5

The U.S. Position on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

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On behalf of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), it is a very distinct pleasure for me to discuss a topic of critical importance to the economic futures of both the USA and many developing nations that have used the catalog of agriculturally important genetic resources maintained by the international agricultural research centers (IARCs). A definitive USAID and U.S. position is still emerging. It is being crafted under the more comprehensive auspices of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) and is being undertaken in response to the renegotiation of the International Undertaking (IU) on Plant Genetic Resources and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). As with any negotiated U.S. position, the policy on access to genetic resources held in trust by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Centers is one that must take into consideration the interests of many sectors of our society and the mandated but sometimes diverse missions of a number of Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Department of State, the USAID, and the U.S. Department of Commerce. As such, the articulation of a definitive position is a complex task and is influenced by a number of mitigating factors and recent treaty developments, such as the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), Codex Alimentaris, and the CBD.

From a historical perspective, USAID has a long history of engagement with the CGIAR Centers (or IARCs). The IARCs have been viewed as major players in advancing our agricultural development goals. USAID recognizes, in