

CGIAR Chairman's Opening Statement AGM04

“A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE”

1. Welcome and Thanks

Your Excellency, Honorable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the first Annual General Meeting of the CGIAR (AGM04), to be held in Latin America. I was pleased to visit the region earlier this year and observe at first hand the work and impact of the Centers and their partners. I thank the Government of Mexico and CIMMYT for co-hosting the CGIAR. We are privileged to have Mexico's Secretary of Agriculture, His Excellency Javier Usabiaga Arroyo, with us. His presence is an important endorsement of our goals and mission. I thank other distinguished guests for their participation. I offer a warm welcome to our three very special guests: Norman Borlaug, Robert McNamara, and Evangelina Villegas. They have a very important place in the distinguished history of the CGIAR. Please join me in welcoming them.

2. Announcement

At AGM03, I dedicated my opening statement to the memory of former CGIAR Chairman Wilfried Thalwitz, my friend and mentor, as a tribute to his effective leadership. As some of you may know, his family and friends have established a scholarship in his memory at IFAR, the CGIAR-oriented foundation that enables young developing country scientists to benefit from professional development at the Centers. Margret Thalwitz is here with us today. I am pleased to announce that the 2004 IFAR Wilfried Thalwitz Scholarship was awarded to Sayat Shortan, an economist at Kazakhstan's Scientific Production Center of Grain Farming. I thank the family and friends of Wilfried Thalwitz for making it possible for the CGIAR System to nurture his legacy.

I will now move on.

3. Celebrating Our Beginning

We meet in the International Year of Rice, a reminder that the world acknowledges the importance of commodities covered by CGIAR Centers. We have already experienced pre-AGM events – Centers and Members Day organized by Center Directors Committee (CDC), and field visits organized by Mexico and CIMMYT. We have much work to do, at both the Stakeholder and Business meetings. Our agenda is rich in substance, setting the scene for robust discussion and clear decisions.

Organizing an AGM is a complex undertaking. Nevertheless these meetings and, indeed, my continuing responsibilities as CGIAR Chair, give me tremendous enjoyment. This is possible because of your sustained support. Let me thank all of you who give me such wonderful advice and backing. I am grateful for this, and I would like to pay a special tribute to my colleague Francisco Reifschneider and his team. There is much more that we all need to do together. My hope is that this AGM will serve as a bridge to the future, linking what has been achieved before with all that remains to be done in the future.

Mexico has a rich history. For example, in international agricultural research, it is here that partnerships for development were launched. So it is appropriate that we should return “home,” to where it all began, as we seek to build a bridge to the future.

International agricultural research was launched here, with the Mexico-Rockefeller Foundation International Agriculture Program, some six decades ago (1943). That joint venture mobilized international and national scientific resources and skills to meet local needs. The Program focused primarily on three research themes:

- increasing the productivity of beans, maize, and wheat;
- soil management and crop protection; and
- improving the productivity of domestic animals.

Many dedicated pioneers collaborated to build a new and unique institution on the foundation that was laid in Mexico. They included Addeke Boerma (FAO), John Crawford (Australia), John Hannah (USAID), George Harrar (Rockefeller Foundation), Forrest Hill (Ford Foundation), Paul Hoffman (UNDP), David Hopper (Canada/IDRC), and Geoffrey Wilson (UK). Robert McNamara’s role was special. Without his strong push there could not have been a CGIAR. Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug exemplifies the scientific excellence of the CGIAR System. Evangelina Villegas of CIMMYT, who received the World Food Prize for her work on quality protein maize, has helped to keep alive the pioneering spirit of our founders. We will be able to interact with them, and to honor their contribution and legacy, at a special lunch-time event today, “Celebrating the Founding of the CGIAR”.

