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By Ed Leahy

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£5.3million boost for crop research

Defra frees up multi-million pound research grants, focussing on improving pulses, wheat, leafy vegetables and oilseed rape



UK universities and research teams working to boost crop resilience will get a £5.3million boost helping to innovate the nation's horticultural sector.

Defra will distribute the funding package over five years to four leading agricultural research centres, environment secretary Michael Gove announced today.

They will focus on boosting productivity for pulses, wheat, leafy vegetables and oilseed rape as part of Defra's Crop Genetic Improvement Networks (GINs).

Gove said: "Developing new technology is crucial to making sure our farmers can continue to grow world-class produce in an environmentally friendly way.

"Through this new fund, I hope to see the creation of new and innovative growing practices and crop protections so we can truly unlock the potential of our food and farming industries."

The four recipients that will undertake the research are the John Innes Centre, Rothamsted Research, University of Warwick and University of York.

Professor Ian Bancroft, who leads the agricultural research centre at the University of York, said: "We aim to support industry in long-term, sustainable rapeseed production by utilising UK expertise in plant genetics to better understand specific crop traits. Innovation through these networks is essential if we are to see growth in healthy crop production."

According to Defra, since their creation in 2003 Genetic Improvement Network's have increased crop resistance to pests and diseases such as orange blossom midge and turnip mosaic virus as well as enhanced pea crops which are now being used to produce high-quality animal feed.

The government stated it has so far invested £160 million through the agri-tech strategy to harness the latest agricultural research and technologies.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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