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**COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Ninth Regular Session

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**REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF *EX SITU*  
COLLECTIONS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF FAO:**

**FURTHER INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR TROPICAL AGRICULTURE  
(CIAT), REGARDING ITS REQUEST FOR A RE-EXAMINATION  
OF U.S. PATENT NO. 5,894,079**

CIAT has made the attached document available,<sup>1</sup> for the information of the Commission in considering agenda item 4.4a, *International Network of Ex Situ Collections under the Auspices of FAO*. It provides updated information on CIAT's request for a re-examination of U.S. Patent no. 5,894,079. This matter is discussed in para. 23-26 of document CGRFA-9/02/11, *Report on the International network of Ex Situ Collections under the Auspices of FAO*.

<sup>1</sup> This document, which was received after the preparation of document CGRFA-9/02/11, is put at the disposal of the Commission in the language in which it was received.

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**The Original Patent with its Fifteen Claims**

As inventor of a new cultivar of field bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.), Mr Larry M. Proctor, owner of POD-NERS L.L.C., was granted U.S. Patent No. 5,894,079 by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) on 15 November 1996. This bean, named 'Enola', produces a distinctly yellow (sulfur-colored) seed with a yellow hilum. The color remains relatively unchanged through time. The invention also relates to a method for producing a field-bean cultivar by crossing a first parent field-bean plant with a second parent field-bean plant, wherein the first and/or second field-bean plant is that of the invention.

In 1994, field beans with yellow seeds were discovered in a package of dry edible beans purchased in Mexico and brought to the United States. In the same year, the yellow beans were selected from the package of miscellaneous beans, planted, and allowed to self-pollinate. The seeds harvested from this crop were planted in 1995 and also allowed to self-pollinate. The process was repeated for 1996. All three crops (1994, 1995, and 1996) were planted in Montrose County, and the patent requested after the 1996 harvest.

**The *Phaseolus* bean collection held at CIAT**

By 1996, CIAT had designated 28,393 accessions of *Phaseolus* beans to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). A total of 5,680 accessions was from Mexico, of which 260 were yellow seeded and carried vernacular names such as 'Canario' (Canary), 'Amarillo' (Yellow), 'Azufrado' (Sulfur-Colored), and 'Garbancillo' (Little Chickpea) that reflected the beans' color. Six of the bean accessions with sulfur-yellow seeds and hilum and designated to FAO matched the description of 'Enola' as provided in the patent.

*The FAO-CGIAR Agreements*

CIAT signed an agreement with FAO on 26 October 1994. This Agreement stipulated that the Center undertakes to make samples of designated germplasm and related information directly available to users or through FAO for purposes of scientific research, plant breeding, or genetic resources conservation without restriction (Art. 9). When samples of the designated germplasm and/or related information are transferred to any other person or institution, the Center shall ensure that such other person or institution, and any further entity receiving samples of the designated germplasm from such person or institution, are bound by the conditions set out in Article 3 (b) (art. 10). Article 3 indicates that the Centre shall not claim legal ownership over the designated germplasm, nor shall it seek any intellectual property rights over that germplasm or related information. This agreement has since been renewed.

To handle the distribution of designated germplasm, a Material Transfer Agreement was developed in 1995 and, from then on, any sample of designated germplasm was distributed by

CIAT's Genetic Resources Unit upon acceptance of the terms stipulated in the Material Transfer Agreement.

In 1998, FAO and the CGIAR Centers produced a second joint statement. It stated:

'The Centers recognize that many accessions designated under the Agreements with FAO were distributed to plant breeders and researchers prior to designation in keeping with the CGIAR policy for providing "unrestricted availability" to germplasm – as noted in the preamble of Agreements. In dealing with this situation, the Centers will request and urge that no intellectual property rights be sought for designated germplasm that was distributed before its designation under the FAO-CGIAR Agreement.'

#### *CIAT's concerns and reasons for challenging the patent*

Patent No. 5,894,079 restricts the use of designated bean germplasm with yellow seeds for purposes of agronomy and breeding in the USA, even though the FAO-CGIAR Agreements expressly prohibit the claiming of intellectual property rights on designated germplasm, even for accessions distributed before their designation (1998 second joint statement).

