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## **Innovation imperative for grain farmers to produce high-quality product for market**

*Canada lags behind its competitors when it comes to government support for innovative crop protection methods and plant biotechnologies.*

**(OTTAWA — October 9, 2019)** The federal election is just over two weeks away and the Grain Growers of Canada (GCC) are speaking up to remind Canadian politicians that investment in innovative plant science is essential to the country's agricultural outputs as well as to its overall economic strength.

Technology and innovation are critical to the work Canadian grain farmers do each day and their use of science-based crop protection methods, plant biotechnologies and gene editing has agricultural, economic and societal benefits.

"Innovation and farming go hand-in-hand," said GCC Chair Jeff Nielsen from his farm in Olds, AB. "By harnessing innovation and using cutting-edge techniques and practices, Canadian grain farmers can sustainably produce more of the safe, high quality grain that consumers demand."

An additional \$8.3 billion of Canadian crops are grown per year as a direct result of farmers' use of plant biotechnologies and innovative crop protection products. In fact, biotech crops are more resistant to weeds, insects and diseases and the use of innovative crop protection methods and scientific innovations also lead to increased yield and improved agronomic traits. As a result, this allows for the more efficient use of resources like land, water, and inputs like seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, leading a smaller environmental footprint. Without scientific innovations, Canadian farmers would need to farm 50% more land to grow the same amount of food.

Innovation has trickle-down effects on the Canadian economy and on Canadian society. The plant science industry contributes almost \$10 billion to Canada's GDP each year and is responsible for more than 130,000 jobs in Canada. Innovation also provides economic viability for the next generation of farmers, whose use of biotech crops and new varieties will result in a reliable, profitable yield. Additionally, innovation in farming saves each Canadian family more \$4,000 per year and has resulted in healthier, more affordable food.

"Smart science and innovative agricultural methods make good agricultural and economic sense," added Nielsen. "Not only do they provide economic stability for our farmers, but they also contribute to stability for Canadian families by helping keep food costs low."

However, when it comes to investment in agriculture innovation, Canada is falling behind. The United States ranks first in the world for its use of biotechnology with access to cutting-edge science and innovations, while, as a result of redundant reviews that lead to regulatory uncertainty, Canadian farmers are being put at a competitive disadvantage relative to our counterparts across the border. All this while Canadian farmers continue to experience net farm income declines. According to Statistics Canada, 2018 was the lowest farm income reported in eight years.

"Political leaders need to ensure Canadian farmers can access the best plant technologies and innovations possible, or Canadian farmers, the Canadian economy and Canadian society will be left behind," said Nielsen.

It is only by encouraging investment in plant science innovations that Canadian grain farmers can produce the world's highest quality, most-profitable grains. By establishing clear, predictable requirements for the pre-market assessment of gene-edited crops, we will ensure that Canadian grain farmers have access to the agricultural innovations that will keep them competitive in the global marketplace now and far into the future.

*Grain Growers of Canada provides a strong national voice for over 65,000 active and successful grain, oilseed and pulse producers through its 16 provincial, regional and national grower groups. Our mission and mandate are to pursue a policy environment that maximizes global competitiveness and to influence federal policy on behalf of independent Canadian grain farmers and their associations.*

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