

# Northeast Buckwheat Growers Newsletter

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## 2016 Buckwheat sourcing

Demand for buckwheat continues to be higher than supply. Birkett Mills' maintained buckwheat contract prices at \$28.50 per hundred pounds for conventional grain, with Certified Organic grain having a premium at \$33.50. This is the same price as last year. It has not gone down, even though corn and soybean commodity prices have dropped dramatically.

Birkett Mills' price is on a clean and dry basis, with the adjustments for non-grain and excess moisture taken at the receiving house.

There is a new buyer of buckwheat grain in the Northeast. Manitou Agrifoods President Sébastien Forget writes that the company exports buckwheat to Asian markets and hopes to increase their grower base.

The company is based in Montréal, and would be particularly relevant to growers in southern Québec. Interested growers should contact the company at (514) 424-7412 or [sforget@manitouagri.com](mailto:sforget@manitouagri.com).

## 2016 Buckwheat Field Day

The 2016 Northeast Buckwheat Field Day will be at the David Jones farm, near Interlaken, NY on Wednesday August 24 at 1 pm.

This year will be an excellent opportunity to see large-scale buckwheat operation that regularly achieves high yields. David Jones has raised buckwheat seed for Agriculver, now Seedway, for many years. Seneca County has led the resurgence of soybeans in New York, and Jones found success with this crop as well.

The topics will include finding the right combination of soil and fertility, the rotation value of buckwheat on larger farms, and advanced harvest techniques that minimize grain loss.

Growers will get a chance to speak directly with Cliff Orr of Birkett Mills, and Ritchie Lent of Seedway, who are in charge of sourcing buckwheat for their respective companies.

The farm is about halfway between Interlaken and Lodi at 2943 St. Rt. 96A.

Sponsors: NOFA-NY, Birkett Mills, Seedway, Cornell University.



## Buckwheat economics

This year, low commodity prices have made corn and soybeans less attractive, with some growers questioning whether to raise them at all. Buckwheat is usually a low-revenue crop by comparison to corn, but this year will be more profitable for many. In some scenarios buckwheat makes money but corn loses it.

While there won't be a great rush of corn acreage to buckwheat, a few corn growers can make a significant difference. There are usually over a million acres of corn in New York, but only a few thousand acres of buckwheat contracts available.

The most likely fields to be switched from corn to buckwheat are those with moderate fertility. There is a lot of land in our region with an expected corn yield of 100-120 bushels per acre. Below is a comparison of the costs and revenue for raising 120 bushels per acre of corn versus 20 bushels per acre of buckwheat. It could be a worthwhile exercise to see the result using your own numbers for each expense.

### Enterprise budget comparing corn to buckwheat.

Thanks to Robert Moore and Barry Ward, Ohio State Univ. Ag Econ for the corn spreadsheet.

	Corn		Buckwheat	
RECEIPTS	<i>Assumption</i>	<i>\$/acre</i>	<i>\$/acre</i>	<i>Assumption</i>
Grain	120 bu @\$3.70/bu	444	285	20 bu@\$14.25/bu
ARC/PLC Payment		32	0	
Crop Insurance I		0	0	
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>		<b>476</b>	<b>285</b>	
<b>VARIABLE COSTS</b>				
Seed	28M @\$3.44/M	96	29	1 bu@\$28.50
Fertilizer				
N (lbs.)	106 lb@\$0.42/lb	54	0	
P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> (lbs)	44 lb @\$0.53/lb	23	0	
K <sub>2</sub> O(lbs)	35 lb @\$0.33/lb	11	0	
Lime(ton)	0.25 t@\$25/t	6	0	
Chemicals				
Herbicide		56	0	
Fungicide		0	0	
Insecticide		0	0	
Drying	\$0.09/bu	10	2	
Trucking - Fuel Only	30 mi	2	2	100 mi
Fuel, Oil, Grease		13	10	
Repairs		27	10	
Crop Insurance		18	0	
Miscellaneous		5	0	
Interest	7 mo @5%	9	1	4 mo@5%
Hired Labor		0	0	
<b>TOTAL VARIABLE COSTS</b>		<b>331</b>	<b>53</b>	
<b>FIXED COSTS</b>				
Labor Charge	3 h@15/hr	45	15	1 h @\$15/hr
Management Charge		24	14	
Machinery		130	66	
Land Charge		40	40	
Miscellaneous		24		
<b>TOTAL FIXED COSTS</b>		<b>263</b>	<b>135</b>	
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>		<b>594</b>	<b>188</b>	
<b>RETURN ABOVE VARIABLE COSTS</b>		<b>145</b>	<b>232</b>	
<b>RETURN ABOVE TOTAL COSTS</b>		<b>-118</b>	<b>97</b>	

