

A New Wheat Variety for the Farmers of Georgia

A new winter wheat variety, Mtskheta-1, was released in Georgia in November of 2002. It has been the top variety of the state yield trials of Georgia for the last three years, showing a yield advantage of 10-40% over the local check varieties. Mtskheta-1 has demonstrated high yellow rust resistance and excellent performance under both irrigated and dryland conditions.

Mtskheta-1 was selected from the 5th Facultative and Winter Wheat Observation Nursery, which came to Georgia through International Winter Wheat Improvement Program (IWWIP). IWWIP is a joint program conducted by the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, CIMMYT, and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

Mtskheta-1 was identified and promoted at the Mtskheta Breeding Station by Dr. Anton Iakobashvili, a local breeder who first noticed that it maintained its green color longer and yielded more than other varieties in a dry year. However, Mtskheta-1's advantages became more obvious in years with good rainfall. Dr. Iakobashvili also singled it out for its wide adaptation and high yield potential (7-8 t/ha). Mr. Jemal Khatiashvili, a farmer and a member of the state variety release committee, noted that he supported the release of Mtskheta-1 for its high yield potential and resistance to lodging. At his farm in East Georgia, Mtskheta-1 yielded as much as 4 t/ha, while Bezostaya-1 and Copper experienced lodging and yellow rust, and yielded 2 t/ha or less. Although Bezostaya-1 and Copper had slightly higher grain protein content, high yielding Mtskheta-1 turned out to be more profitable. For all these reasons, Mr. Khatiashvili increased production of Mtskheta-1 fourfold in the current season.

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