

# LAUNCH OF AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

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## Event

An international research network, *Value Addition through Genomics and GE<sup>3</sup>LS (VALGEN)*, is launched October 1, 2009.

## Significance

Unprecedented in Canadian research and development on applied genomics research in bioproducts and crops, VALGEN supports ground-breaking research on social aspects of science and technology innovation.

## Analysis

Resulting from the competition in Applied Genomics Research in Bioproducts or Crops (ABC), Genome Canada invests in twelve large-scale projects focused on applied genomics research in bioproducts and crops with a total value of \$112M. VALGEN, a four year, \$5.4M project is a unique among these projects with its focus on ethical, environmental, economic, legal and social issues in genomics (GE<sup>3</sup>LS). VALGEN is managed by Genome Prairie and administered through the University of Saskatchewan.

Why VALGEN? Amidst the opportunities in applied genomics for bioproducts and crops, deep governance challenges exist. VALGEN responds to these challenges by assembling a team of researchers to study how Canada can benefit from applying genomic research to agriculture. Using current research methods in the social sciences, humanities and legal scholarship, VALGEN researchers examine three contexts from which barriers to innovation in agricultural biotechnology research and development arise: intellectual property management and technology transfer, regulation and governance, and democratic engagement.

*Intellectual property and technology transfer* research concerns the use of legal tools like patents, copyright and trade secrets in combination with public policy, industrial structure and business strategy, and the effect on commercialization and use of new technologies and products.

*Regulation and governance* research addresses increasingly complex systems of domestic and international regulation meshing, with varying outcomes, with private supply chains, and the identification of regulatory bottlenecks and blindspots.

*Democratic engagement* research focuses on the need to engage the public early and often about the direction of scientific research and technological development, and to identify meaningful ways for Canadians to participate in decisions about how we choose to use new agricultural technologies and products

VALGEN adds value to the eleven GE<sup>3</sup>LS projects integrated in the ABC science-based projects through a number of mechanisms – formal networking, identification of overlaps, gaps and potential for synergies in the collective research activities of integrated GE<sup>3</sup>LS, communications, coordination of partnerships, and new researcher mobility programs. VALGEN furthers the reach of ABC project by spanning disciplines, institutions and other preexisting networks and collaborations to foster national and international collaboration and partnerships. Mobilizing knowledge in creative and effective ways is a chief priority of VALGEN.

## Conclusion

Canadian prosperity depends on science and technology innovation. Bioproducts and crops research benefits from GE<sup>3</sup>LS research and knowledge mobilization to guide scientific and technological creativity into beneficial, safe products and services welcomed by the public. VALGEN's research portfolio and value-adding activities provide insight into the social determinants of successful innovation.