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www.cipotato.org

REMARKS FOR CIP's 45th ANNIVERSARY

DR. OSCAR ORTIZ, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR RESEARCH

AND DEVELOPMENT

Lima, September 16, 2016

Thank you and good morning. It is wonderful to share this moment with so many friends and supporters of the work of the International Potato Center. We are all fan of potato and sweetpotato.

It is estimated that our friendship with potato started about 8000 years ago, potato domestication began in the Andes and since then, this crop as been cultivated providing a reliable source of food in the highlands for the subsequent thousands of years. This has been possible thanks to the work of farmers' knowledge and efforts, we can call them "farmer scientists" who then, as they are now, the true potato guardians or papa arariwas, using the quechua words. On sweetpotato a similar process may have occurred along central and south America.

While the Papa Arariwas have tended our namesake tuber for thousands of years, CIP has been supporting this effort in the last 45 years in potato's center of biodiversity. Still these 45 years of uninterrupted and very productive research has been for the benefit of Peru, Latin America and the entire world. Our work began with a focus on genetic resources conservation that has continued over the years ensuring the conservation of about 19000 types of potato, sweetpotato and Andean root and tuber crops, which otherwise might have been lost due to changes to rural areas, such as urbanization, migration, violence, etc.

Thanks to the contribution of many people, for example the pioneering Peruvian Scientist and potato specialist Carlos Ochoa who started to collect and document the potato



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biodiversity of the Andes back in the 1950s and 1960s, today CIP is the custodian of a world renowned Biodiversity Complex or genebank. The CIP Biodiversity Complex is a strategic priority of CIP focused on conserving and utilizing genetic resources for the future. More than a repository of planting material, the genebank, also serves as a resource of traditional knowledge and defines the best ways to work with farming communities to conserve native varieties in their fields and today we can proudly report that about 7,500 items of conserved genetic material have been returned to 89 communities in the last years.

Today the efforts of CIP's genebank together with the work of our breeding team has resulted in CIP-related varieties being adopted in more than 1.2 M ha around the world. In Peru, about one third of the total potato area is planted with our varieties. A notable example of this is the very popular potato variety called Canchan. This and other varieties are examples of collaborative work between CIP, INIA and other partners, which have added value to farmers through higher yields, market quality and resistance to diseases. As mentioned about sweetpotato, we can claim that we are reaching more than 2 M households in Africa. Varieties are one of CIP's research products, but we also develop pest and seed management technologies to help farmers realize the potential of their crops. Our Social Sciences team has also been an integral part of the effort by helping to prioritize, target, integrate the views of users through participatory research, including gender aspects, value chain interventions and measuring the impact of CIP's research. We have sweetpotato and potato research programs focusing on Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Our work has put potato and sweetpotato as key crops to face the current challenges established in the Millennium Development Goals and further expanded up by the Sustainable Development Goals. We firmly believe that these crops can contribute to reduce poverty and malnutrition, increase income, increase food security, support sustainable intensification and diversification of food systems, and adaptation to climate change.



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Supporting the adaptation of food systems to future uncertainties is essential, and we are looking at how potato and sweetpotato based systems can be better adapted to climate change. We have a research program looking at this topic in order to generate evidence to support decision making of a range of stakeholders, like governments, NGOs, policy makers, the private sector and farmer organizations. Biodiversity can be an essential part of adaptation to climate change, so part of our work entails facilitating farmer access to markets with biodiverse products that has already resulted in the presence of a number of native potato varieties on market shelves, in restaurants and in processed products in Peru and other Andean countries.

Science needs to have a long term horizon also, therefore, another of our research programs focuses on game changing solutions that utilize the advances in science to generate varieties and technologies that will be needed in the future as the Earth warms due to climate change, for example to generate potato and sweetpotato varieties with durable resistance to diseases or with more tolerance to heat and drought.

Today we recognize our World Food Prize Laureates for their outstanding contribution toward reducing malnutrition in Africa. I am proud to be their colleague. And looking back in history, in 1992, CIP received the King Baudouin Award of the CGIAR for its scientific breakthroughs on genetic resistance to insects. CIP has a history of science achievement and generations of researchers who have traveled and work in more than 20 countries with number of partners in South America, Africa and Asia. With these awards, and particularly the World Food Prize, that comes just on time to celebrate our 45 years, our spirit of innovation is renewed.



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However, ahead we have much more serious challenges. How to feed a growing population with shrinking resources -- less land, less water -- and under the threats of climate change that places greater responsibility on the shoulders of agricultural research organizations like CIP and our sister CGIAR Centers. We know that we cannot shoulder this alone. The challenges are too great and the risks are too large. We will look to partners like those of you in the audience today from governments around the world to civil society to universities and the private sector and farmer organizations. We could not have survived all of these 45 years without you, and countless farmers and communities are counting on us to work together to improve their food security and nutrition. I know we can do this and I hope you will join us in facing this challenge.

As a Peruvian and as a scientist, I'm extremely honored to work at CIP and to lead this science team. For several of us, the meaning of CIP goes beyond the professional or scientific aspect, and involves a deeply personal meaning.

All of Peru should be proud of what CIP, Ministry of Agriculture, INIA and other public and private partners have achieved here in Peru. As a citizen of the world and a member of the greater science community, I'm very thankful for the numerous donors and partners who support CIP's work to improve food security and nutrition through roots and tuber crops.

I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Wells for hosting this celebration today and for Mrs. Nane Annan for her advocacy for CIP's work and the power of orange fleshed sweetpotato in Ghana. And finally, let me thank Mrs. Sol Carreño for being here today as well.

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