



International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium

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New international alliance ready to tackle sequencing of wheat genome

Washington—The first meeting of the International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium (WGSC) will take place May 31 in Bozeman, Montana. The group's kickoff meeting coincides with the ITMI Conference in Bozeman, MT (May 29-31) and will have the goals of finalizing the WGSC mission statement, the Coordinating Committee, and a strategy to secure funding.

The international WGSC is a collaboration of scientists, industry, and governmental entities dedicated to expediting the sequencing of the wheat genome for global benefits. Membership in the WSGC is open to any individual or organization who supports the organization's goals and objectives.

Wheat is the staple food for 40% of the world's population, providing 20% of the calories and 55% of the carbohydrates consumed. The sequence of the wheat genome will result ultimately in healthier and more nutritious food that could lead to vast improvements in human and animal health.

The rice genome has been sequenced and the maize genome sequencing project will begin later this year. Wheat, rice, and maize provide about three quarters of the calories and half of the protein required by the world's population.

"Now is the time to begin a concerted effort to sequence the genome of wheat, which is grown on 17% of the world's cultivated land, but will be the last major crop to be sequenced," stated Bikram Gill, the U.S. co-chair of the WGSC.

"Over the last decade, the wheat community has proven that the wheat genome is exploitable for marker development and map-based cloning. We now face the challenge of sequencing this complex genome to accelerate gene discovery and improve this major crop and as we have done in the past, we will rise to this challenge," stated Catherine Feuillet, the European co-chair of the WGSC.

According to **Dusti Fritz** of the Kansas Wheat Commission, a sequenced wheat genome will provide the scientific foundation that is necessary for wheat producer profitability.

The Kansas Wheat Commission and Kansas State University have spearheaded the effort to create an international consortium and will cover the start-up costs of the executive director, Kellye Eversole, and web services.

The draft mission statement, white paper, and other materials are available on the International WGSC website at www.wheatgenome.org. Details about the ITMI Conference, including registration and hotel information, are available online at: http://wheat.pw.usda.gov/ggpages/calendar/ITMI_05_registration2.htm.

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