Fall 2026 Standards Consultation

Mechanical (Species) Purity in Cereal Seed Crops

Current status: Open

This consultation period opened on September 8, 2026, and will close at 5 p.m. ET on November 3, 2026.

About the consultation

Focus of Consultation:

- Section 2, Cereal Seed Crops, of the *Canadian Regulations and Procedures for Pedigreed Seed Crop Production* (Circular 6)
- Maximum impurity standards for mechanical (species) purity, specifically the presence of plants of other cereal species within cereal seed crops (e.g., barley plants in a wheat seed crop)
- Species considered difficult to separate when seed is conditioned

Purpose of the Consultation

The purpose of this consultation is to obtain stakeholder feedback on **proposed revisions to the maximum impurity standards** for the presence of plants of other cereal species within cereal seed crops intended for **Foundation**, **Registered**, and **Certified** status.

Issue

A cereal seed crop must meet the in-field maximum impurity standards for other crop kinds in Circular 6 to be certified. In addition, the harvested seed must meet the mechanical purity standards established in Schedule I of the *Seeds Regulations* for final certification.

Stakeholders have noted that, in many cases, seed lots can still meet the seed standard even when plants of another cereal species were present in the field because seeds of the other kind can often be removed 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 kind to meet the seed standard, resulting in a financial loss to seed growers and companies.

Background

CSGA initiated a review of the maximum impurity standards for cereal seed crops in fall 2024 and conducted a pre-consultation in winter 2025. There was significant stakeholder support for modernizing the standards.

Current certification requirements for Foundation, Registered and Certified cereal seed crop production include maximum impurity standards for other cereal crop kinds where the seeds are considered “difficult-to-separate” (DTS) during seed conditioning.

The in-field maximum impurity standards relate to the number of plants of another kind observed during seed crop inspection. By contrast, the seed standards established under the *Seeds Regulations* and summarized in the Grade Tables relate to the average number of seeds per unit weight (1 kg in the case of cereals) of other crops present in the cleaned seed lot.

Under the *Seeds Regulations,* a crop must first receive CSGA certification before seed harvested from that crop is eligible for final certification. CSGA certification confers pedigreed status to the harvested seed from a specific field and represents the first step in seed lot certification. Grading the cleaned seed lot for mechanical purity and other quality factors is a separate process and is not administered by CSGA.

Current Maximum Impurity Standards for Cereals

Inspected Crop	Impurity in Crop												Impurities	
	Barley		Durum		Oats		Rye		Triticale		Wheat		Current totals	
	F&R	C	F&R	C	F&R	C	F&R	C	F&R	C	F&R	C	F&R	C
Barley	n/a	n/a	1	2	2	4	1	3	2	4	2	8	8	21
Durum	1	2	n/a	n/a	4	8	1	3	1	5	1	5	8	23
Oats	1	2	2	4	n/a	n/a	1	3	4	8	4	8	12	25
Rye	2	4	2	4	2	4	n/a	n/a	2	4	2	4	10	20
Triticale	2	4	1	5	4	8	1	3	n/a	n/a	1	5	9	25
Wheat	2	4	1	5	4	8	1	3	1	5	n/a	n/a	9	25

F = Foundation, R= Registered, C = Certified

Considerations

Many seed conditioners in Canada now use modern seed-cleaning equipment and technologies that are significantly more effective than older conditioning methods at removing one cereal crop kind from another.

Under the current standards, cereal seed crops containing other cereal crop kinds may be denied pedigreed status or demoted to a lower class, even when varietal purity standards are met and the seed could potentially be cleaned to meet grade requirements. This may result in significant loss of value to seed growers and companies and may result in fields being withdrawn from certification.

The Association of Official Seed Certifying Agency's (AOSCA) *Seed Certification Handbook* includes specifications for "inseparable other crops" and "shall include crop plants, the seed of which cannot be thoroughly removed by the usual methods of conditioning." However, AOSCA member agencies determine independently which crop kinds are considered "inseparable." The only specific examples cited in the handbook are rye in winter wheat and barley in oats.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Seed Schemes has in-field standards for plants with seeds that are "difficult to distinguish in a laboratory test from the seed of the crop." Participating countries determine which species fall into that category. In Canada, seeds of cereal crop kinds are not considered difficult to distinguish.

CSGA's current standards are crop-specific rather than cumulative. Each cereal crop has an individual maximum impurity allowance for each other cereal crop kind. The permitted numbers are not added together. As soon as the number of plants of any one crop kind exceeds the permitted threshold, the standard is not met, regardless of whether the levels of other crop kinds remain below their respective limits.

