



PRESS RELEASE

Brussels

8 September 2010

Ref. : *ESA_10.0818*

ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. It represents 32 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 42 direct company members.

ESA's mission is to work for fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry, freedom of choice for customers in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods and for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seed.

Contact:

ESA

European Seed Association

Tel. 0032-2-7432860

secretariat@euroseeds.org

www.euroseeds.org

Scientists decode wheat genome

Scientists from Liverpool and Bristol University together with the John Innes centre Norwich have completed a first draft of the wheat genome the largest and most complex set of genetic instructions ever tackled by DNA sequencing. The genetic code of wheat contains 16 billion chemical letters and an estimated 80,000 genes. With that, It is about five times larger than the human genome.

This complexity and size of the genome held back its analysis compared with other economically important cereal crops. It is only in the past years has DNA sequencing technology advanced to a point where wheat became a technically possible and economically affordable target for researchers.

The raw DNA data was published on the Internet and will now immediately help crop breeders in their development of improved wheat varieties. While many more years more research will be needed to fully understand the complexities of the genome and make full use of the now available information, the data will dramatically increase the efficiency of breeding new crop varieties. The lack of genetic information has held back the breeding of better wheat varieties. By understanding the genetic differences between varieties with different traits, plant breeders now can start to develop new types of wheat better able to cope with drought, salinity and capable of delivering higher yields.