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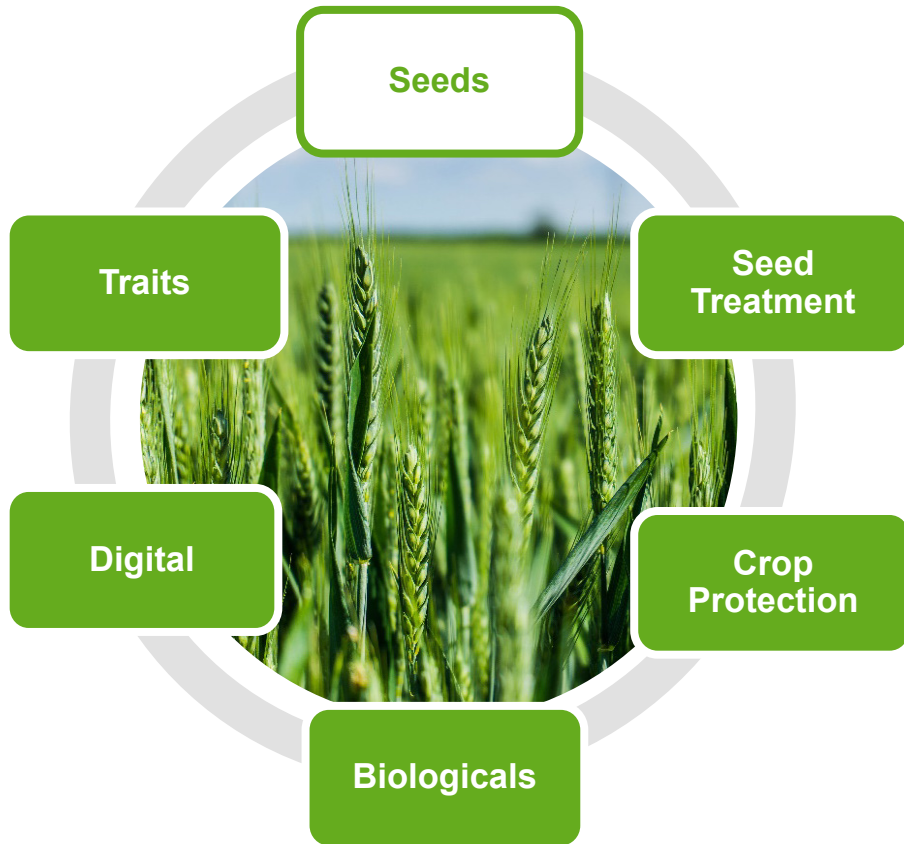
BASF Research Press Conference  
on December 9, 2021

## Hybrid wheat unlocking wheat's full potential

**Prof. Edward Souza**  
Global Head of Wheat Breeding



# The right balance for better yield



Yield that is valued by society

More biodiversity protection

Higher yield with lower environmental impact

Less CO<sub>2</sub> per ton of protein produced

Help farmers make a living

# The demand for wheat will increase in the coming years



**+2 billion**

growth of world population by 2050



**> +50%**

wheat supply increase needed



Yield increases of ~3% annually during 1960s to 1980s, but this declined to less than half that rate in the last 30 years.

## How to sustainably grow global wheat yields?

# Until now, wheat seeds are cultivated through inbred varieties

- Wheat naturally self-pollinates, where the plants are fertilized by their own pollen
  - ▶ Often combine genes from a limited, local genetic pool
  - ▶ As a result, all wheat carry uniformity at each locus or position in the chromosomes
  - ▶ Lacks an increase of genetic diversity to meet demands of production and climate resilience
- Limitation of inbred varieties
  - ▶ More time, natural resources and inputs needed for inbred varieties to meet required yields



More options are needed to achieve higher wheat yield with greater sustainability

