



**Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)**

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**Agenda Item 6. CGIAR and Sustainable Development: 2002 Summits  
and the Way Ahead**

International Treaty on PGR and the Global Conservation Trust

**Background/Process:**

The Global Conservation Trust (GCT) is a partnership between the CGIAR and FAO aimed at conserving in perpetuity the diversity of the world's most important crops. The Trust seeks a financial endowment to help support the crop genebanks' operation and capacity building activities. The establishment of the GCT was announced in August 2002; IPGRI's Director General will provide an update on progress to date.

**Document:** The Global Conservation Trust

**Comments:**



# The Global Conservation Trust

An update for AGM02

The Global Conservation Trust campaign, a partnership between the CGIAR and FAO, is seeking US\$260 million from multilateral and bilateral agencies, corporations, foundations, and governments to endow the world's crop diversity collections. The effort will conserve in perpetuity the diversity of the world's most important crops, as well as allow the provision of training and other capacity building assistance to crop collections in need. The collections will be available for use by all researchers, scientists, and farmers who need them, particularly those in developing countries.

A press briefing at the World Food Summit introduced the idea of the endowment to a wide public audience. Media coverage was extensive. A meeting was held with civil society organizations during the Food Summit to discuss the Trust initiative.

On 29 August 2002, midway through the largest United Nations conference ever held, the CGIAR and FAO announced plans to establish the Global Conservation Trust. The announcement followed on the heels of the release of a report, *Crop Diversity at Risk: The Case for Sustaining Crop Collections*, by Imperial College, London. The report drew largely on information gathered by FAO in 2000 from about 100 countries. Its findings were alarming: not only is crop diversity disappearing from the fields, a large proportion of the crop resources 'safeguarded' in genebanks around the world could soon be lost due to lack of funding.

The report found that while the number of samples held in crop collections has increased in 66 per cent of countries since 1996 (the last time FAO gathered such data), genebank budgets have been reduced in 25 per cent of countries and have remained static in another 35 per cent. The Imperial report recommended the establishment of a global endowment fund for *ex situ* conservation as the best way to ensure humanity's ability to meet the long-term nature of its conservation needs.

With nine venues, a reported 60 000 delegates and hundreds of side events all clamouring for attention during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, there was concern that the announcement of plans for the Global Conservation Trust might not receive much attention. Fortunately that was not the case. Indeed, the event—held at the IUCN Environment Centre—was very well attended. Ismail Serageldin, M.S. Swaminathan, Geoffrey Hawtin, and Professor Chris Higgins of Imperial College described the findings in the Imperial report and announced the intention to establish the Trust early next year.

Important statements of commitment and support followed from Mamdouh Riad Tadros, Egyptian Minister of the Environment; Ambassador Walter Fust, Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Andrew Natsios, Administrator of the US Agency for International Development, and Senator Tim Wirth, President of the United Nations Foundation.

We have tracked media coverage across six continents—Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, South America, and Australia—and in nine languages so far—English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Afrikaans, and Chinese.

To date, funding commitments have been received from Switzerland, the United States, Colombia, Egypt, Brazil, the Gatsby Foundation and the United Nations

Foundation. Several others have expressed a strong interest in providing support, and we expect soon to be able to announce the first of our private sector gifts.

The Trust was presented to the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture during its meeting from 14-18 October. The Trust received consistently strong statements of support from the floor of the Commission.

The preferred legal status, governance and financial mechanisms for the Trust will be decided by the Interim Panel of Eminent Experts for the Establishment of the Global Conservation Trust, based on consultations with a large number of governments, individuals and organizations, South and North. The Interim Panel will also decide upon questions like the proper balance to be achieved in the allocation of funds. The members of the Panel are in the process of being identified and should be in place by the end of the year.

Please visit the website of the Global Conservation Trust at [www.startwithaseed.org](http://www.startwithaseed.org).