New CGIAR Research Planned in Forestry, Vegetables; Stress On Safeguarding Environment, Renewable Resources

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- How the world's supply of renewable resources is used, or abused, for food production will be a key topic of discussion when leading agricultural researchers and donor members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) meet here Oct. 30-Nov. 3.

Specifically, the group will discuss how agricultural production gains in developing countries in the last three decades can be sustained without depleting or jeopardizing renewable resources.

The CGIAR is a consortium of nearly 50 governments, international organizations and foundations that collectively supports a system of 13 agricultural research centers around the world. The Group provides more than $260 million for food crop and livestock research to benefit developing countries.

Attending the five-day session will be officials of the 13 CGIAR centers and representatives of countries and organizations that fund the research. Observers from other research institutions doing related work will also be present.

In the first major program expansion since the mid-1970s, the CGIAR is planning three initiatives capable of increasing and sustaining agricultural development and food production in developing nations, while protecting the environment and renewable resources.
The new CGIAR initiatives are:

-- The addition of forestry research to its mandate in an effort to stem the world-wide degradation of forests, notably in the humid tropics. CGIAR Chairman W. David Hopper said recently that the rapidly developing crisis was not only threatening vast areas of the world's tropical forests, but "creating a threat to the environment and imperiling the sustainability of food production to feed a growing population."

-- A review of the work of 10 international research centers outside the CGIAR system to determine if their research and goals might be merged with existing CGIAR programs. Research centers being evaluated include several that conduct research on water management, soil fertility, agroforestry, vegetable production and fisheries.

-- Consideration of a proposal to establish a vegetable research network in Africa, starting initially in southern Africa with tomato, onion, cabbage and an indigenous African vegetable, leafy amaranth.

In other CGIAR business, funding requirements of nearly $276 million for the 13 centers currently supported by the CGIAR will be presented and donors will announce their pledges for the coming year.

Jacques Diouf, Senegalese agronomist and Secretary General of the Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest will present the Crawford Memorial Lecture Thursday, Nov. 2. The lecture, "The Challenge of Agricultural Development in Africa." is sponsored by the Australian government in honor of the late Sir John Crawford, an eminent

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agriculturalist, educator and statesman, who was the first chairman of the CGIAR Technical Advisory Committee.

The CGIAR provided $212 million for research and training during 1988. Of this, 40 percent was spent in sub-Saharan Africa, an 11 percent increase from the previous year; 30 percent in Asia; 19 percent in Latin America; and 11 percent in North Africa and the Middle East. Training and other programs strengthening national research capabilities absorbed a fifth of the budget in all regions.

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