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News Release

Fusarium Head Blight Alert System Goes Live in Early March

The U.S. Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative's FHB Alert System, which proved its value in 2010, promises to be even more useful this year. Two more states — Louisiana and Mississippi — are joining two dozen other winter- and spring-wheat producing states that were active in the program in 2010. Due to the inclusion of these Gulf Coast states, the projected “go live” date this year also is earlier — early March, as compared to April 15 last year.

Another important change for 2011 is the refinement of regions grouped for purposes of the FHB alerts so that growers and other users have information that is more customized to their geographic area.

The purpose of the FHB Alert System is to give growers and grain industry personnel better advanced notice of potential outbreaks and the risk of scab in their area, thus facilitating timely treatment of at-risk fields with fungicides. The system is tied in with the Fusarium Head Blight Risk Assessment Tool hosted by Pennsylvania State University, Kansas State University, Ohio State University and the U.S. Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative (USWBSI).

That tool — located at <http://www.wheatscab.psu.edu/riskTool.html> and will be available in early March — is where the alerts originate. The prediction model data are supplemented by “feet on the ground” commentary from university extension plant pathologists and other crop specialists in participating states. The commentaries are very important, says Kansas State University plant pathologist Erick DeWolf, because they provide timely, localized interpretation of crop-impacting factors that may not be considered by the scab prediction model. DeWolf is a principal developer of the scab prediction model/FHB Risk Assessment Tool and one of the coordinators of the FHB Alert System.

Producers, crop consultants, grain processors and marketers and other interested persons can sign up for 2011 alerts by going to the following web address: http://scabusa.org/fhb_alert.php. Alerts are sent out to one's cell phone or email, depending upon the user's preference. Frequency and timing of alerts depends upon a given area's risk for serious scab problems — which obviously varies, depending upon environmental conditions and crop stage.

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