**Dry Wheat Grain Harvest Potential Income Losses: I. Description**

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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 for the moisture. If you are too much above standard moisture content for wheat, your delivery point may reject the grain, especially if they do not have the capacity to dry grain.

Common incentives that drive harvesting wheat as soon as possible include minimizing potential storm damage, avoiding increasing weed issues, and possible double cropping scenarios, where the sooner the next crop is planted, the more time it has for growth and maturation.

There is another potential downside to delayed harvesting of mature wheat—or any grain for that matter—which is lower grain moisture below the necessary threshold. When the crop remains in the field too long, further drying occurs and standard moisture content can dip well below 13.5%. As a result, it takes more grain to make a 60-lb. pay unit, or bushel, because there is less water weight. In effect, being able to deliver wheat grain as close as possible to 13.5% enables you to “sell water.” However, as noted above, if grain moisture is above 13.5%, you don’t get paid more—you get docked.

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

Below is a table (Table 1) for wheat grain $ losses with different moisture contents at a range of wheat prices ($/bu). This will help you understand the potential income reduction in your effective per-bushel wheat price as you sell further and further below 13.5%. A link to this table in active form (and reprinted below), entitled “Wheat Grain Moisture Calculator—Potential Income Loss” is posted under the Harvesting/Handling section at <http://varietytesting.tamu.edu/small-grains/>

Table 1. Income losses generated from reduced grain moisture content in wheat.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Standard |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Price of Wheat | Moisture | .------------------------ Percent Grain Moisture ------------------------ | | | | | |
| 13.5% | 13.0% | 12.0% | 11.0% | 10.0% | 9.0% | 8.0% |
| ($/bu) | *----------------- Dollars lost per bushel due to low moisture --------------------* | | | | | | |
| $3.00 | $0.00 | -$0.02 | -$0.05 | -$0.08 | -$0.12 | -$0.15 | -$0.18 |
| $3.50 | $0.00 | -$0.02 | -$0.06 | -$0.10 | -$0.14 | -$0.17 | -$0.21 |
| $4.00 | $0.00 | -$0.02 | -$0.07 | -$0.11 | -$0.16 | -$0.20 | -$0.24 |
| $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 |

You can estimate your potential reduction in effective per-bushel price for wheat <13.5% moisture from the table. Also, the companion online calculator can be used 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 potential reduction in income per acre and per field or farm.

Example:

Wheat is harvested at 11.0% moisture at a price of $4.50/bu. Table 1 (or the online calculator) indicates price was effectively reduced by $0.13/bu. At 40 bushels per acre, this is a potential income loss of up to $5.06 per acre. If applied to 500 acres of wheat, you could have “sold water” in the amount of $2,528.

Weather, availability of harvest equipment, etc. will dictate when you can actually harvest wheat. And yes, it is difficult to hit 13.5% most of the time. But, if by timely harvest you can sell wheat at 12.0% moisture instead of 10.0% moisture, you can preserve some income. The difference is enough to factor into your harvest management decisions to put that money in your pocket.

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