4. From Founding to Reform

In the ‘sixties and ‘seventies, the threat of famine in parts of Asia was so real that concern fueled a tremendous sense of doom. One of the pessimists said that: “Some time between 1970 and 1985 the world will undergo vast famines -- hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death..... In countries such as India, dispassionate analysis indicates that the unbalance between food and population is hopeless.” The doomsayers were wrong, completely wrong. They were proved wrong by new knowledge, new technologies, and good policies that transformed the agricultural sector. In India, impact bordered on the spectacular. The average yield increase for cereals between 1961 and 2000 was 146 percent. The average real income of small farmers in southern India rose by 90 percent, and that of landless laborers – the poorest of the poor -- by 125 percent, in 1973-94. Farmers, policy makers, the public and private sector, contributed to these achievements. A key element was the dynamic partnership between Indian scientists and their international colleagues. As Mr. Sharad Pawar, India’s Minister of Agriculture, wrote to me recently: “The collaboration of Indian National Agricultural Research Systems and the CGIAR Centers represents one of the finest partnerships in the field of international research in agriculture, and has contributed, in particular, to India’s Green Revolution.”

The founders of the CGIAR were convinced that the same knowledge, adapted to local conditions, could be successfully deployed elsewhere. How right they were. A study published just last year estimated that of the more than \$7 billion invested by the CGIAR since its inception, for every single dollar invested, nine dollars worth of additional food has been produced in the world’s developing regions. This is a major achievement. Per capita food consumption in developing countries would have declined by 5% on average and up to 7% in the poorer regions but for this effort. Millions more children would have

been malnourished. Some 300 million hectares of land were saved, and so was precious biodiversity.

Whichever way you look at it, the wisdom of our founders has been amply demonstrated. From a small group of “Northern” members among whom only a few were expected to finance research, the Group has grown into a truly international instrument, with South and North both represented. Today, the South forms a majority. All CGIAR Members are expected to support the approved research agenda. Demands on the Centers have grown in complexity, requiring a new and sharper focus to increase and channel impact. The number of Centers increased, and research interests diversified. Productivity and natural resources management now serve as twin components of our research agenda.

In 2001, we launched a major reform program to modernize, and help us cope with challenges in the years ahead. Many of you will recall that the objectives we set ourselves included:

- 1) “elevating our game,” by making the profoundly important case for agriculture as a prelude to making the case for the CGIAR; creatively mobilizing all resources (human, financial, knowledge and technologies) to address major global or regional issues; developing high-impact, focused, time bound programs;
- 2) increasing efficiency in policy formulation and decision making by streamlining our governance and meeting structure;
- 3) refocusing the work of our science advisory body, enabling it to harness cutting edge science to meet the needs of poor farmers; and
- 4) improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of services provided to the CGIAR System by different units.

I believe that we have more than met our objectives. The initial phase of reform has been a great success, and transparency, accountability, efficiency and impact are all being enhanced. A stronger and better supported CGIAR is now a reality.

Decision-making is more nimble, with full use of the new information technology. The Executive Council (ExCo) has helped to maintain the momentum of change. Later in the week we will endorse and celebrate the first Charter of the CGIAR System that will support consistency and efficiency. Our thanks are due to all those who have worked to make this happen.

Challenge Programs respond directly to the major concerns of the global development agenda. They encourage broad-based coalitions to increase quality and productivity; protect the environment; and strengthen social networks. International interest in and support for the Challenge Programs from both the private and public sector has grown. Some \$33 million has already been contributed for Challenge Programs.

We have elevated the role of the Science Council, which is ideally positioned to strengthen linkages with the global science community – to provide us with the best possible advice, and a very clear focus on science.

Collaboration within the System Office has resulted in better services to the stakeholders, lower costs, mutual awareness among component units, and the development of best practices.

We have begun to think in practical terms about restructuring the arrangement of research activities. A pragmatic and programmatic assessment by the System resulted in ISNAR closing down, but its most useful activities were transformed into a new, focused program within IFPRI. More thought is being given by Members and Centers to other necessary changes. Such changes are to be welcomed.

Donors have reacted positively to all of these trends and, for the first time ever, our annual expenditures have crossed the \$400 million mark. A proud achievement. And we will grow.

5. Beyond the Reform Program

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me now move to matters beyond the Reform Program.

We know that the results of scientific research take time to have an impact. Lag times from good ideas to good implementation can be a decade or more. We are in the business of the long-term. I have just looked back 40 years to honor our guest visionaries, so let us think forward 40 years and take a good look at the middle of this century. I am hopeful that some of us here today will be invited to the virtual 2050 AGM and I sincerely hope that those invited will look back with the same level of pride and enthusiasm that we see today in our honored guests.

