



MEDIA RELEASE

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Wheat Initiative launches its Strategic Research Agenda

July 27, 2015 – Paris (France) - To meet the expected 60% raise in demand for wheat by 2050, coordination of research and significant investments are needed to increase wheat sustainable production globally. The Wheat Initiative presented today its Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) to the G20 Agricultural Chief Scientists gathered in Turkey.

Wheat is a staple food worldwide and provides 20% of all calories and protein, both in developed and in less developed countries. However, between 1998 and 2013, demand exceeded production every other year. Hence, all wheat producing countries share an urgent need to increase yield potential, protect wheat from yield losses due to pests and diseases, maintain yield under highly variable climatic conditions and increase the sustainability of wheat production systems, so that enough wheat with adequate quality is produced. This will only be achieved if resources and capabilities are built to support cutting-edge research, breeding and agronomy in wheat and through knowledge exchange and capacity building in the wheat research global community.

To answer these challenges, the Wheat Initiative SRA identifies key research priorities for the short, medium and long term. It also lists outstanding game-changers that will revolutionise wheat breeding in the future, including: the availability of a fully assembled and annotated wheat reference genome sequence, the accessibility to wheat scientific data and analysis tools via a dedicated information system, the creation of new combinations of desirable alleles through new breeding techniques.

Hélène Lucas, International Scientific Coordinator of the Wheat Initiative explains: “The Wheat Initiative Strategic Research Agenda identifies research priorities that should be tackled at the international level through integrated or coordinated action. It provides a framework for public and private researchers, funders and policy-makers to work together and answer the challenge to sustainably increase wheat production and contribute to global food security”.

Steve Visscher, BBSRC Deputy Chief Executive and Chair of the Wheat Initiative Institutions’ Coordination Committee, adds: “The Wheat Initiative will create a dialogue among its members to define the initial priorities. The Institutions’ Coordination Committee will identify and develop a portfolio of mechanisms to facilitate the effective delivery of the SRA, including encouragement of active research collaborations, alignment of national, regional and company strategies to the SRA priorities, joint-funding mechanisms for international calls, as well as public-private cooperation frameworks.”

The SRA results from the work of the international public-private research community represented in the Wheat Initiative committees and Expert Working Groups. The Wheat Initiative is grateful to the support from many Stakeholders which took the opportunity to comment and improve the document via an open consultation on the challenges and priorities identified in the SRA.

About the Wheat Initiative:

The Wheat Initiative was established in 2011 as part of the Action Plan of the G20 Ministries of Agriculture. It currently brings together 16 countries, 2 CGIAR Centres and 9 private breeding companies. It aims at coordinating international research efforts on wheat and at providing opportunities for an increased and more efficient utilisation of resources through alignment of national and regional activities and pooling of resources. For additional information visit: <http://www.wheatinitiative.org/>

About wheat:

With around 220 million hectares planted annually, wheat is the most widely cultivated cereal in the world. 85% of wheat is produced in only 10 countries/regions, with the EU-28, China and India contributing to 50% of it. 70% of the 700 million tons produced annually are used for human consumption and wheat provides around 20% of global calories and protein of the human diet. Wheat is a staple food for around 3 billion people including 1.2 billion poor. Stable and reliable wheat production and the maintenance of prices at an affordable level are therefore paramount for global food security and political stability.

[Download the Wheat Initiative Strategic Research Agenda](#)

[Download the Press kit](#)

[View the Video presenting the Wheat Initiative SRA](#)

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