

Potential Income Losses in Harvesting Too-Dry Wheat Grain

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The standard moisture for wheat grain at harvest time is 13.5%. If your wheat moisture is above 13.5% you will be docked. If you are too much above standard moisture for wheat your delivery point may reject the grain, especially if they have no capacity for drying.

Common incentives that drive harvesting wheat as soon as possible include:

- minimizing potential storm damage every day wheat remains in the field,
- avoiding increasing weed issues,
- possible double cropping scenarios where the sooner the next crop is in the more time it has for growth and maturation.

But there is another potential downside to harvesting dry wheat—or any grain—the longer the crop remains in the field: it may dry well below standard moisture content. Hence, the drier the grain, the more grain it takes to make a 60-lb. pay unit, or bushel. In effect, being able to deliver wheat grain as close as you can up to 13.5% enables you to “sell water.” Conversely, as noted above, if grain moisture is above 13.5%, you don’t get paid—you get docked.

But how much is the potential income reduction in selling drier wheat grain you could have harvested sooner at slightly higher moisture? Is it a little? Is it a lot?

We compiled a table for wheat grain with different moisture contents at a range of wheat prices (\$/bu). This will help you understand the potential reduction in your effective per-bushel wheat price the more you sell below 13.5%. A link to this interactive table (plug in *your* values), entitled “Wheat Grain Moisture Calculator—Potential Income Loss” is posted at <https://varietytesting.tamu.edu/texas-small-grains-production-practices/>

You can estimate your potential reduction in effective per-bushel price for wheat <13.5% moisture from the table. Also, you can use the calculator to determine reduction in potential income per bushel with your actual %moisture and market grain price (\$/bu). Furthermore, with grain yield (actual or estimated) you can also calculate your potential reduced income per acre and per field or farm.

Example:

You harvest wheat at 11.0% moisture at \$6.00/bu. From the table above (or the calculator online) you find you effectively reduced your price **\$0.17/bu** versus 13.5% harvest. At 50 bushels per acre, this is a loss of potential income of up to \$8.43 per acre. If you have 500 acres of wheat, you could have “sold water” for \$4,213.

Price of Wheat (\$/bu)	Standard Moisture	Percent Grain Moisture					
	13.5%	13.0%	12.0%	11.0%	10.0%	9.0%	8.0%
	Dollars lost per bushel due to low moisture						
\$4.50	\$0.00	-\$0.03	-\$0.08	-\$0.13	-\$0.18	-\$0.22	-\$0.27
\$5.00	\$0.00	-\$0.03	-\$0.09	-\$0.14	-\$0.19	-\$0.25	-\$0.30
\$5.50	\$0.00	-\$0.03	-\$0.09	-\$0.15	-\$0.21	-\$0.27	-\$0.33
\$6.00	\$0.00	-\$0.03	-\$0.10	-\$0.17	-\$0.23	-\$0.30	-\$0.36
\$6.50	\$0.00	-\$0.04	-\$0.11	-\$0.18	-\$0.25	-\$0.32	-\$0.39
\$7.00	\$0.00	-\$0.04	-\$0.12	-\$0.20	-\$0.27	-\$0.35	-\$0.42
\$7.50	\$0.00	-\$0.04	-\$0.13	-\$0.21	-\$0.29	-\$0.37	-\$0.45
\$8.00	\$0.00	-\$0.05	-\$0.14	-\$0.22	-\$0.31	-\$0.40	-\$0.48
\$8.50	\$0.00	-\$0.05	-\$0.14	-\$0.24	-\$0.33	-\$0.42	-\$0.51

Weather, availability of harvest equipment, etc. will dictate when you can actually harvest wheat. No, you can't hit 13.5% most of the time. But if by timely harvest you sell wheat at 12.0% moisture versus 10.0% moisture, you preserve income. The difference is enough to factor in your harvest management decisions to put those savings in your pocket.

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