

THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Forty-First Meeting, Washington, D.C., 29 October-1 November 1986

COMMISSION ON THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE TO AGRICULTURE

FORESTRY AND AQUACULTURE

(Agenda Item 10)

Information Note

Dr. M.H. Arnold represented TAC at the 7th Annual Meeting of the Commission on the Application of Science to Agriculture, Forestry and Aquaculture, held in Berlin on 1-3 September 1986.

A report on the meeting is attached for the information of the Committee.

TAC SECRETARIAT

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

October 1986

COMMISSION ON THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE TO AGRICULTURE  
FORESTRY AND AQUACULTURE

The seventh annual meeting of CASAFA was held during the first three days of September in West Berlin. The meeting was hosted by the Institute of Animal Production, Faculty of International Development, Technical University of Berlin.

As has become customary at these meetings, the first day was devoted to presentations by leading scientists of the host country. The presentations covered a wide range of research topics, including:

- organic matter and nutrient re-cycling in tropical soils
- genetic manipulation of Mucoraceous fungi
- new methods for the control of rust diseases
- regulation of prenatal endocrine systems
- impact and control of African trypanosomiasis.

All the papers described aspects of fundamental research being undertaken at various German institutions. The linkages to applied research were described as well as possible practical applications of the results. The first day's activities were concluded with a tour of the facilities of the Faculty for International Development.

The remaining two days were occupied by the business meeting. In recent years, CASAFA has sought to widen the scope of its influence through greater de-centralization of its activities. Various national committees have been inaugurated which seek to interest research institutions in their home countries in the problems of developing countries. The committees also aim to help in strengthening communication between these institutions and other relevant bodies such as the international centres, donor agencies and research institutions in the developing countries.

The meeting received reports from several of these committees including those in Poland, Italy and the Netherlands. Other CASAFA activities were reported from Australia, Germany, Canada, Spain and Switzerland.

The meeting also received reports from TAC, the CGIAR Secretariat and a range of other organizations whose activities are related to those of CASAFA. These included ACIAR, BOSTID, GTZ, RAWOO, UNU, and IFARD, as well as several of the ICSU family of scientific unions. Dr M S Swaminathan reported on behalf of the International Panel on Food Security, Agriculture, Forestry and Environment and the Executive Secretary of ICSU brought delegates up to date on the activities of ICSU most relevant to those of CASAFA. Of particular interest was his account of the initiation of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme. This programme aims to build on work

already in progress on various components of the total earth system, such as the atmosphere, the hydrosphere and the biosphere, in order to develop greater understanding of the course and causes of global change.

Good progress was reported in various areas of work which CASAFA had promoted in earlier years in conjunction with other organizations. The article on Striga, proposed at the 1985 meeting, had now been published by BOSTID and discussions were going on with a view to its wider dissemination. Meanwhile, some interesting results on stomatal behaviour in Striga had been reported from Professor Stewart's laboratory in London, and progress in breeding for resistance had been reported by both IITA and ICRISAT. The Australian group were continuing their activities related to research on drought and other stresses and a book entitled "Plant Growth, Drought and Salinity" had recently been published by CSIRO.

It was agreed that CASAFA would continue to organize symposia on topics that were not receiving primary attention by other organizations. Plans for the 1986 symposium to be held in Madras in December were well advanced. The symposium, "Agricultural Applications of Biotechnology" was being planned primarily for senior scientists and policy makers in developing countries. The aim was to keep the group small and attendance would be by invitation only. The Symposium was being organized jointly with COSTED and the occasion would be marked as a memorial to the late Professor Nayadmma, formerly Chairman of COSTED.

For 1987, it was agreed that a symposium would be organized on green manuring and nitrogen fixation. The provisional title was agreed as: "Sustainable agriculture: the place of green manure crops in rice farming systems". Dr Swaminathan kindly invited CASAFA to hold this symposium at IRRI.

In my opinion, CASAFA has now established a place in the international network of scientific activities that are important to the CGIAR System. Its primary aim is to improve communication, not to seek funding for projects directly. If TAC is to move in the direction of greater intellectual leadership within the System, then it will be essential for TAC members to remain in touch with the activities of organizations such as CASAFA, as well as with the enormous array of scientific expertise that is available through the ICSU family of organizations. It is also possible that CASAFA and its national committees could be of greater service to the CGIAR System, for example by helping to identify possible members of review panels or boards of trustees.

M H Arnold  
23 October 1986