

SEEDQUEST – January 6, 2012

Idaho's agricultural research enhanced through multi-million dollar endowments from Idaho Wheat Commission and Limagrain Cereal Seeds

The Idaho Wheat Commission today announced a plan to create two faculty research endowments with \$2 million to the University of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences to support Idaho's 4,500 wheat growers and their \$766 million-per-year harvest.

In addition, **Limagrain Cereal Seeds** has agreed to collaborate with the college on breeding new wheat varieties for Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. Both Limagrain and the college will contribute germplasm, technology, and expertise to more rapidly develop varieties with improved productivity and tolerance to diseases and stress. To support this effort, Limagrain is also funding a significant endowment for cropping systems research and graduate training at the university.

"These partnerships clearly demonstrate the power of collaboration and the value that a land-grant institution like the University of Idaho can bring to our state's economy," said M. Duane Nellis, president of the University of Idaho. "We deeply appreciate the confidence that both the Idaho Wheat Commission and Limagrain Cereal Seeds have placed in our university."

Limagrain Cereal Seeds and the university will share grain germplasm, which will "greatly increase varietal options for Idaho and Pacific Northwest wheat growers," said Dean John Hammel of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

"This public-private partnership is a win for all of us and especially for Idaho and the Pacific Northwest wheat industry," said Hammel. "Today's economic realities make it increasingly important for industries benefiting from our research to increase their support. The endowments our partners are establishing today are ensuring the future as they will provide ongoing and perpetual research funding. We applaud both the Idaho Wheat Commission and Limagrain Cereal Seeds for stepping up as willing partners."

Developing new wheat varieties is not easy. It takes a dozen years to develop and test best new grain varieties. "Future yield increases in wheat will be driven by research, said Gordon Gallup of Ririe, chairman of the Idaho Wheat Commission, which represents Idaho's wheat growers. "Private breeders like Limagrain Cereal Seeds bringing new technology and new germplasm into the mix is going to give our public programs a significant boost. New technology will lead to greater yields and better profitability for wheat growers in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest.

"Wheat growers of Idaho are very aware of how important research is to our bottom line," Gallup said. "If wheat is to remain competitive in our state and region, growers of Idaho must look to public/private partnerships, as well as requiring increased efficiencies in our public research programs."

"These past few years we have seen severe cuts to our state universities' budgets. Although cuts were necessary to balance budgets, those reductions have caused an erosion of our ability to fund research that is necessary to keep agriculture healthy," Gallup added.

"Idaho's wheat growers are hopeful that the State of Idaho will continue to invest in agriculture," Gallup said. "We encourage other agricultural related industries to join in this effort to keep our land grant universities' research programs healthy and productive."

Donn Thill, director of the university's Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station that oversees the institution's statewide agricultural research, believes that, "by strategically combining our wheat germplasm with Limagrain Cereal Seeds', new wheat varieties will be created for our growers that yield more wheat per acre, that are easier on the environment, more disease resistant, and more nutritious than what we could do working alone."

Jim Peterson, vice president for research at Limagrain Cereal Seeds, sees this as an exciting opportunity to build on the complementary strengths of the University of Idaho and LCS wheat programs. "The university's cropping systems research will help growers to better manage and capture value from new varieties that come out of the collaborative breeding effort," Peterson said. The collaboration also brings a new international dimension to wheat research in Idaho and the Northwest. Limagrain Cereal Seeds is a new joint venture between the France-based Limagrain Group, the largest cereal seed company in Europe, and Arcadia Biosciences, a biotechnology company based in Davis, Calif.

This year, the Idaho Wheat Commission endowments will fund a wheat breeding and a wheat agronomist professorship, each located at the university's Aberdeen Research and Extension Center. "Some of this endowment will enhance salaries of faculty already conducting research, an effort to stay competitive, to keep these professionals in Idaho," Thill said.

Limagrain Cereal Seeds' support for graduate training also is timely. "Nationally, we're facing shortages of experienced people in agriculture with these skills," Thill said. "An important part of our job is training the next generation of crop scientists. These endowments will help us."

As part of its commitment to the Idaho grain industry, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences is reallocating resources and faculty positions to strengthen statewide cereal research and extension, areas hard hit during the severe economic downturn of the past several years.

These strategic and collaborative partnerships will enable the college to fill two cropping positions in the coming year, one each in Moscow and Aberdeen, along with a plant nutrition position. "These positions will provide important agronomic support to newly developed cereals and other crops," Hammel said.

The small-grain cereal cropping system agronomist in Moscow will focus on northern Idaho's dryland production systems including small grain cereals, peas, lentils, and oilseed with a value of \$150 million annually to northern Idaho.

The plant nutritionist will focus on optimizing fertilizer use and placement in winter wheat to ensure environmental protection and sustainable crop production in both conventional and direct seed farming systems.

To further improve adaptation of new wheat varieties in northern Idaho, an area-wide extension educator position, located in Nez Perce County, will be filled to support cereal agronomic and yield test sites in northern Idaho.

In Aberdeen, "the cropping systems agronomist will provide much needed research and extension information in best management practices for wheat, barley, and crops grown with them in rotation," added Hammel. Additionally at Aberdeen, a research entomology position will be refilled to develop extension and research programs in insect management for crops including small-grain cereals and potatoes.

The university's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences operates research and extension facilities throughout Idaho to serve the state's people and agriculture as part of its mission as a land-grant institution.

The University of Idaho helps students to succeed and become leaders. Its land-grant mission furthers innovative scholarly and creative research to grow Idaho's economy and serve a statewide community. From its main campus in Moscow, Idaho, to 70 research and academic locations statewide, U-Idaho emphasizes real-world application as part of its student experience. U-Idaho combines the strength of a large university with the intimacy of small learning communities. It is home to the Vandals, and competes in the Western Athletic Conference. Learn more: www.uidaho.edu.

The Idaho Wheat Commission (IWC), a quasi-state agency, was established in 1959 by the Idaho Grain Growers Association to help maximize profitability for Idaho wheat producers by investing funds in market development, research, and information and education. The IWC collects a tax, or check-off, from every bushel of wheat sold in the state. Growers are currently assessed \$.02/bushel. Those dollars are reinvested in a variety of programs including: research projects that help develop wheat varieties with increased yields and disease packages; overseas markets; and educational workshops and seminars. Idaho's wheat production generates more than 8,500 jobs in Idaho. www.idahowheat.org

Born of a desire to bring farmers together to build market power, Limagrain Group was founded as a farmer's cooperative in France in 1942. Today, still farmer-owned, the company has 7,200 employees, including 1,400 researchers, and is the largest seed company in the European Union and the largest cereal seed producer in the world. The new North American subsidiary, Limagrain Cereal Seeds, is a joint venture between Vilmorin and Cie, a Limagrain holding, and Arcadia Biosciences. In the US, the company will focus on wheat research and the creation of new improved cultivars for U.S. wheat growers. Headquartered in Fort Collins, Colorado, Limagrain Cereal Seeds is centrally located to prime wheat growing regions of the U.S. www.limagraincerealseeds.com/

Based in Davis, California, with additional facilities in Seattle, Washington, and Phoenix, Arizona, Arcadia Biosciences is an agricultural technology company focused on developing technologies and products that improve the environment and enhance human health. For more information visit www.arcadiabio.com.