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AMBA Makes Changes to Recommended Varieties for 2008

The American Malting Barley Association, Inc. (AMBA) has announced recommended malting barley varieties for the 2008 growing season. Scarlett, a two-row variety has been added and B1202, a two-row and Excel, a six-row, have been dropped from last year's list. The two-rowed varieties are AC Metcalfe, CDC Copeland, Conlon, Conrad, Craft, Harrington, Merit, and Scarlett. Six-rowed varieties are Drummond, Foster, Lacey, Legacy, Robust, Stander, Stellar-ND, and Tradition. Malting barley growers are encouraged to contact their local elevator, grain handler or processor to gauge market demand. The development of malting barley varieties in the US are the result of efforts by both public and private breeding programs. Public programs are located at both state and federal institutions, with AMBA funding development work at many of these locations. "The Association has provided over \$2.8 million in barley research funding in the last 5 years," according to Mike Davis, AMBA President.

AMBA also helps coordinate the activities of the National Barley Improvement Committee (NBIC), which represents the entire US barley community – growers, researchers, and end-users. The NBIC works to secure federal support for barley research and breeding. This federal support is critical to barley improvement and includes research on disease resistance, genomics, drought tolerance and end-use quality.

In the early stages of developing a new variety, breeders begin testing their experimental lines for agronomic characteristics, such as yield and disease resistance. Later on, malting quality tests are conducted on lines developed by public sector breeders at the USDA/ARS Cereal Crops Research Unit (CCRU) in Madison, WI. The CCRU analyzes several thousand lines each year for a number of quality factors. Agronomic and quality trials of new breeding materials continue to progress through both state and regional nurseries. In the later stages of development, lines are submitted to AMBA which coordinates testing by its member companies in a two stage process. After two years of satisfactory testing in pilot malting trials, selections are eligible for commercial scale malting and brewing evaluations. After successful commercial trials, malting varieties are added to the AMBA recommended list.