



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations 2025

Canadian Wheat Research Coalition

August 27, 2025



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List of Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** That the Government prioritize agricultural research investments into variety development and the delivery of field-ready varieties.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the Government invest in infrastructure at AAFC regional research centres.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the Government prioritize filling vacant AAFC breeding and research positions.



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About the Canadian Wheat Research Coalition (CWRC)

The CWRC is a collaboration between Alberta Grains, Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission, and Manitoba Crop Alliance, aimed at increasing the long-term profitability and sustainability of wheat for Canadian producers through leadership in identifying, coordinating, and supporting innovative research. The CWRC facilitates a collaborative approach to producer funding of regional and national research projects in variety development and agronomy, including core wheat breeding agreements with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and universities, and the Canadian National Wheat Cluster under AAFC's Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Canada is a world leader in high-quality wheat production and exports. In 2024, Canada produced just short of 35 million metric tonnes of wheat, with the prairie provinces producing 32 million metric tonnes alone¹. In the 2024-2025 marketing year, Canada is on track to becoming the second-largest wheat exporter globally, and the top exporter of high-quality, high-protein wheat. Market diversification continues to be a strength for the Canadian wheat sector, with exports going to over 80 countries². Wheat production in Canada is vital to the economic success of farmers, rural communities, and Canada as a whole. The Canadian non-durum and durum wheat industries generate \$50.2 billion annually for the Canadian economy³.

A large portion of Canada's wheat production and export success is due to strong investments into public breeding institutions. AAFC's wheat breeding program has produced elite, widely adopted varieties, that dominate western Canadian acres with over 60 percent of the seeded acres of the major wheat classes⁴. Farmers recognize this success, and continue to support public plant breeding, investing more than \$300 million over the past 25 years into wheat germplasm development and varieties released through core breeding agreements⁵. Public plant breeding provides significant benefits to the public as well, with a recent study finding that for every dollar invested in wheat breeding, producers and taxpayers receive almost \$35 in benefits⁶.

¹ Statistics Canada, 2024. Table 32-10-0359-01 Estimated areas, yield, production, average farm price and total farm value of principal field crops, in metric and imperial units.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210035901>

² Cereals Canada, 2025. 2024 Annual Report. <https://cerealscanadaannualreport.ca/>

³ Cereals Canada, 2025. Economic Impact. <https://cerealscanada.ca/economic-impact/>

⁴ Canadian Grain Commission, 2024. Grain varieties by acreage insured. <https://www.grainscanada.gc.ca/en/grain-research/statistics/varieties-by-acreage/>

⁵ Bolek-Callbeck and Gray, 2022. The Benefits and Costs of Producer and Public Investments: Wheat Varietal R&D in Western Canada 1995 to 2020. [FinalBenefitsandCostsWheat2022.pdf \(saskwheat.ca\)](#).

⁶ Bolek-Callbeck and Gray, 2022.



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Despite the high rate of return on investment from plant breeding, we have seen a gradual decline in public funding and lack of investment in highly qualified personnel, infrastructure, equipment, and capacity. Farmers want to continue to partner with AAFC, investing their private dollars to ensure the continued availability of elite, field-ready varieties. However, the sector needs predictable and sustained investment from government to keep the pipeline full of new innovations and prevent technology gaps from occurring.

Furthermore, the Government needs to work with farmers to realign program design and funding decisions with industry priorities. AAFC's current research funding priorities do not align with the needs of Canadian grain farmers and place too much emphasis on previous government priorities, such as climate related outcomes. Previous funding programs have not recognized the vital role that variety development plays in increasing the sustainability of agricultural production. Refocusing AAFC funding on industry priorities such as plant breeding and development of field-ready varieties, will increase the resilience of the Canadian agriculture sector, benefitting all farmers and the Canadian economy.

We recognize that difficult funding decisions will need to be made to meet the Government's spending reduction goals; therefore, the CWRC would like to make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: *That the Government prioritize agricultural research investments into variety development and the delivery of field-ready varieties.*

The public sector has a fundamental role to play in investing in agricultural research, and AAFC can optimize its funding by focusing on variety development to drive productivity which will benefit all producers. The continued provision of public field-ready varieties is critical to the continued success of the Canadian wheat sector. Many research funders, including the CWRC, have raised concerns that AAFC's evolving science strategy is eroding Canada's plant breeding capacity, particularly for crops such as wheat where private investment is limited or uneconomical. AAFC's Strategic Plan for Science presented a shift in focus from downstream variety development to upstream foundational research, which would leave a critical gap in delivering new varieties to farmers. Additionally, shifting AAFC resources upstream will create duplication with universities and other research institutions and is not an optimal use of limited government funding. Farmers are relying on AAFC to continue to provide elite, field-ready varieties to ensure they remain profitable, competitive, and sustainable.

Recommendation 2: *That the Government invest in infrastructure at AAFC regional research centres.*



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AAFC plays a foundational role in Canada's agricultural research network, linking together producers, universities, and the private sector. AAFC's network of labs and research centres spread across diverse agroecological zones is a tremendous asset to the development of widely adapted varieties. This integrated network of physical and human capital cannot be duplicated outside of the public sector. However, even with high rates of return to agricultural research and variety development, we have seen a gradual decline in funding and lack of investment in infrastructure, equipment, and capacity at AAFC research centres over the last 20 years. Emphasis needs to be placed on reinvesting into AAFC research facilities to ensure they are modernized and have the infrastructure to continue their fundamental work to increase the productivity and profitability of producers.

Recommendation 3: *That the Government prioritize filling vacant AAFC breeding and research positions.*

Equally as critical as physical infrastructure, is ensuring that AAFC has the highly qualified personnel required to complete this critical research for the sector. Vacant positions at AAFC research centres and a lack of succession planning continues to be a major concern for industry and threatens AAFC's ability to meet the needs of the sector. The current path of re-structuring and consolidating personnel positions and locations will lead to a reduction in capacity and create knowledge gaps that will hurt the sector's productivity, which neither farmers nor Canada can afford.

The Canadian wheat industry can continue to be an economic driver for the Canadian economy, but we need continued investment in research and capacity to drive economic growth. Sufficient funding for public plant breeding programs and the continued delivery of field-ready varieties is critical to keeping Canadian grain farmers productive, sustainable and competitive in international markets. Ensuring AAFC has the infrastructure and human resources to carry out this vital work is also crucial. Canadian farmers have been an important funding partner with AAFC for over 30 years, and the CWRC is ready to assist in any discussions regarding research funding to ensure programs will provide valuable results for farmers and the Canadian economy.

Sincerely,

Lori-Ann Kaminski
President, CWRC



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