

# NEWS FROM CIP



## Potatoes: our common biological and cultural heritage – our collective responsibility

Ten thousand years ago, in what is modern-day Peru, the men and women who lived around Lake Titicaca began a conscious process of cultivation and trait selection that resulted in the domestication of the potato. The procession of the potato since that first domestication event is an adventure story with chapters that include evolution and biodiversity; deep cultural symbolism and amusing historical anecdotes; food security, with both the ruin and the salvation of entire populations; and cases of economic success and growth. The potato's story is a lens into the story of human civilization and at the same time a vehicle to understand the modern-day challenges to human development. In 1971, the International Potato Center became the contemporary custodian of this treasure that the Andes has given to the rest of the world. And, in 2005, based on a proposal by the Peruvian delegation, the United Nations General Assembly declared that 2008 would be the International Year of the Potato (IYP). Preparations for this celebration have begun around the world.

The United Nations has designated the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to lead IYP on behalf of the UN. The FAO-IYP Informal International Steering Committee met in Rome in February. The group endorsed the UN-FAO IYP slogan, *Potatoes: Hidden Treasure*, as well as the logo (see sidebar) and the concept. The primary objective of IYP is to raise awareness of potato as the most important non-cereal food staple, worldwide, and the role that potato can play in enhancing food security and eradicating poverty. The FAO group is being lead by the Department for Sustainable Development; they have launched their website ([www.potato2008.org](http://www.potato2008.org)), with the request that all of the UN member country National Committees utilize the site to share their 2008 IYP activities.

At present, seven scientific meetings have been announced for 2008. CIP and FAO will co-host the first of the scientific meetings with a forum, *Potato Science for the Poor – Challenges for the New Millennium*, which will be held in Cuzco, Peru from 25 to 28 March 2008. This forum intends to bring together the international potato research and development community with the objective of exploring pathways to enhance the impact of potato production and utilization as contributions to achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. The *Third International Late Blight Conference*, co-hosted by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), the Global Initiative on Late Blight (GILB), and CIP, will take place from 3 to 6 April in Beijing, China. The *17<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of the European Association for Potato Research (EAPR)* will be held in Brasov, Romania from 6 to 10 July. The Potato Association of America (PAA) will celebrate their annual meeting from 10 to 14 August in Buffalo, NY, USA. The Latin American Potato Association (ALAP) will hold the *ALAP XXII Congress* in Mar de Plata, Argentina from 30 November to 5 December. And, the Indian Potato Association is planning "Global Potato Conference-2008: Opportunities and Challenges in the New Millennium" for 9 to 12 December in New Dehli. We also have preliminary news that the World Potato Congress will organize a potato tour to Australia and New Zealand during 2008.



The PapaAndina Partnership Program is developing a series of regional activities with the partnership platforms in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. It is hoped that these activities will lead to the development and launching of a strategic vision for the potato sector in each of the partner countries, including a portfolio of products based on native potatoes. Potato photo competitions and exhibitions are also under discussion.

CIP has developed a specific section of our Website where we will share the most current information that we have on 2008 IYP scientific meetings (<http://www.cipotato.org/pressroom/iyp.asp>). On that same website, we will post other information that we hope will be useful to you as you continue developing your own IYP activities.

CIP is also working with the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on an international exhibition that will tour Europe in 2008. The exhibition, *Potatoes: Gift from Ancient Peru to the World*, will explain the domestication, evolution and biodiversity of potatoes; their movement from the Andes to Europe and the rest of the world; the cultural importance of potatoes in the Andes and around the world; and the work that we all continue today to conserve and utilize potatoes as a vehicle for food security and poverty alleviation. We hope to announce the schedule for this exhibition in the next issue of *News from CIP*.

In 2008, the Government of Peru will host the European Union – Latin American and Caribbean Summit (in May) as well as the Asian-Pacific Economic Community (APEC) meetings throughout 2008. Potatoes will be the cultural theme of the EU-LAC summit, which will lead up to the 30 May celebration of National Potato Day. We hope that as the other UN Member Country National Committees develop their plans for 2008 they will link to the FAO website to keep us all informed.

While we have much to celebrate in 2008, as a research and development community we have the collective responsibility to utilize the International Year of the Potato to strengthen our resolve and refine our strategies for conserving and utilizing potatoes as vehicles to improve the well-being of the poor and hungry around the world.

