

Double-crop options after wheat harvest

It won't be long and the combines will be harvesting our 2026 wheat crop! Unfortunately, the wheat crop faced many challenges during this growing season and some fields have already been destroyed. Potential yields are expected to be well below average, however, producers may be thinking about double-cropping after wheat harvest to help supplement the drought-stricken pastures.

The most common options producers use in northcentral Kansas are either forage or sudan sorghum or cover crops.

Herbicide carryover is the first thing that should be considered in your wheat crop when considering double-cropping. Many herbicides applied to wheat are Group 2 herbicides in the sulfonylurea family with the potential to remain in the soil after harvest. According to Sarah Ganske, K-State Extension, Weed specialist, where herbicide carryover is not a concern, summer annual sorghum-type forages are also a good double-crop option. A KSU research study found that when summer rainfall was very favorable, provided yields of 2.5 to 3 tons dry matter/acre for hybrid pearl millet and sudangrass at the low end to 4 to 5 tons dry matter/acre for forage sorghum, BMR forage sorghum, photoperiod sensitive forage sorghum, and sorghum x sudangrass hybrids. Earlier plantings may produce even more tonnage, as long as there is adequate August rainfall.

One challenge with late-planted summer annual forages is getting them to dry down when harvest is delayed until mid- to late-September. Wrapping bales or bagging to make silage are good ways to deal with the higher moisture forage this late in the year.

Burndown of summer annual weeds present at planting is essential for successful double-cropping. According to Jeanne Falk-Jones, K-State Extension, NW Agronomist, assuming glyphosate-resistant kochia and pigweeds are present, combinations of glyphosate with products such as saflufenacil (Sharpen) or tiafenacil (Reviton), or alternative treatments such as Paraquat may be required.

Cover crops are another option after wheat harvest. Cover crops may offer a longer and more flexible grazing period than spring-planted cover crops within wheat-based dryland cropping systems. However, low available soil moisture and variable weather patterns this time of year can make cover crop establishment and productivity highly variable. the varied species available for use as cover crops.

Producers can use the *Midwest Cover Crops Council, Cover Crops Decision Tool* to help select species based on specified goals. The decision tool currently includes recommendations for Kansas and Nebraska counties.

Ganske stresses that one of the issues with double-cropping that is often overlooked by producers is the potential for volunteer wheat in the crop following wheat. If volunteer wheat emerges and goes uncontrolled, it can cause serious problems for nearby wheat fields in the fall as a host for the wheat streak mosaic complex of viruses [wheat streak mosaic (WSMV), High Plains disease (HPD), and triticum mosaic (TriMV)] that are transmitted by the wheat curl mite (WCM).

Volunteer wheat can generally be controlled fairly well with glyphosate (Roundup, others) or Group 1 herbicides such as quizalofop (Assure II, others) or clethodim (Select Max, others), but control is reduced during times of drought stress. Atrazine can provide control of volunteer wheat in double-crop corn or sorghum, but control can be erratic depending on rainfall patterns.

If you have more questions on double-crop options after wheat harvest, stop by or give me a call at any of our Post Rock Extension District Offices in Beloit, Lincoln, Mankato, Osborne, or Smith Center.