# Unlocking the full potential of wheat with hybrid seeds

- Improved agricultural outcomes and land use result from hybridization of major market crops, such as corn (maize) and rice
- Why are commercial wheat hybrids not yet available for growers?
  - ▶ The wheat genome is 7 times larger than corn and 40 times larger than rice
  - ▶ More variability when combining genes
- Breakthrough technologies needed to manage complexity of wheat and stabilize desirable traits into hybrids

The advantage of hybridization is the improvement in genomic diversity

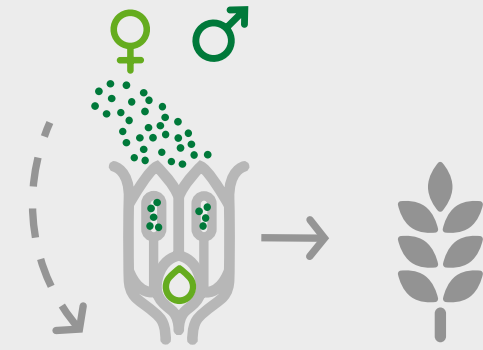


# Hybrid breeding programs balance yield and genetic diversity

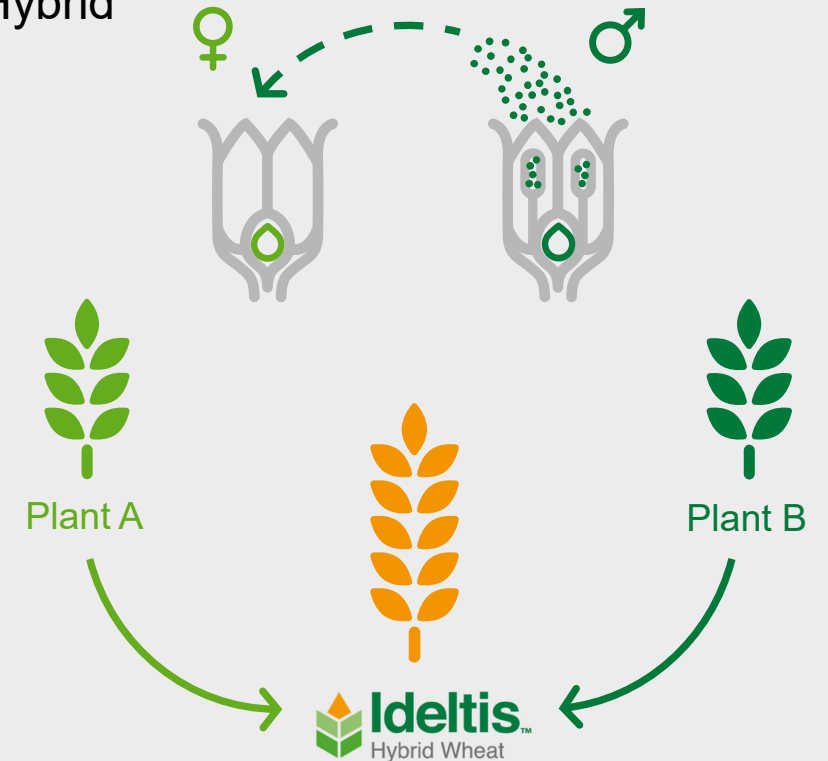
- Our wheat hybrids are the result of directed crosses between genetically distinct parents
  - ▶ Relies solely on the cross-pollination of pre-existing and naturally occurring genetic diversity
- Hybridization allows combination of the best traits from the parents in the offspring
  - ▶ For example, genes for disease and insect resistance and environmental stress tolerance
- Ideltis™ hybrid wheat
  - ▶ Yield increase over inbred varieties due to hybrid vigor

Hybridization improves yield and yield stability delivering climate resilience

Inbred



Hybrid



# Our wheat breeding program enables improved genetic selection through curated technology combinations



GPS-driven planters and combines



Near-infrared units measuring grain protein in field



Automated data collection



Field and genomic data are combined in AI models



Genotyping by sequencing (GBS)



