

cgiarNews

Nourishing the future through scientific excellence

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Japan Hosts Third World Water Forum: New Partnerships Forged for Averting Water Crisis

Water demand is increasing three times faster than the world's population growth rate. By 2025, 30 percent of the world's population—a record 2.3 billion people in 50 countries—will be threatened by water scarcity. The gloomy arithmetic of water is alarming and cries out for solutions.

The recently-concluded Third World Water Forum in Japan is helping catalyze actions for a water-secure world. Given that 70 percent of the world's freshwater is used in agriculture, CGIAR had a major presence at the Forum which was the largest ever, attracting thousands of participants from 182 countries. The Forum offered new opportunities for building partnerships and strengthening cooperation with key Ministries such as Foreign Affairs, and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

"Harnessing the potential of water as a driver of responsible growth is key to meeting the challenges of water, food, and income security," said Ian Johnson, Chairman, CGIAR. "Science and technology must be brought to bear on the water challenges. CGIAR has a key role to play in developing the next generation of less thirsty crops, farming practices and policies." He chaired a sub-group of the "Ministerial Conference on Water for Food and Rural Development" charged with examining ways to improve the efficiency of water use in agriculture. Ministers from 96 countries participated in the ministerial meeting held in conjunction with the Forum.

For the first time, agricultural issues, need for innovation in research and development and for sharing best practices and experiences in the water sector received some prominence in Forum debates and discussions. This is heartening

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CGIAR Chairman

Ian Johnson

CGIAR Director

Francisco Reifschneider

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World Bank



Message from the Chairman and Director

Dear Colleague:

We are pleased to present you with a redesigned “CGIAR News.” We hope you like the new look, and find the contents to be informative and useful.

The CGIAR partnership is about actions at the local level, mobilizing cutting-edge science in a partnership that benefits people and promotes sustainable development.

This issue showcases the power of science being marshaled for the common good.

Our work on plant genetic resources, developing higher yielding food crops, and improving nutrition is illustrative of the global reach and impact of our efforts. Genebanks, the quintessential example of a public good, are a vital resource for plant breeders working to develop new crop varieties that can grow in harsh conditions and better withstand nature's assault of pests and pathogens. The CGIAR holds more than half-a-million seed samples in 11 genebanks all over the world. These collections—held in public trust for the benefit of all—are a valuable resource, and acknowledged as such by FAO and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

As the stories from Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Uzbekistan demonstrate, saving seeds brings economic, environmental, and social benefits. These range from jumpstarting growth by restarting agriculture in conflict-ravaged countries, to better characterizing and conserving nature's crop diversity. They show that research-for-development partnerships can and are making a difference in people's lives.

We are delighted that the new Government of the Republic of Kenya has invited the CGIAR to host its 2003 Annual General Meeting at the United Nations Conference Center in Nairobi during October 29–31. The meeting will bring together the world's leading scientists, policy makers, and representatives from the private sector and civil society to set research priorities and accelerate development solutions for agriculture, poverty reduction, and conserving the environment.

Thank you for your interest in and support for the CGIAR.

Ian Johnson
CGIAR Chairman

Francisco Reifschneider
CGIAR Director

World Water Forum continued

news for the CGIAR alliance whose mandate of promoting sustainable agriculture for food security, reducing poverty, and protecting the environment was given prominent attention at the 2002 World Food Summit and World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The Ministerial Declaration issued by the Forum recognizes “water is essential for broad-based agricultural production and rural development in order to improve food security and eradicate poverty,” and called for renewed efforts to “reduce unsustainable water management and improve the efficiency of agricultural water use.”

Frank Rijsberman, Director General, IWMI and Chairman of the CGIAR Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture organized a special session on “Water Management for Agriculture—Implications for Water, Food and Environment.” Researchers from IFPRI, IRRI, and WorldFish Center participated, highlighting the challenges of raising agricultural water productivity in rainfed and irrigated agriculture and demonstrated the important role of research in promoting sound public policies and investments in the water sector. A new book on water productivity in agriculture was launched at the session.

