



Wheat Research

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Proper funding is essential to the continued vitality of wheat research programs across the country and the world. Efforts during the 2008 Farm Bill to reorganize research coordination under USDA will aid in the efficient use of competitive research funds, but dramatic new investments in both basic and competitive research will be necessary in coming years to meet short-term threats and achieve long-term yield increases required for domestic and international food security.

Declining Acres and Increasing Threats

Wheat acreage has decreased by nearly one-third since 1980 as production has shifted to corn and soybeans, largely because increases in wheat productivity and economic returns per acre have not kept pace with other major crops. Wheat production is also increasingly vulnerable to new and evolving diseases and insect pressures, including Ug99, which is poised to spread through the wheat-growing regions of India and Pakistan and to which an estimated 75 percent of U.S. wheat varieties are vulnerable.

Investments from the federal government are vital to keeping the wheat crop safe in the short-term and ensuring food security in the long-term.

The Necessity of Wheat

Despite the crop's competitiveness challenges, wheat production is fundamental to the U.S. economy. Wheat is grown in 42 U.S. states on almost 60 million acres of land, and the annual U.S. wheat crop is valued at more than \$12.5 billion. More than half of a typical annual crop is exported, bringing millions of dollars into the U.S. while feeding people around the world. Wheat products are the foundation of the U.S. milling and baking industries, supporting millions of jobs and generating additional billions in economic activity.

The need for an increasingly productive wheat crop is more than just a matter of dollars and cents. The United Nations estimates that 20 percent of food calories consumed in the world come from wheat and that food production will have to double by the year 2050 to sustain growing populations. Research investments are vital to keep this food source productive and safe.

Funding Priorities

- The wheat industry is requesting \$2.5 million specifically for the Agricultural Research Service's Cereal Rust Disease Initiative, a key effort in the fight against Ug99.
- NAWG and other agricultural groups have urged budget leaders to include \$500 million in the FY2011 budget for AFRI, USDA's primary competitive grants program.
- The wheat industry is requesting a total of \$5.25 million for quality and pest disease research in labs in eight U.S. states.

Learn More

More information about specific wheat research priorities and background information on major wheat research projects are available at www.wheatworld.org/research.

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