The Land Institute and University of Minnesota Forever Green Initiative (FGI) will continue to play key institutional roles in vetting and licensing new Kernza® growers in 2022. FGI will continue to support The Land Institute in vetting and approving new acreage in the Upper Midwest in the context of advancing broader social, economic, and environmental goals of Kernza in the region.

UMN and The Land Institute are developing a governance structure in partnership with Kernza stakeholders to responsibly shepherd and scale the Kernza enterprise moving forward. Our hope is that by 2022 or soon thereafter, Kernza stakeholders will have developed adequate capacity to effectively govern this process, with UMN and The Land Institute playing long-term institutional support roles. Current Kernza licensees will be contacted about this process in early 2022.

New Kernza grower applications will be considered in 2022. Similar to previous years, a conservative and strategic approach will be taken to licensing new Kernza acreage so as to sustainably scale supply with demand, and to maximize the chances of early adopter growers’ success on the farm and in the market. Priorities for new Kernza growers will remain largely unchanged from 2021. The 2022 vetting and licensing priorities for the Upper Midwest include the following:

- **Prospective growers should be able to show collaboration or contracts with, for example, the Perennial Promise Growers Co-op (MN) or other buyers.**

- **Minimum planting scale:** A minimum acreage is preferred to ensure Kernza will be a production priority, and to achieve supply chain efficiencies. The minimum acreage we recommend is 20 acres, with ideal plantings of 40 acres or more. However, we recognize the challenges of land and scale and may approve smaller plantings as necessary. Participation by a wide variety of growers in Kernza is important to FGI and The Land Institute.

- **Herbicide, pesticide, fungicide-free production:** The only known product on-label for Intermediate Wheatgrass for food production is Nufarm’s Weedar 64 (2,4-D Amine), which was approved in Fall, 2021. Trials are currently underway to approve the use of other selected product applications. Note: Nitrogen fertilizers are allowed.

- **Registration and compliance with The Land Institute’s Kernza® trademark program:** Growers not enrolled in or adhering to the Kernza trademark standards will not be able to market their product as Kernza, and will not be approved to purchase seed.

- **Grower commitment to marketing their harvest, either in partnership with producer groups or market partners.** UMN FGI and The Land Institute are not grain buyers and are not obligated to purchase or market your harvest.

- **Minnesota growers will receive priority** based on early investment from the State of Minnesota, and to advance UMN FGI’s mission to develop new crops and crop enterprises for MN growers and rural communities. Non-MN plantings will be considered following the top geographic priorities described here.

- **Preference for production on MN wellhead protection areas, Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs), or vulnerable/impaired watersheds:** Research shows strong water quality benefits of Kernza, including steep reductions in nitrate leaching. UMN FGI prioritizes new Kernza plantings where it will maximize environmental benefits, such as on wellhead protection areas and/or DWSMAS. To see whether you farm on a DWSMA, see here: https://bit.ly/DWSMA2022
Preference for growers in SE, SW, and Central MN. A “cluster” strategy is important for targeting and concentrating environmental benefits, achieving economic efficiencies, facilitating grower cooperation and public engagement, and leveraging additional resources. Initial investment from the State of MN has prioritized these areas as ‘Economic and Environmental Clusters of Opportunity,’ or EECOs. The areas below have been identified as priority regions in MN for Kernza production based on early successes, economic potential, and environmental vulnerability. The counties included are listed in the sidebar. Support via the MN Clean Water Legacy Fund is available to de-risk grower adoption of Kernza in these areas via the Forever Green EECO Implementation Program. This includes a combination of environmental benefit payments and safety net payments, and technical assistance for growers. For More information: [bit.ly/EECOprogram](bit.ly/EECOprogram)

Preference for growers experience that will maximize their chance of success with Kernza, including:

- Growing other small grains or forage grass seeds such as wheat, barley, oats, rye, intermediate wheatgrass, etc.
- Preference and familiarity with organic management practices. The only known product on-label for Intermediate Wheatgrass for food production is Nufarm’s Weedar 64 (2-4-D Amine), which was approved in Fall, 2021.
- Selling into food grade markets. Producing crops for human consumption is a premium market with high standards. Growers may need to hold their harvest on farm for several months, and have a plan for marketing their crop.
- Adequate planting and harvest equipment, on-farm post-harvest storage, and grain drying capacity.

Preference for dual-use grain and forage production: IWG produces high-value hay and a large quantity of marketable straw. Multiple cuttings per year can be taken without impacting grain yield and quality. Dual-use management can be critical to grower profitability. Growers who are able to take hay and/or straw cuttings to use as forage in their own operation or to sell into local markets will receive priority.

Commitment to review and use available technical assistance (TA) resources understanding that TA support for this crop is still limited. Current web-based resources include the following:


UMN and The Land Institute reserve some discretion to license select plantings outside the boundaries of these exact priorities for ‘uniquely aligned opportunities’ that will advance the Kernza enterprise.

Overall, these licensing priorities combined suggest that new Kernza growers in 2022 will continue to be innovative, risk-tolerant early-adopter growers that are uniquely positioned to succeed with this innovative perennial grain crop while advancing broader goals of social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

Questions about 2022 Kernza Grower Vetting and Licensing?

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For more information, the latest news, and more info on Kernza, visit [kernza.org](http://kernza.org).