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MEDIA RELEASE

International Conference Calls For Integrated Systems Research for Sustainable Intensification in Smallholder Agriculture

Agricultural Scientists Argue that Systems Research Offers Solutions to Tackle Poverty, Hunger and Environmental Degradation Together

IBADAN, NIGERIA, March 3, 2015 – Agricultural scientists and researchers from over 30 nations gather today at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria, for the *International Conference on Integrated Systems for Sustainable Intensification in Smallholder Agriculture*, which lasts through March 6.

Conference speakers and exhibitors will present strategies and results that respond directly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined by the United Nations, and have a marked impact on the lives and livelihoods of smallholder producers and consumers of developing countries.

Considerable progress has been made towards those goals, but much is yet to be done. Despite significant economic growth in many developing countries over the past decade, over 800 million people remain under-nourished, including 160 million children. According to recent [Lancet](#) reports, under-nutrition remains the underlying cause of death for at least 3.1 million children a year, accounting for fully 45% of all deaths of children under 5 and stunting the growth of another 165 million.

Dr. Frank Rijsberman, CEO of the CGIAR Consortium, emphasizes, “We cannot simply tread familiar paths in response to these statistics. Over the next few years we will join with our partners to redouble our focus on the needs of women and young people, extend our efforts to improve dietary quality among the poor and vulnerable, and intensify our work on climate-smart agriculture – all recent additions to our research agenda.”

Dr. Richard Thomas, Director, CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems, notes: “We recognize that an integrated systems approach that takes into account the economic, social, and environmental co-benefits is needed in order to address challenges faced by rural dryland communities of the developing world. Our approach combines crop improvement, natural resources management, and socio-economics in research that considers agricultural livelihood systems in an integrated and ‘holistic’ way. This approach is important because scarce water resources, land degradation, urbanization, commodity price shocks, and climate change are affecting dry areas particularly hard.”

Dr. Kwesi Atta-Krah, Director, CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics), says, “The conference offers a platform for sharing of experiences and research results in systems research for development, from different countries and regions of the world. It provides a reminder of the challenges facing global agriculture and food systems, and the solutions that integrated systems research offers as part of a global effort to tackle poverty, hunger and environmental degradation.”

Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, Director General of IITA, similarly emphasizes the importance of systems research. He calls for continued efforts, declaring, “We must develop and promote improved and nutritious crop varieties of Africa’s major staples, as well as innovative practices on natural resources management, and innovations on integrated farming systems towards sustainable intensification of agriculture.”

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The event features 45 plenary and oral presentations, and over 50 poster presentations, representing one of the most important and stimulating international platforms for knowledge exchange on the latest scientific results, developments and experiences in the agricultural systems research for development sector.

The conference calls upon the donor community, agricultural research institutions, partners in the wider research and development community, the private sector, as well as policy and decision-makers to work jointly and strengthen the use of systems approaches in agricultural research for development, in order to further advance the contribution of science to the international community's commitment to end hunger completely by 2030.

The [conference](#) is organized by the [CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics](#) (Humidtropics), in partnership with the [CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems](#) (Dryland Systems) the [CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems](#) (AAS).

For more information or to set up media interviews at the conference, please contact:

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NOTES TO MEDIA

About Systems Research

Systems research is place-based, and operates at different scales – farm, landscape, province, agro-ecological zone, region, etc. It targets a limited number of regions and agro-ecologies that are home to high concentrations of the world's poor and that offer significant agricultural potential. Systems research requires taking a holistic perspective, and looking at the system as a whole in order to understand the diversity of components that exist in it, and how these components interact with each other, with the aim of understanding trade-offs, optimizing synergies and enhancing overall productivities. The farmer and his community are central in this research approach; including exploring the specific roles and opportunities for women, men and youth. Systems research also involves socio-cultural and policy dimensions, as well as institutional innovation and scaling. Partnerships and the linkages between research and development entities are therefore key elements of this approach. Within the three CGIAR Research Programs on “systems”, a central focus is put on the sustainable intensification of farming systems, including the improvement of social and ecological resilience, and the maintenance of ecosystems integrity.

About Drylands Systems

The CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems aims to improve the lives of 1.6 billion rural people and mitigate land and resource degradation in over 3 billion hectares covering the world's dry areas. Dryland Systems engages in integrated agricultural systems research to address key socioeconomic and biophysical constraints that affect food security, equitable and sustainable land and natural resource management and the livelihoods of poor and marginalized dryland communities. The program unifies 8 CGIAR Centers and uses unique partnership platforms to bind together scientific research results with the skills and capacities of national agricultural research systems (NARS), advanced research institutes (ARIs), non-governmental and civil society organizations, the private sector, and other actors to test and develop practical innovative solutions for dryland farming communities. This program is led by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a member of the CGIAR Consortium. For more information please visit drylandsystems@cgiar.org

About Humidtropics

Humidtropics is a CGIAR Research Program led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). It seeks to transform the lives of the rural poor in tropical America, Asia and Africa, and uses integrated systems research and unique partnership platforms for impact on poverty and ecosystems integrity. Research organizations involved in core partnership with Humidtropics are AVRDC, Bioversity International, CIAT, CIP, FARA, *icipe*, ICRAF, IITA, ILRI, IWMI, and WUR. humidtropics.cgiar.org

About AAS

AAS, the CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems is a multi-year research initiative designed to pursue community-based approaches to agricultural research in farming and fishing systems where the annual production dynamics of natural freshwater and/or coastal ecosystems contribute significantly to the household livelihood, including income and food security. At a global level, AAS is led by WorldFish on behalf of CGIAR together with International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and Bioversity International. aas.cgiar.org

About CGIAR

CGIAR is a global agricultural research partnership for a food secure future. Its science is carried out by the 15 research centers who are members of the CGIAR Consortium in collaboration with hundreds of partner organizations. www.cgiar.org

Conference Live Stream Link

The conference will be live streamed on March 3, 2015, from 10:30 AM to 16:30 PM (CET) at <http://humidtropics.cgiar.org/international-conference-integrated-systems/>

The following speakers and keynotes will be featured during the live stream:

- **Dr. Nteranya Sanginga**, Director General, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA);
- **Dr. Kwesi Atta-Krah**, Director, CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics);
- **Dr. Yemi Akinbamijo**, Executive Director, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA);
- **Dr. Frank Rijsberman**, Chief Executive Officer, CGIAR Consortium;
- **Dr. Ann Tutwiler**, Director General, Bioversity International;
- **Prof. David W. Norman**, Professor Emeritus, Kansas State University;
- **Dr. Bernard Hubert**, President, Agropolis International;
- **Cynthia McDougall**, Senior Scientist, Gender & Equity Theme Leader, WorldFish and CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (AAS);
- **Dr. Marie de Lattre-Gasquet**, Senior Foresight Scientist, CGIAR Consortium.