he said, but they haven't hit anything that high, yet.

We can raise pretty good wheat when it rains," he said.

During one week or two period this spring, the farm recorded 8 inches of rain.

But now, he said, farmers iust need a better price at the cooperative.

#### **Prices poor**

Today's prices aren't much different than they were when Vance and Louise Ehmke returned to Lane County to farm 40 years ago.

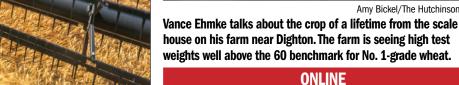
The price of wheat in Dighton on July 1, 1976, was \$3.50 a bushel. By February the next year, wheat had fallen to \$2.17 a bushel.

On Wednesday, Ehmke said the price at the local cooperative was \$3.45. By Friday, it had fallen 20 cents.

The 2016 wheat crop is just that big.

Bins are bursting with wheat - not just domestically – but globally as the U.S. dollar continues to be strong, said custom cutter Shaw. Farmers needed the yields, but it won't mean they will be buying a new pickup. "No one is going to get rich on the deal – it isn't going to heal anyone up," Shaw said. "It is a salvation you have these high yields to offset the low prices." Farmers are expected to harvest more than 394 million bushels of wheat this year – 22 percent more than last year, accord to the Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service. There is talk that a local hog producer will buy wheat for feed, said Ehmke. It's also being considered by cattle feedlots – both of which would open up a different market.





Photos by Jesse Brothers/The Hutchinson News Watch video of Vance Ehmke talking about his "once-in-alifetime" Lane County wheat yield at hutchnews.com.

Custom cutter Bruce Pearson uses three combines to harvest the wheat on the Richard Wires Farm near Frederick in Rice County on Wednesday.



Pam Seltman brings dinner for her husband and family in the field everv evening during harvest.



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"I hope to hell this wheat market holds where it is at

more rain and my god, who knows what we could have done."

and it doesn't go any fur-

have weathered a string

of drought years, making

such a bountiful harvest a

"If you turn back the

clock two or three years -

with these same varieties

you were sweating blood

hoping they would make 30," Ehmke said.

On this 100-percent

blue-sky day, Ehmke is

giddy about the yields. He

watched his other harvest-

of Minnesota, cut a large

patch near his farmstead.

Brink said he has never

cut anything like this - not

"It just pours into the tank," he said, adding the

through the grain because it is so thick. "It's just phe-

Ehmke said the yields could have been even better

if rain would have fallen in

near perfection?" he said

with a smile. "A little bit

"How can you screw with

May and early June.

ther down," he said. Ehmke added farmers

blessing.

in Kansas.

nomenal."

'Occasionally, over a 40-year period, you'll have a field that does real well, 80 to 85 bushels an acre," Ehmke said. "But as far as a county-wide yield experience – this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us."

For now, he and Louise are just relishing in a harvest.

"The greatest moments of your life are like all the rest in that they come, they happen and they go,<sup>3</sup> Ehmke said. "You can't stop them. But you can sure enjoy them. You just got to be aware that they're happening when they're there. So we are trying to enjoy this regardless of the huge workload that comes with the best wheat crop of our careers.<sup>2</sup>

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