

Market and Crop Watch – Special Report



At last month's Western Seed Association Convention, the American Seed Trade Association's (ASTA) Lawn Seed Division presented the following production and consumption reports. We thought it would be useful to pass the data along, as well as a couple of comments. First take note of the perennial ryegrass data. It will help you understand the continued strength of this market. Also, for those of you using named fine fescues, be aware that large quantities of certified hard, chewings, and creeping red fescues are being further reduced with a potentially poor crop next year. We may see more 'normal' prices in these crops within a year or so. Finally, as with all such reports that are accumulated with all good intentions, take them in with a grain of salt! ☺

Production Reports

Annual Ryegrass in Oregon

- 125,000 acres, average yields 1,700 lbs.
- 212.5 Million lb. crop + 60 Million lb carryover = 272.5 Million avail.
- 255 Million lbs estimated 2003-04 usage
- Projected carryover June 2004 = 17.5 Million
- Acreage change for 2004 = Up 3%

Perennial Ryegrass – Oregon Production

- Yields were off 25% due to dry 2002 fall
- Quality is poorer due to inability to properly use pre-emergent herbicides (lack of moisture.)
- 73,457 certified acres/ 75,000 unct. acres (est.)
- 163.5 Million lb crop + nominal carryover
- 220 Million average usage
- Acreage increase for 2003 estimated at +25%

Kentucky Bluegrass

- Dryland acreage down ~20% with average yields. Note that this is an increase of 32% from previous year due to poor yields in 2002.
- Irrigated acreage unchanged; yields up 6.7%
- 2004 estimated acreage up 4-5% for both Dryland and Irrigated areas.

Tall Fescue – Northwest Production

- 2002 Crop Carryover – 60 Million lbs.
- 2003 Crop – 150 Million lbs.
- Estimated 2003-04 consumption – 180 Million lbs.
- Estimated 2003 Crop Carryover – 30 Million lbs.

Kentucky-31 Tall Fescue – MO, KS, OK, AR

- 2002 Crop Carryover – 30 Million lbs.
- 2003 Crop – 60 Million lbs.

Creeping Red Fescue in Canada:

- 2002 Crop Carryover - 38 Million lbs
- 2003 Crop – 33 Million lbs

Fine Fescue Production in Oregon:

- Movement of Chewings and CRF increase 6.5% from previous year to a total of 23.4 Million lbs.
- Yields for 2003 crop were off 10-20% due to hot, dry late spring, also impacting new spring plantings.
- Certified acres continue to decrease significantly with early certification signups as follows:
 - Chewings – down 35%
 - Hard – down 66%
 - Creeper – down 27%

Consumption Reports

Southwest: Tall Fescue and Perennial Ryegrass stable usage w/o being impacted one way or another by price. Annual ryegrass usage continues to be replaced by tall fescue or warm seasons overseeded with perennial ryegrass. Improved bermudagrass usage increasing, fueled by new school, park and sports field construction.

Canada: There was significant damage last year due to the long harsh winter and little snow cover. Late spring and wet conditions delayed seeding until May. The season extend for a longer period and seed usage was considerably higher than average. Bluegrass imports were 8 Million lbs, up 25% from the previous year. P. Ryegrass imports were about 5.3 Million lbs., up from 5.0 Million. Tall Fescue imports were 889K, up 20% from the previous year.

Northeast: Fall '03 consumption was down due to record-breaking precipitation, mild weather, and reduced budgets at golf courses and many tax-supported institutions. Most distributors reported reduction of 15-30% in volume. Retail sales were similar to last year with golf seed sales being the most severely affected segment.

Midwest: Overall Spring movement was better than expected. Late summer & Fall movement varied by specific region, with an overall impression of flat to slightly higher movement as compared to 2002.

Southeast: Spring usage was above average but below expectations. Near record rainfalls and mild temperatures equated to mediocre sales activity. Much of the ryegrass sales were later than normal.