Press Release

SEEDING THE FUTURE SINCE 1856

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KWS Seeds Breaks Ground on New Research Facility to Bring New Innovations to Sugarbeet Growers and Industry

KWS Seeds launched construction today on what will be its most advanced greenhouse research facility in North America dedicated to improving the performance, profitability and sustainability of sugarbeet farming and the industry into the future.

“This project is breaking new ground into the future of sugarbeet research and seed development and marks another milestone in our commitment to the sugarbeet industry and innovation that spans more than 160 years,” said Breanne Stowell, Senior Station Manager with KWS Seeds at the groundbreaking ceremony. “This forward-looking facility will set a new standard by utilizing ultramodern technology. It will play a large part in the development of improved varieties and find agronomic solutions for the challenges that sugarbeet producers face in their crop production. For producers, they will see the benefits of more sustainable, resilient and productive agriculture on their farms.”

“For example, we’ll be able to replicate conditions needed for seed development with the innovative vernalization chambers. By pulling up a dashboard, we’ll be able to regulate temperature and humidity to precise set points, reduce light pollution at night, and improve direct sunlight for the plants in four separate zones. Through these innovative technologies, our researchers will be able to control a range of climate conditions for precise and efficient seed R&D—all while reducing energy use and our carbon footprint.”

The facility will expand the operations at the KWS Seeds breeding and research station in Kimberly, Idaho, with the construction of two greenhouse facilities. One of the greenhouse facilities will be committed to seedling production for sugarbeet trialing and the other focused on research to improve control of plant disease.

KWS Seeds is one of the world’s leading plant breeding companies, with headquarters in Einbeck, Germany. It is the sugarbeet seed industry's leading innovative researcher in North America, with operations based in Bloomington, Minn. The sugarbeet seed varieties are marketed through ACH Seeds and Betaseed seed companies. The company is working with Ceres Greenhouse Solutions based in Boulder, Colo., to design the technologically advanced facility and install the high-tech equipment and systems. Ceres is also managing the construction project, working with the general contractor, Starr Corporation in Twin Falls, Idaho.

“A key focus of the project is achieving precision climate control for both seedling production and testing,” said Chris Uhlig, CEO with Ceres. “To achieve that, the facility incorporates several innovative design elements that set it apart as a futuristic example of seed research.”

Proprietary heat pump systems and energy curtains designed for maximum energy efficiency are among the innovative design elements. “Another unique feature is the facility will utilize the Ceres SunSense™ automation system, which uses advanced algorithms and sensors to maintain optimal growing conditions by controlling greenhouse systems based on real-time environmental data,” said Uhlig.

The future-of-the-industry technologies, design and automation developed by Ceres will advance KWS Seeds’ research and development goals for sugarbeets, said Margaret Rekoske, Lead Breeder for the U.S. with KWS Seeds.

“Our company’s innovative and comprehensive research program is based on our strong, world class germplasm and this new state of the art facility will help us optimize our research efforts,” said Rekoske. “We will be able to enhance the seed production process, bringing next generation hybrids to the market with more precision, better disease tolerance and improved crop yields and that all leads to greater economic gains for the growers and industry.”

“We will expand our disease trialing efforts to identify and select disease resistance traits to develop new disease-resistant hybrids, focusing on Curly Top and Rhizoctonia diseases as well as advancing our herbicide tolerant programs,” said Rekoske.

The KWS Seeds breeding research station in Idaho is one of five breeding research stations in the United States. The 230-acre research site in Idaho is dedicated to trait and hybrid development for irrigated markets in the Western U.S. and around the world. KWS expanded its research capabilities at Kimberly in 2019 with investments that featured a new seed processing facility and other new buildings to increase plant research capabilities in breeding. The new greenhouse project is scheduled to be completed in April 2026.

“We’re devoted to a sustainable future of agriculture and leading the way with future-forward research and technology to develop high-performing sugarbeet seed varieties,” said Stowell. “This new research greenhouse project is an investment in that future for sugarbeet growers. It’s also an investment in the community of Kimberly, representing our commitment to be an important contributor to the future of the area.”

Rendering Cutline:

This photorealistic rendering showcases the scope of the construction project on what will be KWS Seeds' most advanced greenhouse research facility for sugarbeets in North America. The project will expand the KWS Seeds breeding research station in Kimberly, Idaho, adding two greenhouse facilities and innovative vernalization chambers. The new facilities will feature future-forward technologies that set it apart as a futuristic example of seed research. KWS Seeds is working with Ceres Greenhouse Solutions, Boulder, Colo., in designing the technologically advanced facilities. Starr Corporation in Twin Falls, Idaho, is the general contractor.

Photo Cutline:

KWS Seeds, North America's largest producer of sugarbeet seed, broke ground on April 15 on a project that will advance its breeding research station in Kimberly, Idaho, for the future. The new, ultramodern facilities will allow KWS Seeds researchers to expand their efforts to develop improved varieties and find new solutions to improve control of plant disease for sugarbeet producers. Pictured at the groundbreaking ceremony are (from left to right): Alex Arrington, Project Superintendent with Starr Corporation; Christopher Uhlig, Chief Executive Officer with Ceres Greenhouse Solutions; Breanne Stowell, Senior Kimberly Station Manager with KWS Seeds; Chuck Vawser, Kimberly Station Manager with KWS Seeds; Marc Plinke, Owner and Founder of Ceres Greenhouse Solutions; and Michael Arrington, President of Starr Corporation, seated on horse buggy. Ceres Greenhouse Solutions, Boulder, Colo., is designing the technologically advanced facilities and Starr Corporation in Twin Falls, Idaho, is the general contractor.

About Ceres Greenhouse Solutions

Founded in 2011, Ceres is a greenhouse design, engineering, and consulting company specializing in energy-efficient systems. With a team of dedicated professionals passionate about local food production, Ceres has completed projects across the globe, including in the Middle East, New Zealand, South Africa, and Europe. Through the establishment of a global supply chain, Ceres has developed networks that enable the local distribution of materials, all while remaining committed to sustainable practices. In addition to its innovative SunSense™ control system, Ceres also creates proprietary designs and collaborates with existing ones to enhance their energy efficiency

About KWS

KWS is one of the world's leading plant breeding companies. Nearly 5,000 employees* in more than 70 countries generated net sales of around €1.68 billion in the fiscal year 2023/2024. A company with a tradition of family ownership, KWS has operated independently for almost 170 years. It focuses on plant breeding and the production and sale of seed for sugarbeet, corn, cereals, vegetables, oilseed rape and sunflower. KWS uses leading-edge plant breeding methods to continuously improve yield for farmers and plants' resistance to diseases, pests and abiotic stress. To that end, the company invested more than €300 million last fiscal year in research and development.
*excl. seasonal workforce

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