



Alliance for Wheat Adaptation to Heat and Drought is strengthening the Steering Committee of the international network

Braunschweig, Germany, September 4th, In time to the 3rd anniversary, **AHEAD** (Alliance for Wheat Adaptation to Heat and Drought) welcomes two new members to its Steering Committee. **Dr Noah DeWitt** from the United States and **Dr Marwan Owaygen** from Jordan will support the important work of this committee to build networks and deliver research opportunities aimed at assuring wheat production in the face of growing challenges from predicted increases in heat and drought.

“It’s a great pleasure to welcome Noah and Marwan to our community. They both bring strong national and international networks as well as expert research knowledge to AHEAD, and we are pleased they accepted our invitation to join the Steering Committee”, says Dr Greg Rebetzke, Chair of the Steering committee of AHEAD and Chief Scientist in Resilient Crops at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO; Australia). “We are looking forward to working together with the two new members of the AHEAD Steering Committee, Dr. Noah DeWitt and Dr Marwan Owaygen”.

Dr. Noah DeWitt, Assistant Professor at the Louisiana State University (LSU), took over the project lead of the “Small grains breeding programme” at the beginning of 2023. The programme is part of the SunGrain Cooperative Research Programme of seven Universities in the South-east of America, which have together the aim to increase the efficiency and productivity of breeding programmes to ensure the development of superior varieties that serve all end-users. The programme targets a mega-environment which encompasses several southern states where heat stress is a major breeding consideration.

Dr. Marwan Owaygen is a Senior Program Specialist and the Coordinator of the Wheat Research Accelerator fund at the International Development Research Centre (IRDC) in Jordan. “The inter-relationships among wheat production systems, national food security, and social inclusion demonstrate the need for innovative, nationally-led and focused solutions. The Wheat Research Accelerator Fund (WRAF) is a co-funding partnership between Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). The WRAF is designed to address food security by supporting research and technology transfer activities that build capacity and enhance the sustainability and inclusivity of wheat-based production systems in Africa and the Middle East. The engagement with AHEAD presents an opportunity for synergy and cross learning among different wheat-related initiatives across the globe”, reported Dr. Marwan Owaygen.

The AHEAD Steering Committee is composed of stakeholders from governmental and funding institutions as well of international research bodies. Its role is to provide scientific leadership and support, give insight into national funding strategies, connect network members across different stakeholders from economic, policy and non-governmental sectors, and enhance the visibility of successes in wheat research responding to global changes.



Background:

AHEAD is a global co-ordinating programme facilitating development and delivery of new technologies to ensure wheat varieties and agronomic practices can meet the challenges of increasingly hotter and drier production environments. The programme was born in August 2020 in the Expert Working group “Adaptation of Wheat to Abiotic stresses” of the Wheat Initiative (WI) and started with two members from Mexico and Germany. At the 3rd anniversary of our organisation we count 11 members and increased our international activities. Find more information at our webpage: www.ahead-wheat.org.