



NZ bred wheat is 'good as gold'

By Jenna Matthews

Anything is worth trying once. This is the motto that Steve Wright of Wrightco takes when choosing which wheat to grow each season.

On the Wright family farm they work 650 ha of cropping land with 150 ha left for pastoral farming. The farm has been in the family for over three generations; Steve works side by side with his brother Paul and father Donald.

This year Saracen, a wheat cultivar developed by Plant & Food Research, was the new item worth trying and Steve says he has been truly impressed with the results he's seen.

"Saracen has done extremely well especially since it hasn't been the best growing season. We haven't had ideal weather this year considering during November and December, the most critical months for rainfall, we had none.

"January was a terrible month and yielded a late harvest. Overcast, damp, humid conditions made wheat more prone to pre-harvest sprouting. It's the number one problem mills face with wheat.

"Saracen has come back with good test results from the mills despite the bad weather conditions and still offered high yields."

Plant & Food Research, partnering with Canterbury Seed and Luisetti Seeds work to produce wheat cultivars that are both farmer and miller friendly. Saracen is the latest cultivar to hit the commercial market.

Steve grew two of Plant & Food's milling wheat varieties this season, Saracen and Conquest. At the end of the harvest season he found Saracen to be the more favourable of the two.

For the Wrights, Saracen ticked all the right boxes, yielding plump grains and showing strong performance on both dry and irrigated land.

New Zealand bred cultivars are developed to thrive in New Zealand.

Luisetti Seeds director Vincent Luisetti said different cultivars suit different farmers, depending on where their farm was situated and the type of farming that was done. "The disease and sprout resistance of our Plant & Food cultivars are really giving them an edge in the market. Saracen is hard to beat in dry land situations".