



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## CONFERENCE

### Thirty-fourth Session

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### INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE POTATO 2008

1. In response to the request made during the Thirty-third session of the FAO Conference in November 2005 and following the adoption of FAO Conference resolution 4/2005, the United Nations General Assembly, at its Sixty-eighth Session in December 2005, declared 2008 as the International Year of the Potato (IYP).

2. The resolution, submitted by the Government of Peru and co-sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Group of Countries (GRULAC), invited FAO to facilitate the implementation of the IYP, in collaboration with governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research centres (CGIAR) and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as non-governmental organizations and private sector stakeholders.

3. The UN Declaration of the IYP reflects the importance of the potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) in the diet of the world's population. It affirms the need to focus world attention on the role that the potato can play in providing food security and eradicating poverty in support of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This positive development reflects the need to capitalize on the link between IYP and education, nutrition and health, and to project a positive image of potato in collaboration with partner organizations to help millions of the world's hungriest people. IYP provides an opportunity to raise awareness about agriculture and rural development among policy-makers, donors and the general public, especially schoolchildren.

4. Potato contributes to many aspects of society and should not be looked at in isolation, but in the framework of the complexities of sustainable agriculture and food systems. Potato is the world's single most important tuber vegetable, with a vital, but often under-appreciated, role in the global food system. It is a staple food that contributes to the energy and nutritional needs of more than a billion people worldwide. Its products, festivals and traditions have great significance for the world's cultural heritage. Potato cultivation and post-harvest activities constitute an important source of employment and income in rural areas and for women in developing countries. It adapts to a wide range of uses: as a food security crop, as a cash crop, as feed, and as a source of starch for many industrial uses. However, there are still many technical problems and development-related issues that directly affect potato production and potato-based food systems. Responding to these challenges is essential to development of the potato sub-sector and to

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sustainable potato production and food systems, for long-term food security, human nutrition, and poverty alleviation.

5. The goal of the IYP is to provide guidance for the efficient and sustainable development of potato-based systems and the potato industry, and to enhance the well-being of producers and consumers. Recent advances in science, technology and global communication offer new opportunities for achieving IYP objectives. The IYP strategy is to engage interested partners and the entire potato community in developing country-driven activities throughout the world. Typically, these activities will include:

- Information generation, dissemination and exchange;
- Knowledge based-enhancement with feasibility studies, technical guidelines and specialized publications;
- Organizing and supporting scientific conferences, exhibitions, cultural events, and art or photographic competitions around the theme of potato and related issues;
- Transfer of proven and advanced technology through education, extension and training;
- Application of best management practices and promotion of policy and regulatory environment conducive to potato development through support in the formulation of programmes, projects and value-added schemes to support sustainable development of the potato sub-sector.

6. The FAO Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) was requested to lead the IYP implementation process in collaboration with the FAO Communication and Information Division (KCI) and the FAO Internal IYP Task Force members.

7. IYP preparations have begun. Guidance for the implementation of IYP is provided by an Informal International Steering Committee that has been established *ad hoc* as a group of partners including Permanent Representatives to FAO, major international research organizations – the International Potato Center (CIP) and Bioversity International and selected civil society and private sector organizations. A meeting of this group in Rome in February 2007 led to a common vision of the goals of IYP, as well as an agreed road map for IYP implementation, with concrete milestones and tangible outputs and an approach for mobilization of extra-budgetary resources for the period from mid-2007 to mid-2009. The International Steering Committee of IYP will act as a catalyst for decentralized and country-driven programmes through the creation of national IYP committees, and provide a communication channel back to respective constituencies. Following consultation with members of the International Steering Committee, a logo and a slogan (“*Potato: Hidden Treasure*”) have been adopted. The IYP website ([www.potato2008.org](http://www.potato2008.org)) has been launched and its content will continue to expand over the entire period of preparation and observation of the Year.

8. FAO’s lead role in facilitating IYP implementation represents a solid packet of normative work which is additional to activities scheduled and approved under the current Programme of Work and Budget, since Resolution 4/2005 of the FAO Conference did not envisage resource allocation dedicated to this purpose. FAO provided an extraordinary Regular Budget allocation of US\$60 000 to help offset the cost of establishing an advocacy and communication team for IYP inception activities, while it was underlined that efforts would need to be made to mobilize extra-budgetary resources to cover the greater part of the work. Considering the experience gained in leading the implementation of the International Year of Rice 2004, it was estimated that extra-budgetary funding totalling around US\$1.7 million over three years would be required to successfully implement IYP and provide catalytic support to national and regional events. Thus, a multi-donor trust fund project was developed and a fast track mechanism established by the FAO Technical Cooperation Department (TC) to enable donors and partners to support FAO’s normative work related to IYP preparation and implementation. The funds secured through this channel are expected to be used to contract experts and service providers to assist in the preparation and production of communication materials and the development of the website in five languages, to support the launching of IYP, and in catalyzing the activities at regional and country levels. Financial resource mobilization meetings have been organized with potential

donor and private sector stakeholders. The Governments of Spain and Italy have already contributed generously to the multi-donor Trust Fund for IYP. There have also been expressions of interest by other Member Nations, as well as private sector donors, to make contributions to the IYP Trust Fund. Notwithstanding these contributions and expressions of interest, it appears that considerably more extra-budgetary financial resources will still be needed to ensure the success of IYP 2008. In the event that extra-budgetary support falls short of the total estimated requirement, the planned awareness-raising activities will need to be scaled back and, in particular, the full cost of country-level events will need to be borne by local organizations.

9. In preparation for the global awareness campaign, an IYP concept paper, fact sheets, and guidelines for national participation and short narratives on IYP have been produced. Preparations for the IYP's official launch event at the UN Headquarters in New York on 19 October 2007 are underway, as are measures for featuring the IYP message in conferences and in exhibitions to be organized worldwide for the occasion.

10. In a number of countries, focal points and committees are being established for awareness creation and IYP implementation. Some member countries have already formed National Committees and they will serve as the dynamic link between the international vision for IYP and the practical realities in local people's lives.

11. The Year of the Potato is viewed as the first step in a continuing process. It will serve as a catalyst for information exchange and the initiation of medium and long-term programmes of potato development in developing countries. In the short term, IYP will have impact by increasing awareness and support for activities related to the potato. For longer-term impact throughout 2008 and beyond, emphasis will be on supporting national programmes and development strategies, for which both the maintenance of IYP committees and sustained donor support will be essential.