



NEWS RELEASE

Seed Innovators Need a Signal on KVD

Ottawa, Monday January 21, 2008 – The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food needs to give a clear signal to industry that he supports seed driven innovation by eliminating Kernel Visual Distinguishability (KVD) as a requirement for the registration of all western wheat varieties this year.

That message was delivered in a letter to the Minister by the Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA). “Members of CSTA’s Executive Committee were pleased to hear, during a recent meeting with the Minister, that he supports removing KVD as a requirement for variety registration,” said CSTA First Vice-President Jeff Reid. “We urge him to make that support clear to the wheat variety registration recommending committees before they meet at the end of February.”

KVD is a proven impediment to seed driven innovation. For example, there have been no new varieties of winter wheat registered in western Canada for over 6 years. In contrast, in Ontario where KVD was removed in 1989, farmers now have a choice of over 20 different varieties of red winter wheat. These varieties account for over 80% of the wheat acreage in the province. Few if any of these varieties would be eligible for registration under KVD constraints.

In addition, Ontario farmers are growing an increasing acreage of hard red spring wheat which displaces western wheat in Canadian and neighboring US flour mills. Over 15 different spring wheat varieties are now available in Ontario, including several which are well adapted to western Canada, but not eligible for registration there.

Private sector seed innovators invested over \$56 million in research and development in 2007 and plan to almost double that investment by 2012. However, due to regulatory impediments like KVD, investment in cereal research and development will actually decline. “CSTA’s member companies are ready to invest in wheat research and development,” says Mr. Reid. “We just need a clear indication that the regulatory environment will enable that investment.”

CSTA recognizes that grain segregation and marketing related issues will need to be addressed over the coming months. However, given the time required to move a variety from registration testing to commercialization, there is immediate need to reform the variety registration requirements.

“If KVD is not removed as a condition for wheat variety registration this year, another full year of valuable progress will be lost. The opportunity cost for farmers who are anxiously waiting for new wheat opportunities could be in the millions,” says Mr. Reid.

CSTA looks forward to an early announcement from the Minister and to actively participating in the effort to put Canada’s wheat industry back out in front of the world, through innovation.

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Headquartered in the nation's capital, the Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA) represents the interests of 132 corporate members engaged in all aspects of seed research, production and marketing, both domestically and internationally.