The Middle East and North Africa is the most water-scarce region in the world. ICARDA organized a session on “Sustainable Management of Scarce Water Resources in the Dry Areas” that brought together key stakeholders for a discussion of the specific challenges facing agriculture in the dry areas. Adel El-Beltagy, Director General, ICARDA briefed participants about the range of promising new technologies being developed at ICARDA, including new water harvesting techniques that draw on the wealth of local knowledge and indigenous water-conservation practices.

“CGIAR participation in the Forum was valuable,” said Francisco Reifschneider, CGIAR Director. “We are pleased that the critical role of agricultural science and technology in averting the water crisis featured in the discussions.”

The Forum was held in three neighboring cities of Kyoto, Shiga, and Osaka during March 16–23, 2003. The Forum featured 351 separate sessions on over 30 interlocking themes relating to water. More than 100 new commitments on water were made at the Forum. A new CD-ROM “Making Water Flow for All” containing descriptions of 3,000 new water projects was released at the Forum. 🌱

For more information, click on www.world.water-forum3.com

Announcements

Events

First Information and Communication Technology/Knowledge Management (ICT-KM) Advisory Group meeting, May 6–9, IPGRI, Maccaresse, Italy

CIFOR and partners are hosting an “International Conference on Rural Livelihoods, Forests, and Biodiversity,” May 19–23, 2003, Bonn, Germany (www.cifor.org)

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) is hosting its 2nd Plenary meeting “Sustaining Africa’s agriculture through research for development,” during May 19–20, 2003 in Dakar, Senegal.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) 2003 Conference “Linking Research and Rural Innovation to Sustainable Development” May 22–24, 2003 at the Meridien President Hotel, Dakar, Senegal (www.egfar.org/home).

New Appointments

Howarth Bouis, IFPRI, has been appointed Program Director of the new CGIAR Biofortification Challenge Program. An agricultural economist, he is a pioneer in developing the concept of biofortification.

Welcome to New Board Chairs

Jim Godfrey, CIP, succeeding Kang-Kwun Kim
Angela Cropper, CIFOR, succeeding Jagmohan S. Maini (from June)
Margaret Catley-Carlson, ICARDA, succeeding Robert D. Havener (from June)
Isher Judge Ahluwalia, IFPRI, succeeding Geoff Miller
Remo Gautschi, IWMI, succeeding Klaas Jan Beek
Richard S. Musangi, WARDA, succeeding Lindsay Innes

New Address

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From the Chair—CBC

The Committee of Board Chairs (CBC) is an important Committee of the CGIAR because Center Boards of Trustees are arguably the leading agents responsible for change, effectiveness, and efficiency in the System. As trustees of CGIAR resources, the individual Boards set strategies and policies that are key to Center effectiveness. Good communication and understanding is especially important between CGIAR Members and the Boards of Trustees of individual Centers.

CBC meets twice a year, with one meeting coinciding with the Annual General Meeting. CBC also holds joint meetings with the Center Directors Committee (CDC) on these occasions.

In addition to focusing on the CGIAR Executive Council's agenda, the CBC is (a) reviewing Center grievance procedures and policies and developing model guidelines that can be adapted to the particular circumstances and legal requirements of individual Centers, (b) reviewing the selection processes for new board members with a view toward increasing diversity and securing the optimum skills mix for enhancing Board effectiveness, and (c) analyzing changes occurring in the System and assessing opportunities for increasing Center effectiveness.

The CBC presents an annual summary of activities to the AGM. We welcome the opportunity to periodically share news and views with readers of "CGIAR News." CBC members can be contacted either through the Centers or through Ms. Caryl Jones-Swahn, Executive Secretary, CBC (m.jones-swahn@cgiar.org).

John Vercoe, Chairman,
Committee of Board Chairs (CBC)
and Chairman of the Board, ILRI

New Leaders



IPGRI

The Board of Trustees of IPGRI have appointed Dr. Emile Frison as IPGRI's Director General Designate. He takes up his new position on August 1, 2003 when Geoffrey Hawtin's term as Director General ends.

Dr. Frison is a Belgian national and currently serves as Director of the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP), one of IPGRI's three programs. He has worked extensively on bananas and plantains, the world's fourth most important staple crop. In 1997, he launched the Global Programme for Musa Improvement (PROMUSA). In 2002 he launched the Global Consortium on Musa Genomics with 27 members from 14 countries whose goal is to decode the genetic sequence of the banana and use it to improve the varieties available to smallholder farmers.

