



Joint press release by the Wheat Initiative and the Julius Kühn Institute (JKI)

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Heat and drought watch out. One-of-a-kind network launched in Berlin

(Berlin) Wheat crop losses due to heat and drought affect food availability and increase the costs for billions of consumers around the world. The Alliance for Wheat Adaptation to Heat and Drought AHEAD is an international network that hosts initiatives and projects dedicated to addressing scientific gaps and builds synergies to support the development of new wheat varieties that are resilient to heat and drought. The headquarters of AHEAD is located at the Julius Kühn Institute (JKI) in Berlin-Dahlem within the Wheat Initiative, and is coordinated by Corinna Harms.

AHEAD is led by a distinguished Steering Committee that provides leadership for management, funding and networks, identifies global research questions and supports scientific engagement. The Steering Committee provides international advocacy for investment in heat and drought research, along with promoting the relevance of research to policy makers and wheat producers worldwide. The Alliance's stakeholders are from national and international organizations eager to address global challenges in wheat research.

Professor Peter Langridge, Chair of the Wheat Initiative's Scientific Board, appreciates this positive development: "There is an urgent need for close cooperation in heat and drought research to address the challenge of a changing climate and the demand for sustainable production methods. The formation of AHEAD is a big step forward in tackling this challenge", states Langridge (<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/directory/peter.langridge>).

Via the Wheat Initiative the AHEAD-Alliance also offers connections to leading scientists and experts on wheat. One ambitious goal of the Alliance is to connect scientists with stakeholders from economic, policy, and non-governmental sectors. A further goal is to help plant scientists exchange information and ideas at meetings and through staff and student exchanges, and to pool resources for efficient, cost effective, and smart science. Corinna Harms, the Coordinator of AHEAD, emphasizes further: "We will serve as a lighthouse for wheat for the policy sector, funders, societal and economical stakeholders by sharing scientific knowledge and materials, and offering scientists short communication paths and extensive support via an interactive platform."

The Alliance has already started linking international projects to enhance impact and identify innovations for climate resilient wheat. Two such projects include the Heat and Drought Wheat Improvement Consortium (HeDWIC), funded by the "Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research" (<https://foundationfar.org/>) and coordinated by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), and the collaborative project "Genome-based strategies to use the tertiary gene-

pool for breeding of climate-smart wheat” (TERTIUS) coordinated by JKI, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

For more information, visit the AHEAD website: <https://www.wheatinitiative.org/ahead>

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