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Crops for the Future - New international organization announced

Maputo, Mozambique (30 November 2008) — A new international organization dedicated to neglected and underutilized crops will be announced on Sunday 30 November 2008 at the Annual General Meeting of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research in Maputo, Mozambique.

Crops for the Future has evolved from a union of the International Centre for Underutilized Crops (ICUC) and the Global Facilitation Unit for Underutilized Species (GFU). It will be hosted in Malaysia by Bioversity International in a joint venture with the University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus.

Over half of humanity's food comes from only three crops – rice, wheat and maize. Thousands of others are also important, but overlooked, as sources of nutrition, food, animal feed, medicines and other resources. Hannah Jaenicke, Interim Global Coordinator of Crops for the Future, said: "In times of changing climates, and economic and social upheavals, it is essential that we promote diversity. These underutilized or orphan crops are vital to support poor peoples' coping strategies and to encourage sustainability."

Emile Frison, Director General of Bioversity International said: "Bioversity International has been working on neglected and underutilized species for many years. I am delighted that by hosting and supporting Crops for the Future, we will strengthen the global commitment to the use of a wide range of agricultural biodiversity."

Sayed Azam-Ali, Professor of Tropical Agronomy and Vice-President (Research) at The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus said: "This partnership has enormous significance for the future of underutilized crops. I am delighted that we can use our excellent facilities and expertise to help carry out studies on a wide range of potentially important crops."

Crops for the Future will support, collect, synthesize and promote knowledge on neglected and underutilized species for the benefit of the poor and the environment. It will do so by complementing and strengthening the efforts of other players active in international agricultural research and development.

The new organization is expected to start operating early in the new year.

— Ends —

Notes to editors:

The University of Nottingham is ranked in the UK's Top 10 and the World's Top 100 universities by the Shanghai Jiao Tong (SJTU) and Times Higher (THES) World University Rankings.

Bioversity International, part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, is the world's largest organization dedicated to researching the use of agricultural biodiversity to improve the lives of poor people.

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