



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

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***STAKEHOLDER MEETING***

**Invasive Alien Species, Agricultural Development and the “Aid Trade”**

**Agenda Item:** 6h – Program Initiatives, Invasive Species

**This item is for:** Information  Discussion  Decision

**Proposed Action:** None

**Background:** Invasive alien species (IAS) are organisms that have been relocated, deliberately or accidentally, to new habitats where they can cause significant harm to the economy, environment or human health. The attached note provides an overview of the growing importance of the problems being created by IAS. It is the main subject of discussion in Parallel Session III.

**Comments:**

## **Invasive Alien Species, Agricultural Development and the “Aid Trade”**

*Invasive alien species (IAS) are organisms that have been relocated, deliberately or accidentally, to new habitats where they can cause significant harm to the economy, environment or human health. They include plants, invertebrates, vertebrates and microorganisms, in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. IAS are interfering at a global scale today with sustainable development, environmental conservation and economic growth. Rapid globalization of trade, travel, and transport are now exacerbating and accelerating IAS problems, creating new problems for the future. Large-scale trends in climate and land use also appear likely to make IAS an issue of growing importance.*

Why are IAS species an issue for international development? Developing countries are often least equipped to deal with a new invasive species threat in agriculture or environmental conservation, and these problems can cause serious stresses and shocks to sustainable livelihoods. These problems are increasing rapidly with globalization. Further, it appears that a great many IAS problems for developing countries have actually been the inadvertent result of development assistance projects, through the accidental introduction of IAS as contaminants in plant and animal stock or food aid, or through the deliberate introduction of species for agriculture which then became invasive and damaging.

Some serious accidental introductions of IAS through agricultural development activities include the cassava mealybug, cassava green mite and banana nematode in Africa, and itch-grass, a weed of cereals, in South and Central America. International famine relief and military assistance programmes have been linked to the accidental introduction of problems such as the larger grain borer and Parthenium weed into Africa and more recently the corn rootworm into eastern Europe. Invasive species resulting from intentional introductions in some developing countries include water hyacinth and several agroforestry trees and shrubs, particularly woody legumes. The introduction of invasive species place an irreversible burden on developing countries which can far outweigh the benefits of the original aid programmes responsible. Understanding and reducing the “aid trade” in IAS must be a priority for the development community.

Why is this issue getting particular attention now? IAS have always been an issue in agriculture and the development of national and international quarantine systems. Today, increasing trade has put a strain on those systems, and the diversification of the development community means that awareness of the risks of IAS introduction is not universal. In addition, the impact of IAS on natural ecosystems and their services is only now becoming more clear, and countries which have endorsed the Convention on Biological Diversity have agreed to prevent and control IAS which threaten ecosystems, habitats and species. This makes national environment as well as agricultural agencies responsible and attentive to IAS issues.

The Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) is an international coalition of biologists, natural resource managers, economists, lawyers and policy makers which seeks to raise awareness of this problem, to identify and disseminate best practices and to stimulate new research and capacity building for IAS prevention and management. Because the new challenge of preventing the introduction of potential IAS is so large, GISP has advocated focusing in the short term on key pathways of IAS introduction. GISP has identified the pathway of international assistance programmes as one of particular concern.

The purpose of this seminar at AGM 2001 is to engage the agricultural development community in this emerging issue. The nature and impact of the “aid trade” pathway of IAS introduction will be reviewed, in the context of current international efforts in GISP the CBD and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). A panel discussion will address the experience of the CGIAR with IAS and share current approaches and thinking about IAS prevention and management. The seminar will identify the information and action needed to ensure that the development assistance community proactively prevent the spread of future IAS problems which threaten sustainable development and livelihoods.