

Statement by the Future Harvest Centres Supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) on the Scope of the Multilateral System Currently under Consideration in the Re-negotiation of the FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

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The CGIAR's mission is to contribute to food security and poverty eradication in developing countries through research, partnership, capacity building, and policy support. The CGIAR promotes sustainable agricultural development based on the environmentally sound management of natural resources. In our work with PGRFA we offer long-term conservation for germplasm held in trust, and provide over 100,000 samples yearly to researchers and plant breeders around the world. Our mission and our programmes, however, go far beyond the scope of the commitments made with FAO in 1994.

CGIAR research programmes aim to bring the best of modern science to bear on solving the problems of farmers – particularly resource poor farmers – in developing countries. The Centers have active genetic improvement programmes involving more than 20 crops (see Annex I). In addition, the Centres conduct research and provide significant conservation services for a number of other crops, listed in Annex II. The crops we work on provide well over 90% of the plant-derived nutrition for the entire world's population, and many are grown and consumed almost exclusively in developing countries. For a number of crops, Future Harvest Centres provide a substantial portion of the total research effort being undertaken in and for developing countries.

Research such as this depends on many factors, not the least of which is a conducive and enabling policy environment. It requires a cooperative, multilateral approach to obtain germplasm, mobilize scientific efforts and partnerships, and secure necessary funding. The creation of a multilateral system with facilitated access and benefit-sharing, encompassing all the crops currently covered by the CGIAR, will help build such an enabling environment. The omission of any crop is likely to produce a serious impediment to its conservation and will undermine and perhaps destroy our ability to support continued research on it for developing countries. In our opinion, this would be a tragedy of benefit to no country or group, especially small farmers who might lose their principal or even sole source of improved plant materials.

The list of crops covered by the CGIAR has evolved over the years in response to demands and needs from developing countries. As such, one may consider the prioritization of these crops by the CGIAR to be an indication of their critical importance to food security. All are characterized by interdependence as well. A strong case could be made for including all under the mandate of a multilateral system.

The Directors General of the International Agricultural Research Centres of the CGIAR therefore urge FAO delegates to consider including within the proposed multilateral system all crops listed in Annex I, and all currently-designated materials (regardless of crop), as an essential and valuable element in further improvement of these materials, especially for developing countries.

Annex I.

Crops undergoing active genetic improvement work by CGIAR Centres

Banana/Plantain	Barley
Beans (Phaseolus)	Cassava
Chickpea	Cowpea
Faba Bean	Forage Crops*
Grass Pea (Lathyrus)	Groundnut
Lentil	Maize
Millet (Finger)	Millet (Pearl)
Pigeon Pea	Potato
Rice	Rye
Sorghum	Soybean
Sweet Potato	Triticale
Wheat	Yam

*The CGIAR works actively on a wide range of forage species, and in addition, provides conservation services for many more.

Annex II.

Crops for which there is significant conservation and active research activity

Agroforestry crops

(Adansonia, Acacia, alnus, Bactris, Calliandra, Cajanus, Crotalaria, Callycophyllum, Dacryodes, Faidherbia, Glyricidia, Guazuma, Grevillea, Inga, Irvingia, Leucaena, Markhamia, Melia, Moringa, Parkia, Prosopis, Pterocarpus, Prunus, sesbania, Sclerocarya, Tamarindus, Tithonia, Tephrosia, Uapaka, Vitellaria, Ziziphus)

Andean root and tuber crops

Bambara Groundnut

Coconut

Date Palm

Millets (Minor)

Minor

Pea (Pisum)

Taro

Quinoa