



National Association of Wheat Growers

415 Second Street, NE • Suite 300 • Washington, DC 20002 • Phone: 202-547-7800 • Fax: 202-546-2638

November 5, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Federal funding for wheat genomics research

We have been informed by the National Wheat Improvement Committee (NWIC) of a potential reduction or elimination of funding for genomics research in wheat. Apparently, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has received a recommendation to focus genomics research in crops other than wheat. While there are no doubt sound scientific reasons for using these other crops, we believe a strong case can be made for adding wheat to the list and continuing the work that has already begun in wheat genomics.

NWIC cites several scientific reasons why wheat genomics research needs to continue, among them wheat's historic status as a model plant for polyploid research. In addition, the international wheat genetics community has launched the International Genome Research on Wheat (IGROW) effort to coordinate sequencing of the gene-rich regions of the wheat genome. With wheat being a major component of the US agricultural picture and the primary agricultural product of a number of states, we must participate fully in these activities and fund on par with efforts in other major crops.

Finally, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) has recently completed a New Uses Audit, outlining potential new markets, traits, and byproduct applications for wheat. Many of these new opportunities will require further research in genomics and other areas to bring them to fruition. A copy of this report is available on request from NAWG, and may be downloaded from the association's web site (www.wheatworld.org).

Our ability to bring new traits and uses online, and respond to environmental or pest-control concerns, is critical to the future of our producers; failing to make the necessary investments in basic research may foreclose these opportunities. We urge that wheat be included in the upcoming genomics activities and budgets.

Sincerely yours,

W. Daren Coppock
Chief Executive Officer

C: Kay Simmons, ARS National Program Staff
Dave Van Sanford, National Wheat Improvement Committee