CROPBIOTECH UPDATE

A weekly summary of world developments in agri-biotech for developing countries, produced by the Global Knowledge Center on Crop Biotechnology, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications SEAsiaCenter (ISAAA)

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In This Week's Issue:

NEWS:

Asia

- India-US Issue Joint Agriculture Initiative
- Sub-Mekong Countries Promote Agricultural Ties
- ICRISAT Strengthens Partnerships with Private Sector
- Laos Workshop Yields Agricultural Workplan
- Article Predicts GM Rice Effects in China

Africa

- Africa Coffee Stakeholders Hold Conference, Exhibit

The Americas

- Biotechnology Law Approved by the Argentine Senate
- Uruguay Announces Funds for Agriculture and Conservation
- Workshop Establishes National Network of Agricultural Info in Peru
- Termite Gut Bacteria as Allies in Biofuel Production

Europe

- EU Report Considers Co-Existence Issue
- EFSA: GM Potato No Health Threat

RESEARCH:

- Method Developed For Assessing Risk of GM *Cucurbita* in Mexico
- New Wheat for Improved Digestion
- New Diet Reduces Gas Emissions in Livestock
- Dried Fungus Protects Cotton from Pathogenic Fungi

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DOCUMENT REMINDERS:

- Food Security Information Portal for Africa
- FAO's Plant Nutrient Database

NEWS

Asia

INDIA-US ISSUE JOINT AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE

A joint statement between the US President Bush and the India Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was issued on the 2nd March during the US President's official visit to India.

In the statement, the US President and the Indian Prime Minister expressed satisfaction on the level of cooperation between the countries. The statement highlights areas of collaboration in economy and trade, agriculture, energy security and environment, innovation and knowledge, and global security and democracy.

In terms of agriculture, India and the US seek to expand cooperation by launching the Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture, with a three-year financial commitment to link universities, technical institutions, and businesses. The Initiative aims to support agriculture education, joint research, and capacity building projects, including biotechnology. A priority in agricultural research will be the development of crops resistant to diseases and environmental stresses. The two countries also intend to promote bilateral trade and joint investment in agriculture.

To read the full statement visit: http://pmindia.nic.in/pressrel.htm
Further information contact: Bhagirath Choudhary at b.choudhary@isaaa.org

SUB-MEKONG COUNTRIES PROMOTE AGRICULTURAL TIES

Agricultural officials from the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) countries met in the central province of Thua Thien-Hue, Vietnam, to discuss the progress of a regional program on rural agriculture. High on the meeting's agenda was a framework strategy on agricultural development, with focus on cooperation in trade and investment, scientific and applied technology research, the use of natural resources, and environmental protection.

GMS members include Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and the Yunnan Province of China. The program has been funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) since 2003, and has helped GMS members countries conduct research and receive consultancy in agriculture.

More news available at http://www.vnanet.vn/default.asp?LANGUAGE_ID=2. For more information on this article, e-mail Le Hien of the Vietnam Biotechnology Information Center at hienbiotechvn@pmail.vnn.vn.

ICRISAT STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIPS WITH PRIVATE SECTOR

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) are set to work together on improved natural resource management for sustainable rural development. This will strengthen ICRISAT's initiative for partnerships with the private sector through its Agri-Science Park.

ICRISAT and CII recently organized a joint workshop, with the aim of finding ways to collaborate on sustainable rural development. The Andhra Pradesh Agriculture Minister, Mr N Raghuveera Reddy, participated in the workshop and promised the state government's support for the partnership.

“We strongly believe that collaborative arrangements and strategic alliances are the ways of winning organizations,” Dr. William Dar, ICRISAT Director-General, says, “Our collaborations are geared towards helping mobilize cutting-edge science and technology for the well-being of the poor in the semi-arid tropics of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa,"

For more information, contact S Gopikrishna Warrier, ICRISAT Media Officer, at w.gopikrishna@cgiar.org. Visit ICRISAT at http://www.icrisat.org.

LAOS WORKSHOP YIELDS AGRICULTURAL WORKPLAN

Scientists from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) recently visited Luang Prabang, Laos to meet with officials from the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) and Northern Agricultural and Forestry Research Center (NAFReC), and provincial authorities of the Lao provinces of Oudomxay and Sayaboury. Their meeting aimed to finalize milestones and develop a project implementation protocol for a major collaborative upland research program in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).

