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NSAC Receives a Proof-of-Concept Fund Award

Bible Hill--Developing a biological method to control common weeds associated with agricultural production has earned the Nova Scotia Agricultural College a Proof-of-Concept award valued at \$20,000 from Springboard Atlantic Inc. programs.



With a mandate to increase commercialization of academic research, each year Springboard provides \$20,000 for promising early stage inventions through its Proof-of-Concept Program and \$10,000 for investment-ready technologies through its Patent and Legal Fund.

NSAC Professor Glen Sampson has received a Proof-of-Concept program award valued at \$20,000 for his research proposal entitled Mycoherbicides for use on Gallium species in Canada.

The award will enable Professor Sampson and his team to develop and formulate a unique biological herbicide for the control of common broadleaf weeds associated with agricultural production. Plant pathogens can be used to control weeds in a similar way to chemical herbicides. The term bioherbicide is used to refer to herbicides based on any living organism. When the active ingredient used is a fungus, the product is called a mycoherbicide. Professor Sampson is shown here with Cleavers, one of the weeds his team are trying to bring under control.

Common broadleaf weeds such as cleavers and bedstraw have become one of the emerging priorities for weed control in North America as its aggressiveness has led to greater yield losses in both forage and field crops. Inundation by mycoherbicides is the only method of biological weed control that is applicable to intensively cropped areas. The method is faster acting than other biological control methods and can be easily incorporated into an Integrated Pest Management program. Professor Sampson and his team have discovered some fungi that have proven damaging to bed straw and cleavers.

Because the fungi used in mycoherbicides usually occur naturally in the areas where they are utilized, they tend to be less harmful to the environment than chemical herbicides. The fungi are often more selective in their mode of action so the risk of damage to other plants is reduced.

“We are very excited about this award as it is exactly what is needed to take this concept to the next level,” said NSAC Professor Glen Sampson. “These funds will enable us to demonstrate how a naturally occurring fungus can aid in weed control and possibly become a commercially viable product.”

Professor Sampson and his team will have the next 12 months to conduct their

research.

Professor Sampson continues to play an active role in biological control with his continuing research program investigating Pasture Weed and Purple Loosestrife biological control programs as well as being involved in numerous biological control working groups at the National level. Professor Sampson has participate in the development and testing of products such as Chontrol® and EcoClear® and a new proprietary product currently undergoing regulatory approval for the control of dandelions.

Funded by ACOA's Atlantic Innovation Fund, Springboard Atlantic works to bring vital research out of the university labs into the public domain. The Springboard network is made up 14 universities across Atlantic Canada who work collaboratively to advance the commercialization of academic research.

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