In addition, the patent does not fulfill two basic requisites: newness, and non-obviousness. That is:

The yellow color of the 'Enola' bean seeds is not an invention. It had existed in the Americas since pre-Columbian times, as witnessed by considerable prior documentation—see, for example, Irish (1901), Bukasov (1930), Hernández (1973), Kaplan (1980), Lépiz & Sandoval (1983), Voysest (1983), Gepts (1988), Hernández et al. (1991), Voysest & Dessert (1991), and Kaplan & Lynch (1999). These works are not mentioned in the patent.

The patent does not fully describe the breeding process that gave rise to 'Enola'. However, those details available from the incomplete description suggest that neither is the breeding process a novelty. Again, considerable prior documentation is available on similar breeding processes—see, for example, Fermond (1855), Buishand (1956), Fouilloux (1978), Fouilloux & Bannerot (1988), Singh (1991), and Beaver & Kelly (1994). Again, these works are not mentioned in the patent. Bassett and co-workers (2002) in the *Journal of the American Society of Horticultural Science* have provided recent evidence that there is no novelty on the trait nor on the breeding process.

On 7 March 2000, the Director General of CIAT wrote a letter to Mr Proctor indicating that the 'Enola' bean is close to several yellow-seeded bean varieties deposited in the trust collection held at the Center, and that CIAT will continue to distribute freely such germplasm accessions in the framework of the FAO-CGIAR Agreement. CIAT did not receive a reply to this letter.

### **CURRENT STATUS OF THE CHALLENGE**

CIAT challenged the patent on 20 December 2000 by asking for a re-examination through the law offices of Dodds Associates, Washington, DC. On 8 February 2001, the USPTO indicated that it would re-examine the patent and its claims 1 to 15.

On 11 July 2001, the patent owner asked that claims 1 to 15 be cancelled and added claims 16 to 58. CIAT made pertinent searches on these new claims; these were found as continuing to ignore all the above-cited documentation, and as not fulfilling the basic requirements for patent ownership according to U.S. law.

In November 2001, Constanza Quintero, CIAT-BRU, used microsatellites (a form of molecular marker) to survey 21 bean lines with yellow seeds and hilum. 'Enola' was discovered to be genetically very close to the CIAT accessions G22227 and G14024. G22227 is a INIA breeding line from Sinaloa and Sonora, northwestern Mexico; and G14024, also known as 'Peruano', a bean line that CIAT obtained from Mexico, but which is originally from Peru. César Ocampo, CIAT-GRU, showed that 'Enola' has 'T' phaseolin, a marker that is common among wild forms and landraces of the Central Andes of Peru, and also found in 'Peruano' and G22227.

These findings suggest that the yellow bean purchased in Mexico and from which 'Enola' was developed was already the product of breeding work done in Mexico with originally Peruvian germplasm. The following publications describe this breeding work: Lépiz & Sandoval (1983), Voysest (1983; 2000a; 2000b), and Kelly (2000).

Over the past two years, several bean producers in the western states of USA and growing other types of yellow beans have been challenged by POD-NERS in court under the assumption that they were growing 'Enola' without permission. The companies Northern Feed & Bean (of Lucerne L.L.C.) and Yellow River L.L.C., and several farmers and growers are currently attempting to prove in court that various varieties of yellow field beans were a matter of public knowledge before 1996.

Dr Steve Temple, professor of agronomy at the University of California—Davis, has been breeding 'Canario 707' since 1991 from crosses done in 1984. This variety combines the high yield of the Mexican yellow bean 'Mayocoba' (*i.e.*, the 'Azufrado' mentioned above) the yellow seed and hilum of 'Peruano', and resistance to the disease caused by the bean common mosaic virus (BCMV).

POD-NERS has changed attorneys twice since the re-examination was initiated, a delay tactic that enables the company to enter another growing season in the USA and receive additional profits on account of its patent.

In the *Annual Report of the Bean Improvement Cooperative (USA)* of 2002, Mark Bassett and co-workers reported about a genetic study of the yellow seed testa in common bean, and concluded (p. 25): 'All the above experimental work demonstrates that the claim of the Enola Patent (US Patent No. 5,894,079) to have "invented" the greenish yellow color of 'Enola' is false'.

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