



25th June 2018

Press release

Wheat Initiative brings wheat researchers from around the world together

(Berlin) The Wheat Initiative has invited international experts to a meeting in Berlin-Dahlem from the 2nd to the 5th of July. The meeting at the Julius Kühn Institute includes the members and the chairs of the Expert Working Groups of the international Wheat Initiative. The meeting's aim is to identify future global research priorities, to plan joint research projects, to identify potential sources of financing, to discuss current projects and to foster new ones. The experts will exchange their views over the course of an Expert Working Group Jamboree and in meetings of the three Committees of the Wheat Initiative (Research Committee, Institution's Coordination Committee, Scientific Board).

Wheat nourishes the world. Every day wheat is consumed in the form of bread, pastries, pasta, bulgur or couscous all around the globe. As a result of the fast growing world population and increasing climate variability, this crop must continue to adapt to the future production conditions: It has to cope with stress factors such as drought, it must resist fungal diseases and thrive in nutrient-poor soils. *"In order to master these challenges, science and economy must work together"*, Dr. Hermann Onko Aeikens, state secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, says in his welcoming speech. *"Further, all protagonists, namely researchers of all disciplines, breeders and companies but also political decision makers, need a central point of contact. The Wheat Initiative, founded by the G20 agriculture ministers, holds this function"*, Aeikens explains.

"Many countries conduct wheat research. Therefore, it is important to avoid duplication of effort, but to coordinate scientists worldwide and to set priorities. Consequently, the Wheat Initiative and its Strategic Research Agenda are of crucial importance." says Prof. Dr. Frank Ordon. He is the Vice President of the Julius Kühn Institute (JKI), Head of the institute for resistance research and stress tolerance and also the chair of the Research Committee in the Wheat Initiative. Every member of the Wheat Initiative (currently 15 countries, 7 companies and 2 international research centres) sends two scientific representatives to the Research Committee. There, the expert working groups' proposals for new research projects are discussed and passed on to the ICC (Institutions' Coordination Committee), which represents the sponsors of the Initiative. *"In short, we provide recommendations on which objectives should be supported by the Wheat Initiative in the future"*, Prof. Ordon said in summarising the Committee's work. The Scientific Board, which is the strategic management of the Wheat Initiative, decides to what extent these objectives should be pursued. The HeDWIC (Heat and Drought Wheat Improvement Consortium) is one example for such a program where the influence of heat and drought on the yield is examined and possible solutions are explored. The objective is to identify genetic or agronomic mechanisms to improve the drought and heat tolerance of wheat.

Background Information: The Wheat Initiative was founded by the G20 Agriculture Ministers in 2011. It comprises private, public and charitable parties of wheat research to define strategic research priorities and to develop activities for fostering research partnerships in both developing and developed countries. After being located in Paris for six years, the Secretariat of the Wheat

Initiative is resident at the Julius Kühn Institute (JKI) in Berlin-Dahlem since the 1st of February 2018. The Julius Kühn Institute is the Federal Research Institute for cultivated plants and belongs to the Federal Ministry of nutrition and agriculture. www.wheatinitiative.org

The Joint Meeting of the Wheat Initiative takes place from the 2nd till 5th of July 2018 in the JKI in Berlin-Dahlem. For more information and details please contact **Dr. Alisa-Naomi Sieber** (Program Manager): wheat.initative@julius-kuehn.de, Tel: **+49 (0) 30 83042601**