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Media Release

Sydney, Australia, September 12, 2013

Syngenta launches new barley variety for high acid soils

- **Newly launched Litmus provides high yielding alternative for high acid soils**
- **Robust crop rotation option with attractive gross rotational margins**
- **Proven ability to manage weed competition and disease issues in wheat**

Syngenta announced today the launch of Litmus, a new acid-tolerant barley variety, formerly known as WABAR2625, developed in collaboration with InterGrain. Litmus offers growers in areas with acid soils and high levels of aluminium a high yielding alternative to conventional varieties.

“Litmus marks an exciting development for Western Australian grain growers, particularly in the Northern and Central Wheatbelt,” said Ben Miles, Syngenta Head of Cereals Australasia. “Standard varieties aren’t well adapted to grow in acidic environments so they’ve not been a viable choice for many growers. Litmus provides a robust crop rotation option with attractive gross rotational margins.”

InterGrain barley breeder David Moody says the development of Litmus started in 2004 by Chengdao Li, under the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) barley breeding program. The variety was then handed to InterGrain for further testing in advanced stage breeding trials.

“Litmus originates from the crossing of the acid soil tolerant donor breeding line WB229, Baudin and an early maturity breeding line derived from Mundah. It was selected not only for acid and aluminium soil tolerance but also for premium malt qualities, early maturity, strong straw strength and good grain plumpness,” said David. “Litmus belongs where high acid soils occur. Until now, only wheat has been grown in these regions due to a higher level of acid soil tolerance compared to barley varieties.”

Both National Variety Trials and InterGrain trials in areas with a large percentage of high acid soils have demonstrated yields significantly higher than that of Hindmarsh. In some areas, the yield has been up to 10% higher. Litmus has also performed well in a number of broad-acre grower group trials. In both 2011 and 2012, the Mingenew Irwin Group (MIG) saw yields of between 0.5 and one tonne greater than other conventional barley varieties.

Geraldton agronomist, Richard Quinlan of Planfarm, was trials coordinator with MIG in 2011 when they were approached to look at the new variety in the area.

“The Litmus trials showed phenomenal yield improvements over other traditional barley varieties and seemed to close the pH tolerance gap between wheat and barley,” explained Richard. “Putting barley in the rotation enables growers to target some of the disease issues we face with wheat on wheat and other rotation options. For example, wheat on lupin results in a poor lupin yield and poor weed control in the lupin phase. Growers facing serious resistance issues and problems with disease control should consider Litmus as an option.”

Litmus has good agronomic characteristics, with excellent head retention and moderate levels of pre-harvest sprouting tolerance. It has been released as a feed variety, however, preliminary malt analysis results indicates that it has potential to be an excellent export malt quality variety, with higher malt extract levels and lower wort viscosity compared to Baudin.

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