

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Cassava research shifts up a gear, with the launch of the Global Cassava Modelling Consortium**

***New alliance of cassava researchers could accelerate research and help smallholder farmers beat climate change***

(KAMPALA, Uganda - 16<sup>th</sup> July 2012) – A NEW GLOBAL ALLIANCE of crop and climate scientists, officially launched today, could help boost research into one of the most promising, climate-smart crops - cassava.

Research published by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the CGIAR's Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) Research Program earlier this year found that this vital food crop - consumed by around 500m people each day in sub-Saharan Africa - could thrive in warmer conditions expected as a result of climate change, while other food crops struggle.

The study, published in the journal *Tropical Plant Biology* found that temperatures in East and West Africa – two major cassava growing regions - are expected to rise by around 1.8 degrees Celsius as soon as 2050. While this poses problems for the suitability of food staples like bean, banana and sorghum, cassava suitability is likely to be the exception to the rule – brushing off the higher temperatures.

The report earned cassava the title of “Rambo root”, for its ability to survive in such tough conditions.

Speaking at the second meeting of the *Global Cassava Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (GCP-21-II)* in Kampala, Uganda, today, Dr Andy Jarvis, a climate change scientist at CIAT and CCAFS, officially launched the Global Cassava Modelling Consortium – an alliance to accelerate cassava research, and help smallholders in Africa adapt to climate change.

“The potential of cassava is tremendously exciting,” he explained. “But now we have to act promptly on the research, to maximise the crop’s potential.

“This means mobilising researchers all over the world to join the Global Cassava Modelling Consortium, where they can share their research to help us better

understand the physiology of the plant, and explore avenues for improving its management and delivering better varieties to farmers.”

The Consortium will initially establish a “loose” network of scientists sharing their current cassava research, together with historical research data. But as the Consortium grows, Jarvis envisages a complex information-sharing network, which includes the experiences of cassava farmers across the Tropics, with farms being treated as experimental stations in their own right.

“We’ve already established a network like this on a smaller scale with fruit farmers in Colombia,” he continued. “These farmers share detailed information about their crop management practices, which helps us develop site-specific recommendations to maximise fruit production. With the right support we could extend this concept to cassava production as well.

“Knowledge is power, and sharing information about cassava really could help ensure the ‘Rambo root’ lives up to its name, and become one of the most important climate change adaptation crops for Africa.”

Read the full article, [\*Is cassava the answer to African climate change adaptation\*](#) here:

#### **Further Information:**

Through research aimed at making agriculture more eco-efficient, the **International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)** contributes importantly to major global initiatives aimed at reducing rural poverty, strengthening food security, improving human nutrition and health, and achieving sustainable management of natural resources across the developing world. These initiatives are carried out by the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers of the CGIAR (formerly known as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) and its numerous partner organizations, with support from the multi-donor CGIAR Fund.

CIAT leads an initiative called Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), which brings together all centers of the CGIAR Consortium along with the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP) and their global networks of partners.

CIAT scientists have released a series of studies in recent months into the expected impacts of climate change on key crops, and ways for smallholder farmers to adapt production. These include reports on tea production in Kenya and Uganda, effect of climate change on West African cocoa, cotton and cashew. A forthcoming report will focus on beans and maize in Central America.

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