October 13, 1975

To: Members of the Consultative Group

From: The Secretariat

Subject: The International Fertilizer Development Center

1. At its meeting in July, The Technical Advisory Committee considered the report of its Subcommittee on Plant Nutrients. The Subcommittee had received the program of the newly established International Fertilizer Development Center and had recommended to TAC that the Center be given the support of the CGIAR in some appropriate relationship to the system which would ensure that it would be reviewed annually and at longer periods in the same way as any other Center.

2. The Chairman of TAC in his statement to the Consultative Group at its meeting on July 31, 1975, commented on the TAC Subcommittee's recommendation. He said the Center's program had four main elements:

   First, improving the efficiency of applied fertilizer nutrients, and in this to arrange for farm testing;

   Second, research on better use of raw materials available, especially in developing countries, which have not hitherto been widely used as a basis for fertilizer;

   Third, improving physical properties and the methods of handling established fertilizers, and

   Fourth, research on marketing, that is to say on systems of distribution downstream from the factories.

3. He went on to say that, with some qualifications, TAC endorsed the program contemplated for the IFDC. The Committee felt the work IFDC proposes to undertake was necessary and they saw evidence that it would have support from industry both within and outside the United States and from a number of developing countries.
The Center and its program could and would command international scientific respect and could result in making better and cheaper fertilizer more readily available.

4. Because an essential element of IFDC's success lay in having access to the facilities of the Tennessee Valley Authority, which could be duplicated elsewhere only at vast expense, the Center would be in a developed country. Moreover, since the United States had undertaken to ensure finance for its core program to July 1978, there was no suggestion that funds for support of its core program be supplied through the CGIAR in the immediate future. But the Center proposes to gain international status under the laws of the United States and to internationalize its governing board.

5. In these circumstances the TAC recommended that IFDC have the support of the CGIAR and that it be subject to review by the CGIAR, the same as other Centers in the system. In making this recommendation it foresaw that the IFDC would work closely with many of the Centers in the system -- indeed it would offer the Centers services which otherwise they would have to provide for themselves -- and it was important, therefore, that IFDC be itself integrated into the work of the system.

6. There was some brief discussion of this recommendation. As the Chairman of the Group noted, the first issue before the Group was whether to adopt as part of the CGIAR system a center for which no direct financial support is required at this time, but funding for which might appear indirectly in the budgets of the other Centers, just as was already the case with other kinds of research done for them under contract in developed countries. The second issue was whether the "appropriate relationship" with IFDC should be one which would ensure an annual review of IFDC's activities similar to the review conducted of the other Centers. He suggested that the members of the Group might wish time to review the available information on IFDC and consider these issues. He therefore proposed that the TAC recommendation be put on the agenda for the October meeting of the Consultative Group.

7. As pointed out by the Chairman of the Group at the July meeting, there is no other Center in the system in the kind of relationship proposed. There are other International Centers whose work is relevant to the CGIAR system but which are not funded through the Group. The Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center is one and the International Food Policy Research Institute is another. Both receive financial support from certain members of the Group bilaterally and the Group avails itself during Centers Week of the opportunity to learn about their programs.
Neither, however, is subject to scientific review by TAC or budgetary review by the Secretariat.

8. Consideration of the TAC recommendation is on the Provisional Agenda for the October meeting on the assumption that the members would wish to decide these issues now as they will affect the conduct of business at Centers Week in 1976 and the preparatory work. In contemplation of the discussion at the October meeting the Secretariat was requested to seek the preliminary views of a representative number of the members. This has been done. It would appear that the members are aware of the importance of the proposed program of the IFDC to research being carried on at the Centers in the CGIAR system and hence of the importance of ensuring that IFDC's program as it evolves should be closely integrated with these other research programs. Donors seemed to think that it was entirely appropriate that the Centers in the system should contract with IFDC for research inputs into their core programs and that the cost of such services should form part of a Center's core budget and hence be funded through the CGIAR. There were, however, substantial reservations about adopting IFDC as a full member of the system at this stage and about subjecting IFDC to the full review procedures of the CGIAR. Most felt that it would be premature to apply the full review procedure of the CGIAR system to a center whose core program was not being funded through the CGIAR and they questioned adding such a review to the many tasks already facing TAC and the CG Secretariat.

9. It would seem, however, that the members consulted would welcome being kept informed of IFDC's program and future plans and would think it beneficial for the work of the CGIAR system that IFDC should have a regular opportunity to meet with members of the Group, members of TAC, and representatives of the Centers. It is therefore recommended that the IFDC be invited to provide to the Group annually at the time of Centers Week a written report on its program and that its representatives be present at Centers Week to speak to this report and respond to any questions TAC or the CG membership may have.