

# New wheat weapons in WA grower arsenal

**T**wo new wheat varieties, Mace and Fang, were launched in October at a Council of Grain Grower Organisations (COGGO) seed bulk-up site near Northam, WA.

COGGO CEO, Geoff Smith, said the new varieties were developed by Australian Grain Technologies (AGT) and bred for WA conditions.

"Commercial quantities of seed will be available from COGGO Seeds for planting in the 2009 growing season.

"Mace is a Wyalkatchem type which in three years of yield testing has, on average, outyielded Wyalkatchem by six per cent across all agzones in WA," he said.

"In addition, Mace has improved stripe and stem rust resistance, boron tolerance and similar resistance to yellow spot as Wyalkatchem and has a provisional quality grading of APW/AH.

"Fang, a medium-long season APW variety, has been developed for growers looking to manage frost risk by growing different varieties with a range of flowering times.

"It is an alternative to Yitpi, which is often used for this purpose. Fang has improved stem, stripe and leaf rust resistance over Yitpi, it is less susceptible to yellow leaf spot and has, during three years of



**Chatting at the launch of new wheat varieties Mace and Fang are Ray Fulwood at his farm and COGGO seed bulk-up site near Northam, COGGO Chairman and Bindi Bindi grower, Bruce Piper and COGGO CEO, Geoff Smith.**

testing in WA, exceeded Yitpi yield in agzones 5 and 6," Geoff said.

"Fang is similar to Yitpi in its flowering time across a wide range of planting times.

"Parent material for Fang was sourced from a close relative to Spear, but with improved yield and disease resistance."

Geoff said that the new AGT varieties were bred at AGT's Roseworthy based breeding program in South Australia, but were developed for WA growers and will be managed by COGGO Seeds in WA.

## Breeding joint venture

An incorporated joint venture between Grains Research and Development Corporation, Vilmorin and Cie (Limagrain Holdings), South Australian Research and Development Institute, University of Adelaide, University of Sydney and Graincorp Pty Ltd, AGT has breeding operations in all of Australia's major wheat production zones.

While AGT's predecessors have had considerable success in breeding wheat varieties for WA growers since the mid 1960s, AGT's 'physical' presence in WA began in 2002.

Addressing about 40 growers at the variety launch, AGT CEO, Dr Steve Jefferies, said Wyalkatchem was one of WA's landmark varieties, but Mace, containing about three quarters of Wyalkatchem genetic make-up, represented a further frameshift in yield productivity and disease resistance.

"With the yield advantage offered by

Mace, growers should be ahead by \$30 to \$40 per hectare, based on a two tonne per hectare yield and \$300 per tonne price," he said.

"With these new varieties we've used a combination of new and conventional breeding technologies to fast track their development, so growers can enjoy early access.

"Breeding Fang, for example, took seven years from first crossing to commercial release, whereas the long term average in Australia is about 13 years," Steve said.

## Sell to the neighbour

"In a new initiative also designed for more rapid access to new and superior varieties, WA growers can now sell seed retained from these varieties to neighbours, provided they purchased the original quality seed from COGGO Seeds."

Steve explained that the new varieties were named after weapons, continuing the tradition of AGT's Roseworthy-based wheat breeding 'arsenal', which includes Halberd, Spear, Dagger, Machete, Stiletto and the drought tolerant varieties, Gladius, Espada and Axe released in WA last year.

WA growers will soon benefit from new varieties developed from the WA based breeding program, AGT-WA, that is part of the AGT/COGGO partnership.

Advanced breeding lines from this program, led by WA-based Kevin Young, are currently in National Variety Trials (NVTs), with the first commercial release likely within two years, according to Steve. ■



**COGGO CEO, Geoff Smith and AGT CEO, Dr Steve Jefferies at the launch of new wheat varieties Mace and Fang on Ray Fulwood's farm near Northam.**