The meeting resulted in a detailed workplan for 2006, which includes the distribution of 1400 kilograms of upland rice seeds to about 350 farmers in Oudomxay and Sayaboury. A protocol for seed multiplication activities was also developed, along with a schedule for a possible field visit of local officials to Yunnan, China, later in the year, where they can study the modern system of upland rice farming in the area.

The program is jointly funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) through the Consortium for Unfavorable Rice Environments (CURE); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF). It is primarily designed to improve food security and livelihoods of upland rice farmers in Laos through the development of improved technologies for rice-based systems.

Read more in the IRRI bulletin, available at http://bulletin.irri.cgiar.org/bulletin/2006.08/default.asp

ARTICLE PREDICTS GM RICE EFFECTS IN CHINA

In the food industry feature article “China moves towards approval of GM rice,” Tamara Ventroyen looks at the current state of China's rice industry, and predicts the effects that genetically modified (GM) rice will have on the economy once the government approves it. China's central government is setting aside US$ 1 billion to hasten the biotech crop's commercialization.

Ventroyen reports that rice output in China has fallen from 198.5m tons in 1999 to 179m tons in 2004, leading to a 27% increase in rice prices. The country's decreased rice production is due to pollution, irrigation with industrial and domestic sewage, long term use of chemical compounds, and the improper disposal of animal waste from farmland. “One potentially beneficial effect GM rice would have on the rice industry is that it would help reduce the use of pesticides which are themselves creating more pollution,” Ventroyen writes, “Those who stand to benefit the most from a higher rice yield and a reduction in pesticide usage are the Chinese farmers themselves.”

According to Gurdev Singh Khush, a consultant at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), insect-resistant and disease-resistant rice are the two types of GM rice likely to be the first to make their appearance on China's market. While the country waits, China's Ministry of Agriculture has asked 12 grain-producing provinces to raise output by sowing a combined 4m hectares of super rice - a strain of rice developed by “China's Father of Super Rice,” Yuan Longping.

Read the complete article at http://www.just-food.com/features_detail.asp?art=1062.

Africa

AFRICA COFFEE STAKEHOLDERS HOLD CONFERENCE, EXHIBIT

The Eastern African Fine Coffees Association (EAFCA) is a member-driven association of specialty coffee producers, processors and marketers from ten countries in the Eastern African Region: Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. About half the world's specialty coffees are produced in the fine coffee belt of Africa, however coffee from the region only constitutes about 15% of the world's specialty coffee imports.

The 3rd East African Fine Coffee Conference and Exhibition was recently held in Tanzania, aimed to increase yield and coffee quality, to improve processing and marketing of the crop, and to provide a platform for the establishment of partnerships and networks amongst Eastern African coffee producers. The conference was attended by about 500 international delegates. The EAFCA Chairman Mr. Leslie Omari told the conference that Africa had all the necessary things, the land, the great weather, the labour and so what is needed is proper leadership and regional cooperation to be the future of specialty coffee.

Vice President Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein announced at the opening of the conference that Tanzania is looking into strategies that will encourage and ensure an increase in coffee production in the country. "The importance of inputs in ensuring increase in production and quality has been emphasized in various policy measures," Shein explained.
The government will distribute six million seedlings to farmers to double production from the current 50,000 tonnes, to 100,000 tonnes a year by 2015. Tanzania has about 250,000 hectares under coffee, employing two million people from 400,000 families in Kilimanjaro.

Form more information visit:
http://www.eafca.org/
http://www.kikweteshein.com/tanzania/articles/148/1/Tanzania-ensures-an-increase-in-coffee-production or contact Margaret Karembu of the ISAAA AfriCenter at m.karembu@isaaa.org.

The Americas

BIOTECHNOLOGY LAW APPROVED BY THE ARGENTINE SENATE

The Argentine Senate approved in February a project for a law for the promotion of the biotechnology industry. The biotechnology law will promote and facilitate the investment in and the development of biotechnology products by national

firms, and once approved by Parliament will be valid for 15 years. In particular, the law seeks to promote biotech applications aimed at improving agricultural production, such as the development of hybrid seeds. The Senator Jorge Capitanich of the Commission for Treasury and Budgets said that the economic impact of biotechnology is important, as crop production constitutes 52% of the agricultural sector. Currently, 98% of the soybean seeds sown in Argentina are genetically engineered, and the use of biotech maize is increasing, added Capitanich. The biotechnology law will also promote the development of medicines, diagnostic tools, and enzymes and chemicals for industrial use.

