



News Release

For immediate release

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA HELPS FARMERS BY INVESTING IN NEW CROP VARIETIES AND BETTER TECHNOLOGY

LONDON, Ontario, March 19, 2009 – The Government of Canada is creating new economic opportunities for farmers by investing in research that will expand market possibilities. Member of Parliament Joe Preston (Elgin-Middlesex-London) today announced \$8.7 million in funding to develop technologies that will increase the industrial value of the surplus cereal straw that is now left out on the field.

“Our Government is delivering smart investments to make sure Canada weathers this economic storm and comes out stronger than ever,” said Mr. Preston, on behalf of Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz. “This funding will help farmers and rural communities thrive by developing more valuable crop varieties and better technologies.”

Led by the University of Western Ontario, the Agricultural Biorefinery Innovation Network (ABIN) will bring together top Canadian university researchers, government experts and the private sector. The network will develop genetically improved varieties of cereals which will be sought after not only for the value of the grain but also for the value of the straw. It will find more efficient ways of collecting the straw and develop new technologies to extract a range of valuable material.

“This generous funding will help build sustainable pathways from biomass feedstock development to its efficient conversion into bio-based products right through to commercialization,” says Network Lead Franco Berruti, Professor and Director of Western Engineering’s new Institute for Chemicals and fuels from Alternate Resources.

Western’s Vice-President (Research and International Relations), Ted Hewitt, applauds the contribution, adding “Fortified with this support from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Western and its ABIN partners will work to strengthen regional development and rural economies, creating innovative technologies and processes leading to new businesses and jobs for Canadians.”

Funding for this project is being provided through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Agricultural Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP), a federal funding program designed to integrate Canada’s talent from universities, industry and government in order to stimulate creativity, leverage resources, reduce costs and accelerate progress towards commercialization of bioproducts and bioprocesses.

For additional information about ABIP, please visit www.agr.gc.ca/abip.



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BACKGROUND

THE AGRICULTURAL BIOFINERY INNOVATION NETWORK FOR GREEN ENERGY, FUELS AND CHEMICALS

After grain harvesting, most crop residues such as cereal straw are left on the field. To help farmers maximize the use of their crops this project will improve cereal varieties and find the best ways to convert the waste that is left over from harvesting into energy, biofuels and green chemicals. That way the farmer is using the whole plant, and not just the grain.

The network includes Agri-Therm Ltd., École Polytechnique de Montréal, Perth Community Futures Development Co., Ryerson University, the Saskatchewan Research Council, StormFisher Ltd., the University of Alberta, the University of British Columbia, the University of Guelph, the University of Manitoba, the University of Northern British Columbia, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Sherbrooke and the University of Toronto.

THE AGRICULTURAL BIOPRODUCTS INNOVATION PROGRAM

The Agricultural Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP) is designed to promote research, development, technology transfer and the commercialization of agricultural bioproducts, including biofuels, in Canada.

The program will benefit farmers by generating new agricultural knowledge and technology and facilitating its transfer to those that can commercialize these innovations for the benefit of farmers and others in Canada's bioeconomy.

The program supports the establishment, development and operation of bioproducts research networks that focus on:

- Feedstock production through the development of crop platforms and cropping systems suitable for conversion to bioproducts;
- Developing effective and efficient technologies for biomass conversion; and
- Product diversification through technologies relevant to production of bioproducts (e.g. industrial chemicals, biomaterials and health products).

For additional information about the Agricultural Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP) and other Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada programs, please visit www.agr.gc.ca.