Dr. Frison obtained an M. Sc. in plant pathology from the Catholic University of Louvain, and a Ph.D. from the University of Gembloux in Belgium.



ISNAR

Dr. Cyrus Ndiritu is the new Director-General designate of ISNAR. He will assume his duties on June 16, 2003 when Stein W. Bie retires.

Dr. Ndiritu, a Kenyan national, comes to ISNAR with a long experience of national and sub-regional agricultural research institutions in Africa, having served in key CGIAR positions (Member of former Technical Advisory Committee, Oversight Committee, and CIMMYT Board of Trustees). For 11 years (1989-2000) he was Director of the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI). In addition, he helped found ASARECA and the new Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).

Dr. Ndiritu obtained his Bachelor's degree in veterinary medicine from the University of Nairobi, a Master of Science degree in pathology from the University of California-Davis, and a Ph.D. from the University of Nairobi. 🌱

Biotech Colloquium brings together diverse stakeholders



The International Biotechnology Colloquium—Bridging the Technology Divide: Agri-science alliances and the new architecture of innovation—held 17–20 March at ICRISAT’s Patancheru headquarters created a unique platform that brought together biotech stakeholders from all over the world.

Joining ICRISAT in organizing the seminal meeting were CIAT, ILRI and ISNAR, as well as the CGIAR Central Advisory Service for Intellectual Property.

The Governor of Andhra Pradesh state, His Excellency Surjit Singh Barnala, inaugurated the Colloquium on 18 March. Mr. Barnala stressed the need for public policy interventions to ensure that poor communities in the developing countries benefit from biotechnology. Though India has skilled human resources and research infrastructure greater connectivity is needed between those with scientific knowledge and those who will productively use it.

As ICRISAT’s Director General William Dar noted in his inaugural address, “It is very rare that international and national research institutions, advanced laboratories, the private sector, civil society and farmer’s organizations come

together to discuss ways to use cutting-edge technology for removing poverty.”

CGIAR centers use biotechnological tools to improve agricultural productivity and reduce poverty. To improve their effectiveness they are building partnerships with the private sector, civil society and farmers. The Colloquium analyzed multisector partnership projects in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia, and discussed critical challenges and opportunities for building future partnerships.

ICRISAT’s partnerships with the private sector have resulted in the setting up of the Technology Innovation Center. Two components of this initiative are the Agri-business Incubator and the Agri-biotech Park—both of which will be part of the State Government’s Genome Valley project.

The colloquium was a step forward in the CGIAR’s consultative process involving dialogue with multiple stakeholders on biotechnology. The outcomes of the dialogue initiated at Patancheru will guide the process of building a new architecture of innovation for impact on poverty alleviation. 🌱

New Opportunities for Rice Research in Mali

Due to the continuing political crisis in Côte d’Ivoire, leading rice researchers at WARDA—The Africa Rice Center (ARC) are exploring new avenues for research cooperation in Mali, one of the most important rice-growing countries in Africa.

ARC has temporarily relocated its scientists to Bamako, Mali, to continue the Center’s research activities that have been affected by the unrest.

“This is the beginning of a new phase of collaboration in rice research,” said Seydou Traore, Minister for Agriculture,

Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Government of Mali, welcoming the increased collaboration. “Rice responds well to the twin challenges of achieving food security and creating economic wealth and can help us to enter the world market.”

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Uzbek Genebank Renovation Hailed as Partnership Success

The ribbon was cut on a newly renovated genebank at the Uzbek Research Institute of Plant Industry, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Dr. Sherali Nurmatov, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Director General of the Uzbek Scientific Production Center for Agriculture, formally opened the facility.

The genebank was established in 1924 by well-known Russian collector and academician Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov (1887-1943). The facility has seen good and bad times since then, but its collections faced the biggest risk after the breakdown of the former Soviet Union.

Recognizing the value and unique nature of the genetic resources, ICARDA, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), IPGRI, and the national agricultural research system, has worked closely with the institute to plan for and secure funding to upgrade the facility. The genebank has a cool chamber with backup generator for medium-term storage. Some used equipment, such as germinators, balances and refrigerators, has also been repaired and



Dr. Ravza Mavljanova, Deputy Director of the Uzbek Research Institute of Plant Industry, Tashkent, examines seed samples in the newly renovated genebank.

installed, and 20,000 plastic bottles for storage of seeds have been provided. The speedy renovation of the genebank was supported by USDA. ICARDA and ACIAR continue to support the Institute's efforts by providing computers and training, and participating in plant collection missions.

