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InterGrain to lead Australia's National Faba Bean Breeding Program under $9.5 Mn partnership

27 July 2026 | News

New national initiative with GRDC and Adelaide University aims to accelerate development of higher-yielding, disease-resistant faba bean varieties for Australia's key growing regions

Australian plant breeding company InterGrain has been selected to lead a new National Faba Bean Breeding Program under a $9.5 million, 2.5-year co-investment partnership with the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and Adelaide University, marking a significant step towards strengthening Australia's pulse breeding capabilities and improving the competitiveness of its faba bean industry.

The collaborative program will consolidate Australia's faba bean breeding activities into a single national initiative focused on developing improved varieties with higher yield potential, stronger disease resistance, enhanced grain quality and wider adaptation across major production regions. The breeding program will target South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia while also supporting expansion into emerging production areas.

The initiative reflects a strategic shift towards a nationally coordinated breeding framework designed to improve research efficiency, optimise resource utilisation and accelerate the delivery of improved genetics to Australian grain growers. By integrating breeding expertise, advanced technologies and regional testing networks, the partnership aims to shorten variety development timelines while responding more effectively to changing climatic conditions and evolving market requirements.

InterGrain, widely recognised for its cereal breeding programs, is expanding its portfolio into pulse crops as demand for sustainable crop rotations and plant-based protein continues to grow. The company said faba beans play an increasingly important role in improving farm profitability while delivering agronomic benefits through nitrogen fixation, soil health improvement and diversified cropping systems.

The breeding program will leverage InterGrain's national research infrastructure, breeding expertise and advanced rapid-generation technologies to accelerate genetic gain. The company will focus on developing varieties capable of delivering improved productivity while strengthening resilience against major diseases and environmental stresses affecting Australian pulse production.

Leadership of the new breeding initiative will be undertaken by Dr Federico Ribalta, who joined InterGrain in 2020 following research at the University of Western Australia's Centre for Plant Genetics and Breeding. His expertise in accelerated breeding technologies for pulse crops is expected to support faster progression from parental crossing through to commercial variety release, enabling growers to access improved genetics in shorter timeframes.

The announcement comes during a period of significant infrastructure expansion for InterGrain. The company has recently completed its new breeding facility in Horsham, Victoria, strengthening its research presence across key pulse-growing regions, including the Wimmera and Australia's eastern grain belt where faba bean production is well established. InterGrain is also preparing to relocate to a new corporate headquarters and breeding facility in Forrestdale, Western Australia, in late 2027, a move expected to further increase breeding capacity and operational throughput.

Beyond improving farm productivity, the program is expected to support broader industry objectives, including increased pulse production, stronger export competitiveness and growing global demand for plant-based protein ingredients. By combining national breeding capability with modern breeding technologies and collaborative research, the initiative aims to deliver a new generation of faba bean varieties better suited to Australia's diverse production environments while strengthening the long-term sustainability of the country's pulse sector.