



CRAWFORD FUND Media Release

19 September 2005

MORE VEGIES THE WORLD OVER

An international initiative to enhance the significant role that horticulture can play in alleviating hunger and poverty offers positive outcomes for Australian horticulture and the general public.

This is the message being presented at a range of industry, government and other meetings this week by the head of the World Vegetable Center, Dr Tom Lumpkin, who is in Australia to discuss and encourage greater Australian support and involvement in the Global Horticultural Initiative.

The World Vegetable Center (www.avrdc.org), based in Taiwan, is the principal international center for vegetable research and development in the world. Its mission is to reduce poverty and malnutrition in developing countries through improved production and consumption of vegetables.

Dr Bob Clements, the Executive Director of the ATSE Crawford Fund, welcomed Dr Lumpkin's visit.

"The World Vegetable Center has a great track record of delivering benefits to developing countries and to Australia, which is no doubt why the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) has supported it for many years," said Dr Clements.

"Poverty is rampant in much of Asia and more than two billion persons suffer from malnutrition. We know that promoting vegetables can contribute significantly in solving these problems," said Dr Clements.

"Dr Lumpkin's visit comes at a time of growing awareness of the importance of vegetables in the diet. An announcement on the weekend of findings from a new study indicated that eating more raw vegetables everyday may help cut the risk of certain types of cancer in half, such as pancreatic cancer which is one of the most deadly and hard to treat cancers," said Dr Clements.

Dr Lumpkin will be explaining to decision-makers, researchers and growers that while the purpose of the Global Horticultural Initiative is to improve the health and income for poor people in underdeveloped and emerging economies worldwide, all the expected outcomes of this international initiative are positive for Australia.

"By coordinating the world's horticultural R&D organisations, we will be able to increase the productivity, profitability, safety and sustainability of horticultural crop production in wealthy and poor countries alike."

"The Global Horticultural Initiative has identified where research dollars would be best spent for maximum impact and now requires a major investment in further research, training, technical support, and policy planning."

Horticultural crops include fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, medicinal plants and ornamentals.

The Crawford Fund's mission is to increase Australians' engagement in international agricultural R&D & education for the benefit of developing countries & Australia

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ACIAR's support for AVRDC in the past has been through a range of projects with Australian collaborating institutions on issues such as the control of gemini virus diseases of cotton and tomato in Pakistan and Australia, the control of bacterial wilt by agricultural biotechnology, and the sustainable integrated management of whiteflies as pests and vectors of plant viruses.

"With outcomes including increased yields of horticultural crops; the development of new improved varieties of vegetables and fruits adapted to a wide range of environmental conditions and market needs; new job opportunities and higher incomes; enhanced market opportunities; and higher consumption of horticultural produce, Australian growers and the general public have much to gain from this," said Dr Lumpkin.

The World Vegetable Center (or AVRDC) manages the largest and most diverse germplasm collection of vegetables in the world, consisting of 54,500 accessions from 151 countries. This germplasm collection is an international public good, which is safeguarded and made available to all. This repository is used by scientists in over 100 countries to develop varieties that are higher yielding, more nutritious, resist diseases, and protect food security.

AVRDC has distributed 440,000 seed samples to 193 countries and its vegetable germplasm is available to researchers in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

With this kind of resource, the Center was able to respond to the December Tsunami by delivering 25,000 garden kits with 20 varieties of appropriate vegetables, fertiliser, hoses and soil to families devastated by the tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

A recent survey showed that 34% of all tomato and 16% of all chilli pepper varieties released in Asia possess genes obtained from AVRDC. Australian researchers have received 2,100 accessions of 10 vegetables from AVRDC. Numerous improved mungbeans from AVRDC have been released in Australia, e.g. King, Shantung, Emerald, Satin and plans are underway to release AVRDC's VC 3890A.

The Center is also a leader in the identification and management of vegetable diseases and insect pests and has established collaborative networks to protect food supplies throughout the region, including in Australia.

"Our technologies lead to safer vegetable production in the region overall, which contributes to a safer supply of food for Australians. For example, we collaborate with Australian scientists on bacterial wilt and whitefly-transmitted tomato yellow leaf curl virus diseases, in cooperation with other countries in the region. These collaborative programs limit the spread of diseases within the region."

Mr Lumpkin noted the key difference between what vegetables can offer diets of rich and poor people.

"While vegetables can improve diets and incomes in developing countries to help them avoid hunger and poverty, they offer wealthy people the opportunity to improve their diets to avoid the major obesity problems currently being experienced in countries like Australia and the USA."

Further information, photos and to organise an interview, contact Cathy Reade on 0413 575 934

More background is available on related topics as below:

The Global Horticulture Initiative <http://www.avrdc.org/pdf/brief-GHI.pdf>

Horticulture for Poverty Alleviation <http://www.avrdc.org/pdf/brief-poverty.pdf>

Global Horticulture: Now is the Time for Action <http://www.avrdc.org/pdf/GHI.pdf>