

**WORKING WITH PARTNERS
TO CONFRONT THE CHALLENGES OF
CHANGE**

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**Opening Statement
CGIAR Annual General Meeting
Washington D.C.
December 4, 2006**

INTRODUCTION: WELCOME

Good afternoon, colleagues, and welcome. I am pleased to declare open the 2006 Annual General Meeting (AGM06) of the CGIAR.

I am honored to be your ninth Chair, following a line of distinguished predecessors. It gives me great pleasure that two of them – W. David Hopper and V. Rajagopalan – have joined us today. Ian Johnson, whom I succeeded, cannot be with us. In a recent communication he emphasized, and I quote, *“how much I enjoyed being a servant of the CGIAR, how much I believe in its mission and in the people who work for the Centers.”* We can add to what the CGIAR achieved during his stewardship by extending the reforms that CGIAR Members designed and implemented. I offer you my support, as we do so.

Change is normal in a dynamic System. In a few months, Ian’s partner in reform, Francisco Reifschneider, will return to Brazil. There will be other occasions to say farewell to Francisco, but let me say right now how much I have appreciated his collaboration and counsel. Per Pinstrup Andersen will shortly end his term as Science Council Chair. His successor will be Rudy Rabbinge. Several Board Chairs and Directors have ended their terms and their successors are attending an AGM in their current positions for the first time. I thank all those who have served the CGIAR System and those who will do so now and in the future. I thank, as well, all who have worked so hard to arrange this splendid setting for our AGM.

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS – AND BEYOND

What will this AGM send to the table, as the international community looks at the development agenda of today and tomorrow? For that is what an AGM is really about: deciding how best to strengthen the impact of CGIAR-supported research.

Six years ago, the world’s political leaders agreed on a set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with a target date of 2015. These are critically important goals, promoting sustainable development as the gateway out of poverty and hunger for millions. Even so, the world will not cease to function by 2015, whether or not the MDGs have been met. We know, as well, that research is a long-term enterprise. Facing these realities, an effective planning horizon for the CGIAR has to extend well beyond 2015.

What will the world be like in, say, 2050? The world’s population was 3.6 billion when the CGIAR was formed. It now stands at 6 billion and is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050. At the very least, there will be many more mouths to feed. The demand for food may double, and the demand is growing complex as consumption patterns change and diversify. The need to grow more food, and different kinds of food, will challenge agriculture and will continue to place a heavy burden on natural resources.

We will hear at tomorrow’s Crawford Memorial Lecture about the special challenge of providing food for all in the 21st century. Without agricultural science that challenge cannot be met. Do remember, however, that agriculture does much more than feed people. It is the most important productive sector in low-income countries, the primary source of employment to people in rural

areas, and a significant contributor to GDP. Agricultural transformation can help the world to overcome the interlocking problems of hunger, poverty, and natural resource degradation. Agricultural *research* provides agriculture with its strategic underpinning, mobilizing science to achieve sustainable agricultural development.

The contribution of the CGIAR to creating and sharing new knowledge, technologies, policy advice and genetic resources through research for development remains crucial, because most developing countries on their own unfortunately lack the resources to undertake these tasks. The CGIAR is a platform for collaboration among many partners. The whole world benefits from CGIAR outputs which are global public goods.

SOME KEY ISSUES

As we look to a future in which we expect transformed agriculture to help transform human lives, a number of specific issues challenge us. For example:

- Climate variability and change pose threats to development in general and to agriculture in particular, as last month's "UN Climate Change Conference" held in Nairobi reaffirmed. The UK Government's chief economist (Sir Nicholas Stern) has warned that climate change may cost the world as much as 20 percent of GDP -- US\$6 trillion at today's prices -- by the next century. Earlier today, CGIAR Members and Centers focused their discussions on climate change. The CGIAR and its partners need to apply first class science to helping poor farmers adapt to the effects of climate change, and benefit from the opportunities for carbon-sequestration and carbon-farming.
- New pests and diseases are constant risks. Recent examples of unexpected risks are Avian influenza, and Ug99, a virulent form of stem rust. Over 150 million poultry have died or been culled in Southeast Asia, to prevent the spread of Avian influenza. FAO has estimated that the economic cost to the countries concerned is around \$10 billion. Poor farmers suffered the most. Ug99, if left unchecked, can cause massive losses of wheat yields, pushing up the global price of this staple grain and possibly leading to serious food shortages.
- An estimated three billion people suffer from the "hidden hunger" of micronutrient deficiency which can cause premature death, disease, and cognitive impairment. Facing this problem, the CGIAR Challenge Program HarvestPlus seeks to breed nutrient dense staple foods through biofortification. Initial results are promising. Equally important is the emergence of focused partnerships -- a key objective of Challenge Programs.
- The world has been recklessly losing biodiversity. Half the world's forests have been lost in our own lifetime. Agrobiodiversity must be conserved for the future. Genetic resources must be sustainably utilized and made available to poor farmers. The world's agricultural legacy is protected in genebanks at CGIAR Centers. A recent agreement that brings these genebanks into the framework of the "International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources" ensures that farmers and plant breeders will have access to these invaluable resources.