For example, under the current standards for wheat for Certified status, a wheat seed crop could contain:

- 4 barley plants,
- 5 durum plants,
- 8 oat plants,
- 3 rye plants, and
- 5 triticale plants,

for a total of 25 other cereal plants per 10,000 plants on average in 6 counts of 10,000 plants. In practice, however, cereal seed crops rarely contain more than one or two other crop kinds.

Progress To Date – What We Heard So Far

This issue was first discussed by CSGA's Cereal Working Group (CWG) in fall 2024. The CWG expressed strong support for simplifying the standards and moving toward a more flexible approach.

CSGA's Regulatory Services Committee (RSC) subsequently supported seeking broader stakeholder feedback through a pre-consultation process conducted from January to March 2025, including a short stakeholder survey.

The pre-consultation results indicated strong support (**75% of survey respondents**) for providing more flexibility in the way the seed quality standards are achieved and simplifying mechanical purity standards for seed crops, while still maintaining the high quality expected of certified seed. The complete **What We Heard Report** can be found here.

Based on these results, the CWG and RSC initially developed a proposal that would have permitted up to 30 plants, on average in six counts of 10,000 plants, for Certified seed crop production, with corresponding limits of 10 plants for Foundation and 15 plants for Registered status. However, concerns were subsequently raised regarding potential unintended consequences associated with permitting substantially higher levels of other cereal crop kinds within pedigreed seed crops.

Following additional review during fall 2025 and winter 2026, the CWG and RSC developed the revised proposal below, which was subsequently approved by the CSGA Board of Directors for consultation.

Proposal

CSGA proposes revising the maximum impurity standards for mechanical (species) purity for Foundation, Registered and Certified cereal seed production as follows:

1) **Foundation** – maximum of **5** plants, on average in 6 counts of 10,000 plants
2) **Registered** – maximum of **10** plants, on average in 6 counts of 10,000 plants
3) **Certified** – maximum of **20** plants, on average in 6 counts of 10,000 plants

Examples:

1. A wheat seed crop harvested for Foundation status could contain:
   - 3 barley plants and
   - 2 oat plants

   because the total does not exceed the proposed **Foundation limit of 5 plants**.
2. A wheat seed crop harvested for Foundation status containing:
   - 4 barley plants and 2 oat plants, or

- 3 barley plants and 3 oat plants

would be demoted to Registered status because the total exceeds the proposed Foundation limit of 5 plants but remains within the proposed **Registered limit of 10 plants**.

3. A barley seed crop harvested for Certified status could contain:
   - 5 wheat plants,
   - 4 oat plants, and
   - 2 rye plants

   because the total remains below the proposed **Certified limit of 20 plants**.

Who is the focus of this consultation?

This consultation will be of interest to those involved in the seed sector value chain, including but not limited to:

- Seed growers
- Crop certificate assignees and seed companies contracting pedigreed seed production
- Registered seed establishments that process pedigreed cereal seed
- Plant breeders
- Seed analysts
- Authorized seed crop inspection services and licensed seed crop inspectors
- Agriculture organizations, including councils, associations, and commissions with an interest in cereal crops

CSGA also welcomes feedback from the broader Canadian agriculture sector, including the grain industry, government, and other interested organizations or individuals.

How to Participate

Stakeholders are encouraged to complete a short 10-minute survey to provide feedback on the proposal described above.

Written comments may also be submitted by email to Mike Scheffel and Gail Harris with the subject line: "Mechanical purity in cereals consultation". The survey will remain open until **5:00 pm ET, November 3, 2026**.

Consultation Activities

CSGA will inform stakeholders about the consultation through:

- this webpage,
- announcements in the *Seed Scoop* newsletter, and
- direct outreach to key stakeholders.

Upon request, CSGA staff will meet with stakeholders and interested parties.

Next steps

CSGA will review survey results and written comments received during the consultation period and provide a report to the Regulatory Services Committee in late November 2026.

The RSC will then make recommendations to the CSGA Board of Directors regarding next steps.

Related Information

- *Canadian Regulations and Procedures for Pedigreed Seed Crop Production*
- Schedule I (Grade Tables) to the *Seeds Regulations*

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) Seed Program Documents
  - Specific work instructions (SWI 142.1.1): Pedigreed seed crop inspection
  - Appendix VI Other crop kinds to report in counts
  - Specific work instructions (SWI 142.1.2-2): Cereals and minor grains seed crop inspection procedures

We also invite stakeholders to learn more about CSGA's standard development process and Standards Development Policy framework.

Contact Us

- **Mike Scheffel**, Managing Director, Policy and Standards: mscheffel@seedgrowers.ca
- **Gail Harris**, Standards Manager: gharris@seedgrowers.ca