We look forward to working and celebrating with you during 2008.

**Pamela K. Anderson**

## United Nations recognizes Papa Andina/ INCOPA's T'ikapapa work

The T'ikapapa initiative, which markets specially selected and packed native Peruvian potatoes under the T'ikapapa trademark, has been awarded one of the prestigious United Nations Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Nations (Seed) Awards for 2007. The initiative was one of the ten finalists selected out of 230 proposals from 70 countries.

The award was made at the National Potato Day celebrations in Peru in May 2007. The T'ikapapa initiative was selected because it represents a new way to link small-scale Andean farmers with new urban markets, helps to improve local farmers' livelihoods and utilizes environmentally friendly technologies to conserve local biodiversity. The method helps public and private groups form partnerships at all the stages of the market chain, from cultivation and production to packaging and marketing, from the farmer to the consumer.

The Seed Initiative is an international awards-based scheme and learning tool to encourage local entrepreneurs, communities, companies and others to join forces in partnerships for sustainable development. Partners in the Seed Initiative include the World Conservation Union (IUCN); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the governments of the United States of America, Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, and the United Kingdom; and private sector partner Swiss Re. The Seed Awards program publicly recognizes the contribution of innovative, entrepreneurial partnerships to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

T'ikapapa is one of several potato products brought to market in recent years, through



Kurt Manrique of INCOPA receiving the certificate of the SEED Award from the United States Ambassador to Peru Mr Curtis Struble at the National Potato Day celebrations in Lima, Peru, 30 May 2007.



the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)-funded project coordinated by CIP to revalue the Peruvian native potato and position it in the national and international market.

Specialists of Papa Andina (a CIP Partnership Program) and its INCOPA project (Innovation and Competitiveness of the Peruvian Potato), which promoted the T'ikapapa concept, commented in Lima that this is a recognition of the enormous biodiversity contained in the Peruvian native potato, which the entrepreneurs of T'ikapapa knew how to assess, and the contribution of the Andean farmers, who have developed and conserved the varieties over the centuries.

## CGIAR recognizes orange-fleshed sweetpotato work (OFSP)

The civic society organization Helen Keller International (HKI), CIP and HarvestPlus won a \$30,000 Innovation Marketplace Award from the CGIAR for the orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) program in Africa. The Award, one of four that were presented at the CGIAR Annual Meeting in Washington in December 2006, was made for the project "Promoting Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato to Improve Child Survival and Food Security in Africa." The jury particularly recognized:

- How the partnership was innovative in strengthening food security through successfully linking agriculture with nutrition and health.
- The enormous potential for scaling up this project within the African continent and even globally.

The OFSP program promotes the cultivation and consumption of orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes to improve food security and combat vitamin A deficiency (VAD) in developing countries, a leading cause of mortality in African children.

To encourage farmers, many of whom are women, to adopt OFSP as part of their production and consumption, the project promotes behavior change and demand creation strategies, integrates OFSP into health/nutrition activities, and provides training to front-line workers, usually governmental or non-governmental agricultural extension agents.

The program has already reached thousands of families in Africa. Approximately 90,000 families in Mozambique, 10,000 in Burkina Faso and 15,000 in Niger have adopted OFSP. In Mozambique, the program is part of an integrated agriculture and nutrition approach emphasizing market development and consumer behavior change to achieve food sustainability. In Burkina Faso, 50 schools have implemented the program into their school gardens, so that students are taught life skills as well as the importance of nutrition in a daily diet.

Looking forward, HKI, CIP and HarvestPlus hope to expand the OFSP program both within existing and to new countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. One goal of the program is developing varieties of OFSP based on specific eco-zones, including those that are drought, pest and/or disease-resistant.

The OFSP program is sponsored by an international partnership of agriculturalists and nutritionists, working together at the country level to introduce locally suitable OFSP varieties. In addition to these primary sponsors, other partners include networks of key government, non-governmental organizations and research groups that have helped to raise money as well as support activities to reach more families in need.



The Chair of CGIAR Katherine Sierra presenting a \$30,000 Innovation Marketplace Award from the CGIAR to the civic society organization Helen Keller International (HKI), CIP and HarvestPlus for the orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) program in Africa



## OFSP recognition in India as well ...

The Vitamin A for Africa (VITAA) platform was formally recognized for its pioneering work in addressing a major nutritional problem in Africa during the 14<sup>th</sup> Triennial Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops in November 2006 in Kerala, India. VITAA was recognized by the ISTRC secretariat at the Symposium for its outstanding contribution to nutritional security through the promotion of orange-fleshed sweetpotato in Africa.