"The facility has come up exceedingly well and now looks quite modern and functional," said Dr Raj Paroda, Coordinator of ICARDA's Central Asia and Caucasus (CAC) Regional Program. Dr Paroda is also Head of the Facilitation Unit of the CGIAR Program for CAC.

The inauguration of the facility was covered in the Uzbek media. 🌱

Genetic Traits for Tomorrow: Uncovering the Diversity of Kenyan Maize

Mention maize diversity and people conjure up images of blue, yellow, and white tortillas made from maize grown by traditional farmers in Mesoamerica. Indeed, the vast bulk of landraces among the 22,000 accessions found in CIMMYT's maize genebank originate from this region.

Maize diversity is not limited to the cereal's center of origin and domestication, however. A farmer's maize basket from coastal Kenya looks surprisingly

like a maize basket far to the west—a colorful display of black, purple, red, yellow, white, and mixed-color ears, of varying lengths and circumferences. And these varieties carry traits that breeders and future generations may find extremely useful.

The Kenyan Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) has joined forces with CIMMYT, IPGRI, and IFPRI to capture and characterize maize diversity for the benefit of current and future researchers.

"We hope to capture the unique traits of native landraces and learn about the adaptations used by farmers," says Zacharias Muthamia, officer-in-charge of the KARI genebank. "This project provides a major renewal of our maize materials, and helps us to systematically collect and characterize these resources. It's an important contribution to sustainable agriculture, both now and for the future."

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NERICA Seed for Safeguarding Côte d'Ivoire's Future

While images of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire were broadcast widely, little is known about the heartwarming story of NERICA (New Rice for Africa) seeds, saved by women farmers, helping jumpstart and rehabilitate agriculture in the war-torn country. NERICA was created by WARDA—The Africa Rice Center and the new rice is bringing hope to millions of poor farmers in Africa, particularly women farmers.

"Despite the conflict, enterprising women farmers in Danane, western Côte d'Ivoire were able to harvest and save 25 tons of NERICA seeds last year," said Gouantoueu Guei, head of genetic resources at ARC. "Under the aegis of the Government's 'Rice for All' program, the saved seeds will help farmers to plant crops thereby restarting agriculture in war-ravaged areas and helping lay the foundations for economic growth and durable peace."

ARC is providing breeders' seed of NERICA and other promising rice varieties to women farmers with the help of a local NGO, the Organisation volontaire du développement local (OVDL). Women farmers are also trained in community-based seed production systems.

NERICA is well suited for use by poor farmers who cannot afford costly inputs such as fertilizer and herbicides. Women farmers have found a strong ally in NERICA because it boosts incomes and helps to better feed their families.

Apart from desired traits such as high productivity, improved protein content, and weed resistance, NERICA rice matures 30 to 50 days earlier than other varieties grown in the region. This early-maturing trait is particularly valuable for rural women because it allows them to bridge the perilous 'hungry season' gap when food stocks are



Women farmers in Danane are key to achieving food security and peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

exhausted and the standing crop is not ready for harvest. Early harvests help feed school-going children in August, and income earned from selling rice also helps pay children's school fees.

"Our experiences once again reveal the fundamentally crucial role women play in agriculture and seed storage," adds Dr. Guei. "Their efforts are crucial to future food production of the whole country." 🌱

ICARDA Boosts Seed Cleaning Facilities in Afghanistan

Within the framework of the Future Harvest Consortium to Rebuild Agriculture in Afghanistan, ICARDA supplied 53 tons of foundation seed from its Tel Hadya research station, Syria.

Quality seed is essential for restarting agriculture, creating the foundations for economic growth and peace. Seventy-five genotypes of bread and durum wheat, barley, lentil, chickpea and forage legumes—all tested for their adaptation to specific growing conditions in Afghanistan—will be sown during the 2002/2003 cropping season. In preparation for harvest of the seed in 2003, ICARDA has provided six small-scale seed-cleaning units. The units were designed by ICARDA and manufactured by Darbas Company based in Kamishly, Syria.

