

Media Release

For immediate release
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AAFC GROWING FORWARD PARTNERS WITH DUC TO EXPAND WINTER WHEAT RESEARCH

Lethbridge, Alberta – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) announced today that it is providing just over \$1.25 million through the Developing Innovative Agri-Products (DIAP) program to Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), three Prairie Province winter wheat producer commissions and its funding partners to increase winter wheat acres across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This funding is part of the federal government's Growing Forward initiative.

"Improved varieties and good management by producers have made winter wheat one of the most profitable crops over the past few years," says Paul Thoroughgood, Regional Agrologist for DUC. "This funding will allow us to focus on providing farmers with the tools they need to plan and manage their winter wheat crops to maximize productivity and profitability. DUC would like to thank AAFC for its continuing commitment to winter wheat."

There will be a set of nine studies where AAFC scientists will evaluate a number of integrated crop management strategies ranging from nutrient management, weed, disease and insect issues, and stubble, crop residue and crop rotation management, which will all lead to improved winter wheat plant health.

"Time management is an issue because when winter wheat needs to be seeded, farmers are often busy with their spring crop harvest," explains Brian Beres, Biologist and Principal Investigator, Integrated Crop Management Systems, Lethbridge Research Station. "Our research is going to focus on developing better production methods that will ultimately result in improved winter survival, crop yield, and yield and grade stability across the Prairies."

DUC has been working to conserve, restore and manage wetlands and their associated habitats for North America's waterfowl since 1938. Winter wheat provides ideal undisturbed nesting sites for waterfowl providing a longer, more productive nesting period.

"Ducks that choose to nest in winter wheat are 10 times more likely to successfully hatch as those that nest in spring-seeded cereals," says Thoroughgood. "This is particularly beneficial to northern pintails, a species that has declined since the late '70s."

This research project builds on a long-standing relationship between DUC and winter wheat producer commissions across the Prairies. Winter wheat producer groups in each of the Prairie Provinces such as the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission, Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission and Winter Cereals Manitoba Inc. give farmers an excellent opportunity to direct and participate in the research.

"Today's announcement is the result of the co-operation between producer groups and DUC working together towards the common goal of increasing the cultivation and profitability of winter wheat," says Jake Davidson, Executive Director, Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission and Winter Cereals Manitoba, Inc. "Currently winter wheat is one of the smaller cereal crops grown on the Prairies. It is essential that all the parties with a vested interest in winter wheat work closely together to maximize the investment of producer dollars in this research."

Industry partners such as Agrium, Canadian Wheat Board and Agrotain International L.L.C. complete a very diverse group of partners investing in this project.

DUC's investment in this important research is made possible through its partnership with Bayer CropScience, under the North American initiative of *Winter Cereals: Sustainability in Action*. This program showcases the important role winter wheat plays in sustainable agriculture and highlights an agricultural practice that is profitable and wildlife-friendly.

"These relationships are essential to the success of seeing more farmers include winter wheat in their cropping plans and for us to provide more wildlife habitat," says Thoroughgood. "It really is a win-win situation for everyone involved."

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About Ducks Unlimited Canada

We are Canada's most trusted and respected conservation organization. (*Ipsos Reid and NRG Surveys*) Our mission is to conserve, restore and manage wetlands and associated habitats for waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

Additional information about Ducks Unlimited Canada is available at ducks.ca

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