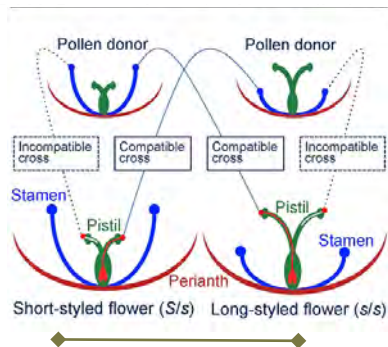
## Research news

### *Buckwheat genome sequenced.*

Many crop genomes are being sequenced: now it is buckwheat's turn. The lead researcher, Yasuo Yasui of Kyoto University, is advancing buckwheat genetics, maintaining Kyodai's center of excellence in the field that was established by his mentor, Ohmi Ohnishi.

The hope is that this genetic information will help in crop improvement. In this research paper, the genes that make buckwheat unable to self-pollinate were described in detail. The genetics are complicated and have been the subject of considerable scientific argument. The new knowledge will not only help in breeding self-compatible buckwheat varieties, it will also make breeding regular buckwheat more efficient.

*Yasui Y, Hirakawa H, Ueno M, Matsui K, Katsube-Tanaka T, Yang SJ, Aii J, Sato S, Mori M. 2016. Assembly of the draft genome of buckwheat and its applications in identifying agronomically useful genes.*



## In memoriam

Steve Treleven passed away in March. He was an important part of the buckwheat community, being in charge of buckwheat receiving and handling at the Seedway receiving house in Mecklenburg where he worked for the past 25 years.

### *Wild bees assessed.*

Bees are the main pollinators of buckwheat in the Northeast, so growers are concerned by reports that too many honey bee hives are dying each winter. Both managed and wild bees pollinate buckwheat, so the health of wild populations is important to know. A new survey of wild bee populations and trends shows that populations are strong in much of the Northeast buckwheat production area. The exception is the fertile agricultural area in Western New York.

In the northern Plains buckwheat region, by contrast, the wild bee populations are low. Bees pollinate the vast canola fields there to help increase yields. The buckwheat is dependent on bees for pollination.

In many areas, declines in wild bee populations are caused by conversion of bee-supporting habitat to corn and soy rotations. Raising buckwheat strengthens wild bee hives by providing late-summer forage.

*Koh, I, E.V. Lonsdorf, N.M. Williams, C. Brittain, R. Isaacs, J. Gibbs, T.H. Ricketts. 2016. Modeling the status, trends, and impacts of wild bee abundance in the United States. Proceedings of the National Academy*



### **Abundance of wild bees in US buckwheat growing regions.**

*Populations are high in many areas where buckwheat is grown in the northeast, and provide important pollination*



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## International markets

Until the early 2000s buckwheat acreage in Russia was almost 4 million acres. Black Earth grain reports that since 2001 the planted area has decreased almost half 50% to about 2 million acres. In large part it has been displaced by winter wheat. In the past, winter wheat would not survive the winter in the buckwheat regions of Russia, but

now it does. There has been a corresponding reduction of wheat export from the US over the same period.

Buckwheat remains a politically important food in the region.

<http://www.blackseagrains.net/novosti/russia-to-provide-all-neighboring-countries-with-buckwheat>

## About the Northeast Buckwheat Growers Association

The NBGA is made up of about 180 buckwheat growers in the Northeast.

Membership may be obtained by contacting the editor and providing contact information (address, phone, email). There is currently no charge to join.

This semi-annual newsletter goes out to those who have signed up as members of NBGA. The printed version is sent to

members in the Northeast, and electronic version elsewhere. The complete member list is distributed to members each fall.

The Northeast Buckwheat Growers Association has been on the World Wide Web since 1998. An on-line Buckwheat Production Guide for the Northeast and back issues of this newsletter are available there.



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