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Integrated Crop Agronomy Cluster Announced

Federal Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay was in Saskatoon yesterday to announce a new 5-year Integrated Crop Agronomy Cluster.

The research will be based on a multi-crop whole farm approach.

The federal government is contributing \$6.3 million in funding, with an additional \$1.6 million coming from the Western Grains Research Foundation and another \$1.1 million from other industry partners.

The new Integrated Crop Agronomy Cluster will be led by the Western Grains Research Foundation.

Dr. Keith Degenhardt is Chair of the Research Committee for WGRF says producers face many agronomic challenges that cut across multiple crops.

"The focus of this Cluster is to use an integrated approach to study agronomic issues for everything from soil health, crop rotations, adapting to climate change and dealing with threats such as weeds, insects, and disease. The research projects included address many of these agronomic challenges and will aim to find solutions to production threats, as well as further, develop sustainable and resilient cropping systems."

WGRF Executive Director Garth Patterson says the research is very important for farmers in Western Canada.

"We've spent two years working with Crop Commissions and Researchers in Western Canada to design this and make this proposal to the Federal Government. We're very pleased they announced yesterday (Thursday) their funding for this."

The other funders in the new Integrated Crop Agronomy Cluster include: The Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta Wheat Commission, Brewing and Malting Barley Research Institute, Manitoba Canola Growers Association, Manitoba Pulse and Soybean Growers, Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association, Prairie Oat Growers Association, Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission.

Patterson says now that the funding has been announced they are doing all the paperwork but notes research is already underway.

WGRF will be collaborating with a variety of research organizations among them Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Agri-Metrix, Brandon University, Farming Smarter, InnoTech Alberta, Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, Smoky Applied Research and Demonstration Association, University of Alberta, University of Manitoba, University of Saskatchewan, and Western Applied Research Corporation.