

Obtaining Seed and Becoming a Kernza® Grower – Information from The Land Institute



Last Update 17 May 2022

This document will guide you through decision making questions to help you understand whether Kernza® is a good fit for your system during the “Proof of Concept” phase of its development. Agronomic, genetic, and market changes are expected for the next 10 years. Grower success depends largely on willingness to share information, data, and innovations with other growers, researchers, and stakeholders.

Are Kernza® and my farm a good fit?

Kernza® is the only perennial grain crop currently marketed in the USA. For 15 years, The Land Institute has endeavored to breed a perennial grain crop from a wild wheat relative, intermediate wheatgrass. The result is Kernza® perennial grain. The crop is in beta form with R&D ongoing. It is in pre-commercialization and found in niche markets nationally. The Land Institute is committed to bringing this crop to scale in a responsible manner and working with growers committed to the experimental nature of the crop while ongoing genetic and agronomic improvements are achieved.

Seed quantities are limited and Kernza® growers’ success is dependent on some basic criteria. If you answer yes to most of the following questions, Kernza® might be a good crop for you to experiment with in your system:

1. Are you familiar with growing small grains or grasses?
2. Do you have interest in experimentation with a new crop where agronomic management techniques are still being developed?
3. Do you have access to planting equipment for small seeded crops (e.g. grain drill or a seeder and packer)?
4. Do you have access to harvesting equipment for grasses or small grains (e.g. a swather and a pickup head or a stripper header)?
5. Do you have expertise or are you interested in experimenting in adapting equipment intended for other crops to be successful with different grain sizes and plant types?
6. Are you interested in using Kernza® as a dual-purpose crop for grain and forage?

7. Do you have access to a baler or mower for removing hay or straw after grain harvest?
8. Kernza® plants produce biomass that has been used as forage, hay, and straw. Do you have a market or use for forage, hay, or straw?
9. Is your operation located near other Kernza® growers or an institution involved in Kernza® research?
 - Kernza is currently being grown in the Upper Midwest (MN, WI, IA), the Central Plains (NE, SD, KS) and the Intermountain West (MT, WY) Outside regions housing these states, production is higher risk and will have less research/technical support.
10. Are you comfortable taking agronomic data on your plantings and sharing that data with other growers and researchers through The Land Institute or other partners?
11. Do you have at least 6 weeks of temperatures between 32 and 50 degrees to trigger the plant to produce seed heads? Some rules of thumb are:
 - If you are in a region where winter wheat can be grown, Kernza® may be a viable crop.
12. Are you comfortable working with an experimental crop with the risk of low yields and crop failures, but also with the promise of great ecological benefits?
13. If you are an organic farmer, are you aware that the establishment year can lead to very little or no production of commercially viable grain due to weed competition?
14. Are you comfortable working with The Land Institute to provide harvest reports, management plans, and royalties (\$5/acre/year) to help support the research and development of the crop?
15. If you are a conventional farmer, are you aware that only one herbicide has been approved for use with Kernza® and that there are only narrow uses for this herbicide (Weedar54)?
16. Kernza® perennial grain can be part of an NRCS CSP enhancement program under E3280.

The Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has led the effort on developing Kernza® as a perennial grain crop, including developing identity preserve protocols, testing requirements, and developing the grain market. The Land Institute owns the trademark on Kernza® perennial grain and manages licensing agreements with seed producers, growers, handlers, and manufacturers to ensure quality products enter the marketplace.

If you believe Kernza® might be right for you, please apply to be a grower at <https://thelandinstitute.submittable.com/submit>