

New dawn for pasta wheat in Australia

September 17 2014, by Robyn Mills

The University of Adelaide's durum breeding program today at the Hart Field Day will release a new durum wheat variety called DBA-Aurora which promises a step-change in potential durum production in southern Australia.

DBA-Aurora, named after the Roman goddess of the dawn, is high yielding with improved quality and robustness. It is also already attracting considerable interest from the global pasta manufacturing industry.

"DBA-Aurora heralds a new beginning for the Australian durum industry with many superior attributes over current commercial grown varieties including Hyperno, Saintly, Tjilkuri, Yawa and WID802 in the southern region (South Australia and Victoria)," says leader of the University's durum breeding program Dr Jason Able.

"With over five years of advanced trial fieldwork, DBA-Aurora has consistently shown yield potential that is as good as or better than the current highest yielding commercially available durum varieties across Australia. But its most notable features are an improved disease resistance package, larger grain size, good test weight, early vigour and weed competitiveness when compared to the other high yielding durum varieties."

Dr Able says the new variety will overcome concerns about possible quality downgrades and weed competition, and improve durum's fit into the farming system rotation.

"DBA-Aurora is a more robust durum that is better suited to an integrated weed management system, and less likely to be downgraded for small grain under a tight spring finish with minimal rainfall," he says. He adds that there is already demand for the new variety – both from the University's industry partner San Remo Macaroni Pty Ltd and other pasta manufacturers.

"I've just recently returned from Italy where I had preliminary discussions with Italian pasta giants Barilla and Divella, who clearly signalled that they want to buy durum from the southern regions of Australia," he says. "It is now in the hands of growers and exporters to meet that demand.

"These companies openly acknowledge we produce some of the best durum in the world. What they need though is the availability of a consistent export supply, year-on-year, of 50-100 kilotonnes and more. DBA-Aurora will hopefully signal the start of increased opportunities for growers and exporters beyond that needed by San Remo and other local end-users."

Depending on this season and the way it finishes, as much as 1000 tonnes of DBA-Aurora will be available through the Southern Australian Durum Growers Association for sale to sow in 2015.

Dr Able says the future also looks bright for ongoing variety development with upgraded breeding operations and new germplasm from overseas collections to widen the genetic-base of future varieties.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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