



Presenters at the announcement included: Stuart Lawrence, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers; Ana Vargas, University of Saskatchewan; Curtis Pozniak, University of Saskatchewan; Daryl Harrison, Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan; Shane Strydhorst, Alberta Pulse Growers; and Penny McCall, Government of Saskatchewan. (Photo courtesy of Saskatchewan Pulse Growers)

VARIETY DEVELOPMENT

APG welcomes new lentil breeding partnership

The Alberta Pulse Growers Commission (APG) is pleased to partner with the University of Saskatchewan's Crop Development Centre (CDC) and Saskatchewan Pulse Growers to develop lentils that benefit a growing number of pulse farmers in Alberta.

"Thanks to research investment by Alberta Pulse Growers, lentils are now being planted and successfully grown in non-traditional lentil growing regions of Alberta, such as the Peace in the north," said APG Chair Will Muller.

"With the expansion and interest in our province, we are excited to once again be supporting innovation in lentil breeding and foster new and improved genetics for this crop."

The program, which will be led by CDC plant breeder Dr. Ana Vargas, will develop lentils for improved yield, improved disease resistance (Anthracnose, Ascochyta blight, *Aphanomyces* and *Fusarium* root rots), as well as herbicide tolerance focused on Groups 5 and 14. Breeding will take place in Saskatoon and leverage testing sites in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Vargas is working on traits that will not only increase yield but also improve the disease package and increase resilience in the face of abiotic stress. She is early in her career, and APG is pleased to be a part of the efforts to set her up for success.

APG previously participated in CDC lentil breeding efforts with Dr. Bert Vandenberg, and Dr. Manjula Bandara with Alberta Agriculture in Brooks who was linked to the CDC.

CDC's strong history of pulse breeding and variety development began in 1978 when the Laird lentil was first released in Canada. Since then, hundreds of CDC pulse varieties have been released. The agreement announced in July at Ag in Motion reflects a commitment to commercialize new varieties with royalties on all acres, including those planted with farm-saved seed. Royalties flow back to breeders, which encourages further lentil breeding advancements. This creates a merit-based system where royalties flow to those breeders developing the varieties that farmers grow. APG and other funders, where applicable, will also receive a portion of royalties to reinvest in strategic program areas.

"Variety development has proven to have a high return on investment, and we are excited to fund the advancement of lentil genetics," Muller explained. "It makes sense to pool resources, reduce administrative burden and avoid duplication by investing together through partnership. APG is looking forward to sharing ideas and goals with the team through the advisory committee, ensuring that the farm is the primary beneficiary of this work."

Lentils are currently the second most commonly grown pulse crop in Alberta after field peas. 