Drone-based phenotyping



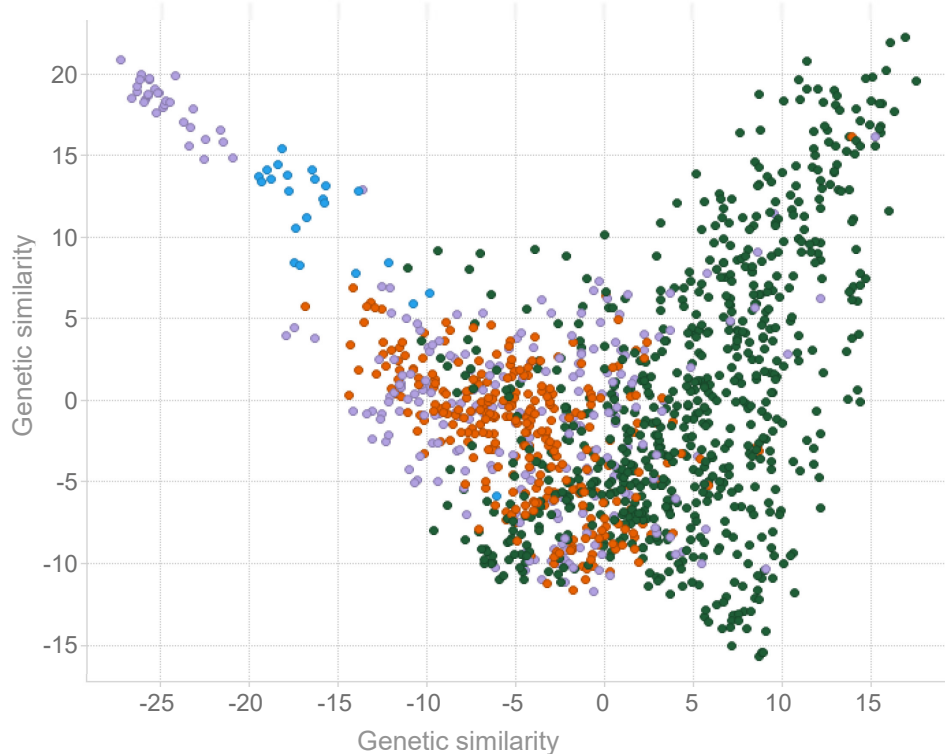
Upload to databases



Data interpreted by experienced breeders

# Harnessing the genetic diversity of elite germplasm

Map of genetic diversity of European germplasm<sup>1</sup>



- Wheat varieties grown today trace back to many different lineages
  - ▶ Diversity of genes for adaptation, stress tolerance, baking quality, grain yield
  - ▶ Each lineage is a different evolutionary solution to the environmental stress in the region of origin
- Hybrids combine these solutions into stacks within a variety to manage seasonal unpredictability
  - ▶ Field testing all parental combinations would require replicated testing of millions of hybrid combinations across a farming region

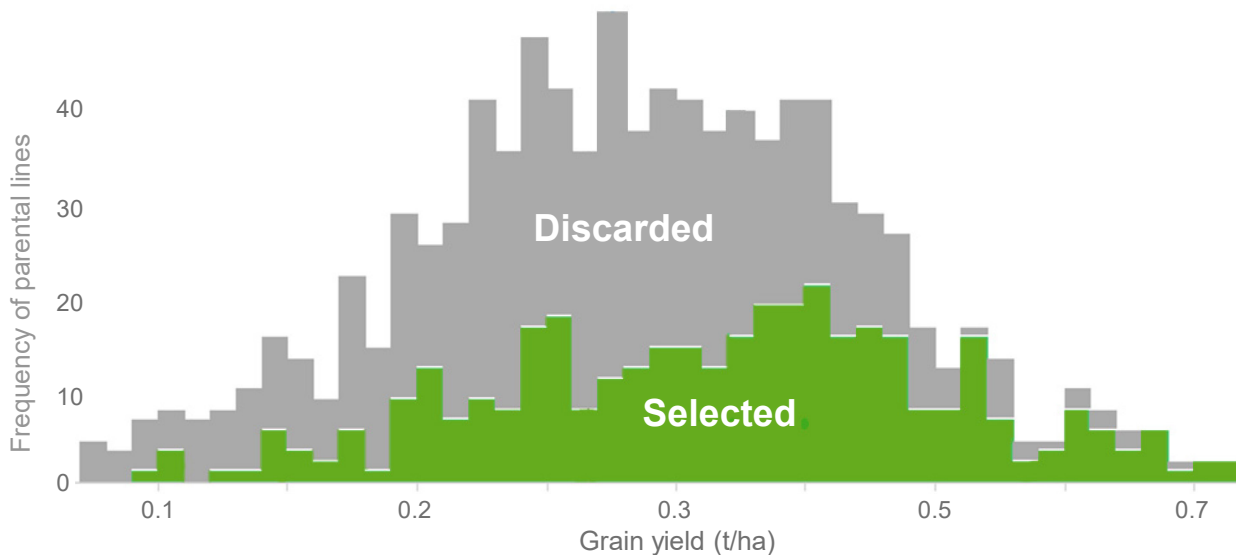
Our breeding programs predict combinations of parents to create the best hybrids

