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Producer Groups Provide Leadership in Wheat & Barley Breeding

Recognizing the important role producer funding of public breeding has played in delivering new wheat and barley varieties for increased farm profitability, Western Canada's wheat and barley commissions/associations are working together to consider options for continued leadership and influence.

Since producer investments in breeding began in 1995, over 200 new wheat and barley varieties have been made available to farmers by public research institutions. With studies demonstrating that producer investments contribute to increased net profitability per acre for western Canadian farmers, producer organizations have formed a working group to examine opportunities for optimum producer involvement in wheat and barley variety development.

The participating organizations include the Alberta Barley Commission, the Alberta Wheat Commission, the BC Grain Producers Association, the Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission and Winter Cereals Manitoba. The Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF) serves as the facilitator.

A recent study commissioned by the WGRF calculated that on average every producer check-off dollar invested into wheat varietal research has returned \$20.40 in value to the producer. Barley varietal research saw a return of over \$7.56 for each producer dollar invested.

In 2015, the working group engaged JRG Consulting Group to explore a range of opportunities for producer involvement and leadership in wheat and barley variety development. The consultant's report was recently received by the working group. The report emphasizes the importance of continued and increased public, producer and private industry investment in wheat and barley variety development, and the benefits to producers. The report identifies and evaluates five options for producers to intensify their leadership and realize the benefits of future variety development.

The consultant's report is available on the websites of the participating organizations. The organizations are encouraging farmers and other interested stakeholders to read the report and provide comments. The five options put forward are intended to stimulate dialogue and none have been endorsed by the working group.

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