



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

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SCIENCE AIMED AT HELPING POOR FARMERS IS KEY TO SOLVING HUNGER, MALNUTRITION AND POVERTY

WASHINGTON, DC, October 29, 2001—The postponement of the World Food Summit last month should not lull policymakers into complacency about the real challenges of the 21st century. Chronic hunger, widespread malnutrition, and pervasive poverty – especially in rural areas – will not be solved, and will most likely intensify, unless scientific efforts are directed toward problems faced by the world’s poorest farmers, says a new report from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Nourishing a Peaceful Earth: The CGIAR’s Contributions provides concrete examples of how scientists, in partnership with industrialized and developing countries, are producing new technologies and other solutions to boost crop yields, increase rural incomes, and reduce the use of pesticides.

“The effective use of science can help provide solutions for the enormous problems facing the world’s poor, including hunger and malnutrition,” says Ian Johnson, World Bank Vice President and CGIAR Chairman. “As these stories from the field show, agricultural research aimed at real world challenges can vastly improve people’s lives and well being. We must assure adequate investment in science and technology in general, and in agricultural science in particular.”

Some examples:

- New maize varieties have 30 – 50 percent higher yields even when grown in difficult drought and low-fertility soil conditions. Maturing earlier than traditional maize varieties, the new varieties are helping bridge the “hunger gap” that threatens many subsistence farmers in the time between planting and harvest. They can be eaten green, making a vital difference in the economic and social well-being of poor farm families. This is especially important in Sub-Saharan Africa where maize accounts for almost 40 percent of all cereal production.

- Integrated pest management is enabling resource-poor farmers to maintain and sustain high agricultural productivity in environmentally benign ways. Success stories abound. In Nigeria, new intercropping practices have reduced *Striga*, attacks (a parasitic weed) by 63 percent, greatly improving maize harvests. In Kenya, farmers participating in a pilot project have increased their maize yields by 20 percent through intercropping and habitat management.
- Golden Rice, rich in beta carotene and other carotenoids, promises to be more effective in combating Vitamin A deficiency, a condition estimated to cause half a million cases of irreversible blindness, and up to one million deaths, worldwide every year. Researchers are testing and evaluating Golden Rice to ensure the safety and efficacy of this potential solution to the problem of Vitamin A deficiency.
- A vaccine is being developed for East Coast fever, a cattle disease that causes losses of \$200 million each year in Africa. The vaccine promises spillover benefits for malaria and cancer research.

Nourishing a Peaceful Earth intends to provide background and contribute to the international debate for the upcoming global summits on food, financing, and sustainable development.

The CGIAR report comes at a time of declining public investments in international agricultural research. Trade issues are looming large, and there is concern in developing countries about the negative effect of massive subsidies: industrialized countries spend more than \$360 billion a year on agricultural subsidies, an amount equivalent to the gross national product of all of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The CGIAR is an association of 58 public and private members who support a system of 16 international agricultural research centers known as the Future Harvest Centers. More than 8,500 CGIAR scientists and scientific staff work in more than 100 countries around the world, harnessing the best of cutting-edge science to increase food security, reduce poverty, and protect the global environment.

Nourishing a Peaceful Earth: The CGIAR's Contributions is available electronically at www.cgiar.org. Complimentary print copies are available for journalists who contact cgiaar@cgiar.org or call 202-473-2047.