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**Minnesota Crop Improvement Association
Presents Achievement in Crop Improvement Award to Roger Wippler**

ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA, January 24, 2024 The Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) today presented its highest honor, the Achievement in Crop Improvement Award, to Roger Wippler, who recently retired as manager of MCIA's Foundation Seed Services. The award, presented annually since 1972, recognizes exemplary service to the seed industry as well as outstanding leadership in agriculture. During his 34-year tenure with MCIA, Roger Wippler led the Association's Foundation Seed Program and was key to developing its Variety Licensing Program in partnership with the University of Minnesota. Through writing, speaking, outreach, and education, Roger raised public awareness of the purpose of the seed certification system and its importance to Minnesota's seed industry.

The award was presented at the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association's 121st Annual Meeting. The event was held at the Holiday Inn and Suites in St. Cloud, Minnesota, January 24, 2024.

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Roger Wippler grew up on a hobby farm near Randall, Minnesota. His love for agriculture began when he was old enough to help area farmers by picking rocks, stacking hay bales, and milking cows. In high school, he was very involved in FFA. He participated in several judging contests, held various offices in the local and district FFA, and received the State Farmer Degree. He went on to study landscape technology at Brainard Area Vocational and Technical Institute and agriculture education at the University of Minnesota.

After college, Roger worked as an energy auditor, a landscaper, and then, as an ag teacher. When the teaching program was cut, he applied for a position at MCIA. Roger was hired as foundation seed manager on July 5, 1989. For the next 30-plus years, Roger grew and harvested seed increases, including breeder and foundation seed. He's driven thousands of miles and walked hundreds more to check on each year's foundation seed production fields.

Roger recently retired as MCIA's Foundation Seed Services Manager. At the beginning of his career, the organization's sole focus was seed certification. Over the years, Roger was involved in MCIA's efforts to diversify its programs and services. In particular, he was key to the development of the Variety Licensing Program. He was also instrumental in developing relationships with the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, commodity groups, and industry professionals. Since 1989, Roger has attended every Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) Annual Meeting and most of its regional meetings. He served on and was chair and vice-chair for several AOSCA committees. In 2023, AOSCA presented Roger with an Honorary Member Award in recognition of his lifetime achievements.

Roger has been involved with the Minnesota State Fair certified seed booth since 1989. From that platform, Roger has informed thousands of fair attendees about MCIA's work and Minnesota agriculture. He has also served as a UMN Extension Master Gardener for 24 years, educating gardeners at booths, in seminars, and online.

Roger accepted the Achievement in Crop Improvement Award with gratitude, saying, "I greatly appreciate this honor. It has truly been a privilege to work with members of MCIA and be a part of this great organization."

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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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For more information on this topic, please contact Kris Folland at 218-791-2156 or kris.folland@mncia.org.