<sup>1</sup>Hybrid parents color-coded by mating pools. Each point is a single type of wheat, when closer together represents more genetic similarity  
Measured by Multi-dimensional scaling (MDS)



# Genomic selection enables delivery of hybrid wheat genetics

## Selection via modeling<sup>1</sup>

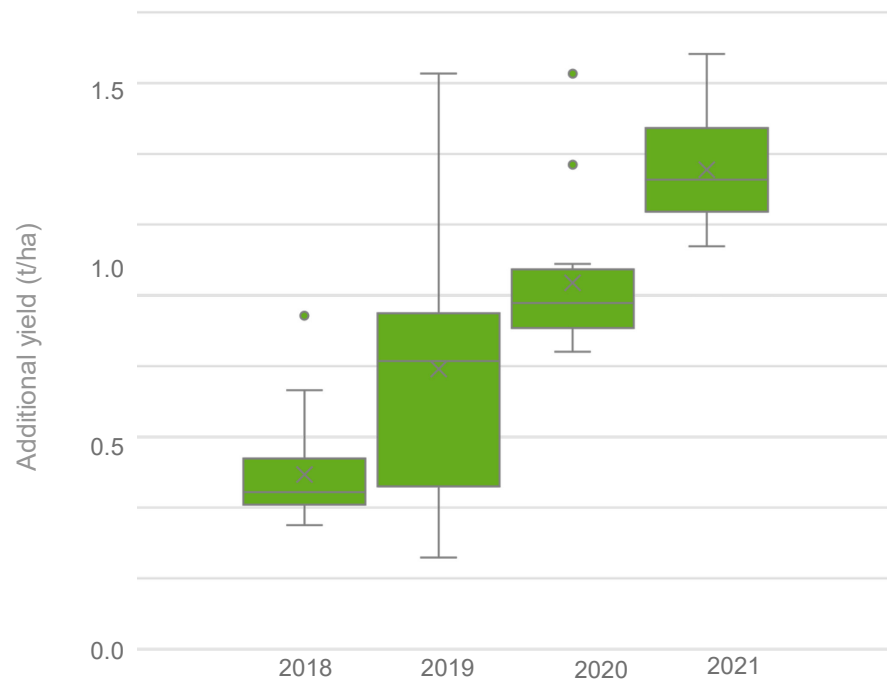


- New parents are
  - ▶ Discarded, if they do not meet minimum requirements for use by farmers, for example: plant height, maturity, and disease resistance
  - ▶ Genotyped by sequencing (GBS)
  - ▶ Selected from the remaining lines and modeled for their expected yield as hybrids
- Combination of expected performance models with breeder expertise of the germplasm to select candidate parents

