

What We Heard Report: Winter 2025 Pre-Consultation Mechanical Purity in Cereal Seed Crops

Introduction

As part of its annual review of seed crop certification requirements, the Canadian Seed Growers' Association (CSGA) is currently evaluating the mechanical purity standards for cereal seed crops. The Cereal Working Group (CWG) and the Regulatory Services Committee (RSC) are leading this review.

The review focuses specifically on the maximum impurity standard for the presence of plants of other cereal species (e.g., barley plants reported in a wheat seed crop during seed crop inspection) in Foundation, Registered, and Certified class seed crops, as outlined in Section 2 of the [Canadian Regulations and Procedures for Pedigreed Seed Crop Production](#) (Circular 6).

The review also addresses which cereal species have seeds that are difficult to separate from those of other cereal species during seed conditioning. If a seed crop is not certified due to mechanical purity at the time of inspection, it prevents final certification of the seed even if the seed processor has been able to remove enough seeds of the other crop kind to meet the seed standard, resulting in a financial loss to seed growers and companies.

Consultation Overview

At the CWG, there was strong support for a simplified standard for other crop kinds and potentially some relaxation of the existing standard. There was also support for maintaining some standards for certain crop kinds in certain other crop kinds, where the seeds of two crop kinds are particularly difficult to separate from one another (e.g., barley in oats).

Based on a recommendation from the CWG and the RSC, CSGA conducted an [initial consultation](#) from January 7, 2025, to March 4, 2025, seeking feedback from stakeholders. The purpose of 'pre-consultation' was to determine whether stakeholders supported revisions to the maximum impurity standards for mechanical purity in cereals and to seek feedback on potential options going forward. Some examples of what the options could look like were provided along with the opportunity to suggest which standards need to be maintained (i.e., which crop kinds are still difficult to separate from one another during seed processing, even with current technology).

To streamline the process, stakeholders were invited to complete a short survey to provide feedback on the three options presented. The options included:

1. **Status Quo** – Maintain existing crop-specific standards.
2. **Single Standard** – Move towards a single standard for plants of all other cereals combined, but still maintain certain crop-specific standards.
3. **Where Necessary** – Only maintain mechanical purity standards where necessary for those species that are considered difficult to separate.

Who Participated

Members of the CWG and the RSC contributed to the development of the potential options and examples included in the stakeholder survey. A total of ninety-one (91) survey responses were received (75 English and 16 French), representing a broad range of stakeholders. All regions were well represented, and respondents covered a wide range of crops, including a range of different cereals. One written submission from a producer organization was also received.

Stakeholders included:

- Seed growers and seed processors, including Registered Seed Establishments (RSEs)
- Seed wholesalers and retailers
- Crop certificate assignees and seed companies contracting pedigreed cereal seed production
- Plant breeders/variety developers/distributors
- Authorized seed crop inspection services (ASCIS) and licensed seed crop inspectors (LSCI)
- Seed analysts and graders
- Seed importers and exporters
- Producers and producer organizations
- Government
- Agricultural organizations, including councils, associations, and commissions

What we heard

There was clear support for providing more flexibility in the way the seed quality standards are achieved and simplifying mechanical purity standards of seed crops, while still maintaining the high quality expected of certified seed.

- **75% of respondents** supported moving away from current standards.
- **50% of respondents** supported moving towards a single standard for all cereals combined while maintaining certain crop-specific standards where needed.
- **25% of respondents** supported only maintaining certain standards where seeds of the different species are considered difficult to separate.

Foundation status seed crops should continue to have stricter standards (potentially in the range of 5-10/10,000 plants). For **Certified status** seed crops, many supported more flexibility (potentially in the range of 20-30/10,000 plants), but there was concern that anything higher (e.g., 40 or more/10,000) would be considered too high, even for Certified.

A **three-page summary** of the survey results can be [found here](#).

Next steps

Following the consultation, the CWG discussed the findings and submitted a report to the RSC in late March, including a **proposal for updated mechanical purity standards**. The RSC will present a report to the **CSGA Board of Directors** at their May meeting. With Board support, CSGA will launch a consultation on the proposal in **Fall 2025** to seek feedback on the proposed changes. If the proposal receives broad support, feedback from the consultation will be summarized and presented to the RSC and Board of Directors. Following their review and approval, the **revised standards could potentially be implemented for the 2026 production season**.