U.S. pressuring Canada on grain grading
Grain companies say current regulations are no impediment

BY ALLAN DAWSON
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U.S. officials say this country’s grain-grading system is to blame for why American farmers living close to the border can’t take advantage of higher Canadian wheat prices.

But Canadian officials deny claims by U.S. administration that Canada’s quality control system discriminates against imported U.S. wheat.

Conservation districts aim to improve water infiltration
Cover crops could be the key to building higher organic matter and catching water

BY JENNIFER PAIGE
Co-operator staff/Brandon

The best place to store water is where it falls. That’s the conclusion of four Manitoba conservation districts that are banding together to launch a new project that will demonstrate how to build organic matter in soil and make it a sink for rainfall and meltwater.

“Our surface water management strategy has been built on small water stor- age and there are all kinds of issues with that, beavers, dams blowing out, limited sites and the require- ment for licences,” said Ryan Canart, district manager of the Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District (UARCD). “If we moved towards establishing practices that store water in our soil, the flooding becomes less of an issue, beavers are not an issue and there is the added benefit of capturing carbon.”

The UARCD has partnered with the Intermountain Conservation District, the Assiniboine Hills Conservation District and the Kelsey Conservation District to initiate soil health pro- grams. They want to link up with interested producers and establish sustainable agriculture concepts on active farm operations.

“We started last year by converting funds from our previous forage program to a soil health program and found three producers to work with,” said Canart. “Each producer determines the goals they want to work towards, but typically, if you are trying to build soil or build carbon, you are looking at growing some kind of cover crop with a lot of vegetation and then try to return that vegetation back into the soil.”

Canart says the program will establish a few of these concepts on local farms, under local conditions, in order to demonstrate the practices and broaden knowl- edge of them.

“We really want to initiate these concepts in our own backyard and demonstrate the benefits, so that we can...
Soy is a promising antimicrobial agent

New testing shows plant isolates could replace failing chemical agents

Forget chemicals. The best antimicrobial available may be natural soy isolates like isoflavones and peptides.

That’s according to a new study from University of Guelph researchers who looked at using these materials to inhibit the growth of microbial pathogens that cause foodborne illnesses.

Engineering professor, Suresh Neethirajan, director of the university’s BioNano Laboratory, says the discovery could benefit the food industry and soy growers.

“Heavy use of chemical antimicrobial agents has caused some strains of bacteria to become very resistant to them,” said Neethirajan, in a media release from the university.

The researchers used high-tech tools and high-throughput screening to run millions of tests in a short period.

They found that soy can be a more effective antimicrobial agent than the current roster of synthetic chemicals.

“Soy peptides and isoflavones are biodegradable, environmentally friendly and non-toxic,” he said. “The demand for new ways to combat microbes is huge, and our study suggests soy-based isoflavones and peptides could be part of the solution.”

Neethirajan and his team found soy peptides and isoflavones limited growth of some bacteria, including listeria and pseudomonas pathogens.

“The really exciting thing about this study is that it shows promise in overcoming the issue of current antibiotics killing bacteria indiscriminately, whether they are pathogenic or beneficial. You need beneficial bacteria in your intestines to be able to properly process food,” he said.

North America has one of the safest food sources in the world, said Neethirajan, but authorities estimate about 48 million people in the U.S. suffer from some sort of foodborne illness every year.