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## **FAIR PLAY campaign supports plant breeding innovation**

Since the FAIR PLAY campaign on farm-saved seed (FSS) was launched 10 years ago, the contribution of FSS payments to plant breeders' income has more than doubled from around £4.5m in 2005 to £9.25m in 2014. According to BSPB, the campaign plays a key role in safeguarding future innovation in UK-based plant breeding.

A joint initiative between BSPB and the major UK farming unions (NFU, NFUS and UFU), the FAIR PLAY campaign was established in 2005 to address concerns that low levels of collection of FSS payments were draining vital income away from investment in UK breeding programmes.

Speaking on the eve of the Cereals 2015 event, BSPB chairman Dr Richard Summers marked 10 years of FAIR PLAY by reviewing key developments in the campaign, and highlighting some of the breeding advances safeguarded by the drive to reduce FSS evasion.

“The central objective of the FAIR PLAY campaign is to create a level playing-field in which all farmers contribute fairly for the benefits of using farm-saved seed. Since 2005, compliance levels have improved significantly, and FSS collections now account for around a third of total breeding income,” said Dr Summers.

“Communication has been central to the FAIR PLAY campaign, focused on raising awareness of the benefits of continued investment in plant breeding, while ensuring farmers are clear about their legal responsibilities on FSS use, declaration and payment. BSPB has also taken steps to make the FSS payment process more straightforward for farmers, and strengthened the FSS collection system through additional staff resources, major investment in a new farmer database better intelligence about seed and variety use,” he explained.

Dr Summers highlighted the following breeding advances in combinable crops which the FAIR PLAY campaign has helped safeguard over the past 10 years:

- HOLL oilseed rape varieties now top-yielding
- Development of no-GN spring malting barleys
- First oilseed rape varieties with resistance to Turnip Yellow Virus
- Semi-dwarf oilseed rape
- Herbicide tolerant oilseed rape
- Quality wheat yields now matching feed varieties
- UK first to register modern CMS hybrid barley varieties
- Dwarf husked and naked oats
- High oil naked oats
- Low vicine/covicine quality in spring beans
- Improved standing ability in field peas
- Better colour retention in large blue and marrowfat peas
- Pale hilum winter bean yields now matching black hilum types

Speaking on behalf of the UK farming unions, NFU combinable crops chairman Mike Hambly welcomed the progress made through FAIR PLAY in protecting future breeding innovation:

“The FAIR PLAY campaign promotes a collaborative, industry-wide approach to safeguarding future breeding innovation. Farmers need access to new varieties for improved yields, quality and disease resistance, and to cope with emerging challenges such as climate change and to help reduce resistance to key crop protection tools. The farming unions fully support the campaign’s objectives to ensure all farmers contribute fairly for the benefits of improved varieties, bred for our markets and growing conditions.”

Dr Summers added: “Since 2005, FAIR PLAY has come a long way in tackling the gap in FSS payments, and BSPB would like to say a big thank you, not only to the farming unions for their support in delivering the campaign, but also to the many thousands of farmers who recognise the benefits of continued investment in improved varieties.”

“Despite improvements in FSS compliance levels across virtually all crops, it’s important to emphasise the ongoing need for the FAIR PLAY campaign. There is still work to do to deliver 100% compliance, with communication and

enforcement activity now more intelligence-led and targeted on specific crops, regions and farmer types,” he said.

**Ends**

**About BSPB**

The British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) is the representative body for the UK plant breeding industry. Acting on members’ behalf, BSPB licenses, collects and distributes certified seed royalties and farm-saved seed payments on agricultural and horticultural crops. The Society represents members’ interests on technical, regulatory and intellectual property matters, and works to promote continued innovation and investment in UK plant breeding. For further information visit: [www.bspb.co.uk](http://www.bspb.co.uk)

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