

Barley breeder leaving USDA ARS Aberdeen

Dr. Don Obert, USDA ARS barley breeder based at the National Small Grains Germplasm Research Facility in Aberdeen, ID, will be leaving the ARS research program in mid-February to take a wheat breeding position with Limagrain Cereal Seeds, a European based company which is currently scaling up its U.S. wheat breeding programs across the U.S.

Dr. Obert assumed the Idaho-based barley breeding position upon Darrell Wesenberg's retirement in 2003. Obert has been responsible for managing both extensive barley and oat breeding efforts at Aberdeen and experimental testing plots at five additional locations across the state.

"Dr. Obert will be greatly missed, but we wish him well in his new endeavors," says Ron Elkin, IBC chairman and grower from Buhl, ID. "We can assure barley growers that we are working closely with the management team at USDA ARS to refill the barley breeding position as quickly as possible."

Five-Year Barley and Wheat Germplasm Research Project Funded under Competitive USDA Research Grant Program

USDA announced last week that a **five year, \$25 million competitive research grant has been awarded to a collaborative team of barley and wheat researchers at 28 institutions across the United States**, including both the USDA ARS and University of Idaho barley and wheat breeding programs at Aberdeen, ID, to conduct both basic and applied research to improve barley and wheat germplasm for changing environments. A team of 56 scientists will utilize the latest genetic mapping and sequencing techniques to intensely focus on improving yields, water and nitrogen efficiency and resistance to major diseases, including the emerging threat of new and virulent races stem rust.

This project known as the Triticeae CAP or T-CAP will be headed by Dr. Gary Muehlbauer, barley geneticist at the University of Minnesota, and Dr. Jorge Dubcovsky, wheat geneticist at the University of California, Davis. Three Idaho-based scientists will play a key role in this comprehensive 5-year collaborative research project: Dr. Jianli Chen, University of Idaho wheat breeder; Dr. Mike Bonman, USDA ARS Research Leader and plant pathologist; and Dr. Harold Bockelman, USDA supervisory agronomist and curator of the National Small Grains Collection.

The Idaho scientists will screen the water and nitrogen-use efficiency of the 3,000 barley and wheat lines that comprise the USDA ARS National Small Grains Collection housed at the federal research facility in Aberdeen. This seed collection represents a global diversity of small grain germplasm gathered by researchers worldwide since 1897.



From the federal frontlines... Competitive rail legislation back on front burner for Senate Commerce Committee

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John D. (Jay) Rockefeller IV said this week that his rail competition bill, known as the Surface Transportation Board (STB) Reauthorization Act of 2011 (S.B. 158), will be a priority for the Commerce Committee this year. Rockefeller says his bill will improve rail service, create new jobs and make the rail industry and U.S. goods more competitive in the U.S. and abroad. **Key provisions include:**

- ◇ Requiring major rail carriers to quote bottleneck rates;

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- ◇ Setting standards for reciprocal switching and terminal access rates;
- ◇ Creating a process for parties to challenge paper barriers;
- ◇ Increasing STB scrutiny of future railroad mergers for competitive, service and environmental effects;
- ◇ Strengthening STB oversight of the railroad industry by update rail transportation policy, giving the Board independent investigative authority and creating a strong rail customer advocate at the STB to help resolve shippers' concerns;
- ◇ Reducing filing fees for shippers to bring rate complaints to the STB; and
- ◇ Allowing the STB's simplified rate dispute methods to be used by more shippers and to allow certain larger cases to be resolved through arbitration; and

Competitive rail reforms are spearheaded by the Alliance for Rail Competition and the Rail Customer Coalition, which IBC has been involved in through our rail consultant, Terry Whiteside, Whiteside & Associates in Billings, MT, who serves as ARC chairman. The National Barley Growers Association (NBGA) and National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) are active members of the Rail Customer Coalition.