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U.C. Davis/CA Wheat Commission Awarded Grant for Stripe Rust Research

A U.C. Discovery Grant was recently awarded to U.C. wheat breeder Jorge Dubcovsky, Extension Agronomist Lee Jackson, and commodity partner California Wheat Commission for a four-year research project aimed at developing wheat varieties with durable resistance to stripe rust. This project will use available molecular markers to incorporate multiple stripe rust resistance genes (gene pyramiding) into wheat lines adapted to different California environments, as well as discovering new resistance sources of stripe rust.

Wheat Stripe rust has been devastating to California's 600,000-acre wheat crop since 1999, causing cumulative yield losses of 17.4 million bushels of wheat valued at \$60.9 million. Traditional breeding has not been able to keep up with the mutating fungus that causes the disease; over 120 races of the stripe rust pathogen now exist. New "resistant" wheat varieties are becoming susceptible to the fungus within a matter of a few short years.

The research project will benefit California growers by maintaining the competitiveness and long-term productivity of California wheat. The current stripe rust epidemic has postponed improvement of other traits needed to maintain competitiveness in the market, such as better quality and agronomic traits. The incorporation of stripe rust resistant genes into wheat varieties will give growers the opportunity to continue to grow wheat as a valuable rotation crop or as an alternative crop when it is profitable in the marketplace.

The U.C. Discovery Grant provides for matching resources from the State of California and an industry partner on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

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