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AMBA Makes Changes to Recommended Varieties for 2009

The American Malting Barley Association, Inc. (AMBA), a nonprofit trade association of major US malting and brewing companies, and also a member of the IBMS Board of Directors, has announced recommended malting barley varieties for the 2009 growing season. Foster and Stander, six-rowed varieties, have been dropped from last year's list. Rasmusson, a six-rowed developed at the University of Minnesota and named in honor of retired barley breeder, Dr. Donald Rasmusson, has been added. Another addition is Charles, a two-rowed winter developed by the USDA-ARS National Small Grains Germplasm Research Facility in Idaho and named after the late Dr. Charles Murphy, USDA-ARS. This is the first winter malting barley variety to be added to the AMBA recommended list.

The recommended two-rowed varieties for 2009 are AC Metcalfe, CDC Copeland, Charles, Conlon, Conrad, Craft, Harrington, Merit, and Scarlett. Six-rowed varieties are Drummond, Lacey, Legacy, Rasmusson, Robust, Stellar-ND, and Tradition. Malting barley growers are encouraged to contact their local elevator, grain handler or processor to gauge market demand for varieties grown in their region prior to seeding. The development of malting barley varieties in the US is 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 \$2.5 million in barley research funding in the last 5 years," according to Dr. 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 as concurrent agronomic trials are continued in both state and regional nurseries by the breeders. 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.

The IBMS, which is a national center located at North Dakota State University, seeks to provide reliable, high-quality, targeted research, outreach and education for U.S. barley producers and domestic and international malting and brewing industries at a single site. Beside AMBA, the IBMS Board of Directors includes representatives from ID, MT and ND Producer Organizations, Rahr Malting Co., Malteurop North America Inc., Anheuser-Busch, Inc., Cargill Malt, and MillerCoors Brewing Co.