



News Release

For immediate release

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA INVESTS IN FIBRE RESEARCH TO HELP FARMERS

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, March 18, 2009 – The Government of Canada is investing in the hemp and flax industry so that farmers can harness new opportunities and access new value added markets. The Honourable Vic Toews, Member of Parliament for Provencher and President of the Treasury Board, today announced a \$9.6 million investment in the Natural Fibres for the Green Economy Network (NAFGEN).

“Our Government is continuing to deliver real results to our farmers, our rural communities and our economy,” said Mr. Toews, on behalf of Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz. “This new, innovative research will explore the full potential of Canadian flax and hemp crops to create better returns for farmers and boost our economy.”

Led by Flax Canada 2015 Inc., NAFGEN is a multidisciplinary network that brings together Canada’s top researchers, industry and producers to help create additional profitable natural fibre-based industrial value chains by improving varieties, technologies and processes, and by improving products made out of the natural fibres.

“NAFGEN’s networking approach is significant in that through collaboration of government, university and corporate research facilities and scientists their strengths and specialities are combined,” said Barry Hall, President, Flax Canada 2015 Inc. “Working as a team affords the best opportunity for the industry to develop new and improved technology and products for both flax and hemp fibre, thereby enhancing the value of these two crops.”

Funding for this project is being provided through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Agricultural Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP), a federal funding program designed to integrate Canada’s talent from universities, industry and government in order to stimulate creativity, leverage resources, reduce costs and accelerate progress towards commercialization of bioproducts and bioprocesses.

“The funding for fibre research through the NAFGEN network is important and holds considerable promise for enhancing the value of the flax crop to producers through whole crop utilization,” said Eric Fridfinnson, a Manitoba-based flax producer and Chairman of the Board of Directors for Flax Canada 2015 Inc.

For additional information about ABIP, please visit www.agr.gc.ca/abip.



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For more information please contact:

Media Relations

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Ottawa, Ontario

613-759-7972

1-866-345-7972

Meagan Murdoch

Press Secretary

The Office of the Honourable Gerry Ritz

613-759-1059



BACKGROUND

THE NATURAL FIBRES FOR THE GREEN ECONOMY NETWORK

The Natural Fibres for the Green Economy Network (NAFGEN) will help make the natural fibre industry more profitable by getting more value out of hemp and flax plants and processes. They're working towards breeding better varieties of flax and hemp, and they're solving problems with harvesting, processing, storage, transportation and grading. The network will also develop technologies to convert fibre and associated residue into a variety of new industrial chemicals and products.

The network is led by Flax Canada 2015 Inc. and includes the Alberta Research Council Inc., Biolin Research Inc., Composites Innovation Centre Manitoba Inc., FPInnovations, Indian Head Agricultural Research Foundation, Lanaupôle Fibres, Manitoba Zero Tillage Research Association, McGill University, Natural Step Canada, Ontario Hemp Alliance, Parkland Crop Diversification Foundation, Queen's University, Schweitzer-Mauduit Canada Inc., Tekle Technical Services Inc., the University of New Brunswick, the University of Toronto, the University of Saskatchewan and Wheatland Conservation Area.

THE AGRICULTURAL BIOPRODUCTS INNOVATION PROGRAM

The Agricultural Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP) is designed to promote research, development, technology transfer and the commercialization of agricultural bioproducts, including biofuels, in Canada.

The program will benefit farmers by generating new agricultural knowledge and technology and facilitating its transfer to those that can commercialize these innovations for the benefit of farmers and others in Canada's bioeconomy.

The program supports the establishment, development and operation of bioproducts research networks that focus on:

- Feedstock production through the development of crop platforms and cropping systems suitable for conversion to bioproducts;
- Developing effective and efficient technologies for biomass conversion; and
- Product diversification through technologies relevant to production of bioproducts (e.g. industrial chemicals, biomaterials and health products).

For additional information about the Agricultural Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP) and other Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada programs please visit www.agr.gc.ca.