The theme of the symposium was Roots and Tubers for Sustainable Development: Issues and Strategies. A special session sponsored by HarvestPlus was held on the second day, at which Robert Mwangi, a partner from the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) in Uganda, described advances in quality breeding of orange-fleshed sweetpotato made through the joint efforts of CIP's Wolfgang Gruneberg and NARO. Jan Low reported the findings from an impact study from Central Mozambique. The level of interest in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in OFSP is very high and the Symposium organizers expressed the explicit hope that VITAA would soon become VITAA A ... for Africa and Asia.



The ISTRC Secretariat recognized VITAA for its outstanding contribution.

## Agile response to famine and fever in Papua, Indonesia

Famine and an outbreak of swine fever hit Papua, Eastern Indonesia in 2005/6. In Yahukimo district, 55 people died and another 112 suffered the effects of starvation when continuous rain for almost 7 months meant that sweetpotato was not producing edible roots. Meanwhile, in the Jayawijaya district, thousands of pigs died when they contracted swine fever.

In Yahukimo, CIP assisted local farmers by providing three new varieties of sweetpotato, Papua Salossa, Papua Pattipi and Papua Sawentar, developed through the CIP-SPS project, that tolerated waterlogged conditions. Planted in February, the three varieties were successfully harvested in July 2006. The President of Indonesia, Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, was pleased to start the harvest. "I hope that there will be no more food shortages in Yahukimo," he said. "The government has already released three new varieties of sweetpotato, which are high yielding, have good eating quality and are adapted to high elevation areas."

CIP, in collaboration with SARDI and a number of national research and development institutions (e.g. ILETRI and IRIAP), has worked in Jayawijaya since 2001. Using financial support from ACIAR, CIP led a project to improve the sweetpotato-pig systems (CIP-SPS project). Generally, in Papua, sweetpotatoes and pigs are the most important agricultural commodities. Sweetpotatoes account for 90% of the daily diet of the local residents and up to 100% of pig feed. Pigs carry a significant socio-cultural, financial, and nutritional value in the indigenous cultures of Papua.

The traditional practice of releasing pigs during the day made them very easy to be infected. In Jayawijaya, CIP's innovation in integrated pig-raising systems using a *laleken*-based system for confining pigs saved the animals of the CIP-SPS project's farmer collaborators. By confining their pigs, they were not infected by swine fever during the outbreak. Mr. and Mrs. Elopere and their neighbors in Napua, one of the villages in Jayawijaya, who employ this CIP innovation, said: "Our pigs are alive because we confined them in our *laleken*. Thanks to the CIP-SPS project team!" This achievement was also recognized by the local government of Jayawijaya. Recently, the head of the Jayawijaya Livestock Office, Mr. I Made Putra, proposed regulations to confine pigs. This proposal is now being discussed in the Jayawijaya House of Representatives. (This story was contributed by CIP staff Sukendra Mahalaya, Colin Cargill, Luther Kossay and Tjintokohadi)



## CIP Alumni news

### ***New CG Director ex-CIP Board Member***

Dr. Ren Wang has been appointed Director of the CGIAR. Since 2000, Dr. Wang, a Chinese national, served as Deputy Director General for Research at IRRI. In that position, he managed the Institute's research programs and outreach offices in 14 countries, providing leadership in the development of IRRI's strategic plan and in the creation of new collaborative initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia.

Before joining IRRI, Dr. Wang served on the CIP Board from 1997 to 2000. He played a key leadership role in planning China's agricultural research, serving as Vice President of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS). There he acted as the focal point for the China-CGIAR partnership and was responsible for fostering unprecedented levels of Japan-China collaboration in agriculture through the establishment of the Sino-Japan Center for Sustainable Agriculture at CAAS.

An entomologist by training, Dr. Wang pioneered a program for biological control of exotic pests in China and later promoted integrated pest management initiatives internationally from various posts, including Deputy Director of the International Institute of Biological Control of CAB International in the UK.

Dr. Wang will continue to expand the Bank-led reform program of the CGIAR which is strengthening science and governance.



**Dr. Ren Wang is the new Director of CGIAR.**

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