Working Group A considered the subject of internationalization of crop science research during two open hearings that featured excellent discussion. The general view was that agricultural research is already an accepted and functioning international endeavor. There is little controversy on this point. What is important, however, is the way the research is done and how it will be organized in the future.

From the beginning of agriculture, people have exchanged crop germplasm and knowledge of how to cultivate and use it. Species and cultivars have traveled between villages, countries, and continents. Some have evolved as basic food crops with a wide range of adaptation while others have been developed as specialty crops and have found particular niches in which they are produced. Other species were lost or became minor crops in limited areas where the local population retained the knowledge of how to grow and use them.

Agriculture is a fundamental worldwide activity mostly engaged in by people with limited resources. This industry feeds and clothes the people of the world, but with increasing difficulty in the face of ever-expanding populations and a decreasing natural resource base. All nations support their farmers with research and extension systems designed to deliver new information and technology on a broad range of production components. These include new genetic stocks, new soil and crop management techniques, more efficient machinery and power, and more reliable harvest and storage techniques. Most important, however, are national agricultural policies that serve to stimulate or restrict agricultural development.