

**Message from Mr. Ian Johnson, Chairman
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
on the Observance of the World Food Day**

Biodiversity is central to food security of the rural and urban poor. It is being threatened by rapidly expanding human populations, resulting in deforestation, wetland encroachment, and terrestrial and aquatic pollution. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) continues to have a positive impact on biodiversity and food security by ensuring the conservation of wild relatives of modern food crops, and by collecting, characterizing and conserving plant genetic resources. Genes from the wild relatives of modern plant species are essential to sustain food productivity and meet increasing human needs. Eleven CGIAR research Centers together maintain almost 600,000 samples of crop, forage and agroforestry genetic resources in gene banks available to all.

The CGIAR research Centers contribute to many hundreds of initiatives designed to protect biodiversity and build food security for small farmers and producers. In Asia, researchers make good use of existing natural biodiversity to identify fish characteristics and help fish farmers obtain better returns. In Africa, CGIAR projects are helping to preserve broad ecosystems, while others are protecting specific traditional plant varieties which offer benefits to the poor. A recent project revealed the value of harvesting traditional leafy vegetables with higher levels of micronutrients than many modern vegetable varieties. And in Peru scientists are working with local farmers to establish community gene banks which are helping restore biodiversity in mountainous regions and protect traditional crop varieties at risk of being lost to disease.

Around the world, scientists are working on creative and critical projects, finding new ways to preserve our environment and benefit the poor.