

December 9, 2008

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate

Re: Funding for Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

Dear Chairman Leahy:

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to Congress for the 2008 Supplemental Appropriations Act for Development Assistance to address the international food crisis. This funding was instrumental in alleviating devastating cuts proposed in USAID funding for the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in FY08 that would have had a critical, long-term impact on world food production.

Our appreciation also is extended to Administrators of USAID and OMB. It was only through a combination of 'bridge' funds from the Supplemental Appropriations Act, year-end funding commitments from USAID central and regional offices, and OMB emergency famine funds for seed multiplication that core CGIAR programs could be maintained and implemented through FY08. These programs address critical world needs, including multiplication of disease resistant wheat varieties for Africa and West Asia, and sustainable wheat and rice production systems for South Asia.

While we are thankful for the funding which 'rescued' CGIAR in FY08, we are deeply concerned that the Administration's FY09 budget proposal for USAID, as it did in FY08, seeks no funding commitments for CGIAR. There is inadequate funding and flexibility in the proposed USAID-EGAT (Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade) budget to provide core base funding for the CGIAR. We are again extremely concerned over the financial vulnerability and future of the CGIAR and the International Ag Research Centers.

We implore Congress to provide line-item funding for the CGIAR at \$45M in the FY09 appropriations for USAID-EGAT, as is proposed in the Lugar-Casey Global Food Security Act now being considered by Congress. This line-item and increase in funding for the CGIAR is critical to sustain international research efforts, increase agricultural productivity, defend against emerging plant diseases, and reduce poverty in developing countries.

Threats to world food security are increasing, just as the world's population and global poverty increases. Virulent strains of crop diseases and increasingly erratic weather events, including severe drought and heat, directly impact grain production. Across Africa and Asia, as well as in the US, access to and price of food have become critically important in the last year. US investment in international agricultural research is fundamental to global food supplies and critical to reversing the course of diminishing global food security.

USAID has been a long-term supporter of the international agricultural research centers, such as the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), and the

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and was a founding member of the CGIAR in 1971. This investment in research has resulted in worldwide deployment of new technologies and improved crop varieties, dramatically increasing food security in the developing world. Funding cuts in FY09 would undermine this nearly 40-year investment and threaten the CGIAR's most important research efforts. Also at risk are the advances in crop productivity made during the Green Revolution and lasting legacies of Nobel laureate and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Dr. Norman Borlaug.

US crop scientists collaborate closely with CGIAR scientists to address chronic and emerging diseases, improve management systems, and reduce the impact of environmental stresses on our major crops. CIMMYT and US researchers are now racing to prevent disaster from a stem rust epidemic developing in south and west Asia. Since identified in Kenya and Uganda in 1999, the Ug99 race of stem rust has spread to Ethiopia, Yemen, Sudan, and Iran, and now threatens critical wheat and barley producing areas of Iraq, Pakistan, India, Syria, and Turkey. In the US, nearly all spring wheat varieties and over 75% of US winter wheat varieties are highly susceptible to this new race of stem rust. We must act quickly, in concert with CIMMYT and ICARDA, to develop and deploy new varieties with resistance to this virulent and rapidly evolving disease. To succeed, we must increase our investments in agricultural research, both within the US and through the CGIAR.

Your consideration and assistance to support the CGIAR international research centers will be greatly appreciated and recognized by US growers, researchers, and the entire international crop community. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Sincerely yours,

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W.E. Kronstad Endowed Chair - Wheat Research
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cc: Dr. Norman Borlaug – via Chris Dowswell
Ed Shafer, Secretary of Agriculture
Dr. Rob Horsch, Gates Foundation
Dr. Robert Zeigler, IRRI
Dr. Tom Lumpkin, CIMMYT
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