



☛ This is thanks to the Irminger Current, a branch of the Gulf Stream that brings warm air up from more southern latitudes.

Iceland does, however, remain at the northern limit of possible barley cultivation. While it does get plentiful sunshine, it never gets very warm — an average of 11 C in its warmest month versus 17.5 C for the Peace River region in July. This is particularly challenging in late summer and early fall when the barley heads are filling.

In their paper in the *Journal Crop Science*, Göransson’s group cited reports that show barley yields have stagnated in south and central Europe, while yields in more northern fields are rising. This is attributed to climate change, something that is expected to intensify with time.

The trend does open opportunity for improved barley lines adapted to more northern latitudes. The researchers reported that current varieties have lagged behind southern varieties in yield, for instance, suggesting a goal for barley breeders.

Identifying genes associated with traits like height and early maturity allows breeders to screen new varieties before field trials. This significantly cuts costs and time to get new varieties into the field. The researchers expect breeders will use this new knowledge to combine “early maturity and height stability with traits such as quality, further enabling the northward expansion of grain production.” ☛

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