

Wheat Sequencing Consortium Announces New Appointments to Board of Directors



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The [International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium](http://www.iwgs.org) (IWGSC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Ute Baumann, Hikmet Budak, and Etienne Paux as new Board members of the organization.

Ute Baumann is a Bioinformatics Group Leader at the Plant Genomics Centre of the University of Adelaide in Australia. Her research focuses on transcriptome assembly and analysis, comparative genomics, hybrid wheat, and evolution of gene families in wheat. Baumann brings to the Board a unique perspective as a bioinformatician and a biologist. She is highly experienced in cereal bioinformatics and has worked closely with several breeding companies, and is also a member of the wheatIS, the International Wheat Information System. She has been a member of the IWGSC Coordinating Committee since 2015.

“I am pleased to be able to contribute as part of the Board to the next phase of the Consortium,” says Baumann, “it is a great opportunity to be able to work together with fantastic wheat researchers and breeders.”

Hikmet Budak is a Professor and Winifred-Asbjornson Plant Science Endowed Chair at Montana State University in the USA. He also serves as Honorary Professor at the University of Worcester, UK and adjunct Professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA, and Sabanci University, Turkey. His main research interest is on biotic and abiotic stress responses in cereals, and the components of stress tolerance mechanisms. Budak has been a member of the IWGSC Coordinating Committee since 2005 and has participated to several IWGSC projects, from the production of physical maps for chromosome 5D and 1AL, to the survey sequence and the reference sequence projects.

“Feeding people is something that I believe in and sequencing and characterizing the wheat genome will be a key tool to improve breeding programs to reach this goal. I am very honored to join the IWGSC Board and I will do my best to help the Consortium develop a global strategy oriented towards end user needs”, says Budak.

Etienne Paux is a Senior researcher at INRA, the French National Institute for Agricultural Research, in the “Genetics, Diversity and Ecophysiology of Cereals” laboratory in Clermont-Ferrand. He has been a member of the IWGSC Coordinating Committee since its creation in 2005 and has been leading or participating in numerous projects at the interface between basic and applied research under the umbrella of the Consortium. He has been involved in the chromosome 3B project, from the construction of the physical map to its sequencing in 2014. Lately, his group has been involved in the production of the IWGSC high-quality reference sequence of the wheat genome. With wheat entering the post-genome sequence era, his main research interests are to understand the structure, function

and evolution of the wheat genome and epigenome partitioning, to characterize the wheat genetic, genomic and epigenomic diversity, and to use this knowledge to develop efficient breeding tools and strategies.

“Getting access to the wheat genome reference sequence is in several respects a quantum leap for the community but this is just a first step,” says Paux. “A structurally and functionally annotated sequence, together with a well-documented genetic diversity in the form of a wheat pangenome are the next main challenges for the IWGSC. And I am happy to be on board to contribute to drive this effort.”

Kellye Eversole, the IWGSC Executive Director, says “we are extremely pleased to have these three leaders joining the Board as we move into the next phase for the IWGSC. Their leadership and vision will be invaluable to shape and drive the Consortium strategy for the coming years.”

Now that the IWGSC has reached its goal of producing a high-quality genome sequence of bread wheat, the Consortium is moving into Phase II to pursue its original mission – accelerate wheat improvement. Over the next years, the IWGSC will focus its efforts on four activities: production of an IWGSC Exome Array based on the reference sequence; production of a wheat pan-genome based on de novo sequencing and assembly of multiple wheat genomes; maintenance, updates, and integration of manual and functional annotation to the reference sequence to produce the IWGSC Gold Standard reference sequence; and development of user-friendly, integrated databases and tools to benefit public breeders and industry partners.

The new appointments come as Catherine Feuillet (formerly Bayer CropScience, now Inari Agriculture), an original founder of the IWGSC, and Beat Keller (University of Zurich) are finishing their terms as Board members. “We would like to thank Catherine and Beat for their dedication over the last 13 years”, says Eversole. “The IWGSC would not have achieved the reference sequence of bread wheat without their leadership and commitment to excellence.”

About the IWGSC

The IWGSC, with 2,100 members in 64 countries, is an international, collaborative consortium, established in 2005 by a group of wheat growers, plant scientists, and public and private breeders. The goal of the IWGSC is to make a high quality genome sequence of bread wheat publicly available, in order to lay a foundation for basic research that will enable breeders to develop improved varieties. The IWGSC is a U.S. 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. www.wheatgenome.org

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