The biotechnology law represents the combination of two projects, one from the Office of Biotechnology of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Food, and the second from the Department of Industry. The Ministry of Economy was in charge of combining the two proposals, and presented the project to the Senate.

For more information (in Spanish) visit:
http://buscador.lanacion.com.ar/Nota.asp?nota_id=781106&high=biotecnolog%EDa
http://www.porquebiotecnologia.com.ar/doc/reportes/result_indiv.asp?Id=2830 or contact ArgenBio (http://www.argenbio.org/)

URUGUAY ANNOUNCES FUNDS FOR AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION

The Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Agriculture of Uruguay has announced that the government will provide US$ 40 million to fund projects to promote the adoption of efficient and integrated management systems for agricultural production, including biodiversity conservation.

The Natural Resources and Biodiversity Management Project, named the "Project for Responsible Production" in Uruguay, will be financed with a US$30 million loan from the World Bank and a US$7 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The loan forms part of the World Bank Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Uruguay, which projects financial assistance of up to US$800 million between 2005 and 2010, as well as technical and advisory services.

"This project gives new opportunities to Uruguay's rural population," said Axel van Trotsenburg, World Bank Country Director for Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. "It will enable them to improve their competitiveness and their market opportunities, demonstrating how to achieve economic development in harmony with the conservation of the natural environment, upon which their long-term future depends" added van Trotsenburg.

The project will directly benefit 13,000 rural families in the adoption of economically and environmentally sustainable integrated production systems which focus on the management and conservation of soils, water and rangelands; as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation.

For more information visit:
http://www.mgap.gub.uy/Cartelera/PPR/Llamado_PPR.pdf (in Spanish) and
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20534407~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html

WORKSHOP ESTABLISHES NATIONAL NETWORK OF AGRICULTURAL INFO IN PERU

The “National Workshop on Experiences on Agricultural and Ecological Information Networks” took place recently in Lima, Peru. The event was organized with the aim to identify sources of agricultural and ecological information to create a national information network. Organizers of the workshop included the Network of Agricultural and Ecological Libraries of Peru (REPIABE), the Peruvian Branch of the Inter-American Association of Agricultural Librarians, Documentalists, and Information Specialists (AIBDA), and the Ministry of Agriculture of Peru.

The workshop was attended by representatives of forty institutions, including members of universities, public institutions, inter-governmental organizations, and non governmental organizations. Participants agreed on the creation of an information network that will be named AGRORED-PERU, and to collectively work to disseminate agricultural information. In addition, workshop attendants also agreed to implement a platform for the systematic incorporation of information in accordance with standards approved by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

For more information (in Spanish) visit:
http://www.incagro.gob.pe/noticia.shtml?x=1971

TERMITE GUT BACTERIA AS ALLIES IN BIOFUEL PRODUCTION

Termites feed on materials that contain cellulose, primarily dead wood. The actual digestion of wood is carried out by bacteria living in the gut of termites, which are passed on from adults to young termites from generation to generation. Efforts are under way in the U.S. Department of Energy's Joint Genome Institute to identify the bacterial enzymes involved in wood digestion to

turn agricultural plant waste, such as corn husks, to ethanol for the production of environmentally friendly biofuel.

To this end, researchers are undertaking genome sequencing initiatives of whole bacterial populations, rather than single individuals, to uncover suitable enzymes for several industrial processes. Sequencing outputs are then sorted according to biological activity or function, rather to the specific organism they belong to. Information obtained from this initiative can be used to improve biofuel production processes and for engineering specific traits in energy crops.

Read more at http://www.nature.com/news/2006/060220/full/060220-2.html.

Europe

EU REPORT CONSIDERS CO-EXISTENCE ISSUE

Researchers from France's Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA); Germany's University of Applied Sciences of Weihenstephan; and the European Commission's (EC) Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) Joint Research Centre (JRC) have come together to report on “New Case Studies On The Coexistence Of GM And Non-GM Crops In European Agriculture.”

The report aims to identify agronomic measures for coexistence that could be implemented by biotech crop farmers; simulate in real agricultural landscapes the efficacy and feasibility of coexistence measures; identify and evaluate specific measures needed to meet the thresholds being discussed for seed production; and study the effects of long time periods on the level of adventitious presence of biotech crops.

