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Brewers Association Funds Public Hop Breeding Program

Trust agreement with USDA jumpstarts program benefitting hops and brewing industries

Boulder, CO • October 30, 2017—The [Brewers Association](#)—the not-for-profit trade association dedicated to [small and independent](#) American brewers—announced an agreement today with the United States Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) to fund public hop breeding for the purpose of developing and releasing disease resistant aroma hop cultivars into the public domain, in support of hop growing efforts throughout the U.S. The trust agreement between the Brewers Association and USDA-ARS provides funding for a program located in Washington and Oregon to leverage significant existing academic and operational infrastructure.

“Public hop breeding creates benefits for a broad range of groups within the hop and brewing industries,” said Chris Swersey, supply chain specialist for the Brewers Association. “Research to develop and release hop cultivars with no intellectual property protection ensures that all growers have access to high quality, disease-resistant cultivars they need to sustain production at levels required by brewers. In the long-term, this important program will fuel efforts of existing legacy growers as well as nascent hop growing industries throughout the U.S. The program will also fulfill an essential stewardship strategy by providing foundational germplasm for public and private breeding programs. Even the smallest brewers will be able to source ingredients they need to produce that truly local pint.”

“The United States is globally recognized as a diverse and innovative driver in the brewing scene. The significant growth of the craft brewing sector has its foundations in the lavish use of flavorful, publicly bred American hops. Brewers strongly support all efforts to strengthen these vitally important, long-range programs,” said John Mallett, director of operations of Bell's Brewery Inc., and chair of the Brewers Association technical committee. “A vibrant and steady public breeding program will jointly benefit growers, hop merchants, brewers and beer drinkers alike.”

The U.S. hop and brewing industries are experiencing unprecedented expansion, and currently support over 360,000 jobs and is valued at \$33 billion. This growth has created strong demand for new and existing hop varieties nationwide. Concurrently, chronic loss and isolated catastrophic loss from pests and diseases have increased because of the lack of broad spectrum, durable resistance in the varieties demanded by the market place. The net impact is disease management costs and crop damage that

approach 15 percent of total crop value, destabilization of critical supply chains and lost export opportunities.

“Public sector development of new hop varieties that combine disease resistance and improved brewing quality are needed to sustain the expansion of crop production and meet the increased demand for high quality hops,” said Ryan Hayes, research leader of the Forage Seed and Cereal Research Unit. “Support from the Brewers Association is instrumental in helping the USDA meet this goal.”

“The BA’s funding of public hop breeding, structured through the USDA, will allow development of germplasm that serves all growing regions with viable disease resistant varieties. The Hop Research Council will now have a secure base that we can work with to add value to all segments of our members,” said Fred Geschwill, president of the Hop Research Council. “Having been involved in the public breeding effort for the last decade, I can honestly say this is the most exciting development the program has ever seen.”

The research will prioritize breeding efforts in four areas: sensory requirements as determined by the Brewers Association through a collaborative and participatory brewer and industry stakeholder program; improved downy mildew resistance; improved powdery mildew resistance; and improved agronomic performance compared to existing aroma cultivars.

“The Brewers Association’s pledge to support USDA breeding efforts for new hop varieties clearly demonstrates its long-term commitment to the brewing and hop industries,” added Bryan and Judy Thoet, co-technical directors at the Hop Research Council. “This partnership ultimately supports hop growers, hop processors and breweries by providing additional energy to maintain the international competitiveness of the U.S. industry.”

“The hop grower community has had a long association with public hop breeding and genetics programs. Due to declining federal and state support of research in recent years, these programs have become increasingly difficult to maintain without infusion of private support. The Brewers Association’s leadership will take this program to the next level and make it a reality,” said Ann George, executive director of Hop Growers of America and the Washington Hop Commission. “This a phenomenal step forward for the U.S. hop industry to maintain and expand programs as we move into the future.”

With the agreement signed, the USDA will move forward to hire a professional breeder and an operating partner facility will be secured.

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About the Brewers Association

The Brewers Association (BA) is the not-for-profit trade association dedicated to [small and independent](#) American brewers, their beers and the community of brewing enthusiasts. The BA represents 4,000-plus U.S. breweries. The BA’s [independent craft brewer seal](#) is a widely adopted symbol that differentiates beers by small and independent craft brewers. The BA organizes events including the [World Beer CupSM](#), [Great American Beer Festival[®]](#), [Craft Brewers Conference & BrewExpo America[®]](#), [SAVORSM: An American Craft Beer & Food Experience](#), [Homebrew Con](#), [National Homebrew Competition](#) and [American Craft Beer Week[®]](#). The BA publishes [The New Brewer[®]](#) magazine, and [Brewers Publications[™]](#) is the leading publisher of brewing literature in the U.S. Beer lovers are invited to learn more about the dynamic world of craft beer at [CraftBeer.com](#) and about homebrewing via the

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