Hybrid candidates are selected for farm and sustainable market goals

# Success of predictive breeding program delivers improved regional varieties

Yearly improvement of hybrid performance<sup>1</sup>



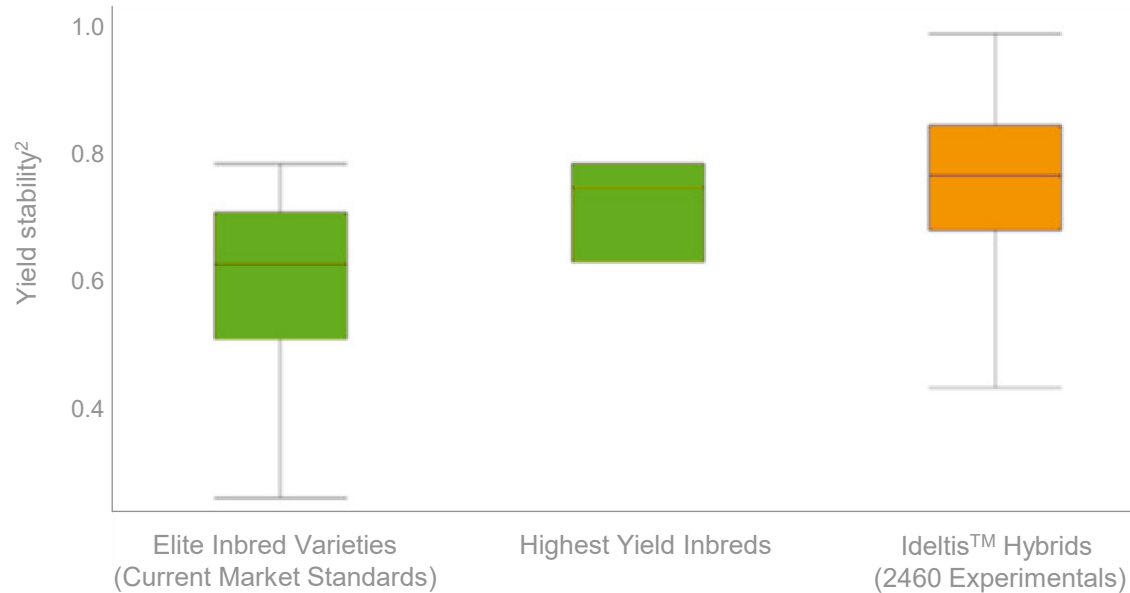
- Yield is increasing while selecting for background adaptations in agronomic traits such as resource efficiency as well as protein content and quality
- Models improve as years of data accumulate and added complexity of environments are included

Our research program selects traits and adapts new varieties to local climate conditions through targeted selection

<sup>1</sup>Source: Central & Southern French breeding program, comparing 20 highest yielding hybrids in each year, combining data across all trials in 2018 to 2021

# Yield stability is key for improved regional land and resource use in changing conditions

## Yield stability of experimental hybrids vs. inbreds<sup>1</sup>



## Yield stability

- Measured as expected yield vs actual yield
- Stable varieties produce expected yields year over year – despite changing environmental variables, such as disease, water availability

## Benefits from stability

- Better climate resilience
- Predictable and reliable use of resources
- Improved ability to synergize with other agricultural inputs like crop protection and prediction models

## Yield stability in hybrids allows management of seasonal unpredictability for climate resilience

<sup>1</sup>Source: Northern France trials over 3 years

<sup>2</sup>Difference between yield predicted by the model and the actual yield (1- Root Mean Square Deviation)

# Hybrid breeding is fundamental to the future of wheat innovation



Supporting food security



Enabling higher and stable yields



Locally adapted varieties



Predictable yield for climate resilience



Efficient resource utilization

- Ideltis™ hybrid wheat will help meet the nutritional needs of a growing population through **improved and stable yields**
- Contributes to our **sustainability commitments**

- Ideltis™ hybrid wheat employs genetic diversity for climate resilience, yield improvement, productive land use and resource efficiency
- Stability from hybrid wheat serves as basis to **integrate technologies** like precision, crop protection and digital farming tools **across wheat cultivation**



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