Biotech maize is the only genetically modified (GM) crop approved for planting and sale in the European Union (EU), where regulations dictate a 0.9% labeling threshold for the adventitious presence of GM material in non-GM products. This threshold is still a point of contention: agriculture takes place in a complex environment, and some GM farmers have asked that the threshold be lowered.

Researchers selected for study seed and crop production of biotech maize, sugar beet, cotton, and oilseed rape, in defined EU regions. The main conclusions of the report are: 1) crop production at the 0.9 % threshold set by the EU is feasible, with few or no changes in agricultural practices, if adventitious GM presence in seeds does not exceed 0.5 %; 2) the production of seed up to 0.5% GM seed would be possible with little or no change in current seed production practices; 3) for maize, lowering the seed threshold to 0.3 % would require the introduction of larger isolation distances (from the current 100-200 m to 400-600 m); and 4) guaranteeing that maize seeds will contain no more than 0.1 % adventitious GM

presence is not possible if co-existence measures are limited to action on individual farms or coordination between neighboring farms.

The full version of the report is available at http://www.jrc.es/home/pages/eur22102enfinal.pdf.

EFSA: GM POTATO NO HEALTH THREAT

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has ruled that a genetically modified potato product with altered starch composition is not a threat to human health. BASF Plant Science's GM potato known as EH92-527-1, which is mainly used for the production of starch, has a higher amylopectin:amylase ratio.

EFSA came to the decision after conducting several assessment procedures that included scientific, nutritional, and environmental risk assessments. In addition, a comparative analysis of agronomic traits and composition as well as the safety of the food/feed was evaluated. Bioinformatic analysis showed the stability of the DNA insert structure, hence indicating that there was no cause for concern.

Read more on the decision at http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=66081-efsa-potato-gm

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RESEARCH

METHOD DEVELOPED FOR ASSESSING RISK OF GM CUCURBITA IN MEXICO

Researchers at the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity of Mexico (CONABIO) and the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) have designed a methodology for assessing the risk to biodiversity of releasing genetically modified (GM) crops in areas where wild relatives would co-exist with the engineered variety. The methodology was developed using the genus *Curcubita* in Mexico as a case study. Their report is published in the March issue of the Journal Agriculture, Ecosystems, and the Environment.

The protocol designed took into account available biological data on 15 taxa, including GM virus-resistant squash, standard cultivated varieties, and wild-relatives. This data was incorporated to spatial information on the distribution of these species in target sites for releasing the GM varieties. Relevant biological data included information on reproductive systems, pollination and dispersal mechanisms, genetic variability, hybridization and traits of the introduced gene, and environmental variables. The study identified localities where cultivated varieties converged with related, sexually compatible wild species. Therefore

these “hot spots” for the genus represent sites where the risk of gene flow would be greatest.

The methodology is intended to provide a baseline for assessment, prevention and management of GM crops. It requires information already available in existing scientific collections and in digital cartography, is relatively inexpensive, and can be developed for any collected species. The methodology can therefore be used as a preventive tool to identify locations where there may be a conflict between biodiversity conservation and agricultural practices, and to facilitate the design of specific safety management practices required for the safe use of GM crops.

The abstract for the article “Assessing the risk of releasing transgenic *Cucurbita* spp. in Mexico” can be viewed at: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6T3Y-4H4T0JD-1&_user=677719&_handle=V-WA-A-W-AE-MsSAYVW-UUA-U-AAVBZABYWV-AAVAAEVZWV-ZYZUVCAUZ-AE-U&_fmt=summary&_coverDate=03%2F31%2F2006&_rdoc=5&_orig=browse&_srch=%23toc%234959%232006%23998879995%23615327!&_cdi=4959&view=c&_acct=C000036823&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=677719&md5=01a1f68ed3988b49239a75b85e25de63

NEW WHEAT FOR IMPROVED DIGESTION

The level of starch digestion in the small intestine correlates with the amount of sugar entering the bloodstream, and the presence of resistant starch (RS), such as amylose, in our diet has proven health benefits. The consumption of dietary fiber has been shown to correlate negatively with the incidence of diet-related non-infectious diseases, such as coronary heart disease, colon cancer, and diabetes.

