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NEW ORLEANS, La. – Dr. Eric Hequet, a former cotton breeder and current chair of Texas Tech University’s Plant & Soil Science Department in Lubbock, has been selected by the Joint Cotton Breeding Committee as the recipient of the 2018 Cotton Genetics Research Award.

The announcement was made here today during the 2019 Beltwide Cotton Improvement Conference, which convened as part of the National Cotton Council (NCC)-coordinated 2019 Beltwide Cotton Conferences. Hequet received a plaque and a monetary award.

Hequet, who co-developed and co-released 21 improved germplasm lines of upland cotton and two cultivars, has served the cotton genetics community as a breeder, textile engineer, department chairman, and collaborator with cotton breeders in Texas, other states, and worldwide.

According to one of his nominators, Dr. Wayne Smith, professor and associate head of Texas A&M University’s Soil and Crop Sciences Department, Hequet has 1) conducted research into the use of high volume instrument and Advanced Fiber Information System data as selection criteria for breeders across the United States and 2) encouraged breeders to utilize these parameters in the development of improved cotton germplasm and cultivars.

“Eric has provided leadership in research on the measurement of cotton fiber properties and contaminants and their impact on textile processing performance,” Smith said. “He has been in the forefront of advocating that breeders consider more than just micronaire, length, and strength in their plant and row selections and has provided guidance in the value of fineness, maturity, length uniformity, and fiber elongation.”

Smith noted that Hequet also has been a terrific collaborator in evaluating the exceptional fiber quality material and how these improvements can lead to better yarns that will lead to better textiles for maintaining cotton as a fiber of choice.”

Another nominator, Dr. Jane K. Dever, a professor and cotton breeder at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center in Lubbock, agreed saying that Hequet “instilled conscientiousness about the importance of fiber quality in the U.S. breeding community at a crucial time in the industry, as U.S. raw cotton exports soared from 20% to 80% of production.”

Hequet has received multiple awards and honors. Among those are being named in 2014 the J.A.

Love Endowed Chair for Sustainable Agriculture at Texas Tech as well as being named in 2015 as a Horn Endowed Professor – Texas Tech’s highest honor for a faculty member.

After earning his Ph.D. in Engineering Sciences at the Université de Haute Alsace (France), Hequet worked at the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development. He came to Texas Tech in 1997 where he served five years as assistant director of the Fiber and Biopolymer Research Institute before being named the Institute’s associate director – a post he still holds. In 2006, he became a research associate and professor in Tech’s Plant & Soil Science Department.

The annual cotton Genetics Research Award was established in 1961 by U.S. commercial cotton breeders to recognize and encourage basic research in cotton genetics, cytogenetics and breeding. It is administered by the Joint Cotton Breeding Committee consisting of representatives of the NCC, the USDA, state experiment stations, Cotton Incorporated and commercial breeders.

Source: National Cotton Council