"These units, with a capacity of processing 300 kilograms of seeds per hour, are ideal for cleaning and treating seeds from small production plots," says Adel El-Beltagy, Director General, ICARDA. "They are easily towed by a tractor, allowing us to cover larger areas and thereby increase the effectiveness of the overall effort."

The units have been checked, tested and demonstrated to users in Afghanistan. Five more mobile seed cleaning units with similar specifications, but higher capacity (1 t/hr) are under construction and will be sent to Afghanistan soon. The Consortium is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 🌱

Participants at the Iberoamerica meeting visiting the successful CIRNMA project in Puno, Peru.



Iberoamerican researchers meet at CIP

Spain's Ministry of Science and Technology (Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología) announced in February 2002 that the Spanish Council of Ministers had approved increased support to the CGIAR (to \$1.9 million, up from \$0.83 million, representing a 135 percent increase).

"I hope Spain's increased support will help to launch new collaborative projects," said Adolfo Cazorla Montero, Director General, Spanish National Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Technology (INIA).

The CGIAR gratefully acknowledges the Government of Spain's strong and continuing support.

Research collaboration in the Latin America region was strengthened at the 2nd meeting of the Iberoamerican alliance held at CIP headquarters in March in Lima.

Scientists and researchers from national agricultural research institutes (NARIs) of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay, Venezuela. Spain, Portugal, CIP, CIAT and CIMMYT signed an agreement establishing a permanent forum for advancing cooperation in research, training and information for food and agriculture research. The agreement was signed by Señor Carlos Diaz Valcarcel, Ambassador of Spain to Peru.

"We are delighted that so many senior representatives of national agricultural research systems attended the meeting", said Hugo Li-Pun, Deputy Director General for Corporate Development, CIP. "This is an important step in linking institutes around the world, and will provide many new opportunities for collaborative research and training."

In addition to opening channels for training and information exchange, the alliance aims to increase agricultural exports of Latin American countries. "Participants were excited at the potential opportunities that the collaboration presents", adds Dr. Li-Pun. "Poverty and environmental degradation remain significant challenges in Latin America, but with additional support and cooperation from Spain and Portugal, these challenges can be met."

The alliance is focusing on training activities in research management and collaboration in key areas such as genetic resources, food safety and quality, reduction of post-harvest losses, agro-industry, and improved management of natural resources.

Participants also visited a long-running project in Puno, in the Peruvian Highlands. Supported by Spain, the project involves collaboration with the Government of Peru, CIP, and the Centro de Investigación en Recursos Naturales y Medio Ambiente (CIRNMA), a Peruvian NGO. The project focuses on poverty reduction in rural areas through improved farming systems, conservation of native potatoes, processing and promotion of Andean products including yacon (an Andean root crop), quinoa, milk and cheese, sheep and alpaca meat and fiber. 🌱

CGIAR Biofortification Challenge Program— Shared Solutions to a Global Problem

More than 800 million people, mostly women and children, lack food that meets their basic energy needs. Far more—an estimated 3 billion—suffer the insidious effects of micronutrient deficiencies.

Making “Biofortified” crops—using sound science to breed plants with increased vitamin and mineral content—is one of the most promising new tools in the fight to end malnutrition and save lives.

At a briefing organized for World Bank nutrition, health, agriculture, and rural development specialists, the enormous potential of biofortified crops to combat problems of hunger and widespread malnutrition was outlined. The newly-approved CGIAR Challenge Program “Biofortified Crops for Improved Human Nutrition,” led by CIAT and IFPRI, brought together a diverse range of partners for a discussion of the research agenda and next steps.

“Biofortification approaches are a new paradigm in agriculture,” said Joachim Voss, Director General, CIAT. “The results of such research will focus on providing better food to poor people, not just more food.” Biofortification approaches contribute directly to the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating hunger, reducing child mortality, and improving maternal health.

Developing ultra-nourishing crops is one only side of the coin. The other, equally important side is food policy. This effort, to be led by IFPRI, will focus on key nutrition policy issues such as nutrients lost in processing and the critical area of consumer acceptance. A proactive communication and consultation strategy will be an integral part of the research effort.