CSIRO, the Australian National Science Agency, has developed a new variety of experimental wheat with altered starch composition that could provide an opportunity for large scale improvement in public health. The team, lead by Dr Matthew Morell, employed a process known as Interference RNA (RNAi) gene silencing. In this technique, a construct carrying a fragment of the target gene cloned in both orientations is transformed into a plant. Once expressed, this construct will generate a double-stranded RNA molecule that will trigger the natural degradation of the homologous mRNA. This process is believed to have evolved in plants as a natural defense mechanism against viral attack. Morrel and co-workers used RNAi to reduce the expression levels of two starch-branching enzymes, and obtained a variety of wheat with 70% amylose, instead of the 25% present in standard wheat. An animal trial confirmed that there were positive changes in indicators of bowel health in rats fed a diet of the high-

amylose wheat, when compared to standard wheat, and there was no effect on the animals' growth rate.

'The use of gene technology has proved exceptionally useful in defining the genetic changes in wheat that are required to generate this new type of wheat,' says Dr Morell. Therefore, this approach can be used in molecular marker technology to generate improved crops using conventional breeding methods.

To read the abstract of “High-amylose wheat generated by RNA interference improves indices of large-bowel health in rats,” visit:
http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/abstract/0510737103v1
More information at: http://www.csiro.au/csiro/content/standard/ps1bd,,.html

NEW DIET REDUCES GAS EMISSIONS IN LIVESTOCK

Scientists all over the world are taking part in an effort to find strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Domestic animal populations have increased four times during the last century, and there is an upward trend in the number of livestock, As a result, emissions from livestock have become a significant source of atmospheric methane, and currently account for about 15% of anthropogenic emissions. The extent of a ruminant's methane release depends on feed levels, diet composition, and its ability to digest the feed.

The role of dietary fats in methane emission levels has been known for over 30 years. However, the specific fatty acids responsible for the decrease had not been identified. In a series of in vitro and in vivo experiments, Andrea Machmüller and colleagues of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology investigate “Medium-chain fatty acids and their potential to reduce methanogenesis in domestic ruminants.” The researchers first compared the effect of feeding coconut oil, rich in medium-chain fatty acids (MCFA), and feeds with long chain fatty acids (LCFA). MCFA were found to be much effective in reducing methane emission than LCFA. Subsequently, the team identified additional suitable MCFA feeds: esterified forms such as palm kernel oil and genetically modified canola oil, and non-esterified forms.

The authors report that methane emissions in ruminants could be lowered by as much as 50% even with dietary proportions below 3% of MCFA without affecting total tract nutrient digestion and energy utilization. The effect of MCFA on methane emissions is due to changes in the bacterial flora of ruminants.

Subscribers to the Journal of Agriculture, Ecosystems, and Environment can read the complete article at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.agee.2005.08.010.

DRIED FUNGUS PROTECTS COTTON FROM PATHOGENIC FUNGI

Penicillium chrysogenum (PEN) is a fungus useful in the pharmaceutical industry. Its dried mycelium (DM) is a waste product of penicillin production that has also been found to be effective in controlling fungal diseases in crop plants. To investigate its effects on cotton, Hezhong Dong and colleagues of China's Cotton Research Center at the Shandong Academy of Agricultural Sciences applied it in the field, and report that “Dry mycelium of *Penicillium chrysogenum* protects cotton plants against wilt diseases and increases yield under field conditions.” Their article appears in a recent issue of Crop Protection.

Cotton is an important cash crop worldwide, and in China it is grown over 4 million hectares annually. Cotton is attacked by a wide range of fungal pathogens which significantly reduce yield, with the most destructive being the soil-borne Fusarium wilt and Verticillium wilt.

In their experiments, researchers amended fields with DM, planted cotton in them, and monitored the disease severity of Fusarium wilt and Verticillium wilt from 2001 to 2004. Results from the 2001-2002 run show that a relatively high dose of DM was effective in protecting the crop against the pathogens, while the 2003-2004 results show that, although DM could still control the diseases, its efficacy was dependent on application rates. Lint yields also increased, a fact attributed to both disease control and the nutritional effects of DM.

