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## REMARKS FOR CIP's 45<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

**Dr. Barbara Wells, Director General of CIP**

Lima, September 16, 2016

Honorable Guests,

Although September 11, 1971 marked the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the date that CIP was founded, our work began several years earlier. In those early times, our potato collectors worked in very remote areas of Ancash, La Libertad and Junín. They travelled for weeks on end, often during times of gas rationing and in the face of terrorism with very limited connectivity to anyone. To collect the thousands of varieties of roots and tubers that now populate CIP's genebank, they traveled to small villages on horseback when their four-wheeled drive vehicles could go no further. They used local knowledge and their years of experience to gather these treasures of the Incas and their predecessors. [One researcher](#) when traveling on remote stretches of a road, was known to tell the driver to stop because he could smell the potatoes. Apparently he was correct in nine out of 10 times.

This was the world that CIP's founding scientists were living in when the Center was founded. In these early years, CIP's first Director General Dr. [Richard Sawyer](#) had a vision of regional research and collaboration with researchers around the world, bringing new technologies and innovations to improve food security. With our mission to reduce poverty and hunger and improve nutrition of small holder root and tuber farmers, our work expanded from the Andes to countries around the world including Africa, and Asia. In those days, researchers collaborated via mail and would travel great distances to meet colleagues, partners and farmers often working under challenging conditions. In many places where we work today conditions have changed little although technology now allows us to stay connected with much greater ease.

Under Dr. Sawyer's leadership and those Director Generals who followed, Dr. Hubert Zandstra and Dr. Pamela Anderson, CIP continued to evolve with a focus on research for development and scaling for impact. Yes we have had great leaders but most importantly we have had a extremely dedicated and committed staff. Social Scientists, breeders, gender specialists, economists, agronomists, pathologists, and nutritionists to mention just a few. Many of whom are with us here today.



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CIP has achieved much over the past 45 years. We have been a key player in research for development of potato and sweetpotato. Although the foundation of our work has been focused on breeding locally adapted and consumer preferred varieties that are tolerant biotic and abiotic stresses, we work with our partners across the entire value chain. From developing the best varieties, to ensuring quality seed systems are in place to guarantee farmer access to clean planting material to working with and linking to private sector entrepreneurs to process their products after harvest. We focus on gender inclusion throughout value chain development and capacity development is at the core of all that we do.

While in 1988, our mandate crop of potato was expanded to also include sweet potato, our work on biofortified orange flesh sweet potato did not start in earnest until several years later. Scientists in the nutrition community did not understand the potential for the powerful link between agriculture for nutrition. After much work to convince the nutrition community, CIP along with our partners and with the support from our donors, has led the development of the most compelling evidence for going to scale with orange flesh sweet potato as a model for biofortified crops. We have built robust evidence to demonstrate that just 125 g/day of OFSP meets the daily vitamin A needs of a young child. From the outset of our work we learned that nutrition education is critical to ensuring OFSP is incorporated into the diets of pregnant and lactating mothers and young children. Since 2009, the livelihoods of **2.2** million households in 7 SSA countries have been impacted by this richly biofortified crop. It is now firmly on the table in 14 SSA countries.

This has been a multi-disciplinary effort across the entire value chain including agriculture-nutrition & health integration, regional breeding, quality seed system development, and post-harvest innovations done in partnership with local communities, health and extension services, national and regional programs and NGOs.

This is the subject of the World Food Prize so I will leave further details until later.

Here in Peru, the center of origin and biodiversity for the potato, CIP has had tremendous success in connecting potato farmers to markets through a value chain approach. At the turn of this century, Peru's now famous native potatoes were little known in urban centers of Peru much less the world. CIP had done much to conserve and preserve these native potatoes in its genebank and has documented centuries of traditional knowledge about how to best cultivate them, but smallholder farmers were not benefitting from the richness of this Andean crop. CIP took on the challenge of transforming this asset into a business opportunity for the farmers who grew them, the processors who could convert them into ready-to-eat snacks, and the chefs who



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would popularize them in their renowned restaurants. This value chain approach has made the colorful Peruvian potato known to the world and the approach itself has been imitated by others and CIP has replicated the approach in other regions where we work.

We are, in our words and in our deeds, an agricultural research for development institution that delivers sustainable solutions to the global problems of food security, nutrition, poverty, gender inclusion, and climate change. Today the legacy of the famous Peruvian potato scientist Carlos Ochoa lives on through the CIP Biodiversity Center also known as our genebank where we hold the largest collection of Potato and sweet potato germplasm in the world. It is at the core of CIP's research and it continues to grow and remains on the cutting edge of agriculture conservation and preservation, which is even more important as the reality of climate change threatens these vital food security crops. Not just a collection but a resource to be used by researchers around the world to improve resiliency to climate change, improve nutrition and productivity. With focus on repatriating potato germplasm back to local communities, we made nearly 7,700 germplasm transfers of more than 1,250 accessions back to 89 local communities and institutions.

