

**CGIAR “King Baudouin Science Award for Outstanding Partnership”
awarded to the Program for Sustainable Agriculture in Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC)**

Press Release

It is with great pleasure that we announce that on December 2, 2008, during the Annual General Meeting 2008 of the *Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research* (CGIAR), held in Maputo, Mozambique, the CGIAR Program for Sustainable Agriculture in Central Asia and the Caucasus (in short, CAC Program) has been awarded the CGIAR King Baudouin "Science Award for Outstanding Partnership".

The *CGIAR Program for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (CAC) is implemented by a Consortium of partners, namely the eight National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, eight International Centers of the CGIAR – Bioversity International, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), International Potato Center (CIP), International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), International Center for Water Management (IWMI); two other International Centers – AVRDC - the World Vegetable Center, International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA); and Michigan State University (MSU).

The Program was established in 1998, and is hosted by ICARDA’s Regional Office in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The activities of the Program over the last ten years have been very positively evaluated by an independent External Review in 2008.

Achievements were made in germplasm improvement, seed supply systems, cropping systems and agricultural diversification, integrated system of livestock and fodder production, integrated on-farm soil, water and salinity management, conservation of plant genetic resources, small ruminants breed characterization, socioeconomic and policy research. The Program’s efforts for capacity development and in strengthening the regional and international cooperation are well recognized by the NARS partners.

In receiving the prize in the name of the whole CAC Consortium, Dr. Christopher Martius, Head of the Program’s Facilitation Unit (PFU) based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, emphasized: “I am very pleased to receive the prize, and do so in the name of the Consortium and of the partners that collaborate for more sustainable, and more profitable agriculture in the highly degraded lands of Central Asia and the Caucasus. The Program is an example of fruitful and constructive collaboration between the NARS in all our partner countries and the CG centers, and across all centers involved.” He received the award together with Academician Hukmatullo Akhmadov, who is President of the Tajik Academy of Agricultural Sciences, and Chairman of the Central Asia and Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (CACAARI), who represented the eight partner countries, and Dr. Mahmoud Solh, Director General of ICARDA and Chairman of the CGIAR Task Force on Central Asia, representing the Centers involved in the Consortium.

Dr. Martius emphasized that the Award is received on behalf of the whole consortium and added: “The whole collaborative Program would not have been possible without the incessant enthusiastic support from the NARS to establish a CGIAR support office in the region that provides bridges into the modern world of science. The program owes its existence also to the great efforts of the former and the present Directors General of ICARDA, Dr. Adel El-Beltagy and Dr. Mahmoud Solh. They worked untiringly to get

this Program off the ground.” He furthermore emphasized the role of his predecessors, Dr. Surendra Beniwal and Dr. Raj Paroda, in firmly establishing the program in the region as a forum for close and equitable collaboration.

Being honored with the Award, the representatives of the CAC Program stressed that it represents an immensely satisfactory recognition of their past efforts, which renews their commitment to increase efforts in the region for agricultural development in poor rural areas. Dr. Solh emphasized that “the CAC program is an excellent example of true participation of NARS, CGIAR centers and advanced research institutions that applies research to find solutions to the particular development challenge of regions in economic transition. However, these regions also offer wide opportunities for improvement.” Providing better land use technologies and linking poor farmers to markets through agricultural development will provide opportunities for the predominantly rural populations in these countries. This also calls upon donors to increase their contributions to the stability in this highly important region in terms of increasing global food security.