

Article on ASA webinars

By Christina Cowger, Carl Bradley, and Pierce Paul

Thanks to funding from the USWBSI, a pair of one-hour webinars on managing FHB in wheat was offered in February 2019 by the American Society of Agronomy (ASA) to interested parties across the globe at no charge.

Content from those webinars is now available free to all at the ASA's self-paced learning library. First, click on this link: <https://www.agronomy.org/education/classroom/classes>. Next, click on *Browse Classes*, and the titles are in alphabetical order; scroll down to *Management of Fusarium Head Blight (Scab) of Wheat – Webinar Series*. After signing up for an ASA account, which is quick and free, you can view the content.

The webinars present a lively and comprehensive picture of what causes FHB, the impact of various management techniques including variety resistance, how to monitor risk, and fungicide efficacy and timing.

How did these webinars come about? The USWBSI's 2014 national survey of wheat and barley producers found that in the US, producers consider private crop consultants one of their top sources of information about FHB, along with county extension agents. So, helping crop consultants obtain complete and up-to-date information about FHB management is key. About half the participants in each live webinar came from industry and/or consulting.

For the first webinar, "Understanding the Basics of Fusarium Head Blight," presenters were Christina Cowger, USDA-ARS at NCSU in Raleigh, and Pierce Paul, The Ohio State University. The February 11 session covered the epidemiology of FHB, management with cultural practices and resistant varieties, and risk forecasting.

Carl Bradley, University of Kentucky, and Pierce Paul presented the second webinar on February 18, entitled "Management of Fusarium Head Blight (Scab) of Wheat with Fungicides." The session focused on fungicide decision-making, fungicide efficacy, and fungicide timing. Rainfastness and application technology were also covered during the second webinar.

The webinars met the USWBSI's objective of reaching out broadly to crop consultants and other farmer advisors. The February 11 webinar had 929 registrants. Most were from the USA (81%, from 43 states) or Canada (18%, from 9 provinces). An additional handful were from Brazil, South Africa, China, Switzerland, and other countries. Actual live attendance on February 11 was 343, which is a normal percentage of registrants for ASA webinars. For their occupation, registrants identified the following categories: consultant/industry, 51%; university/college/government, 11%; and farmer/grower/rancher, 4%.

Statistics for the February 18 webinar were similar. Out of 912 registrants, most were from the USA (81%) and Canada (17%), with a handful from other countries. Live attendance was 231. Registrants listed occupations in nearly identical percentages to the first webinar.

Participants were asked, “How many total acres of wheat and small grain crops do you farm or advise your clientele about annually?” While a considerable number indicated the question was not applicable, those to whom the question applied gave answers ranging from 30 acres to over 1 million acres, with many in the 500-50,000 acre range.

Many participants indicated they found the information valuable, although a few also said the subject was of low relevance, either due to reduced small-grain acreage or because they work on other crops. Of the 246 who responded to a survey after the live sessions, 64% found the program “very valuable” and 31% found it “somewhat valuable.” Many also offered both good questions and suggestions. A sample:

- “Great webinar! I’m responsible for our wheat seed business in [several states]. A significant amount of our seed production...is raised under center pivot irrigation to maximize yields. If moisture two weeks before flowering increases the probability of scab, what recommendations do you have if crop water needs must be met via irrigation?”
- “Excellent webinar. Very good presentation from extremely knowledgeable experts. Very helpful and practical. More like this.”
- “It was a good program with valuable review information plus I liked the sharing of the research data supporting the best products and application timings. The online concept works almost as well as attending a meeting in person.”
- “Excellent topic, largely new to me.”
- “Short videos on practical aspects and best practices for spraying for Fusarium control would be useful” and, similarly, “Actual videos of some trials with techniques applied would give a live dimension to the presentations.”
- “Let’s expand into vomitoxin in corn – causes and controls.”
- “Very informative. Resources from unbiased research.”
- “Thank you to the sponsor for allowing this webinar to be free!”