



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

International Potato Center (CIP)

Lima, Peru
www.cipotato.org

Background Information on CIP Shipment to Svalbard Global Seed Vault

In line with its effort to secure the long-term conservation of root and tuber crop genetic resources, CIP is sending a significant supply of seed samples to the recently created Svalbard International Seed Vault in Norway as a backup of its collections.

CIP is one among many CGIAR centers that is sending seed samples to Norway. Specifically, CIP is sending a total of 2,200 samples of wild potatoes, 3,650 samples of cultivated potatoes, 1,373 samples of wild *Ipomea*, and 3,797 samples of cultivated sweet potato. These more than 11,000 different samples will be deposited over a four-year period beginning in January 2008.

CIP currently holds in trust the world's largest reservoir of root and tuber crop genetic material, which includes approximately 2,000 wild and 5,000 cultivated potato samples, 6,000 of sweet potato and over 1,000 of other Andean root and tuber crops. These crops are particularly important in impoverished and marginal environments where many of the world's poorest people live. CIP has distributed these germplasm holdings to users worldwide, with developing countries receiving most samples.

In addition to helping restore native potato varieties in poor rural farming communities—varieties that otherwise would have been lost forever—CIP's collection has also served as a source for scientists to breed new varieties with desired traits, such as varieties that contain genes that are tolerant to cold and drought, or resistant to saline soil and certain viruses and diseases.

This includes varieties with resistance to late blight disease, the cause of the infamous Irish Potato Famine, and today the cause of millions of dollars in losses to farmers around the world. Late-blight resistant potato varieties developed and deployed at CIP have helped reduce potato production losses due to this devastating disease as well as damage to human health and the environment caused by the use of fungicides to combat it.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, a project involving the cultivation and consumption of CIP-bred orange-fleshed sweet potato varieties is helping combat vitamin A deficiency, a leading cause of mortality in African children.

CIP's genebank in early 2008 is set to be awarded an ISO 17025 accreditation, which covers the competency of a laboratory. This will be the first genebank in the world to apply this demanding technical quality standard in its work.

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