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Minnesota Crop Improvement Association Presents Awards

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, January 13, 2021 Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) today presented its highest honor, the Achievement in Crop Improvement Award, to Dr. **Don Wyse**, Professor of Agronomy and Plant Genetics at the University of Minnesota. The award, presented annually since 1972, recognizes exemplary service to the seed industry as well as outstanding leadership in agriculture. Dr. Wyse has made significant contributions to grass seed production and is a well-respected teacher, researcher, and leader.

MCIA also recognized four Premier Seedsman awardees, **Bob Ehlers** of Elbow Lake, **Clyde Kringlen** of McIntosh, and **Dean Tarning** and **Dennis Tarning** of Cokato. Each year since 1928, MCIA has presented this award to recognize individuals or partners involved in quality seed production, active in MCIA, and who provide excellent service to the seed industry. University of Minnesota research scientist **Donn Vellekson** and veteran MCIA field inspector **Randy Krzmarzick** were the recipients of MCIA's Honorary Premier Seedsman Award, which recognizes individuals not directly involved in seed production but who have actively supported the seed industry, MCIA, and their local community. MCIA has presented this award annually since 1930.

The awards were presented at the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association's 118th Annual Meeting. The virtual event was hosted at MCIA's office in St. Paul, Minnesota, January 13, 2021.

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Achievement in Crop Improvement Award

Dr. Don Wyse, University of Minnesota, professor and researcher, came to Minnesota in 1974 to accept a weed scientist position. The focus of his work quickly became quackgrass control in Kentucky bluegrass. Thus began a 45-year relationship with the grass seed producers in northern Minnesota. His work has been a key part in the success of the grass seed industry in Minnesota but has also benefited others in agriculture. He is a well-respected teacher, researcher, and leader. Don has taken the collaborative philosophy that helped the grass seed industry succeed and applied it to other initiatives in which he has been involved. Today, through the Forever Green Initiative, his work focuses on Kernza and other perennial and winter annual crops.

Premier Seedsman Awards

Bob Ehlers has been a certified seed producer for 45 years. Today he owns and operates Red River Marketing Company near Elbow Lake. His entry into the seed business was based on the belief that, "Good year or bad, farmers will need quality seed every year." Today he grows certified wheat and soybean seed. With a degree in agricultural engineering from the University of Minnesota, Bob built his own approved seed conditioning facility in 1994; he was also a partner in building a second seed facility in Thompson, North Dakota. Bob is an active MCIA member, serving as vice chair of the board of directors. He has also been active in various local organizations, including his church and area school board.

Premier Seedsman Awards, continued

Clyde Kringle has been associated with certified seed since he and his father purchased McIntosh Farm Service in 1981. Operating their MCIA-approved seed facility, he worked with local seed growers conditioning and selling certified wheat, oats, and barley. Over the years, Clyde developed a passion for wheat production and today manages wheat seed production for West Central Ag Services. He sees the value of wheat in the rotation and enjoys seeing the advancements being made in wheat production. Clyde has also served his community in a variety of ways including the McIntosh Fire and Rescue, St. Mary's Church, and the Larry Sing golf tournament to support ALS research.

Dean and Dennis Tarning, of Cokato, grew up in a seed corn producing family. They also grew certified seed of small grains and soybeans, conditioning it in a seed plant built by their father Ralph. The brothers did all the jobs necessary for seed production and learned the importance of quality. In 1985, Dean and Dennis began producing hybrid seed corn for their retail brand, Tarning Seeds. Those first two hybrids have grown into a large-scale seed corn production operation. Today they can produce, harvest, and dry seed corn from over 6,000 acres. They continue to work with other local seed companies and say much of their success is due to great employees who take pride in producing high quality seed.

Honorary Premier Seedsman Awards

Donn Vellekson began working at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, in 1975. As a research scientist, his career has been devoted to turf grass and forage seed production research. He grew up on a crop and livestock farm near Dawson, Minnesota, and graduated from the University of Minnesota, Crookston. Initially, his work focused on Kentucky bluegrass, timothy, and birdsfoot trefoil. Much of Donn's work is done at the Magnusson Research Farm near Roseau and today perennial ryegrass is a primary emphasis. Over the years, he has received great cooperation from farmers and seed processors in the Roseau and Lake of the Woods area. Donn's work on fertility, herbicides, winter hardiness, and seed production has been instrumental in the success of the Minnesota grass seed industry.

Randy Krzmarzick has been a reliable MCIA field inspector for 22 years. From his home farm near Sleepy Eye, he has walked thousands of acres across southwest Minnesota. Inspecting fields of oats, wheat, soybeans, and occasionally corn, Randy is a key part of the seed certification process. Each field must be evaluated prior to harvest for varietal purity, other crops, and weeds. His part-time work provides him the opportunity to meet people from family-owned operations to multinational corporations. As someone who loves the outdoors, he enjoys walking fields and is proud to play a small part in seed production. Randy is also involved in the Brown County Farmers Union, St. Mary's Church, and the Sleepy Eye area food shelf.

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Since 1903, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) has provided programs and services to meet the needs of an ever-changing agricultural world. These services include seed certification, organic certification, foundation seed production, and a variety of customized third-party verification programs for seed and identity-preserved grains. MCIA operates from facilities on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus with field staff located throughout Minnesota.

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If you would like more information on this topic, please contact Roger Wippler at 612-625-7766 or wippl002@umn.edu.