Even modest per capita income increases in developing countries to reduce and, I hope, eliminate the ravages of poverty will result in a significant increase in Global GDP — potentially adding \$100 trillion to today's \$35 trillion. We will see a major increase in food demand to feed 2 billion additional people on our planet and to meet new demands as incomes rise, and people spend more on high value foods. Food demand could double by the middle of the century. We could see a rise in the incomes of the poor, driven in very large measure by increasing agricultural productivity. We must see Africa play a crucial and larger role in the global economy. We must confront the environmental challenges to our fragile planet, whether they be Climate Change or the loss of biodiversity. In addition, the search for fresh water resources in the future will resemble the search for oil in the previous century: both scarce, highly valued, and often contentious resources.

As we look to our common future, it is clear to me and I hope to you, that agriculture will remain a cornerstone of our search for a sustainable, prosperous and more equitable planet:

- Agriculture will remain a cornerstone for economic growth in many poor countries, where it often represents more than 25% of GDP. Agricultural growth will help to drive out rural poverty and contribute to the growth of other sectors, as it has done in Asia. I am reminded of recent research on low income countries that indicated a 1% increase in agricultural GDP per capita led to a 1.6% gain in per capita incomes of the poorest fifth of the population.
- Agricultural growth is a cornerstone of long-term food security. And we must not allow ourselves to be either self-congratulatory or complacent about the rapidly growing demand for food commodities in the coming decades. Productivity,

especially in Africa, must not be ignored. In this regard, I want to congratulate Monty Jones and WARDA for winning this year's World Food Prize for his work on the New Rices in Africa (NERICA).

- Agricultural growth is not only about food commodities. Increasingly, poor farmers will find that their search for income security leads them to other non-traditional and often higher value products such as vegetables, fruits and non-food products. Indeed, experiments in carbon credits under the Kyoto Protocol may offer opportunities for local farmers to gain supplemental income by addressing our common global environment.
- Agriculture will become a cornerstone of our ecological and environmental management, especially of natural resources. The future of the world's remaining natural habitats is dependent, in large measure, on how we manage agriculture. Climate Change is projected to have a major impact on agriculture – in the absence of action, potentially a productivity decline of 30 % in some parts of the world. Remember also -- over 70% of the world's freshwater is used in agriculture, and often inefficiently. This must change. The environmental dimensions of agriculture have become critically important to our future agenda.
- Agriculture will remain central to major international public policy concerns. The Doha Round provides an important litmus test for our commitment to a fairer global deal and is critical to establishing a more level playing field for millions of farmers. The current level of OECD agricultural subsidies is both unfair and uneconomic. Also, issues of benefits and risks of science applied to agriculture will need open and informed discourse with all stakeholders. This must be done in a professional and mutually respectful manner.
- Agriculture will play a larger role in helping deliver health benefits. The pioneering work of Eva Villegas on protein quality maize and the most recent work on the HarvestPlus Challenge Program could pave the way for cost-effectively embedding important health traits into the food that poor people eat.
- Let's not forget, too, that agriculture can serve the needs of rural communities, encouraging social cohesion and fostering community development. And, as exemplified by our Nobel Peace Laureate, Norman Borlaug, food and peace are intertwined. Farmers will play an increasingly important role in our research endeavors. The social policy dimensions of agriculture have also become critically important to our agenda.

Many issues will arise as we consider the changing role of agriculture and its contribution to sustainable development. We must face them squarely. We need scientific and strategic advice to help us decide, and we are fortunate that the Science Council is working on many of these issues. This meeting gives us the opportunity to put our views on the table, discuss them among all shareholders and stakeholders, and shape a consensus for future action.

Clearly, the nature of scientific enquiry is changing. The inter-dependence and complexity of the new agenda suggests greater integration of research areas and of disciplines; and participatory research may play a larger role. Yet, it is essential that this will be done with the highest intellectual rigor. Also, while we do identify critical multi-

disciplinary issues, let's not lose sight of core scientific work at Centers nor of the continued importance of commodities.

The CGIAR cannot be all things to all people. We cannot lose our focus at a time when challenges seem to increase. Nor can the CGIAR act on its own. The tasks that lie ahead are too crucial for that.

