

Update on Biofortification Challenge Program, August, 2003

Activities since May, 2003:

1. Planning meeting of core collaborators and selected stakeholders, June 2-6, CIAT headquarters.

75 persons attended this five-day meeting. The planning committee of 15 persons met for the first time as a group for one full day on May 30.

The following objectives were achieved:

- 1.1 To introduce and discuss the different broad components of the project to those who will be participating in the project and other stakeholders; there was an initial unevenness among the collaborators/participants in their familiarity with the project.
- 1.2. To flesh out and revise the conceptual framework laid out in the proposal to ensure that the different components are designed to complement each other technically -- thus, it was essential to engage in interdisciplinary learning and exchange at the meeting;
- 1.3. To develop an operational plan to implement coordinated activities over the next 12 months; a workplan and budget allocation for 2003 was agreed upon.
- 1.4. To open and set up lines of communication across the components -- collaborators got to know each other much better, and crop leaders became better familiarized with what would be involved in building and managing their crop teams.
- 1.5. To hear, at a very broad, global level, what might be stakeholder or collaborator concerns on the concept of the project as a whole and to get their buy-in.

The agenda, participant list, and outputs of various breakout groups are available upon request.

2. Private sector meeting, IFPRI headquarters, July 20.

Representatives from DuPont/Pioneer and Monsanto corporations, ILSI, and USAID met with Howarth Bouis and Joe Tohme of the BCP to discuss collaboration. The meeting was organized by Bill Neibur of the CGIAR Private Sector Committee. There was strong interest expressed on both sides in cooperating on development of micronutrient-dense, transgenic varieties. Private sector representatives were encouraged to attend the upcoming technical meetings and crop meetings during September-October. Summary notes of the meeting are available upon request.

3. Meeting to discuss collaboration with AATF at IITA headquarters, August 4-6

It was agreed that AATF management will seek approval of the maize biofortification activities by the AATF Board as one of the initial activities of the AATF. Summary notes of the meeting are available upon request.

4. Staffing

4.1. Marianna Carbe (Italy) began employment as Senior Administrative Coordinator at IFPRI in June after a job announcement/search (local hire) in March/April.

4.2. Bonnie McClafferty (United States) will begin employment in September as Senior Communications Specialist at IFPRI after a job announcement/search (local hire) in May/June.

4.3. A process has been initiated (international hire) for filling the nutrition coordinator position. This will be an IFPRI employee based in the Dept. of Human Nutrition at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Three candidates have been short-listed and will be interviewed by the selection committee on September 8.

5. Planning Meetings

The following series of eight planning meetings are in various stages of planning/implementation:

1. Impact and Policy Analysis, IFPRI headquarters, September 2-3.
2. Nutritional Breeding Objectives, September 4-5
3. Wheat crop meeting, September 10-12, CIMMYT headquarters.
4. Cassava crop meeting, Entebbe, Uganda, September 15-17
5. Sweet Potato crop meeting, Entebbe, Uganda, September, 17-19
6. Maize crop meeting, Addis Ababa, September 24-26
7. Bean crop meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, October 1-3
8. Rice crop meeting, IRRI headquarters, October 6-8

The second Project Advisory Meeting will be held at IFPRI headquarters, November 11-12 to consider/approve workplans for 2004 developed at these various planning meetings.

6. Funding, Name Change, and Press Release

6.1. An agreement, officially between IFPRI and the Gates Foundation (although the funding will be jointly administered jointly by CIAT and IFPRI), has been signed which calls for the Gates Foundation to provide \$25 million in funding over four years. The funds will be released in four tranches (\$7 million – August, 2003; \$7 million – January, 2005; \$7 million – January, 2006; \$4 million – January, 2007).

A press release will be issued on October 14 announcing the grant, and a press conference will be held in Washington, DC. Various collaborating organizations will issue their own press releases simultaneously describing their involvement in the BCP.

The name of HarvestPlus, which will be more appealing to the general public, has been widely discussed among collaborators and stakeholders and selected/approved as the new name for the Program. October 14 will be the initial occasion for use of this name -- and

a new logo which was designed by CIP (winner of a competition). The term “biofortification” (which CIAT has trademarked) will continue to be frequently used to describe the process of breeding for micronutrient-dense crops. This name change does not preclude the use of the name Biofortification Challenge Program internally for official CGIAR purposes. A website will be available for use by the time of the October 14 announcement.

6.2. DANIDA indicated approval of 3 million Danish Kroner per year for three years (about US \$440,000 per year at the current exchange rate). 2 million Kr are designated for complementary activities to be undertaken by seven Danish institutions and 1 million Kr are designated for core BCP funding.

6.3. The additional major donor is expected to be USAID, but no commitment has been made as yet for 2004. Additional donors are being approached as indicated in the May, 2003 update.