



Crop derivative used in manufacture of virtually all plastic bags; North Carolina poised to become dominant growing region in the United States

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C., Aug. 30, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Farmers in North Carolina will be growing another profitable crop this fall, thanks to a partnership by Perdue AgriBusiness and Winston-Salem-based Technology Crops International (TCI). Known as HEAR (high erucic acid rapeseed), the crop looks identical to canola, but the oil it produces has a different composition and multiple end-use applications, especially industrial uses. Grown in trials in North Carolina for more than three years, HEAR is expected to earn farmers additional income. Demand for HEAR oil is strong and sustainable, and if farmers in North Carolina seize the opportunity, TCI's home state could soon become the nation's largest producer of the lucrative crop.



(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20110830/CL59043>)

Perdue AgriBusiness, a leading processor, merchandiser and exporter of agricultural commodities, and TCI, a global leader in high-value specialty oilseed crops, have joined forces to roll out the new crop to North Carolina farmers. This announcement comes after over three years of trial work conducted on winter varieties of the crop with North Carolina State University (NCSU) and one year of commercial production. Unlike wheat, HEAR is grown under contract, so farmers have the assurance that all the HEAR they grow will be purchased. TCI supplies the seed, agronomic assistance and purchases the end crop from growers. Perdue provides storage and processing.

"We are proud to partner with the experts at TCI because they have a proven track record of success in delivering premium specialty oils to the marketplace. This is a great opportunity not only for agriculture in North Carolina, but for the state's economy as a whole," says Dick Willey, President, Perdue AgriBusiness.

Robust demand for HEAR oil

Valued as a renewable raw material, oil from the HEAR seed is used in the manufacture of polymers, petroleum additives, pharmaceuticals, foods and personal-care products. A derivative of the oil is used in the manufacturing process for almost all plastic bags. Its high non-food use means HEAR oil cannot be replaced by other plant or mineral oils, and demand is not subject to government energy policies.

"We have a very strong demand for HEAR globally, and are seeking long-term crop production partners," says Andrew Hebard, president and CEO of TCI. "Yield results in North Carolina prove the state offers one of the best regions for growing HEAR. Commercial crops grown by North Carolina farmers produced approximately 55 bushels per acre in 2011. We contract with growers around the world to supply specialty oils to our customers and we're pleased to be able to bring this opportunity to farmers right here in our home state."

Farmers reap big benefits by growing HEAR

HEAR offers a new, profitable fall growing option for farmers in North Carolina. It is expected that HEAR will earn growers from \$50 to \$100 more per acre than wheat, and it improves wheat yields the following growing season by as much as 15%. The meal produced after the oil is extracted from the seed is a high-protein animal feed, and will be a valuable addition to North Carolina's current protein deficit in the livestock production industry.

"We are continually looking for new crop opportunities for North Carolina farmers that help them be more profitable," says Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "As farmers begin considering their fall planting options, they need to look at their own individual operations to determine whether this would be a viable alternative crop for their farm."

"We are right in the heart of where you can grow HEAR very well," says Dr. Chris Reberg-Horton, assistant professor and organic cropping specialist in NCSU's Department of Crop Science. "It's a great fit because of our long growing season. HEAR can be another reliable crop. Other states report that HEAR can repress diseases and nematodes in soybeans, which gives growers another advantage in crop rotation."

Phil McLain, grower and owner of Snow Creek Farms in Statesville, N.C., participated in the trials and has signed up to grow another 2,000 acres of HEAR this year. "HEAR is reliable, without the same disease and quality issues of other crops," he says. "It gives us greater diversity, is a great complement to wheat, and we can double-crop it with soybeans. Plus, we are able to use our existing equipment for planting and harvest."

"TCI has also been excellent to work with," McLain adds. "They have an agronomist on call who is always available if we have any questions."

North Carolina farmers interested in growing HEAR should contact TCI at (877) 780-5882 or Perdue AgriBusiness at goagpartners@perdue.com.

About Perdue

Perdue AgriBusiness ranks among the largest grain companies in the U.S. Perdue AgriBusiness is a leading merchandiser, processor and exporter of agriculture products. Through its more than 40 elevator locations with more than 60 million bushels of storage, four transload facilities, three protein blend mills, four soybean crushing operations, an edible oil refinery and two rendering facilities, Perdue AgriBusiness serves agricultural markets across the United States and around the world.

About Technology Crops International

Technology Crops International (TCI) is a global leader in the evaluation, development, commercialization and delivery (supply chain management) of new and high-value strategic oils from oilseed crops such as high erucic acid rapeseed, high oleic sunflower, meadowfoam, cuphea, lesquerella, camelina and echium. The company offers a full spectrum of expert services in specialty crop contracting and serves the biotechnology, pharmaceutical, industrial chemical, specialty nutrition, and medical foods industries. With offices in the U.S. and the U.K., TCI supplies customers around the world with safe, sustainable, traceable, and cost-competitive crop-derived products.

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