Helios AI INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

CASE STUDY
SEPTEMBER 2026

PROCUREMENT TIMING · CLIMATE RISK DATA

Seven weeks of warning before the smallest US wheat crop since 1965

KEY TAKEAWAY

Helios put Kansas — 18% of US wheat production — at its lowest rating in the first week of the season and held it for 21 straight weeks. A buyer watching that rating had seven weeks of warning before USDA's June forecast and covered before US wheat export prices rose 24.6%.

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGE

Drought does its damage to the Southern Plains in April and May. It becomes a number the market trusts when USDA publishes in June. It reaches the price only when traders act on that number, which can take weeks longer.

A buyer who waits for all three steps pays for the same damage twice — once in a short crop, and again in the cost of covering late. The whole value is in how early you can act with confidence.

WHAT HELIOS SAID, AND WHEN

26 April. In the first weekly snapshot of the season, Helios rated Kansas — the largest producing state, 18% of the national crop — at 1★, its lowest band. Oklahoma sat alongside it.

> *Every April day recorded drought stress; 97% also experienced heat above crop tolerance.*
> — Helios weekly assessment, Kansas wheat, 26 April 2026

THE ASSESSMENT HARDENED, NOT SOFTENED

A week later the reading was firmer, and stated in absolute terms: not simply dry, but the driest and hottest planting phase in the record, with damage already extending into vegetative growth.

> *Every single day in Planting recorded both drought and heat stress (100th percentile for both), exceeding any prior season on record; cold stress in Vegetative Growth is also at the 100th percentile.*
> — Helios weekly assessment, Kansas wheat, 3 May 2026

WHAT THE PUBLIC RECORD DID NEXT

Kansas stayed at 1★ for **all 21 consecutive weekly assessments** from 26 April through 7 September — through harvest, without a single upgrade. On 21 June Helios took the national rating to Take Action, where it also stayed.

USDA put the winter wheat crop at **1.03 billion bushels in its June forecast, down 26.5% and the smallest since 1965**, then cut it again in July to 990 million.

For a buyer, the consistency is the usable part. A signal that flickers cannot be acted on. A signal set early and held gives a procurement team a defensible position to take to a committee.

THE MARKET WAS LAST

US wheat export prices averaged **$274/mt** in the week Helios escalated the national rating, and were still drifting lower the week after. By 31 August they had reached **$340/mt**.

The move was not confined to one corner of the market. **All 64 published US wheat export price series rose**, across every trade basis — Gulf, Pacific Northwest, Pacific and Asian destinations alike — in a range from +10.4% to +91.4%.

The Impact

7 weeks	21 of 21	64 of 64	+24.6%
WARNING BEFORE USDA'S JUNE FORECAST	CONSECUTIVE WEEKS AT THE LOWEST RATING	EXPORT PRICE SERIES THAT ROSE	AVERAGE EXPORT PRICE, CALL WEEK TO 31 AUG

HOW THIS HELPS YOU

If you buy US wheat, this is the signal that gives you a defensible reason to cover early — weeks before the crop report everyone else is waiting on. That is the difference between hedging into a market that is still drifting down and hedging after it has already turned.

You do not have to change anything to get it. The Kansas rating sits in the ordinary weekly view next to every other origin you buy, and because each rating is frozen with the date it was written, the position you took in April is still in the record in September — which matters when you have to explain the decision to a committee.

IN SHORT Kansas was flagged in April, USDA confirmed the smallest crop since 1965 in June, and export prices rose 24.6%.

HELIOS AI · CLIMATE RISK INTELLIGENCE

Helios ratings quoted verbatim from archived weekly snapshots, each frozen with the run date it was written on. Price moves computed from Helios published weekly export price series. Crop outcomes from the public sources named above. Validation window 26 April – 7 September 2026. Origin identities are public; no customer data is used.