

CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2001
Stakeholder Meeting
October 31, 2001
Report from Session III
Chair: Thomas Lovejoy
Sec. : Amir Kassam/Sean Murphy

Invasive alien species are non-native organisms whose explosive population growth and spread causes harm to economies, the environment, or human health. Long recognized as threats to agriculture, invasive alien species are now also considered one of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss and environmental change. Growing world trade and ongoing changes in land use and climate are accelerating the appearance of new invasive alien species problems.

At a session organized by the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), the U.S. National Invasive Species Council (NISC), World Bank's Environment Department, CGIAR centres and donors identified the major invasive alien species issues in their sectors and discussed the priorities for addressing these. Session participants agreed that:

- Invasive alien species can have a significant impact on development, affecting sustainability of livelihoods, food security and essential ecosystem services and processes.
- Targeted development assistance programmes have reduced the threat or impact of particular invasive alien species.
- Development assistance projects and emergency food aid programmes have been significant pathways for the introduction of serious new invasive alien species to poor countries, either through contamination of imported plant and animal resources, or the deliberate introduction of beneficial species which subsequently become invasive and damaging.
- Cooperation between agricultural, environmental and related ministries will be essential to effective prevention and management of invasive alien species

Participants noted that:

- The status of invasive alien species problems in developing countries is very poorly known relative to other regions, and CGIAR centres can contribute to assessment.
- Action against invasive alien species is constrained by a lack of awareness at the national and development agency level, where there is a need to quantify the costs of invasive species problems
- Centres are often challenged to deliver short term benefits in productivity from new agricultural introductions, without sufficient knowledge on potential invasiveness of new plant and animal species or varieties. This identifies an urgent need for predictive tools to evaluate invasiveness.
- Besides direct impacts on agricultural production, e.g. by invasive pests, alien plant and animal material can pose a serious threat to the erosion of valuable genetic resources, particularly in areas of crop origin.

- Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to the extent that they are potentially invasive and damaging, should be considered in programmes on invasive alien species
- Microbial systems have received far too little attention as potential areas of invasion and agricultural/environmental impact
- There are few truly effective barriers to species spread today, which creates a need to anticipate and understand emerging and potential problems, to prioritise these and to be proactive.

The following actions were supported at the meeting:

1. An assessment of the status and threats posed by invasive alien species to developing countries should be undertaken, with specific effort to quantify impact and costs of invasive problems, relative to other development challenges.
2. A study of pathways by which invasive alien species become problems in developing countries, with particular emphasis on the role which development assistance and emergency assistance plays in the creation of new problems.
3. Development, in concert with GISP, the International Plant Protection Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity of best practices for governments, private sector and development assistance programmes which reduce risks to developing countries from invasive alien species.

It is proposed that GISP, NISC and the World Bank develop these actions into a project, and that a committee of experienced specialists from CGIAR Centres be engaged for its design and to facilitate its execution. Results of (1) and (2) above would be reported to AGM 2002.