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## A Message From the Director

Spring has sprung, and as I write this, the Crop Development Centre (CDC) breeding and research activities are in full swing with planting well underway. March 31st, 2025, marked our year-end reporting requirements. I'm pleased to report that the CDC enjoyed another productive year in variety development, with 21 new candidate cultivars supported for registration in February 2025. CDC and affiliated faculty obtained new research and development funding totaling over \$26 million from government,



public, and private sector organizations. This includes the renewal of our core wheat breeding agreement with the Canadian Wheat Research Coalition – an \$11.8 million investment representing a 20% increase from our previous agreement.

Nearly five years ago, we completed a comprehensive Complement Plan to guide our scientific hiring priorities moving forward, including through industry-endowed research chairs. In January of this year, we were pleased to announce that the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission has supported a \$6.7 million Career-endowed research chair at the CDC in “Applied Genomics and Pre-breeding.” The chair will focus on applying genomics to pre-breeding activities and bridging the gap between discovery research, exploration of gene banks, genomics, and breeding. This research is necessary to connect crop wild relatives and commercial varieties. We are currently interviewing for this position and hope to announce the successful candidate in the next few months.

CDC faculty continue to be recognized as leaders in their fields. Dr. Aaron Beattie was awarded the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists Distinguished Agronomist Award for

his outstanding service to the agrology profession. Dr. Bob Bors was officially inducted into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame in recognition for an outstanding career and his contribution to the Horticulture industry. Our seed varieties continue to be impactful, with our barley variety, CDC Austensen, being recognized as the Seed of the Year – West, for 2024. These recognitions are significant and are a testament to their hard work and commitment to excellence.

This summer, we will be hosting a stakeholder field tour in mid-July. This will provide an opportunity for the CDC to showcase our research and breeding programs and strengthen our partnerships across the value chain. Our collaborations and partnerships are invaluable as we continue to drive forward our growth plan. Watch your email for an invitation!

I am honored to note that my position as CDC Director has been renewed for a second five-year term effective July 1st, 2025. It is hard to believe it has already been five years since I was first appointed! Looking back, we achieved many of our growth plan targets. We are now in the process of revisiting our strategic plan, and I will share more of those plans in the next few months.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication. I hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Warm regards,

*Dr. Curtis Pozniak*

## Announcements

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The Canadian Wheat Research Coalition (CWRC) has committed \$11.8 million over the next five years to a core breeding agreement (CBA) with the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) Crop Development Centre (CDC).



The Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission (Sask Wheat) has committed \$6.5 million to support the establishment of the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission Applied Genomics and Pre-Breeding Chair at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

## Awards

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Dr. Bob Bors was officially inducted into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame on April 26, 2025. His nomination highlighted his many contributions to the fruit industry across Canada and beyond, in particular his advances in sour cherry and haskap varieties, and his role in maintaining the Prairie Fruit Genebank.



Dr. Aaron Beattie has been awarded the Distinguished Agrologist award from The Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists. The award is presented to a Saskatchewan agrologist for professional distinction associated with outstanding service and worthy contributions to agriculture, bioresources, food or the environment.



The 2-row feed barley variety CDC Austenson was selected as Seed of the Year by Seed World Canada because of its popularity as the most seeded barley variety for 3 years in a row. The variety was bred by Distinguished Professor Emeritus Dr., Brian Rossnagel and released in 2009.





PhD. student Sheila M.P. Andrade was awarded the Best Poster Award for her poster entitled “Linking Fusarium damaged kernels and deoxynivalenol contamination in wheat: A synchrotron-based X-ray imaging approach” at the 15th conference of The World Mycotoxin Forum held in Salzburg, Austria April 7-9, 2025.



## In the Community



Our plant breeders along with members of their staff spent time at the 2025 Crop Production Show, January 10-12, answering questions and doing live interview spots with a local radio show.



Dr. Bunyamin Tar'an was an invited speaker at the Chickpea Stakeholder meeting held March 12, 2025 in Saskatoon SK.



Dr. Curtis Pozniak was a member of the guest panel at the Durum Summit held on Thursday January 30, 2025 in Swift Current, SK.



