

# Feds spend for better grain varieties

*Jamac news services*

New wheat and barley varieties better able to resist disease and insects while making better use of water and nutrients represents the goal for \$11 million in research money announced last week in Saskatoon.

“Grain farmers struggle against challenges like drought, floods and pests so that families in Canada and around the world can enjoy safe, healthy and high quality food,” said Parliamentary Secretary David Anderson (Cypress Hills-Grasslands) in a prepared statement.

Anderson, speaking for Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, added that the government hopes the investment “will not only improve the quality of field crop varieties, but will also create value-added opportunities for farmers in the growing bio-economy.”

More than \$8 million, under the Canadian Agri-Science Clusters initiative, along with funding from the Western Grains Research Foundation, will go to creating the Canadian Wheat Breeding Cluster. Officials expect it to collect together “the best scientific expertise to improve wheat varieties that will help farmers

obtain higher yields and higher quality with lower production costs.”

The government will also spend up to \$2.8 million under the Developing Innovative Agri-Products measure for barley breeding and related research. Along with the research foundation, other partners with a direct interest in barley research include the Canadian Wheat Board, the Alberta Barley Commission, the Brewing and Malting Barley Research Institute and Rahr Malting Canada Ltd.

Demand for high quality Canadian malt, malt products, bio-products and healthy food is rising, and producers need new barley varieties to compete in the marketplace, the statement said. The research foundation will work with federal Agriculture Department researchers “to enhance the quality of barley crops with varieties that are resistant to existing and emerging threats, while continuing to offer optimal yields.”

Canada is the sixth largest producer of wheat world wide, with sales generating over \$5 billion annually. The western Canadian wheat industry produces 95 per cent of Canadian wheat

and the industry employs over 400,000 people. Canadians consume only 30 per cent of the wheat produced here.



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Scientists hope to develop higher-yielding wheat and barley with a recent injection of \$11 million for research. Eagle file photo.