

## **Canadian, Australian and US Farm Groups Want Biotech Wheat**

**May 14, 2009** – The Grain Growers of Canada, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association and the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission announce that they have reached an accord with Australian and US wheat producers on the need for the synchronized introduction of biotech wheat.

"Wheat acreage in Canada is in danger of declining even more unless we see innovation in plant breeding," said Doug Robertson, President of the Grain Growers. "As farmers we will switch acres into those crops which have the best return. In recent years, we have seen wheat yields stagnate in comparison to canola, corn and soybeans."

The application of biotechnology in wheat research could lead to the development of several traits to improve wheat yields and wheat quality. Traits to improve yields could include those that deal with environmental factors (e.g. drought, cold tolerance), combat weed or insect infestations (e.g. midge, sawfly), improve disease resistance (e.g. fusarium, rust) or improve the wheat plant's utilization of nutrients. Traits to improve the quality attributes of wheat could include those that are designed to accommodate consumers with food allergies, reduce obesity, or improve the nutritional profile of wheat-based foods.

"Prairie farmers and consumers around the globe have benefitted tremendously from the development of biotech traits in canola," says Kevin Bender, President of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers. "Using the same tools in wheat could improve yields, increase farm profits and better meet the needs of future consumers."

Wheat acreage in western Canada has declined significantly over the past two decades, in part due to its declining profitability (relative to canola and other crops) and increased competition from wheat producers in Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and Argentina.

"Being early adopters of new biotech traits in wheat could help restore our competitive advantage," says Kent Erickson, Chairman of the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission. "Coordinating our efforts with farmers in other leading-edge countries will ensure Canadian wheat producers are not left behind and instead are among the first to take advantage of this technology."

Canadian growers are working with American and Australia farmers to ensure the commercial introduction of biotech traits in wheat will proceed smoothly by synchronizing regulatory approvals in exporting and importing nations.

Given the time frame of six to eight years for new biotech wheat varieties to reach commercial introduction, it is critical to signal both seed developers and policymakers now, that many farmers are eager to see biotech traits in wheat that could improve their profitability and

improve food security for many countries around the world.

A copy of the joint international statement is attached.

For further comment, please contact:

Doug Robertson, President  
Grain Growers of Canada  
(403) 819-8372

Kevin Bender, President  
Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association  
(403) 350-4949

Kent Erickson, Chairman  
Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission  
(780) 754-2541

