

Rapeseed Award to Dr Wilfred Keller



Dr Wilfred Keller receiving the Rapeseed Award.

(from left to right, 3 eminent GCIRC Honorary Members: Dr R. Mailer (Australia), Dr W. Keller (Canada), Prof W. Friedt (Germany)).

The Eminent Scientist Award, or Rapeseed Award, created in 1983, has been given to Dr Wilfred Keller.

Dr Rod Mailer reminded the assembly about his lasting contribution to innovation in rapeseed/canola and his participation in the life and development of GCIRC : “Throughout his 40-year science career, Wilf Keller has led many major research initiatives including the application of genomics in canola development; the development of industrial bioproducts from vegetable oils; and the production of bio-active natural products I plants for enhanced human health and quality of life.

The development of canola as a major crop in Saskatchewan is directly attributed to the development of herbicide tolerant varieties undertaken by Dr Wilf Keller. Herbicide tolerant canola makes up about 98% of Saskatchewan canola today. Wilf collaborated very well with industry and always propagated a private-public partnership.

Wilf grew up in Melville, Saskatoon. He earned a PhD in Crop Science at the University of Saskatchewan, followed by postdoctoral studies in Germany. He worked at Agriculture Canada in Ottawa from 1973-89, where he pursued research on cell genetics of selected Canadian crops. He contributed to the establishment of a plant biotechnology research program, which he chaired from 1980-89. In 1990, he accepted a position with the Plant Biotechnology Institute (PBI) of the National research Council of Canada in Saskatoon. He served as group leader for canola biotechnology and head of the Transgenic Plant Centre. In 1999, he became research director of the Centre. In 2007, Wilf took a one-year posting



as the acting director general of PBI, then served as president and CEO for Genome Prairie from 2008 to 2012. As CEO of Ag-West Bio since 2012 Wilf's work focuses on how agriculture can be improved, and how to increase prosperity amongst the farming community, all the while making it more sustainable in the face of an increasing world population. Along with his position as president and CEO of Ag-West Bio, Wilf assumed the role of Chair of Agricultural Institute of Canada since 2016. "

Dr Wilf Keller sent to the assembly a message full of optimism, reminding of the numerous changes he saw on canola crops, growing from 1Mha to 10 Mha in Canada, becoming a big industry for the country: this development has been possible with the progress which has been made in science and technologies.

In 1982, Wilk Keller remembers he could learn new techniques in Tübingen, to speed up genetics: the use of these techniques has been very important, but even more collaboration and the collective aspects. It is why these Rapeseed Congresses are so important, each Congress representing a step.

Wilf Keller mentioned a series of innovation areas and technologies for canola agriculture, like digital technologies, drones, etc... and issues: how to address sustainability and weather uncertainties, yield and performance? How to develop new products with proteins? Science base culture is needed to build in this crop and industry. Wilf Keller concluded on his optimism concerning the role of science in building a great future.

