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Government of Canada Invests in Innovation for Western Grain Growers

The Government of Canada is investing in grain research that will help improve crop performance and give our wheat and barley producers a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Today Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, David Anderson, on behalf of Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, announced investments of \$11 million to develop new wheat and barley varieties.

“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 Anderson. “Our Government is making sure grain farmers remain prosperous and competitive by investing in innovation that will not only improve the quality of field crop varieties, but will also create value-added opportunities for farmers in the growing bio-economy.”

A Government of

Canada investment of more than \$8 million under the Canadian Agriculture Science Clusters initiative, along with funding from the Western Grains Research Foundation, will create the Canadian Wheat Breeding Cluster. The Cluster will bring together the best scientific expertise to improve wheat varieties that will help farmers obtain higher yields and higher quality with lower production costs. Using innovative breeding techniques, researchers will focus on varieties that are more resistant to disease and insects, promote efficient nutrient and water use and capitalize on opportunities in new markets. The Cluster will also help to build capacity and generate knowledge to ensure the long-term success of the sector and maintain Canada’s reputation as a leader in the industry.

“The WGRF is pleased with the Government of Canada’s investment in wheat and barley,” noted WGRF Chairman Keith Degenhardt. “WGRF has a long and successful history with our research

partners at AAFC and the prairie universities who will be part of the Wheat Cluster research activities. We view this new program as an opportunity to strengthen and grow these relationships.”

In addition, the Government of Canada will invest up to \$2.8 million under the Developing Innovative Agri-Products (DIAP) initiative for barley breeding and related research. Along with WGRF, the project pulls together partners with a direct interest in barley research, including 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, bioproducts and healthy food is rising, and producers need new barley varieties to compete in the marketplace. WGRF will work with AAFC researchers to enhance the quality of barley crops with varieties that are resistant to existing and emerging threats, while continuing to offer





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optimal yields.

The grain industry in western Canada contributes significantly to our economy. Canada is the sixth largest producer of wheat world wide, with sales of Canadian wheat

generating over \$5 billion annually. The western Canadian wheat industry produces 95 per cent of Canadian wheat and the industry employs over 400,000 workers.

Canada consumes only 30 per cent of the wheat produced here. Barley production in the Prairies generated 9.5 million tonnes in 2009.

Both projects are de-

livered by the Growing Forward framework under the Agri-Innovations Program, a \$158-million five-year program announced to support industry-led science and technology projects.