“Biofortification is not the proverbial silver bullet,” cautioned Joachim von Braun, Director General, IFPRI. “We

are aiming for a whole-diet approach for healthy nutrition that benefits the poor.”

The briefing was well-attended and included informative presentations on preventing and controlling micronutrient malnutrition by Rae Galloway of World Bank, nutritional genomics by Dean Della Penna of Michigan State University, and the links between human nutrition research and biofortification by Reynaldo Martorell of Emory University.

Iodized salt offers a compelling example of the benefits of supplementation in human diets. In 1990, less than 20 percent of households consumed iodized salt. Today, that number has risen to 70 percent. However, there are only 28 developing countries where universal salt iodization has been achieved. Combining current supplementation programs with food-based solutions is one of the promising ways of tackling hunger and malnutrition. 🌱

New Consortium is Boosting Information Access

Rapid information access, at computer desktops, is one of the marvels of the Internet age. The CGIAR's new Library and Information Services Consortium (CG-LISC), a network of Information Managers in the CGIAR is working to increase efficiency in acquiring, sharing, and disseminating information to scientists while reducing costs and time delays. Examples of significant progress and substantial savings include:

- Increased access to e-journals by using a common journal aggregator—CGIAR scientists and researchers are now receiving 60 e-journals for the price of 39

- Joint acquisition of “Science Online” involving participation by nine CGIAR Centers; WARDA-ARC has free access to this service
- Joint purchase of the CAB Agrivista database; CABI offered simultaneous access to 8 CGNET users and AGRIVISTA has placed no restrictions on the number of users
- Locating INMAGIC databases and WebPublisher program on a common server at CGNET, increasing systemwide access to these widely-used programs
- Further development of the CGIAR library gateway portal page as the central point for accessing CGIAR information

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George Owuor examines samples of the Mundingu maize landrace from coastal Kenya.

“This is one of the first efforts at characterizing maize diversity in Africa. Though it is small step we consider it important because of the surprising diversity we have discovered.”

Kenyan Maize continued

As part of the Insect Resistant Maize in Africa (IRMA) project, extensive farmer surveys were conducted by Hugo de Groot, CIMMYT socioeconomist and George Owuor of Kenya’s Egerton University. Dan Kiambi received a small grant for collection activities, with the anticipation of further funding for morphological and genetic characterization work at the KARI genebank. IPGRI also provided guidance on collection methodologies, while IFPRI’s Melinda Smale contributed approaches for analyzing maize biodiversity.

During the surveys, Owuor and de Groot saw practical examples of how farmers in Kenya’s coastal areas manage risks posed by pestilence and erratic weather. Kanjerenjere, a yellow landrace is chosen because of stable yields even when rains are variable. But the yields are poor, and harvested cobs are susceptible to storage pests. Mdzhiana, a dark purple variety provides good yields, and has better resistance to field and storage pests. But it is vulnerable to erratic weather conditions. Since a failed harvest can be catastrophic, poor farmers cushion the risks by planting both landraces, along with five or six other varieties having different agronomic, physiological, and consumption characteristics.

“This is one of the first efforts at characterizing maize diversity in Africa,” says Dan Kiambi, an IPGRI researcher. “Though it is small step we consider it important because of the surprising diversity we have discovered.”

The KARI-CGIAR partnership is key to revitalizing a this important collection of plant genetic resources. 🌿

Rice Research continued

“By strengthening our presence in Mali, our scientists have a great opportunity to explore new rice ecologies and cropping systems as well as new niches for our products,” said Kanayo F. Nwanze, Director General, ARC. Mali is a member of the Association.

ARC staff have been working under difficult and trying conditions. The main research station in Bouaké has only essential staff, while ARC management are continuing to operate from temporary headquarters in Abidjan.

Fortunately, ARC’s genebank in Bouaké is intact and remains operational. To safeguard the precious collections, a duplicate set of over 6000 seed samples of rice varieties, representing over 80 percent of the total genebank collection has been recovered from the genebank for safe storage outside the campus.

To mark the new partnership, ARC’s Board of Trustees meeting was held in Bamako during February 24–28.

“CGIAR is extremely proud of ARC’s contributions and several donors recognize the fantastic work done by ARC,” said Francisco Reifschneider, CGIAR Director, while attending the meeting and conveying strong support.

