

The Borlaug Global Rust Initiative and International Collaboration

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The global threat of stem rust Ug99 to wheat production calls for a coordinated global response. The Borlaug Global Rust Initiative (BGRI), chaired by Dr N.E. Borlaug, advocates for sustainable international resources and coordinated action to reduce the world's vulnerability to stem, yellow, and leaf rusts of wheat. The BGRI Executive Committee includes permanent representation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (known by the Spanish acronym, CIMMYT), Cornell University, and rotating representation from national agricultural research systems of both industrialized and developing countries. General membership is open to all interested parties (<http://www.globalrust.org>).

Cornell University recently announced a \$26.8 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for a Durable Rust Resistance in Wheat (DRRW) project (<http://www.wheatrust.cornell.edu>), which includes many of the activities advocated by the BGRI. The Cornell project will provide Secretariat services for the BGRI and support increased advocacy to mobilize additional global resources and cooperation to a level commensurate with the rust threat. The DRRW project will provide 3 years of support to 16 institutions, with a focus on developing improved wheat varieties that protect resource-poor farmers, primarily in Africa and Asia. Development of a broader-based second phase proposal due for submission in mid-2009 is a significant project milestone. Improved international collaboration will be key to obtaining future funding and effectively managing the threat of emerging rust diseases.