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SIDEBAR: Flaxseed's New Market Power . . .

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Few crops can boast the kind of market expansion that flaxseed has seen during the past five years. As a primary ingredient in paints and linoleum the linseed oil crush is still the largest user of flaxseed. But instead of having to market 80% of the crop in September or October, flaxseed growers now have year-round demand from new markets.

“The export market is exploding for seed and for baking and oil use,” says Jan Topp, Grace City, ND farmer and President of AmeriFlax. “Plus we continue to see growth in the domestic market for consumer seed, multi-grain products, pasta and oil.”

Flaxseed in livestock feed is also strong growth market today as producers discover the health, reproductive and performance benefits of adding flaxseed to their livestock rations. “We’ve seen quite an increase in demand for flax in higher end livestock feeds,” says Brad Newton with Red River Commodities, Fargo, ND. “It’s absolutely a consistent year-round market now.”

Newfound knowledge about the importance of Omega-3 fatty acids in both human and livestock diets is driving the expansion in flax markets. “As the primary plant source of Omega-3s, flaxseed is becoming well recognized by food professionals and livestock nutritionists,” says Ernie Hoffert, Reimers Seeds, Carrington, ND and AmeriFlax board member.

“It’s clear that flaxseed interest is growing in popularity and awareness,” says Darlena Goetz, owner of FlaxSnax, a California company that sells her flax muffin mix to fine hotels and food service outlets across America. “Last year my sales grew 30% from the year before and I’m just beginning to reach people.”

Indeed, flax has become more a value-added crop than a commodity. Expect that trend to continue now that science is documenting Omega-3 health benefits. “Flaxseed has so many new emerging markets that are still in the infancy stage of development,” says Topp.

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