

Australia - Victorian growers look forward to the new Bayer CropScience Wheat and Oilseeds Breeding Centre, first of its kind

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Victorian farmers have heralded today's official sod-turning ceremony marking the commencement of construction on the Bayer CropScience Wheat and Oilseeds Breeding Centre at Longerenong College near Horsham as "extraordinarily important" for Australian agriculture.

Their comments coincide with initiatives outlined in the Blueprint for Australian Agriculture to be handed down in Canberra today identifying a vision for a profitable, sustainable and respected agricultural industry.

The Blueprint report was developed in consultation with almost 4,000 members of the agricultural community in a bid to provide a framework to achieve safe, competitively priced, high quality agricultural products to consumers globally. It identified innovation through science and research as one of seven key areas of focus.

Bayer's state-of-the-art Breeding Centre will be the first of its kind in Australia and work there will focus on developing new wheat and oilseed varieties with higher yields and productivity improvements.

The company is investing \$14 million in the new centre and the Coalition Government is providing \$1.2 million to Horsham Rural City Council to upgrade roads to the facility and improve access to the Centre's trial sites and breeding station.

Wimmera farmer, Andrew Weidemann said, "Without scientific research centres like Bayer's, we would not be farmers."

"There are so many risks for us and we need to use all the tools available to manage those to ensure we can produce more from Mother Nature.

"We would struggle without research like Bayer is funding here in Horsham - it is extraordinarily important for the future advancement of crop production in this country," he added.

Weidemann is adamant Australian agriculture and the Government must encourage and engage with companies like Bayer to access a global \$5 billion research pool for agricultural science.

Investment in research and development; access to state of the art technology and best practice uptake are significant factors to be addressed under the Blueprint for Australian Agriculture.

Dr Jacqueline Applegate, Managing Director Bayer CropScience, Australia says the breeding centre illustrates the company's committed to innovation and a partnership with the rural community.

"At Bayer, we work together with famers and industry partners to develop new technologies so that farmers can become even more efficient and more sustainable, and thus contribute to securing a more vibrant and rewarding agricultural sector, essential for our population and for the planet," she said.

"Our aim is to create healthier crops with better yields that are resistant to pests and diseases and which can thrive under Australia's environmental stresses like drought.

"This investment confirms our commitment to agricultural education and the partnership between business and science which is essential for the future success of our farmers.

"Bayer is pursuing numerous promising projects in the areas of crop protection, biologics and seed. Recent projects include Bayer Hybrid Canola, IH50RR, Bayer's first Roundup Ready® variety for Australia, the unique pre-emergent herbicide Sakura® 850 WG and EverGol® Prime 240 FS, a seed treatment for the suppression of rhizoctonia root rot and the control of smut diseases in wheat and barley," she added.

The centre will also provide economic benefits for the rural community.

Cr David Grimble, Mayor of Horsham Rural City Council, said, "The new Breeding Centre is important for the further economic development of the Wimmera-Horsham region and will enhance opportunities for local industries and the community."

Peter Hall, MLC, Minister for Higher Education and Skills, added, "This is great news for the Wimmera Horsham region. The Breeding Centre will stimulate economic growth, supporting 20 new life sciences jobs and further seasonal employment opportunities once fully operational later this year."

The Blueprint for Australian Agriculture is an initiative of the National Farmers' Federation. Bayer is key supporter of this initiative together with Woolworths, Westpac and Syngenta.

SOURCE Seedquest.com