

CIAT Appoints New Interim Director General

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Geoff Hawtin, a British-Canadian scientist and expert in plant genetic resources, will be the new Interim Director General of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), in replacement of anthropologist Joachim Voss, who will retire in January 2008.

Hawtin is well known in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the donor community, given his trajectory as researcher and Director of two other centers that also form part of the system to which CIAT belongs.

The new director arrives at a difficult historical moment for this international center, triggered by the limited financial resources available over last 18 months, which can be attributed to the significant reduction in international donations—a situation worsened by the revaluation of the Colombian peso.

Joachim Voss has been the fifth Director General since CIAT was founded in Colombia in 1967. His greatest achievement during his 7 years of leadership was the globalization of the Center with solid activities in Africa and Asia. CIAT, headquartered in Palmira, Department of Valle del Cauca, and with regional offices in Asia, Africa, and Central America, will celebrate its 40th anniversary this coming November.

The Center aims to increase its competitiveness and generate new products of world coverage. Scientific efforts will focus on outcome lines (knowledge and technologies) that seek to empower poor farmers in the tropics so they can achieve a more competitive agriculture.

The new work model involves multidisciplinary teams whose mission is to produce international goods that benefit the poor of the tropical countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Research on traditional crops such as beans, cassava, and forages will continue and, together with soil management and high-value crops, will constitute the Center's priorities with world mandate, while rice research for Latin America will also continue.