
News Release/Communiqué

Federal/Provincial



GOVERNMENTS INVEST IN INTERNATIONAL WHEAT GENOMICS PROJECT

Today, Mr. Brad Trost, MP for Saskatoon-Humboldt, on behalf of the Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State (Science and Technology), and the Honourable Rob Norris, Saskatchewan Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration and Minister responsible for Innovation, on behalf of the Honourable Bob Bjornerud, Minister of Agriculture, announced more than \$5.6 million in research funding that will result in new wheat varieties for Canadian farmers.

“The Government of Canada is investing in science and research to create jobs, economic growth and improve the quality of life of Canadians,” MP Trost said. “These investments will help farmers and others in the agricultural industry by increasing the diversity of high quality wheat produced in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner.”

“Agriculture research is a continuing priority for our government and we are pleased to fund this important project,” Minister Norris said. “This research will result in new varieties of wheat that will benefit our producers and the entire agriculture industry.”

This project will be managed by Genome Prairie and is part of the \$8.5 million Canadian Triticum Advancement through Genomics (CTAG) project. It will also represent Canada’s contribution to the new international sequencing effort led by the International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium (IWSWG).

The CTAG project was provided \$4.1 million in funding through Genome Canada’s 2010 Large Scale Applied Research Project Competition, announced on March 25, 2011 as part of \$60 million in Government of Canada funding for 16 new Genome Canada applied research projects that will use genomics research to improve key sectors of the Canadian economy.

The Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$1.5 million through its Agriculture Development Fund.

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Research in Saskatchewan will be lead by Drs. Curtis Pozniak and Pierre Hucl, the Ministry of Agriculture's Strategic Research Chairs, working out of the Crop Development Centre at the University of Saskatchewan.

"This research is timely and necessary, and supports other international efforts in providing Canadian wheat breeders with tools and resources to accelerate wheat improvement to meet the global challenge of increased food production," Genome Prairie President and CEO Wilf Keller said.

Other funding partners for this project include the Western Grains Research Foundation, Viterra, Genome Alberta, the Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund, France's National Institute for Agricultural Research and India's National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute.

"This investment in research will undoubtedly strengthen and advance cereal breeding programs across Western Canada," Western Grains Research Foundation Chairman Dr. Keith Degenhardt said. "With the potential to accelerate the crop breeding cycle and speed the release of improved varieties to the market, this project is a worthwhile and powerful investment that will provide a great return for crop producers."

"Research is vital to the growth of our industry," Western Canadian Wheat Growers Saskatchewan Vice-President Geoffrey Hewson said. "This project will lead to new and improved wheat varieties that will benefit producers for years to come."

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BACKGROUNDER

Canadian *Triticum* Advancement through Genomics (CTAG) Project

Wheat is a staple food crop contributing approximately \$4 billion annually to the Canadian agriculture industry. Wheat production comprised more than 20 per cent of Canadian farm crop income during 2005-2009 (Statistics Canada 2010) and a total value of approximately \$11 billion when value-added food processing is considered.

The three-year \$8.5 million CTAG project aims to enable geneticists and breeders to characterize the genes at the most fundamental level: the DNA sequence. The wheat DNA sequence holds the key to genetic improvements, allowing growers to meet the increasing demands for high quality food and feed produced in an environmentally sensitive, sustainable and profitable manner.

Funding Partners

Genome Canada- \$4,102,385

Province of Saskatchewan- \$1,533,667

Western Grains Research Foundation- \$1,126,782

National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (India)- \$999,999

Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund- \$295,636

Alberta Innovates/Genome Alberta- \$207,779

Viterra- \$120,578

National Institute for Agricultural Research (France)- \$120,000

Total- \$8,506,826

Genome Prairie, a non-profit organization established in 2000, fosters world-class innovation and commercialization on the Prairies by managing research projects and facilitating regional participation for genomic research and knowledge transfer. It delivers public education and awareness of societal impacts including ethical, economic, environmental and legal issues related to genomics.