



## **National Association for Plant Breeding PUBLIC SECTOR PLANT BREEDING IMPACT AWARD 2025**

**ISTVAN RAJCAN**  
**University of Guelph**  
**Guelph, Ontario, Canada**

The 2025 recipient of the National Association for Plant Breeding (NAPB) Public Sector Plant Breeding Impact Award is Dr. Istvan Rajcan, Professor in the Department of Plant Agriculture, University of Guelph, Canada. This award recognizes an individual whose accomplishments as a scientist in the public sector have had extraordinary impact in the field of plant breeding in areas such as research, technological innovation, germplasm development, cultivar release, education, and leadership.

*As one of his colleagues commented in his nomination letter: “Dr. Istvan Rajcan’s work demonstrates his concern for and his focus on the areas recognized by the Public Sector Plant Breeding Impact Award. His innovative research, prolific cultivar development, demonstrated mentorship, and his public service nationally and internationally, have greatly impacted the field of plant breeding. His work delivers benefits to students, soybean growers and the soybean sector.”*

Rajcan has been leading a soybean breeding and genetics program at the University of Guelph since 1998, where he focuses on seed compositional traits (fatty acids, isoflavones, etc.) for food, nutraceutical/functional food, and industrial uses. He has also pursued research in soybean genetics, genomics and phenomics, exploring genetic variation for yield and disease resistance traits and adaptation to mega environments using exotic germplasm, especially from China, the center of origin for soybean.

Rajcan has advised 46 graduate students at the M.Sc. or Ph.D. level who work in industry, government and universities and currently advises five students and has active collaborations with Canadian, Chinese, US, and European scientists. In fact, as one of those collaborators noted in the nomination package: “Dr. Rajcan is the most open and generous breeder I know of, always

*willing to engage in a germplasm exchange in the spirit of public collaboration. His open and collaborative spirit helps to infect the rest of the public soybean breeding community.*

Rajcan is the recipient of several awards: the 2022 Canadian Plant Breeding and Genetics award, the 2022 Canadian Seed Growers Association (CSGA) Lifetime Achievement Award, the 2008 “Seed of the Year” Award (for the soybean cultivar OAC Kent), and the University of Guelph Ontario Agricultural College Alumni Distinguished Researcher Award. Since 2023, he served as Chair of the Continuing Committee of the World Soybean Research Conference.

Rajcan has co-edited two books, published 10 book chapters and 139 peer-reviewed journal articles, and developed more than 87 soybean cultivars that have been grown in Canada and Europe. He received his B.Sc. degree from the University of Novi Sad, Serbia and his Ph.D. in canola breeding and genetics from the University of Guelph, Canada.

In summary, according to his nomination letter: *“Dr. Rajcan embodies the ideal candidate for the NAPB Public Sector Plant Breeding Impact Award. His career demonstrates excellence across all evaluation criteria - mentoring future scientists, developing economically important crop varieties, advancing scientific knowledge through innovative research, and fostering international collaboration to address global agricultural challenges.”*



The 2025 recipient of the National Association for Plant Breeding (NAPB) Public Sector Plant Breeding Impact Award is Dr. Istvan Rajcan, Professor in the Department of Plant Agriculture, University of Guelph, Canada.



Dr. Istvan Rajcan, Professor in the Department of Plant Agriculture, University of Guelph, Canada and the 2025 recipient of the National Association for Plant Breeding Public Sector Plant Breeding Impact Award at a soybean field trial.