Dr. Randy Kutcher along with MSc student Valentina Anastasini were presenters at the Alberta Agronomy Update January 14, 2025, The Irrigated Crop Production Update in Lethbridge AB, January 23, 2025 and the Independent Consulting Agronomists Network in Saskatoon, February 5th, 2025



Dr. Tom Warkentin was an invited speaker at the 2025 Saskatchewan Pulse Growers Variety update on January 13, 2025.

## In the Media

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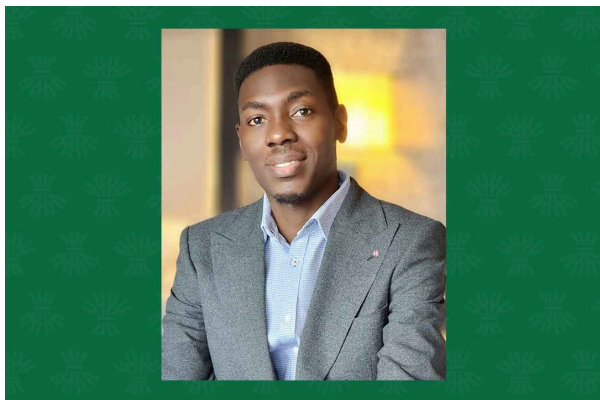


Dr's Aaron Beattie and Adam Carter were featured in the Seed World Canada article describing the events at the annual PGDC meetings held in Winnipeg, February

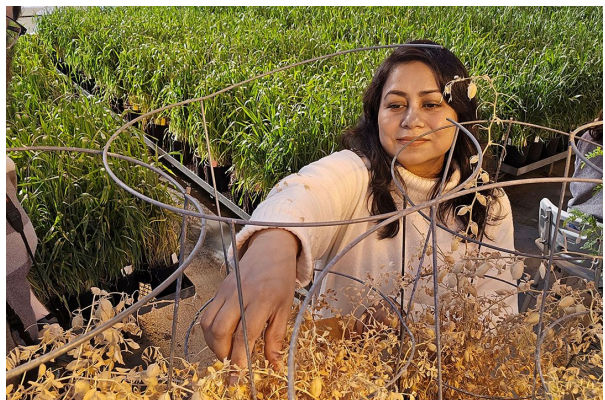


Dr's Sabine Banniza and Tom Warkentin were featured in the annual AgriView update by the SK Ministry of Agriculture.





Graduate student Stephen Awodele was named as one of nine 'Plant Science Polymaths that are Shaping a Sustainable World' by Seed World Canada.



Research Officer Dr. Tamana Jahan was featured in a USAsk news story in March. [Read full article](#)

## International Women's Day

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The Department of Plant Sciences along with the Crop Development Centre hosted an event at Louis' Loft on March 10, 2025 to celebrate International Women's Day. IWD is globally recognized annually on March 8 to celebrate the social, economic, political and cultural contributions of women, and highlight the importance of creating opportunities for women and girls, particularly those who face barriers to success. Members of the department came together to learn about the Saskatchewan organization, Women in Ag, and their work in fostering connection and professional development opportunities for women pursuing careers in agriculture and who support family farms.

Guest speaker Laura Lawrence delivered a poignant and engaging talk about juggling careers, family and personal well-being. She is a motivational speaker, author and entrepreneur from an agricultural family. Laura spoke about how women often put others' needs before their own. She provided tips on how to reconnect, set boundaries, and take time for oneself.

## Recent Graduate Students Defending

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Celine Ferre successfully defended her MSc. thesis entitled “Understanding Lodging in Oat (*Avena sativa* L.) through Root, Stem and Leaf Characteristics” on January 8, 2025. Celine studied under the supervision of Dr. Aaron Beattie.



## Graduate Student Spotlight

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Quinn Sturby is a PhD student studying under the supervision on Kirstin Bett. Quinn's research focuses on the application of unoccupied aerial vehicle (UAV) digital phenotyping to better understand growth and development in common bean with the goal of increasing the efficiency of phenotyping and selection. Quinn recently received a 2025 Canadian Plant Breeding Innovation Scholar award by SeedWorld Canada and was voted 2024 most outstanding PhD student in the Plant Sciences Department.