Subsequently, a high-level delegation consisting of Lindsay Innes, Chairman of ARC Board of Trustees, Kanayo Nwanze and Francisco Reifschneider met with the Prime Minister of Mali and key Malian authorities. The Board, Director General, management and staff are working closely to maintain the Center’s viability and credibility while emphasizing staff security, motivation, and stability. 🌿

New Consortium continued

CG-LISC is an excellent example of a systemwide effort generating systemwide benefits and cost reductions. ISNAR's Monica Allmand and her colleagues in the Information Management (IM) community are working hard to increase access to information. A new ICT/KM Advisory Group is being formed, led by Frank Rijsberman, Chairman of the ICT/KM Sub-Committee and Enrica Porcari, Chief Information Officer, CGIAR. The meeting of the group is scheduled for May 6-9, 2003 at IPGRI. 🌱

A University Without Walls

Can you imagine a university without walls, classrooms and even registered students? In fact, it will not even have its own faculty but draw from the resources of many institutions.

Welcome to the Virtual University for the Semi-Arid Tropics (VUSAT), jointly initiated by ICRISAT and the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai.

Unlike a conventional university, VUSAT will not award degrees or diplomas but provide critical information, in real time, to farmers working in the rainfed areas of the semi-arid tropics. While the broad aim is to provide climate literacy, the immediate concern is to enable resource-poor farmers to tackle the ravaging effects of this year's drought.

"The Virtual University will take the right information to the right people at the right time using new Internet and conventional communication tools," said William Dar, Director General, ICRISAT.

Kenya to host CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2003

The Republic of Kenya has invited the CGIAR to host its 2003 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Nairobi, Kenya, during October 29–31.

"My Ministry has been keenly following CGIAR activities as the main source of agricultural technologies and knowledge," said H.E. Kipruto arap Kirwa, MP and Kenyan Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development. "We will be proud and privileged to host the meeting this year because we need new ideas to revitalize our agricultural sector and the entire economy."

"Kenya's role as host of our AGM would be in keeping with your country's strong association with the CGIAR," said Ian Johnson, Chairman, CGIAR, accepting the invitation and thanking the Government of Kenya for the gracious offer. "Kenya-CGIAR links will undoubtedly be strengthened as a result of the interactions."

The CGIAR Secretariat, World Agroforestry Centre, ILRI and KARI will be working closely to coordinate the arrangements for the meeting and field visits.

"It will help India's Central and State Governments to tackle drought, benefiting thousands of subsistence farmers."

The Virtual University concept envisages a consortium of institutions using ICT applications to work together to deliver content and programs to learners and farmers. Unlike a conventional university associated with a single institution, the VUSAT will be a seamless organization linking the expertise of many institutions. It aims to develop climate literacy and drought preparedness among rural communities, development workers, service providers and policy makers. It will also communicate information on climatic trends like monsoon behavior and methods of drought management for community mobilization and disaster preparation. VUSAT will explore ways to innovatively interface Internet and satellite technologies with conventional print, radio and television media.

