Minnesota Crop Improvement Association
Presents Premier Seed Grower Award to Kurt Flegel

FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA, January 12, 2023  Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) today recognized Kurt Flegel, of Benson, with the Premier Seed Grower Award. The award, presented annually since 1928, recognizes individuals or partners involved in quality seed production, active in MCIA, and who provide excellent service to the seed industry.

Kurt Flegel received the award, along with fellow Premier Seed Grower awardees, Lon Baldus and Dean Johnson and Kurt Aakre, during the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association’s 120th Annual Meeting. The event was hosted at the Bigwood Event Center in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, January 12, 2023.

Kurt Flegel, of Benson, has been in the seed business for 40 years. Currently, he is the plant manager at Syngenta in Danvers. He grew up on a dairy, beef, and small grain farm near Kulm, North Dakota. His father enjoyed growing durum wheat and Kurt recalls asking about the blue Certified tags attached to the bags of seed. With an interest in agriculture, he attended Bismarck Junior College and was one of the first students to study as an "ag transfer student." The transfer led to North Dakota State University, where he obtained a degree in ag economics.

Following graduation, he took a position with Stauffer Seeds in Fargo, and in 1983 he transferred to the Danvers production plant. In those early years he was very involved with the sunflower program, including research, parent seed production, and conditioning. In 1987, Stauffer’s merged with Northrup King and added soybeans to the operation. Kurt became familiar with MCIA as his work involved OECD certification of soybeans and sunflower seed for export to Europe.

OECD varieties were typically very early, and Kurt needed to convince farmers in North Dakota and northern Minnesota that they could grow soybeans. Through the years, he has developed great relationships with growers, some are into their third generation working with Kurt. Eventually, OECD exports declined, and sunflower production shifted to California. In 2001, as soybeans acres moved north and west, Syngenta switched the facility to a soybean-only plant, to handle the increasing demand for domestic seed production.

Kurt has been an active member of MCIA, serving on various committees. As a director on the MCIA board, he was elected as chair for three terms. During his tenure, he led MCIA’s management through a continuity and succession planning process.

A longtime paramedic for Centra Care, Kurt also teaches Emergency Medical Services classes. Other community activities include past service as a board member for several organization including his church, the ECFE advisory board, and the hospital foundation.

Kurt enjoys getting together with his son and his daughter and their spouses. He is also a downhill skier and serves on the ski patrol at the local ski slope. Trips to the Boundary Waters and other travel adventures occupy any other spare time.

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.

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