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news release

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Federal investment helps Alberta Barley Commission increase shochu barley exports to Japan

Calgary, Alberta (July 29, 2010) – The Alberta Barley Commission welcomes a \$1.08 million investment from the Government of Canada for the “Multi-purpose high starch shochu barley selection program.” The end-goal of this project is to increase exports of Canadian barley to Japan for the purpose of making shochu, a distilled alcoholic beverage.

“We have looked to the Japanese market for a number of years as a premium export destination for Canadian barley for malt, feed, and food uses,” says Commission Chair Matt Sawyer. “I believe our barley can meet the needs of this market consistently and that this project will ensure our barley exports to Japan for shochu continue to grow.”

Shochu can be made from a number of different raw ingredients, but by far the most popular is barley shochu or *mugijochu*, as it is known in Japan.

“The Agriculture and Food Council (AFC) is pleased to provide funding through the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP) for the shochu barley initiative to build on previous commercialization research led by the Alberta Barley Commission,” says AFC Chair Heather Broughton. “This innovative project will help the Alberta barley industry to diversify by identifying suitable regionally adapted shochu barley varieties that also have the agronomic characteristics required for other barley markets.”

Shochu has gained in market share in Japan from sake and other liquors over the last decade—particularly among 20–40 year olds. Exports of shochu barley from Canada to Japan have increased from samples of a few kilograms originally to thousands of tonnes in recent years.

In addition to federal funding, this project includes support and investment from a Japanese shochu manufacturer, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, the Canadian Wheat Board, Rahr Malting Co., and the University of Alberta.

“We have assembled a world-class research team to evaluate new and emerging lines of barley as potential varieties for export,” explains Sawyer. “Our aim is to determine what characteristics



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of barley make a high-quality shochu and to ensure that barley exported for shochu better meets those requirements.”

Canada’s only barley commission, the Alberta Barley Commission is a not-for-profit corporation organized, funded, directed and controlled by the province’s 17,000 barley producers. The Commission coordinates and sponsors research, market development, technology-transfer and policy development on behalf of its producers.

In Alberta, CAAP is delivered by the Agriculture and Food Council. CAAP is a five-year (2009–2014), \$163-million national initiative that aims to help the Canadian agricultural sector adapt and remain competitive. Eligible CAAP projects could be in areas of traceability, environment, climate change, capacity development, pests and diseases, and more.

For more information on CAAP, please visit www.agr.gc.ca/caap. To learn more about AFC, please visit www.agfoodcouncil.com.

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***For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact
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