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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winter barley interest increasing

Although winter hardiness is a limiting factor, interest in winter barley is increasing in the U.S. Workload convenience, better use of water resources and potential for higher yields with good malting quality characteristics make winter barley consistently attractive to barley stakeholders. Research programs are in place in almost every major barley growing area in the U.S.

This year the winter malting two-rowed barley, Charles, was added to the American Malting Barley Association, Inc. (AMBA) recommended variety list. Charles was developed at the USDA-ARS National Small Grains Germplasm Research Facility in Aberdeen, ID as a result of work completed by Darrel Wesenberg who retired in 2002. A second two-rowed winter variety, Endeavor, was developed in the same program and will be planted this fall for a first year of AMBA plant scale testing. Don Obert continues the work in Aberdeen which also includes some feed and food winter barley research. Obert comments that he "has received many calls from producers all over the country looking for information on growing winter malting barley". He says that winter barley could meet the quality requirements of the malting and brewing industry and increase the profitability for producers through yield increases of up to 20 percent, and a higher likelihood of producing malt quality grain.

According to producer Clark Kaufmann who farms in the Magic Valley at Filer, ID, winter barley allows him to do some of his spring work in the fall, spreading out the spring and harvest workload. He says that winter barley harvest generally begins 10 days earlier than spring grain harvest. He has grown Charles and Anheuser-Busch varieties and has had good luck overall.

Juliet Windes, University of Idaho Extension Crop Management Specialist at Idaho Falls, says that this has been the best year of the last three for winter barley survival. Consistent cold temperatures, good snow cover and little or no frost heaving probably have contributed to the good crop. She notes high stand percentages in her research plots in Kimberly and Idaho Falls. She is excited about the yield and water saving potential of winter barley.

The winter barley research program at Oregon State University in Corvallis is run by Pat Hayes. Pat works with six-rowed winter malting barley and has had increasing numbers of lines in the AMBA testing program each year. He credits Paul Hoskins who headed the Agronomy section at Anheuser-Busch with encouraging him to begin a six-rowed winter barley breeding program in 1986. Hayes says that Hoskins was "visionary in seeking diversification for barley through this winter breeding program."

In North Dakota and Minnesota, where traditionally it is difficult to produce winter small grains, evaluations of varieties and breeding lines from other winter barley breeding programs in the U.S are planned. Up to twenty varieties will be tested this winter at the Research Extension Centers across the state of North Dakota. Kevin Smith at the University of Minnesota has completed two years of yield trials, has made selections and crosses and plans to utilize Marker Assisted Selection and the barley CAP genetic tools for future winter barley breeding efforts.

Mike Davis, President of AMBA, which supports winter barley research, states that "after 50 years of effort, results that combine quality and winter hardiness are finally being realized". Davis states that "with barley production at a historic low, winter barley production may be one way to reverse production decline". He also noted that reliable winter malting barley would increase options for small grain production in areas of the U.S. where spring barley is not traditionally grown.

For more information on AMBA and several of the research programs above, look at the IBMS website www.ag.ndsu.edu/ibms. The IBMS is a multi-state, industry and research organization which seeks to provide reliable, high-quality, targeted research and education for U.S. barley producers and domestic and international malting and brewing industries.