- The annual Human Development Report issued last month estimated that the number of people living in water-stressed countries will increase from around 800 million to some 3 billion people by 2025, at current trends. The “good news” is that small investments in infrastructure for water can yield big returns. This was a major finding presented at this year’s World Water Week, hosted by the Stockholm International Water Institute. Representatives of several CGIAR Centers and of the “Water and Food” Challenge Program participated.
- Marine fisheries are so over-exploited that 29 percent of all fished species had collapsed by 2003, according to a recent study led by Canadian ecologists. The study projected that unless trends are reversed, the world could run out of seafood by 2048.
- Developing countries are the hardest hit by fluctuating prices of fossil fuel because they are the least able to cope with them. Research to develop renewable sources of energy, and to understand the impact of agro-energy products on food production, water and the environment need to be pursued vigorously. Such research will need to include the development of biofuels, whether these are derived from energy crops, food crops that can be put to many uses, or agricultural waste.
- Global trade affects poor farmers as well. OECD agricultural subsidies continue to dwarf ODA budgets. As the World Bank’s President Paul Wolfowitz has reminded us, and I quote, *“investments in agriculture alone will not improve farm incomes. Rich countries must end agricultural subsidies that distort prices and restrict market access for poor farmers. Successful liberalization of trade is as important for enabling people to escape from poverty as are increases in aid or debt relief.”* Fair access to fair markets is indeed critical.
- Many of these issues are especially relevant in Africa which has not gained from the green revolution as Asia and parts of Latin America did. Although significant improvements have been made in some countries, serious poverty and hunger persist. Close to 300 million people survive on average incomes of less than US\$1 a day. Most African countries are not expected to reach the MDGs by 2015. Every effort needs to be made to make Africa’s growth pro-poor, and agriculture has to be at the heart of this process. CGIAR Centers working in Africa need to speed up adjustments that lead to more efficient interaction with and support to African countries.

These issues demand attention. In saying that, I emphasize that we confront a formidable agenda. The challenges ahead are many and complex: biological, biophysical, institutional, and more. Complexities are not an excuse for inaction. If, in order to meet these challenges we need to plan new modes of operation, of governance and of management, and even set ourselves new goals, we should be prepared to do so – just as the CGIAR has responded to the challenge of change before.

INNOVATIONS

In 2001, the CGIAR System saw the need for change, in order to modernize internally and, combining with partners externally, to confront major global and regional issues. I will not repeat the details. A fact worth noting, however, is that the System's estimated resources for 2006 stand at \$500 million. I have been informed that this figure was eliminated as a target in the "CGIAR Lucerne Declaration" of 1995 because it was considered wildly excessive. The CGIAR *has* moved on. We must keep moving on.

AGM06 is in many ways a showcase of change. A major innovation is the first comprehensive interaction between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the CGIAR, which was planned with the assistance of a dedicated advisory group. Also for the first time, a Member Coordination Forum will be part of the Business Meeting, and that could lead to more coordinated funding for research on System priorities. There are many more innovations, as you will yourselves experience.

We have also just re-launched the Challenge Programs process. This is particularly important, because Challenge Programs are a successful component of the reform program. The Annual General Meeting is another. Have all other components had the same success? A view frequently expressed by many from the South, is that we have not found an effective way of mobilizing its science resources. Governance was a recurring theme in the World Bank's recent Sustainable Development Network Week, and I know it is a matter of critical relevance to the CGIAR. The results of the recent Stakeholder Perception Survey were positive, overall, but there was a clear perception of the need for greater efficiency in the System. And, as I am constantly reminded, there is a perception that the speed of change itself needs to be accelerated. Reality and perception might sometimes differ but, so often, the separation between the two is thin.

CONCLUSION: MOVING ON

Colleagues:

There is much ahead of us. There is much that we can and must do. We know, however, that the CGIAR cannot be all things to all people. But it can always attempt to be relevant, dynamic, and efficient.

We must define our comparative advantage clearly, and make that the basis of our best efforts.

We must ensure that our science is of the highest quality.

We must realign our institutions to be able to move swiftly and effectively.

We must develop true and equal partnerships.

We must move faster to change the way we work.

We are all members of the same human family, with a common future. We must shape it together, for the mutual benefit of all. We have one world to share and if we do not share that wisely, we will have nothing to share at all. Thank you.

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