Einbeck, September 23

New KWS research project: Cem Özdemir presents grant approval

The formal presentation of the grant approval by Cem Özdemir, Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, marks the official start of a research project for the development of sustainable baking wheat varieties. KWS is the only industrial partner to be part of a high-profile project team.

Baking wheat needs nitrogen to develop the proteins necessary to attain high quality. In conventional farming, this nitrogen is supplied through mineral fertilizers. Prompted by the EU's plans to lower CO_2 emissions and reduce the use of fertilizers in the interest of more sustainable agriculture, this research project aims to develop nutrient-efficient wheat varieties that deliver high-quality baking results even with a lower protein content or with reduced fertilizer use. This is particularly important when crops are grown organically. The project, entitled "Increasing protein use efficiency in baking wheat through innovative breeding research on the WM-800 MAGIC WHEAT population for effective climate protection in the cereal value chain," will receive funding from the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) until December 2027. KWS contributes to the research project with its breeding expertise and does not receive any funding. The project is part of the German government's Climate Action Program 2023. With the MRI (Max Rubner-Institute) as the project lead and a number of other renowned research institutes[1] involved, KWS is the only industrial partner to collaborate in the project.

KWS has long been working with genotypes that deliver good baking wheat quality even with a lower protein content – and thus with less input. "Our goal is now to decode the genetics of these plants and then purposefully integrate those genetics into our variety development," says R&D manager Jenny Matthiesen, who is in charge of the project at KWS. To ensure comparable research results, KWS will conduct large-scale field trials and produce seed under both conventional and organic conditions in the same environment. If the project is successful, farmers could benefit from nutrient-efficient and sustainable wheat varieties that require less nitrogen fertilization. In addition, the research partners aim to provide valid data on how many greenhouse gas emissions can actually be saved with these varieties.

[1] Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU), Bielefeld University (UniBi), Julius Kühn-Institute (JKI)

About KWS

KWS is one of the world's leading plant breeding companies. Over 5,000 employees* in more than 70 countries generated net sales of around $1,94 billion in the fiscal year 2022/2023. A company with a tradition of family ownership, KWS has operated independently for 165 years. It focuses on plant breeding and the production and sale of seed for corn, sugarbeet, cereals, vegetables, oilseed rape and sunflower. KWS uses leading-edge plant breeding methods to continuously improve yield for farmers and plants' resistance to diseases, pests and abiotic stress. To that end, the company invested more than $320 million last fiscal year in research and development.
*excl. seasonal workforce

More information: www.kws.com. Follow us on X (Twitter) at https://twitter.com/KWS_Group.

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