A critically important challenge, therefore, is to design new business-like partnerships, in which compatible strengths are combined. Effective partnerships need to be formed and to function at different levels. They have to be substantive, results-driven, well planned, and wholeheartedly implemented. We must have faith in the concept, and determination to make the concept work. We need to work with a broad range of partners – civil society groups such as producer and consumer associations; traditional knowledge organizations and indigenous peoples; universities; and the private sector. We need to encourage not only South-North partnerships but South-South also. Please have a look at exhibits at this meeting which illustrate the partnerships that are developing.

We already know that Challenge Programs offer one avenue to support more effective partnerships. So is the collaboration between Centers and civil society as seen in the Innovation Marketplace today. We have integrated our efforts at the global level in the international conventions, and the various development-related summits. Our work is relevant to and supportive of the Millennium Development Goals.

Another challenge is to continue to develop the agility of our institutions. The founding institutions of the CGIAR were suited to meet the needs of the time. Changing circumstances require innovative approaches. Last year I suggested that Center governance would benefit from arrangements that create greater coherence in the management of Centers, eliminating duplication of effort, and decreasing inter-Center competition for resources. We can streamline even more. We must re-examine and renew management structures. We must reconfigure and cluster research and service activities. There is a greater willingness to discuss these issues and an openness to innovate. I congratulate the Centers and Directors General for beginning to explore different ways of managing and conducting research. I thank and commend the Boards for supporting them. These ideas are encouraging, but we must also move to action – very soon. We can learn from others, and we are ready to do so.

We are challenged, as well, to be ahead of our times, as the CGIAR founders were ahead of theirs. Many areas of effort await creative responses. One of them is to further strengthen global capacity building so that, eventually, national and regional scientists and systems will be the leaders of global agricultural research. We have trained some 75,000 scientists since the CGIAR was created. Surely, we can aim at training 75,000 a year, every year, using new information technologies, and supporting such distance learning initiatives as the Global Open Agriculture and Food University which is currently being discussed by Centers.

Another area that demands thinking “outside the box” is how to develop new paradigms that appropriately handle IPR issues, enabling the private and public sector to collaborate for the production of global and regional public goods. And we must truly embed diversity, including gender diversity, deep within the CGIAR System. External factors are equally important, and we must look to the day when action is taken to ensure that the agricultural products of developing countries are allowed fair access to fair markets. We have an exciting agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We should never forget that calls on public and private finance are numerous, and growing. Industrialized country subsidies for agriculture remain at over \$300 billion each year; global military spending alone is over \$900 billion per year. Development aid expenditures remain at around \$50 billion a year.

By comparison we are small, yet we deliver high rates of return and significant impact. We provide good value, and therefore I call on every CGIAR Member to support the research agenda to the fullest extent possible. This involves financial support to the CGIAR, of course. But it requires more. It requires that we work as a System, and in collaboration with others, to ensure that agricultural research systems in the South and North are fully supported. When a critical mass of countries, big and small, respect and support their own agricultural research systems, the wider global agricultural system will benefit as well. Unfortunately, in many countries we have instead seen a decline in support for national agricultural research systems.

6. Conclusion: Towards Prosperity

Secretary Usabiaga, Your Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen.

The founders of the CGIAR System confronted the threat of famine and worked successfully to overcome it. There continue to be areas of the world where sustainable productivity increases and food security will remain a major priority in the decades ahead. The research we support will continue to help increase productivity and create food security, reduce hunger, and combat natural resource degradation. We must, for instance, commit ourselves to creating new partnerships in Africa for the generation of knowledge and technologies, for increasing productivity, and for ensuring impact.

Beyond those tasks, however, lies the goal of helping the world's poor to begin a permanent escape from poverty. Growth, linked with responsible practices and policies, is the starting point of that process. For the great majority of the poor who live in rural areas, sustainable agriculture is the basis of sustainable growth.

The CGIAR is very special. We have a dedicated group of professionals. We have committed and talented partners. We have committed and caring donors from South and North. We have the right agenda.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to help millions of the world's marginalized to begin their progress towards prosperity. That is the bridge to the future. We are prepared for the next 40 years; we are relevant; and we are ready. We cannot afford to lose this opportunity. Thank you.