A TRIBUTE TO
Dr. Baldur Rosmund Stefansson
Winner of the
FIRST INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR RESEARCH IN RAPESEED

Mr. Chairman, distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour on behalf of the Groupe Consultatif International de Recherche sur le Colza and all in attendance at this Seventh International Rapeseed Congress, to present Dr. Baldur Rosmund Stefansson, Professor and Senior Scholar, University of Manitoba, Canada, to receive the First International Award for Research on Rapeseed. While he has received many previous honors and recognitions for his oilseed breeding research and for his dedication and service, it is most appropriate that this man be recognized by this International Assembly of rapeseed scientists.

Dr. Stefansson was born in Manitoba, Canada and received his education there, starting in a rural elementary school and ultimately receiving a Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba in 1966. He is married and has a family of three.

Dr. Stefansson has devoted nearly 35 very productive years to developing superior oilseed crops for Canada, particularly in the breeding of rapeseed. During that period Canada changed from an importer of most of its edible oil needs to an exporter and to where the rapeseed crop rivals wheat and barley as a source of income for Canadian farmers. Since 1964, Dr. Stefansson has had eight cultivars of rapeseed licensed, as well as two cultivars of soybeans. At least six of ten other recent cultivars of Canadian and European rapeseed were derived in part from Dr. Stefansson's material.

Innovation has been a feature of Dr. Stefansson's research as he sought to change and improve the rapeseed crop. He has been credited with being the first plant breeder in the world to use gas chromatography for rapeseed improvement. He was also the first to select simultaneously for oil and protein content. His early varieties Tanka, Target and Turret gained wide acceptance on the Canadian prairies by farmers and crushers. They were high yielding and had above average oil and protein content. He is also credited with being the senior author of the first paper (1961) showing that it was possible to eliminate erucic acid from rapeseed oil and this was to prove essential to the survival of the rapeseed industry. It will be recalled that the erucic acid issue became an international crisis at the 1970 International Rapeseed Congress held at St. Adele in Canada. Soon thereafter Canadian rapeseed breeders developed low erucic acid cultivars and another breakthrough was to occur as well, that being the discovery by Downey and Krzymanski of low glucosinolate rapeseed. With access to this new genetic material, Dr. Stefansson developed and released the varieties Tower and Regent in 1974 and 1977, the first "double lows" in the Brassica napus type. The name "canola" was soon to be adopted in Canada to identify improved rapeseed having very low levels of erucic acid and low glucosinolates.

Dr. Stefansson has developed canola strains having low linolenic acid levels which could lead to new cultivars and superior quality in salad and cooking oils and to the elimination of hydrogenation and winterizing, two costly oil processing steps.

Another area of his research pertains to the reduction of fibre content by breeding and selecting for yellow hulls in Brassica napus. Yellow seed contains less hull than dark seed does and the hull is more digestible by animals.

Dr. Stefansson has been actively exploring hybrid rapeseed production and has demonstrated superior yields from hybrids. He has also developed a high erucic acid cultivar for the production of industrial oil. The cultivar Reston was licensed in 1982. Strains high in erucic acid and low in glucosinolate are being developed.

Dr. Stefansson has made significant contributions through the training of post graduate students who now occupy positions in Canada, Europe, Africa and Asia and many of whom are rapeseed breeders. Dr. Stefansson has personally travelled to many countries as a member of technical groups to explain his work to people interested in producing or using rapeseed or canola. His work has been published in major scientific journals, contributions to books and in conference proceedings.

It is not surprising that Dr. Stefansson's dedicated and productive service have been recognized by his professional colleagues by the award of a Fellowship in the Agricultural Institute of Canada in 1975, the Distinguished Agrologist Award in 1981 and the Grindley Medal in 1978. He was made an Honorary Life Member of the Canadian Seed Growers Association in 1975 and the Canadian Barley and Oilseeds Conference Award in 1982. The excellence of his performance brought him the Royal Bank Award in 1975, the Agronomy Merit Award in 1980 and he was named the Agricultural Laureate of Canada in 1980. In 1985 he was elected an Officer of the Order of Canada.

On this day, May 11, 1987, this 7th International Rapeseed Congress, meeting in Poznan, Poland, has the honor of awarding the First International Award for Research in Rapeseed to Dr. Baldur Rosmund Stefansson, with congratulations and best wishes.

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