Subscribers to Crop Protection can read the complete article at http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_aset=V-WA-A-W-AWV-MsSWYVW-UUA-U-AAVBYZEWUU-AAVAVCUUUU-ZECUYEUUW-AWV-U&_rdoc=1&_fmt=full&_udi=B6T5T-4GJM3C3-1&_coverDate=04%2F30%2F2006&_cdi=5011&_orig=search&_st=13&_sort=d&view=c&_acct=C000036823&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=677719&md5=7b2086564e20d44d54b2a4b8a115c07f or at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cropro.2005.05.003

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANSTI POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS FOR AFRICA

The African Network of Scientific and Technological Institutions (ANSTI) is offering a limited number of fellowships for postgraduate studies in the 2006/2007 academic session tenable in ANSTI member institutions. The fellowships cover fees, subsistence and international travel, and are awarded to sub-Saharan African nationals for studies outside the applicants' home countries. The fellowship is initially awarded for one year, but can be extended to 2 or more

for masters or doctorate studies upon successful completion of first year. Deadline for application is 31 May 2006.

For further information, in English and in French, and for the application form visit: http://www.ansti.org

BIOSAFETY COURSE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN NORWAY

The course “Holistic Foundations for Assessment and Regulation of Genetic Engineering and GMOs” will take place in University of Tromsø, Norway, on 31 July - 11 August 2006.

The course is designed to provide policy makers, regulators, scientists and NGOs/civil society leaders, especially from developing countries, with the necessary balanced and critical knowledge and training in crucial GE/GMO issues. Through lectures, laboratory demonstrations, group work on case studies, and discussions, the course will offer biosafety capacity building within a holistic framework. Participants will also be required to submit a GE/GMO/biosafety country report in order to more broadly share their local experiences of the current status of GMOs/biosafety with other participants.

Full sponsorship will be given to 40 selected applicants and priority will be given to applicants from developing countries. The sponsorship will cover curricular materials, course-associated travel, visa-fees, accommodation and meals.

For additional information about the course and to obtain the application form visit:
http://www.genok.org/english/lesartikkel.asp?article_id=1322&id2=glyHBx8I58gm4YNzAkFMXhPtG

E-CONFERENCE FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SHARING IN AGRICULTURE

Information and communication specialists working in agriculture will meet online between February and June 2006 to exchange ideas and experiences on "Knowledge Management and Sharing in Agriculture". The initiative is supported by the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) and members of the iNARS (Information and Communication Technologies -ICTs- and National Agricultural Research Systems) community. The electronic discussions will document what is being done around the world in terms of projects, activities, and lessons; learn from members' experiences in terms of what works and what doesn't; and formulate guidance for future activities in this area.

The e-conference started on 20 February discussing: "strengthening rural livelihoods through communication, knowledge sharing and learning, and the use of ICTs". The second thread, between April and June, will examine the issue: "improving the performance of agricultural research by accessing, sharing, and communicating knowledge and information". The discussions are in English, Spanish and French.

Interested people can join the conference at
http://www.dgroups.org/groups/inars/

DOCUMENT REMINDERS

FOOD SECURITY INFORMATION PORTAL FOR AFRICA

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), in cooperation with African Food Security/Policy Networks and the Michigan State University Department of Agricultural Economics, have created a food security information portal for Africa. The objective of this directory is to assist African food security and food policy researchers to find important and high quality internet sources of data and information and to improve their professional skills for research and policy outreach. The directory is available in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

The directory may be accessed at:
http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/test/index.cfm?Lang=en

FAO'S PLANT NUTRIENT DATABASE

The Land and Water Development Division of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is concerned with the development of technology, strategy and policy, and the provision of advisory and technical services. The Division aims to ensure a more productive and efficient use of land and water resources in order to meet present and future food and agriculture demands on a sustainable basis.

With the objective to provide important information about plant nutrients management, the Division has created an Integrated Plant Nutrition Information System (IPNIS) database. The database provides information for a number of countries to a variety of stakeholders on crop-wise plant nutrients management at the administrative (district) level, supported by relevant data on soil and soil management, agro-ecological zones, and crop production constraints. This information is not only a prerequisite for providing farmers with appropriate

advice on nutrient management, but also offers background information for policy formulations, demand forecasting, and formulation of agricultural field programs.

The database can be accessed at:
http://www.fao.org/landandwater/agll/ipnis/index.asp

Do not hesitate to tell other colleagues/contacts about this mail list. If they wish to join, they should send an e-mail message to knowledge.center@isaaa.org leaving the subject blank and entering the one-line text message as follows:
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Please visit CropBiotech Net web pages (http://www.isaaa.org/kc) to view previous issues of this newsletter and see other available resources for download.

While we are still developing this site, feel free to e-mail (knowledge.center@isaaa.org) us for your views and comments on any crop biotechnology product and related issues.

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