

Promethean Science

Agricultural Biotechnology, the Environment, and the Poor

Ismail Serageldin and G. J. Persley



CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

*For John J. Doyle,
whose vision inspires us still*

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The CGIAR...

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is an informal association of 58 public and private sector members supporting 16 international agricultural research centers. The CGIAR's mission is to contribute to food security and poverty eradication in developing countries through research, partnership, capacity building, and policy support, promoting sustainable agricultural development based on the environmentally sound management of natural resources. The World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) serve as cosponsors.

The Authors...

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Authors' Preface

Prometheus, according to Greek mythology, was a Titan, responsible for introducing fire to humans, a remarkable innovation at the time, but having benefits and risks, depending on its use. Promethean has since come to mean *dangerously original and creative*.

This book is a companion to the larger volume "Agricultural Biotechnology and the Poor" which was published in January 2000. That volume reported on the international conference that the CGIAR and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences co-sponsored with many other interested institutions in October 1999.

There is a double shift in the research paradigm: firstly, the need for greater contextualization of research, to be undertaken in the context of the deeper understanding of the sustainable management of the environment and the socioeconomic and gender issues that affect the livelihoods of poor people in rural and urban areas. The second shift is the need to mobilize the new revolution in genetics and biotechnology to improve the productivity of agro-ecological systems and the crops, livestock, fish, trees and other species important to poor people and developing countries.

Without minimizing in any way the vital importance of the first shift, this monograph is devoted to a discussion of the second shift, the challenge of

harnessing the new findings in biotechnology for the benefit of the poor and the environment.

It is here that the newly created Global Forum for Agricultural Research must be seen as an important new vector for bringing about the necessary collaboration amongst farmers, producer and consumer organizations, public and private companies, non-governmental organizations, national agricultural research systems, advanced research organizations and international agriculture research institutes, including the CGIAR centers.

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Schematic illustration of regions of origin of the major food crops and the locations of the research centers of the CGIAR

