



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/elmer-heyne-lecture-pennycress>

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K-State to host talk on potential of CoverCress in state's cropping systems

Midwestern company aims to bring value to oil-rich field pennycress

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The vice president of research at a Midwestern company aiming to develop a common weed into valuable biofuel feedstock will be speaking at Kansas State University on April 9.

Ratan Chopra's talk highlights the 37th annual [Elmer G. Heyne Crop Science Lecture](#), hosted by K-State's Department of Agronomy. His talk is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. in room 1018 of the university's Throckmorton Plant Sciences Center.

Chopra leads product design for St. Louis-based CoverCress, Inc., formed in 2013 to develop field pennycress as a climate-smart agriculture product that contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration and mitigation.

Field pennycress, a flowering plant in the cabbage family, is native to Europe and Asia, and is a common winter annual weed in North America. Many farmers consider it a nuisance weed, but field pennycress is oil-rich – making it an ideal candidate for such select uses as healthy edible oils, biodegradable plastic packaging materials, lubricants and biofuels.El

“There is great investment and anticipation surrounding the renewable diesel economy across the U.S., and as a result, there is a significant new demand being placed on approved oilseed feedstocks,” said Mike Stamm, a K-State canola breeder and chair of the Elmer G. Heyne lecture committee.

Stamm noted that the United States' current renewable diesel production capacity exceeds 4 billion gallons, but estimates indicate that will increase to nearly 6 billion gallons by 2025.

Thus, CoverCress is being studied as a potential oilseed feedstock that can be grown in Kansas cropping systems. For example, Stamm said CoverCress has been successfully integrated into traditional corn-soybean rotations in the Midwest.

Chopra's talk will discuss his company's progress in developing CoverCress, as well as the breeding and genomic tools used in that process. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Elmer Heyne joined K-State's Department of Agronomy in 1938, embarking on a career marked by numerous scientific achievements that improved wheat quality, resistance to disease and various plant breeding techniques. During his tenure, he released three corn lines, four sorghum lines, one barley variety, six oat varieties and ten wheat varieties.

"Dr. Heyne was a wheat breeding pioneer in his time," Stamm said, "so this topic is fitting for a lecture that commemorates his many accomplishments."

More information is [available online from K-State's Department of Agronomy](#).

The mention of products in this article is meant for identification purposes only and does not indicate an endorsement by Kansas State University.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

Elmer G. Heyne Crop Science Lecture, <https://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/about/news-and-events/lectureships>

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