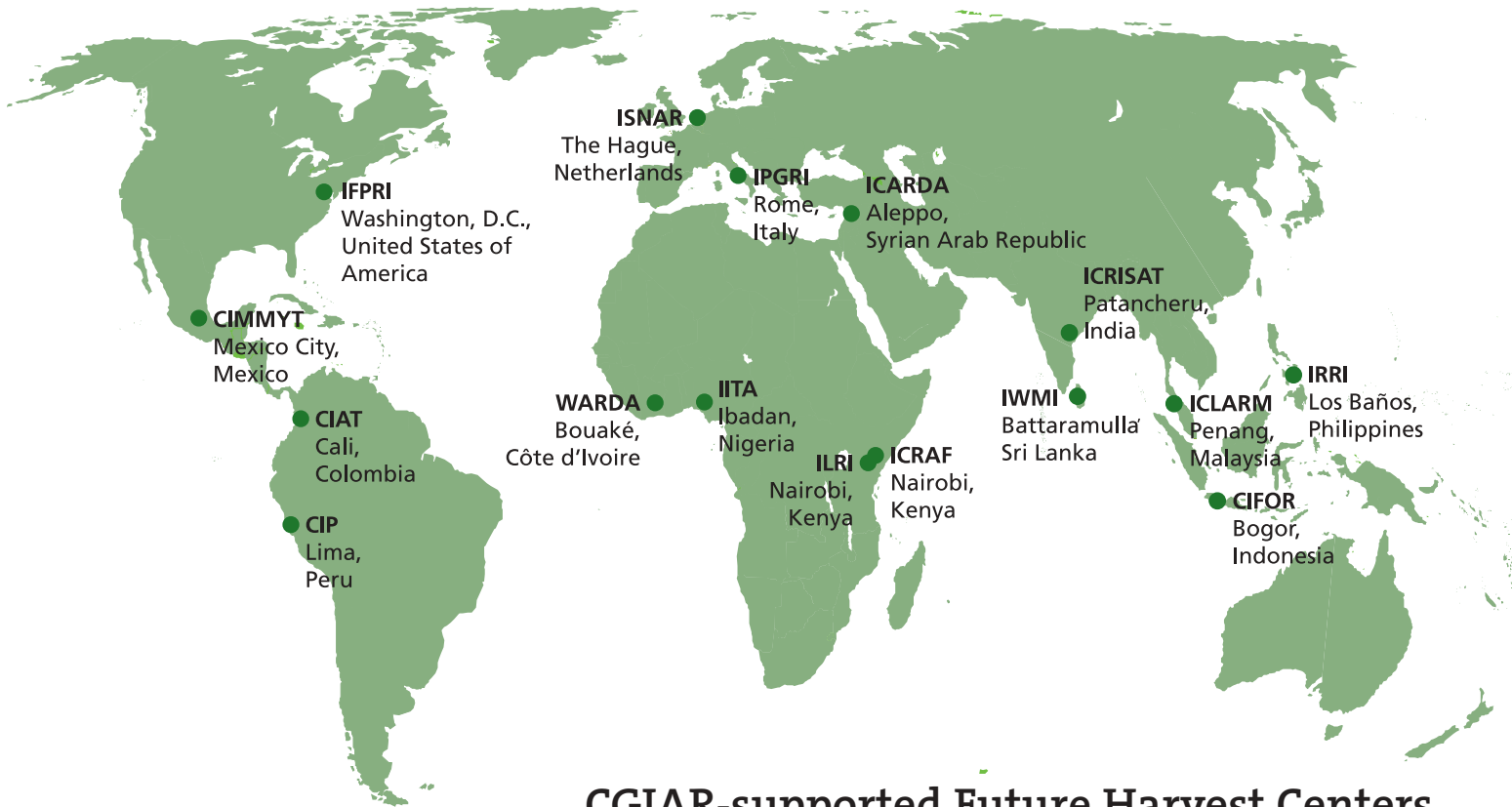
"This is a novel initiative," said M.S. Swaminathan, eminent scientist and Chairman, MSSRF. "We need to use

modern science through VUSAT to help the poorest of the poor."

ICRISAT's pilot project in Adakkal village, Andhra Pradesh, has empowered farmers to cope with drought through distance learning. It shared information and knowledge on crop-livestock management with farmers under scenarios of rainfall and groundwater inadequacy. The project also developed off-farm knowledge and skills for viable livelihood opportunities.

Partnerships are at the core of the VUSAT model, including with important national bodies such as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Commonwealth of Learning, national and state Open Universities, IWMI and others. The lessons in India will be used to implement this Virtual University initiative in sub-Saharan Africa.

ICRISAT aims to launch VUSAT on World Environment Day, June 5, 2003. 🌱



CGIAR-supported Future Harvest Centers

International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
www.ciat.cgiar.org

Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
www.cifor.org

International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)
www.cimmyt.org

International Potato Center (CIP)
www.cipotato.org

International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)
www.icarda.org

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
www.icrisat.org

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
www.ifpri.org

International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
www.iita.org

International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)
www.cgiar.org/ilri

International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI)
www.ipgri.org

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)
www.irri.org

International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR)
www.isnar.cgiar.org

International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
www.cgiar.org/iwmi

West Africa Rice Development Association—The Africa Rice Center (WARDA)
www.warda.org

World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)
www.worldagroforestrycentre.org

WorldFish Center (ICLARM)
www.worldfishcenter.org