In 2015 the United Nations announced the Sustainable Development Goals as the cornerstone of its development priorities. Having integrated relevant elements of these SDGs into our Strategic Plan, CIP is well prepared for this moment. Indeed the goals of ending hunger, eliminating poverty, promoting health and well-being, establishing gender equity, and climate action are embedded into our strategy. Moreover potato and sweetpotato are widely recognized as climate resilient crops that are resistant to climate shocks. We think that our crops are well positioned to help smallholder farmers, who are impacted disproportionately by the harmful effects of a warming planet. So while today we celebrate our 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we do so with an eye on the future and the huge problems we face to eliminate poverty and improve health and nutrition in a sustainable way in the face of climate change.

Earlier this year in a ceremony at the US State Department, the World Food Prize Foundation announced that CIP researchers Drs. Jan Low, Maria Andrade, and Robert Mwangi along with Dr. Hoarth Bouis of HarvestPlus, will be awarded the 2016 World Food Prize for their work on biofortified orange flesh sweetpotato to reduce hidden hunger and specifically vitamin A deficiency (VAD), one of the most pernicious forms of undernourishment in the developing world.

This award recognizes the contribution these scientists and many others have made to improve food eliminating childhood blindness and contributing to the reduction in stunting.



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To the CIP family, the World Food Prize is further recognition of CIP's leading research for development capabilities and leading edge work done to bridge agriculture with nutrition.

We are so very proud of the three scientists who have dedicated their careers to make this story a success and most importantly to impact the lives of so many. They are with us here today. May I ask Jan, Maria and Robert to stand so we can give them a round of applause for their achievement?

Thank you Jan, Maria and Robert for being here. We will hear more from you in a moment.

Today we will also hear from a great friend of CIP, Mrs. Nane Annan. I was introduced to Nane and Kofi only 2 years ago by Pamela Anderson who had been sharing with them the wonders of OFSP and how with just 125g / day we could prevent childhood blindness caused by VAD. The Annans are acutely aware of this given that in their home country of Ghana where more than a third of children under five suffer from micro-nutrient deficiency or hidden hunger. I am pleased to share with you that, with the support of the Annans and the Kofi Annan Foundation we are working to bring together partners from both the public and private sectors in Ghana to scale OFSP.

Over the past year and a half of her involvement with CIP, Nane has been called an ambassador for sweetpotato. Since she has lent her unconditional enthusiastic support for sweetpotato through advocacy and education tours in Ghana where the potential impact for sweetpotato to improve the nutritional status of thousands of women and children is immense. In her three advocacy tours she and Kofi have vowed to work together with us to promote sweetpotato to smallholder farmers and producers to their mutual benefit. Her dedication to the communities of Ghana and Western Africa is admirable. It has been a pleasure to work with her as we achieve our shared agendas.

I would like to recognize Nane for her belief in the power of sweetpotato to improve the lives of women, children and youth in Ghana and for being here to celebrate with us today. Nane would you please stand so we can thank you for your support of CIP?

And we would not be here today celebrating 45 years of agriculture research for development if it were not for the support of the Peruvian government. We thank you for your support throughout these past four decades and for many decades ahead.



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Forty-five years ago, a group of visionaries had the grit to start a research organization to benefit smallholder farmers around the world and the communities where they lived. Their vision became a reality. Now that CIP has turned 45 what should our vision be? We have already set some ambitious goals like building on the success of our sweetpotato programs and enabling 15 million households in Africa, Asia, and Haiti to improve the quality of their diet by 20% and raising their crop income by 15%. We propose introducing early-maturing potatoes to improve systems productivity and farm incomes of at least seven million households in China, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Pakistan, Nepal and Central Asia. And we have set out to put high quality seed and biofortified potatoes into the hands of 600,000 smallholder households in potato-growing regions of Africa.

In Peru and Latin America we will similarly continue our efforts in working with food and nutrition vulnerable communities and in the development of pro-smallholder value chains that provide nutritious food and sustainable income generating opportunities for rural communities. All of this, naturally, in the context of increasingly challenging conditions brought on by climate change.

Indeed we have 45 years of history that we celebrate today but CIP is poised for the future using strong science, partnering smartly, and through the generous support of our donors.

CIP is honored with your presence today and I thank you for your time and attention.

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