

Overview from Francisco J. B. Reifschneider, CGIAR Director



At the dawn of the new millennium, agricultural development holds the key to some of the most pressing challenges facing the human family. The CGIAR has a long track record of success in providing research outputs that fulfill the criteria for global public goods. At a time when one of the greatest

challenges is the speed of scientific change itself, the CGIAR must remain true to its mission of generating knowledge and technologies that directly benefit poor farmers in developing countries.

For the CGIAR, the year 2000 will be remembered as a time when the contributions of CGIAR science to international development goals, including poverty reduction and improved health and nutrition, were widely recognized.

Let me highlight just three examples:

- A higher-yielding, protein-rich “miracle corn” to help prevent malnutrition in millions of people earned Dr. Evangelina Villegas and Dr. Surinder K. Vasal of the Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center—CIMMYT) the Millennium World Food Prize. Dr. Villegas—the first woman ever to receive the Food Prize—and Dr. Vasal join six other CGIAR scientists who are World Food Prize Laureates.
- Scientists at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) were enlisted to aid international efforts to investigate the safety and utility of “Golden Rice” in combating Vitamin A deficiency, which is responsible for 500,000 cases of irreversible blindness and 1 to 2 million deaths worldwide each year. This work is a good example of CGIAR strengths in mobilizing high science for the cause of the poor.
- Scientists at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and The Institute for Genomic Research

(TIGR) began using advanced sequencing techniques from the Human Genomic Project to pry open the molecular secrets of *Theileria parva*, the tiny parasite that causes East Coast Fever, a debilitating livestock disease that kills two cows every minute in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their research may also lead to a breakthrough in finding cures for persistent human diseases such as malaria and cancer.

The year 2000 will also be remembered for the changes that occurred across the CGIAR System. World Bank Vice President Ian Johnson became the CGIAR Chairman in July, succeeding Ismail Serageldin, who had served in that leadership position since 1994. Alexander von der Osten, CGIAR Executive Secretary since 1989, also retired at the end of the year 2000.

Since becoming CGIAR Director in January 2001, I have had the pleasure of working with the whole CGIAR family. It is my privilege to participate in shaping the new, revitalized CGIAR.

Scientific enterprise works best as a collaboration, especially when new challenges confront us and test the relevance of our work. In order for the CGIAR to be on the cutting edge, it must renew and transform itself continuously. Members of the CGIAR family are in broad agreement that such renewal is necessary: together, they supported formation of a Change Design and Management Team to examine options, suggest alternatives, and propose specific changes, all the while ensuring that the target of our efforts remains the small farmer who ekes out a precarious existence in the marginal ecosystems of the developing world.

This annual report itself reflects change. It highlights a major environmental issue, the potential impact of climate change on agriculture, especially in developing countries. International agricultural research will play an important role in helping poor farmers adapt to the consequences of climate change and mitigate its deleterious effects. Although climate change is global in scope, a group of the world’s leading scientists has warned that climate change is potentially most devastating to the world’s poorest people. The CGIAR’s research agenda cannot remain unaffected by that finding.

It is a reality that we are in the midst of change that affects every aspect of our work. For a scientific enterprise such as the CGIAR, the prospect of change cannot deter us from pursuing our mission of promoting poverty reduction and sustainable

agriculture. Indeed, this is an opportunity for the scientific temperament to take charge of change and direct it to the noble cause of helping the world's poor farmers.

At this time of change, the *raison d'être* for the CGIAR remains unchanged. Our strategy builds on past achievements, and recognizes that the problems of today and tomorrow need a different kind of security, one that includes food, natural resources, and social components. In pursuit of its pro-farmer mission, the “new” CGIAR must strengthen its true and creative partnerships—based on mutual respect and interests—with national agricultural research systems, civil society institutions, and the private sector, among others.



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