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MEDIA RELEASE

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GETTING TO THE 'HART' OF WHAT BEER BREWERS WANT FROM BARLEY

Farmers will have the opportunity to hear first hand from national and international brewers about what they are looking for in malting barley at the Hart Field Day on Thursday, September 22.

Coopers operations manager Nick Sterenberg, who is also a trained brewer with 30 years experience, will speak to growers about the malting and brewing of barley.

With Coopers recently forming a partnership with Japanese brewer, Sapporo Breweries Ltd - one of the world's oldest breweries – Mr Sterenberg will also be able to give some insight into the requirements of international brewers.

“Sapporo’s focus on quality is greater than any brewer I’ve ever come across,” Mr Sterenberg said.

“This company actually do their own barley breeding, so they’ve identified that the quality of the beer they brew starts in the paddock.”

Mr Sterenberg said that while he and a team of Coopers representatives get out into the field each harvest, this was the first time they would speak at a field day and have direct access to so many barley growers.

“I’ll be talking about what the brewer looks for in terms and malting barley varieties,” Mr Sterenberg said.

“We currently have a chain of Chinese whispers here, with the brewers talking to the breeders and the maltsters talking to the farmers about what they require. But this is going to be a direct brewer’s perspective to the farmer about what we look for in malting barley.”

So what are they looking for? Well, Mr Sterenberg says the two factors of most importance are quantity and quality.

“From a brewer’s perspective, quantity is the amount of extract a variety yields, so we want as much extract as we can get,” he said.

“We’re looking for low levels of beta glucan and high levels of enzymes to create a balance for processing and brewing on its own, or we’re looking at using those enzymes to process other forms of carbohydrates.”

Mr Sterenberg said those were the requirements for the domestic market, however international brewers generally wanted higher levels of enzymes than domestic brewers. He said that was where the role of barley breeders was so important in developing varieties suitable for malting and brewing but that also met the agronomic requirements of the growers.

“The barley breeder’s job is to look after everyone’s interests which can be tough, it might also be frustrating for farmers to be encouraged to try new varieties if they don’t quite work out agronomically, but this is a chance to come along and hear what the brewer is looking for,” he said.

Mr Sterenberg said he was looking forward to the 2011 Hart Field Day and particularly being able to meet direct with the growers.

“After glass bottles, malt is our next most expensive raw material, so every bit of improvement we can collectively get, the better the situation is for everyone,” he said.

“We’re interested in what the issues are for growers and how the season is coming along. Coopers buy only about 1 per cent of the Australian malting barley, so we’re not a huge part of the market but we are very much engaged in the industry and we’re looking forward to this opportunity.”

Hear Mr Sterenberg speak at the Hart Field Day, Thursday, September 22. And be sure to pay particular attention to the sessions as there may just be a gift from Coopers for the winner of a pop quiz at the end!

For more information about the Hart Field Day, take a look at the website www.hartfieldsite.org.au or contact Sandy Kimber on 0427 423 154 or email admin@hartfieldsite.org.au.

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