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Press Release

Bayer CropScience Fungicides Have Proven Control of Ug99 in Wheat Trials

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RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C. (June 19, 2008) – Ug99, an aggressive race of the black stem rust fungus (*Puccinia graminis*) that has been spreading across Africa and the Middle East, has the potential to devastate wheat crops. Field trials conducted in Kenya by Bayer CropScience have successfully demonstrated that this race, designated Ug99, can be effectively controlled by the company's established cereal fungicide Folicur®. Folicur is already available to farmers in Kenya and Iran to combat stem rust. Bayer CropScience plans to register further fungicides based on Folicur in these two countries to control the disease.

That means growers in the United States also have the means to protect their fields, should the disease find its way across the ocean, says Randy Myers, Fungicide Portfolio Manager for Bayer CropScience in the U.S. "There are a number of fungicides in our portfolio that are proven to control Ug99 in multi-year field trials," says Myers. "Although it can be devastating to an untreated wheat field, U.S. wheat growers would be amply prepared for Ug99 with the fungicides available."

Field trials conducted by Bayer CropScience have successfully demonstrated that this unique race of rust can be effectively controlled by several of the company's established cereal-specific fungicides including Folicur, Stratego® and the recently registered fungicide Prosaro™.

First appearance in East Africa

In 1999, African scientists made a discovery in Uganda that had serious consequences. Many wheat stocks were infested by a parasitic fungus that permanently weakened the plants, leading to a total loss of the harvest. The causative agent was a new, extremely aggressive variant of the black rust fungus (*Puccinia graminis*). Scientists named this new race of stem rust “Ug99” after the country and year in which it was first observed. “It can be recognized from the dark orange to dark brown lateral pustules it forms on the stalks and leaf sheaths of the plants”, says Dr. Stefan Dutzmann, Product Development Manager Cereal Fungicides at Bayer CropScience, describing the disease symptoms.

Since then, the pathogen has continued to spread: it has been reported in Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and recently also in Iran. No end to its proliferation is in sight. Fears that fungal spores may already have reached Pakistan have not been confirmed to date. From here, it is not far to the fields of India, the world’s largest producer of wheat after Europe and China. This would lead to increasing shortages and further rises in the price of this important basic foodstuff.

In the long term, warmer regions such as Mexico and North America may also be at risk if fungal spores are introduced there, for example by travelers. The last large-scale outbreak of black stem rust in 1954 destroyed approximately 40 percent of the U.S. wheat harvest. It was not until many years later that resistant varieties of wheat were developed that cannot be harmed by black rust.

Food supply in emerging countries under threat

At present there are no varieties of wheat resistant to infection with Ug99, and many years could pass before new, resistant varieties have been bred and sufficient seed is available. Unfortunately, many farmers in emerging markets such as Pakistan and India cannot afford state-of-the-

art crop protection products. Because of research and development by companies such as Bayer CropScience, products like Folicur are now able to provide a cost-effective solution to control black rust.

The food supply in emerging markets is strongly dependent on wheat growing. Ug99 is therefore a particular threat to these countries. In 2005, the Global Rust Initiative (GRI) was co-established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The members of the initiative are working to jointly halt the spread of Ug99 and prevent any further proliferation. In addition to widespread surveillance and the targeted use of fungicides, their efforts are focused on searching for wheat varieties that are resistant to Ug99. However, the current findings are not very encouraging: 80 percent of the varieties tested to date are extremely susceptible.

With the availability of multiple cereal fungicide offerings from Bayer CropScience, the ability to effectively control the fungus, should it reach U.S., is steadfast.

Bayer CropScience is committed to bringing solutions such as Folicur, Prosaro and Stratego to U.S. crop protection. For any questions concerning the use of fungicides in the Bayer CropScience portfolio, growers should visit www.cerealexperts.com or talk to their local Cereal Experts representative.

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